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Speaking Asleep

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SPEAKING ASLEEP

1

A woman pulls a welcome mat
from her cart, places it at the mouth
of the subway. She does not see me.
The leash deadens my fingers.
I check my pockets: a postcard,
a piece of gnarled lace. I laugh
and taste vermouth. My face
slides across the window
of a clamoring shop.
It isn't the man with the gun
but someone pulls
at my face. I tell them,
surely I have a home.

2

The butterfly drowns
in my cup. Mother
won't take me
to the doctor. My tooth
hangs from the doorknob
wrapped with thread.
My mouth is red, flooding.
She can't understand.
I can't speak. Wasps
gather in the eaves.

3

Water lips my shoes
and spills into the hole

in the sand. I'm digging
for a man I heard singing.
The waves are wrong,
full of fur, and they lift me
to my feet. A glove burns
on the highway. Lightning
careens through the snow.

4

I read Kant at the zoo,
the words a tangle of gaffs.
The keeper shot himself
last night. The elephants
can't weep. I'm not sure
what to tell the snakes.
How can I justify?
They look at me as if
they've forgotten.
I look back to the Preface
and read aloud.

5

There's too much of me.
The room won't give,
nor the doors. I rest
my nose in the crook
of my arm, suffocated
by my skin. I have
squeezed out one eye
and can see a dog
at the window pacing
nervously.