

New Sheets

Because the market was closed, our steps
took us to the river, where you skipped
stones & I watched you do it in silence,
& you said it was time to take a break
& sublet our apartment to a couple
who kept their shit together a little better,
as if you could sublet anger or squat

inside it, breaking windows when you left,
pulling bricks out of the wall, so no one
else felt at home in that godforsaken place,
& maybe feeling at home is overrated
anyway, maybe alienation is indeed
the status quo in this world, as some have
observed, & there's nothing strange

about wanting to jump off a ledge once
in a while, or a windowsill, something
high up, with enough room to fall into
oblivion, as the wings fail to open & I
find myself sprawled on spit-encrusted
pavement, miraculously alive, with a crowd
gawking, with the police trying to get

through to me & paramedics taking their
sweet time to arrive on the scene of my
greatest shame—that I can think of, at any
rate, what with the memory loss I've
thankfully acquired during the fall, so that
instead of mourning you, I mourn the right
to grieve in private, without having to

account to a complete stranger what could
have possibly pushed me over the edge
up there, in that apartment I don't even
recognize as mine when they take me
upstairs to write a report & I look at
objects, I weigh them in my hands & feel
nothing—I, for whom objects were spiders

biding their time for stray thoughts to get
tangled in their snare, the way our bodies
got tangled sometimes, if the sheets on that
strikingly foreign bed were any indication,
or the stale air in the room, charged with sex,
or loneliness, or something like it, & you
nowhere to be seen, which is when the police

start asking the same questions over & over,
& the paramedics are finally here, & I'm
wondering how the shiniest blue can seep
through holes made by vacant stars, while
a boy with a scant mustache takes my
blood pressure, flashing a light in my eyes,
demanding to know what year it is &

who is the president, & now I'm thinking,
what a dumb question, because now, it's all
coming back—the world tightens its fist
around me & squeezes you out; now, that
blue I glimpsed from the corner of my eye
when I jumped is gone, & with it,
the fraction of peace; now, the myriad

spiders sink their fangs into squirming flesh
& I start screaming, I start telling the truth,

or what I hope is the truth, & for that,
they take me in, but this is not the end, not
quite, because somehow they track you
down at that new address you refused
to share with me, & you're alive, after all—

surprise!—& you tell them I wouldn't
hurt a fly, which is not true, since you know
I've done it in the past & would gladly
do it again, given half a chance, because
flies are easy, you could even say
I'm a serial fly killer, except I never
hid it, not from you, but you I've been

hiding far too long, telling neighbors
you've been nursing your sick father
in Maine for the past six months, & I can
always tell when they don't believe me
or grow suspicious, which I like better than
disbelief, so now I'm angry with the police
for finding you, for making me wonder

whether you laughed when they told you
what happened, because who in his right
mind would jump from a third-floor window
onto an awning & slide off it unscathed,
what kind of despair would send such a clear
smoke signal in hopes that you would
come back, or that you would at least call,

your voice thin with worry, & the truth is,
I would rather be in jail than tangled
in those sheets you left behind, like not
even the sheets mattered, not even that day

when we picked them together & you
turned pink when I told the cashier we
had just rented our first place & were

buying our first bedding set & she winked
& gave me a once-over & threw in some
condoms 'on the house,' which I paid for
anyway, then strutted out of the store into
the sun, feeling like everyone envied us,
while you walked ahead, you got in the car
without saying a word.