AUGUST ON ALICE

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Last August there was nothing wrong with our naked bodies
polishing off little loaves of banana bread from the Merritt Bakery on a cool night
in the evenings reading Flannery O'Connor out loud in bed
we dreamed about buying a '65 Buick LeSabre from an old couple
in Santa Cruz who told us they didn't need that much room any more
in my journal I strung eighth notes across song lyrics
we played in your not yet vandalized car
I learned "Chelsea Bridge"
my legs felt danced on

Last August I would fall asleep at 3 in your arms listening to you breathe
and wake up to your lips kissing me wanting me
then I was the woman full of steam and vigor staying awake after
feeling it in my teeth and the heels of my feet
in my bed where good things could now be stored and there was peace after dreams
we wondered whether people really felt like what it felt like to make love
were they scared as we were
your honey quaking and we did not go further

This August every window on Alice Street is open again
impatiens in the courtyard are shining like a fountain
it's a lunch hour cookout on a third floor balcony
but you do not live here
your stuff is not here
instead you have turned up on the back of a bookmark
where you once pencilled a long distance phone number
then again because I still buy the toothpaste you like

because I still have the box of horrible-fitting condoms the *Guardian*
recommended
because the candles beside my bed have not burned down

This August the morning sun keeps reminding me that before our indefinite
silences
you came to Oakland and blessed this once-dreaded month
shook all the evil out of it
so that now when I go walking up Alice Street without you
past the wasps floating round the 10-foot hollyhocks
the kids in drumming camp
no line at the post office
I don't tap any of the watermelons at the Goodluck Supermarket
for knowing still they will all be sweet