August on Alice

Jonathan Blum*
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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