

Panic Attack

By Alexander Ayres

Cold sweat on your legs,
is the first thing I notice,
fire in your eyes,
ice in your lungs,
earthquake in your hands.

Shake a little faster, dear.
Maybe you'll warm yourself up.

Or maybe you'll break your neck,
so I carry you
from the ground to the bath,
from the restaurant to the house,
a kind of quiet contemplation on my tongue.
Is this what it means to be alone with someone?
I do not mind.
I find a easy silence in your eyes squeezed shut.

You are getting warmer.
You stopped crying when we got to the house,
and now you cry again,
but — here — I can hear you breathe.
My hand rubs your shoulder, your back,
once and again,
skin to skin, a quiet thrum in your spine,
a hum in mine
from where the lullaby spills from my throat to the air.

It is simple, now.
It is easy
to be who you need me to be,
and in this moment you need to not be human.
And so you are not,
you are anything
that does not need to think,
the kind that will drink this water
and lay in bed with me,
and breathe easily
sleep sweet, sleep gently.