

Between Women

By Autumn Stiles

mornings like these
your voice is scottish-thick and
full of sleep

eyes heavy, grey –
two slabs of sea-washed stone.

nights like last
I'm sleepless, rubbing
Edinburgh's perpetual damp from
your limbs, with wide plebian hands
so that you can sleep as you now stand,
naked
illuminated by the space heater
so that you resemble – what did Woolf say?
- a match burning in a crocus
gold diffused through cream and mauve.

you make us tea the color of my skin and sip,
august and absorbed in this ritual of morning.
in this moment, we are possible.

yet this room is not ours, this bed, these cups.

we're just borrowing and
there is no ritual
to transform the British floral of your best friend's sheets
into the plain, Christ-like linen of your dorm set.

we were given one night, now morning's come
we can't go on pretending, we must go.

but please,
as we hurtle up North, to the sea and our studies,
as the rain rolls in 'neath this bruised Scottish sky,
as we become clandestine, platonic, pretend,

let us remember
my lips at your temple where the hair is soft and new,
and the trail of my fingers along the rind of your hip
- a swallow's wing skimming midnight pools
because I'll always be there to rub the warmth back in
and you'll always take your tea the color of my skin.