

Rishma Dunlop

Slippage

My neighbor's house
stands tall, exemplary,
a white standard
on the tree-lined street
where spills of children
play in the fragrance
of newly mown grass
and friends gather like moths
at patio barbecues,
swim laps in blue pools
of suburbia.

Behind the pristine door
the air is scented with peach
and lemon pot-pourri,
imported soaps,
Gucci colognes and
white terry cloth robes.

One night in June
the cul-de-sac is lit up
red and blue lights pulsing
in Delta Police cars

he is escorted from his home
the marriage ended

in restraint and order
his throat caught in the noose of love

his raging words
burn a path
through his small sons' bodies
across her lawn
through her rose bushes

That night I dream
of masked raccoons
night marauders
owls following the paths of headlights
a falcon circling small prey
the tattered beat of wing

I dream of consumption plants
the choke of deadly nightshade
stinging nettles along the Serpentine River

I dream a black fisted storm
a singular fury
lightening razoring
the neighbor's pine tree
its scent in my nostrils
crashing through my roof

In the morning
the tree still stands
outside my window
the sun rises
a warm peach
offering up seaside angelica
the air full of anise swallowtails
and red admiral butterflies

At dawn
I slip into my daughters' rooms
listen to their measured breaths
stroke their hair softly back
from their foreheads.