

10-P-83

after birth

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you drove placenta from amherst in a uhaul
thirty-footer flailing behind you, skidding ice like a tonka.

wrapped in paper, it somersaulted
cooler's plastic refuge, ice unfixing

biohazard symbol, lifeblood co-piloting.
you steered it home before unthaw, penniless,

on good faith and *i owe you* passed ticket-takers,
tolls and damages. this cargo, our freight,

we wanted to migrate mississippi, fried chicken in shoeboxes,
boys in backseat catching monarchs and counting cows.

we wanted to plant it under an oak near hattiesburg, shaw, senatobia.
my family tended and wailed rosehill's lone black cemetery.

i wanted to guide you to your kin. in my childhood, i got
stung by fire ants, walked barefoot down a mississippi road

named after big papa to the mailbox,
a dusty country child, i grayed bathwater, slopped hogs
on his farm 'til skin blackened two whole shades,
gathered small pebbles in my palms to bless my city home.

we wanted a house the boys could grow in,
a yard wide enough to hold their black bodies

against metropolis and ghosts. we walked woodlawn
to hyde park window-shopping open curtains

like children playing that's my car through chainlink. we
wanted a system of belief, to pitch a tent on a cliff,

to see mountains and sweep
dirt smooth underneath a flat-back moon.

we wanted separate rooms, a blue house,
a little girl, then we did not.

i cleaned out our unlived-in apartment, not even mice remained.
stones heavy as babies heads lined windowsills.

a child's scribbled orange crayon, yogurt bursts like graffiti
on a blank wall. placenta in the freezer's nook .

yet, we said nothing. when we love, we even say things

we don't mean,

come back.

come back.