

Little Spells

We are not witches as fable stoops us
hunchback over caldrons, not women
hobbled sinister by absence though we know
there are tides in our blood that lean us
toward some ancient clock. Still
if ox marrow soup is suggested, the pot readies
and if we return from the Chinese market
with a rough bag of earth tea, our house steeps
in the dank reduction of bark and root,
cold air cut heavy with mist.

We may have eaten goose eggs, raw
garlic and sweetbreads, charged our bathwater
with carnelian and held our noses as we threw
back shots of chlorophyll and kombucha.
We may have made closet altars,
placed bowls of royal pollen beneath our beds
and because someone swore it worked,
our underwear may have all gone orange, pockets
filled with quartz turtles, a moonstone at the throat.

If we turn out to be the end of the line,
there are other circles that will flare
like a small cosmos, we know that
creation is a field and a cave and we will be there
churning some broad-winged flurry from the ether.

We know we are not dying but we are
wading in a time-out-of-time
kept afloat by little spells. When will we again
be so studious with our will, omnipresent
of spark and silence and all the rough
honey it takes to set a life in motion?

We are not witches but we know
how to flick the last seeds
of air from a needle
and ease it into the womb
with reverie and we know magic
is its own making,
the power, if there be one,
not in the sung pot or expelled frog

but the fastidious busying
through the terrible
artistry of so fierce a care
as did my dear friend when her boy was born still,
secretly pumping milk through the spring
so that daily she poured a blue cup
over her garden until the blooms ached through.

Jennifer K. Sweeney
from *Little Spells*