

We Were Women, We Were Already Receding

You are someone with a penchant for dark  
beers and pasts, walk-in closets and porch-step

smokes, who liked to ride it out to the depths  
of the middle of Lake Hopatcong, spark

the flint of your lighter, take longing drags  
and talk about hipster coffee and sex

with whipped cream designs—and sometimes, your next  
lover—and dive in to put out the fag,

swim to the deck to peel off your cotton  
boxers and wring them in your fighter's fist.

It's too cold in the fall on the water  
we fall in, too naked for falling in

naked and docking unanchored like this.  
I remember. You'd kiss me and shiver.

## **Settlement Is a Motor, Settlement Is a Vehicle**

The adjuster is a sign. She stands in

for you, I cannot stand  
for extended periods of time.

Settlement is a vehicle.

For you I cannot stand  
to atrophy. I contract when she says

Settlement is a vehicle.  
Her neck's a violent rash, which starts

to atrophy. I contract when she says  
policy ceiling and pre-existing injury.

Her neck's a violent rash, she starts  
at the photograph of your luxated machine.

Policy, sealing and pre-existing injury—  
the vehicular innards bent and weeping, and weeping

at the photograph of your luxated machine,  
I contract. I sign.

## **The Art of Flossing isn't Hard to Master**

I finally threw out your toothbrush today  
but first kissed the bristles against my own gum  
line. Whatever it is you didn't say

recedes now in my own mouth. Your taste will stay  
in the half bath waste basket for some  
days, but I finally threw out your toothbrush today.

(The city collects trash on Friday.)  
It's flavored like ash, sour, spearmint, and rum  
and whatever it is you didn't say.

While you're starving, I'm craving something to allay  
the phantom ache of how you would come.  
Before I threw out your toothbrush today

I hungered in the depression where you lay  
on the left side of the bed, which sums  
up what you wouldn't say:

You thinned like enamel. I wore you away  
like the overwashed, worried-loose skin of a plum—  
or the head of your toothbrush I threw out today.  
I threw out whatever it is you didn't say.