

Long Nights at Largo and More

by [Lisa Low](#) (October 2023)



Death, Giovanni Segantini, 1899

Long Nights at Largo

For My Father

I want to believe you eased into the dark.
I want to believe you weren't afraid
as you lay there, underarms lathered with
soap, the cell phone blinking; the bedside
empty of Mom who preferred shopping
to the boredom of waiting; the shameful
bedpan, the basket of grapes the neighbors
left; how it drained you to say, "the nights
are so long" when we got there at last;
how otherwise you died there alone

at Largo, never coming home; how like
a lost flock we stood on the sidewalk
afterwards, watching the wild swan rise, its
long neck pointed above the seals to the sun.

Portrait of a Marriage in the Best of Times

The kids were in the commissary
having their faces painted with whales
when we saw three or four of them hurling
their huge bodies like apostrophes
from the waves; by the time the moon wormed
its way into the portholes, we were
kneeling by Sam and Julia's bunks,
brushing star light from their hair; we waited
in the dark a long time like that, not
talking; letting the seagulls shake the last
dust from their wings, and listening to
the whales, those great gray protectors, swimming
past the portholes beside their babies,
and beside us, too, on the many-fathomed sea.

Another Night Out for the Lovers

My father in a pirate's patch warming
up at the piano; my mother
shimmying in a sequined dress,

slinking sideways, head
thrown back; necklace, bracelets,

chandeliers—Jazz hot dancing;

Cuban tap and toe; the man in
the pirate's patch unswirling her
hips wriggling at the social club.

Meanwhile, boxed in the crib
of a box-shaped house
on an island hot as silver

melting, cottonmouths
snaking through summer grass;
blue water rippling

to the horizon; mosquito
foggers plowing down Main Street,
filling the air with poison,

six kids under six huddling
with blankets and one-eyed bunnies,
reflected in the light of chiller TV.

To Marian

Goddess, I'm not here to tell you, you
will live. I'm here to look at your face
and to tell you that you died there like you
wanted to, in your own house, hovered
over by the five saints you gave birth to.
You said to me once, "marry him." This is
to tell you that I have, but not once has
he allowed me in. I find him afternoons,
wandering in the chapel of his own sweet
thought. Last summer, I put my hands on
the grave they gave you. I felt the keening

let out of your throat. I heard it shriek on
the wind. Marian, mother I can't have,
my hands get dirty when I think of you.

This Breeze Blows

Yet once more this breeze blows,
lifting the clothes, hanging from
back-alley clotheslines in March.

Yet once more these window box
flowers stir for a wind
touching each leaf with its whispering

wand. Yet once more in this
city of flown up cinders
and blown-down bags, pigeons

break dance on ledges in rows,
and sparrows rail on fire
escapes, singing aves across

the avenues. Spring,
the country, even here in this shadow
of tall, things begin again.

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Lisa Low's essays, book reviews, and interviews have appeared in *The Massachusetts Review*, *The Boston Review*, *The Tupelo Quarterly*, and *The Adroit Journal*. Her poetry has appeared in a variety of literary journals, among them *Valparaiso Poetry*

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