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Arranging Flowers for My Death

Thelma Brown

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ARRANGING FLOWERS FOR MY DEATH

Those wax-white hyacinths, they travel well,
set them on my knees,
let fragrance fill my face.
The tiger, my companion, pads
through living room and den.
With twitching tail he looks
to left, to right.
He moves around the furniture,
this room too small for him,
lays his head upon my lap.
His breath is in my lungs,
his purring rattles all my noons.
I stroke that flaming fur,
follow those stripes with my hand,
and he measures my life.
The restless tail strikes cabinets
where all my treasures are,
and the painted egg is broken.
On hind legs he tears the drapes away
from my garden,
and it is now
that we must go—
I climb upon his back,
clutch his deep and glossy rug
as he leaps among the broken trees
where crackling wires hiss,
and the roar of his delight
shakes the pale day moon.
I feel the rhythm of his muscles
beneath me as we dance
to the song of the ordered stars.
Madame Yamasaki sits on my patio
arranging tiger
lilies, tears at her aralia leaf.
“Nothing is perfect,” she says to her hands.