

the HARLEQUIN

Kate Potts

4.57 am

After William Carlos Williams

Snow-blinded by your dream's shingle and tug, you're lodged
tight in your body's mechanisms.

I think, in your dream, you're seven again, and sat in sagged,
sea-marbled swimming trunks:

your feet joggle the crusted sand. You're inhaling a sneaky
wodge of fat, greened sea-shore

before, upwind at the chalet, your dad — your sea lion —
wakes up, clatters, begins to brew

his abominable potions, before he carps and whips this last
holiday morning into gear.

I watch for the retinal twitch, a reeling under your lids.
Your breath's a squeezebox whistle.

For myself — I've tried hot milk, aspirin, tensing and de-tensing,
I've counted the blanked tides

of my breathing. I have to tell you, while you're so attentive
and rapt:

I have eaten the oranges, the soft white loaf, the slices
of salmon, the six new-laid eggs

and all the shaved moons of sweetened, nut-spattered pastry;
the soap of cold butter

and the five hash-browns, the tomatoes and the lima beans —
which you were probably saving.

I have bodily hoovered the carton of orange juice, the milk,
and, purring with the fridge's Gnostic dirge,

I've drunk of the kitchen's yellow paintwork, chewed
on the drop-leaf table's limbs,

the maroon window-blind and all of the plaster edges and joists.
I have bitten on crockery

and foam upholstery, crunched book-spines and DVDs,
gulped back the TV's plastic angles

and licked at the furred air that sags in high corners. All this
gorged matter bruises me, troubles and knits

in my sleepless gut. Now there is only this bed, your quietness
and, outside, brazening light: forgive me.

Thank you for reading! Find more at www.theharlequin.org.