Comprehensible Terms

Suzanne Roszak
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After Mary Biddinger

I knew it was time to begin again. The stark fissure between our bodies. Days spent trenching through the muck. We shared the same topography of heart and liver, but we called it up in different words. Basic elements of life became uncomfortable. Everywhere I turned, you had irradiated a chair or footstool, afraid I would stop there permanently. Even the mattress was toxic. Friends who came wanting to know what language you were speaking went away disappointed. There was no dictionary for this brand of evasion.

I hunted recipes that might convert your speech, or mine. A different, rented syntax: the smooth structures of someone else. Once, you’d drink and the horizon would bow.

A coterie of planets behind you. With me you were a sad tangle of syllables. We fabricated the scene of your interpretation, each of us alone, with descriptors we could understand.