

## Bedtime Story

It's in the starless dark of your nursery that I wish—  
not that you could be undone,  
but for the impossibility of the past:  
the way the house settling,  
the barred owl's gentle question meant nothing  
to my rest. I wish I had not heard you,  
frantic for me, frantic to nurse  
as your father tried to give you a bottle and I tried to sleep.

It's laughable, this wishing,  
when for years I wished for you.  
It's laughable, except nothing's funny  
at two in the morning when the street is quiet,  
even the barred owl in the oak quiet,  
all the light in the world just this slat of yellow  
that slants from the hall and under your door  
so I can see to bring you to my breast

while I dream of water and distant voices  
from the canal beside our hotel in Venice,  
the wide bed and your father's skin against my skin  
as I sank into sleep like an ocean,  
or of my childhood room, the world snowy silent,  
stars lidded, down blankets and the hush  
of heat rushing through vents.  
Sometimes, I dream of not dreaming; I dream of nothingness.

But you call me back with your bumbling hum,  
soothed and soothing, your hand pressing my chest  
as you unreel the endless white strand  
that flows from somewhere close to my heart  
but not quite my heart. So if this is hard?  
I won't wish it away. You cannot be wished away.  
So, sleep in my arms as I sleep,  
dreaming of a sleep before you came.