

SOPHIE KLAHR

*from* Like Nebraska

~

He comes like a fox—  
Quick run of heat in the dark  
    places his hands on  
Each side of her head  
As if to absolve. As if  
They were both treading water.  
At dawn, a strange bee alights  
On the collar of her dress  
Just as she slips it over her head.  
*That's not fair*, he hears her say  
    to the bee.  
In the field,  
The hole is deep enough now  
That he must hoist himself out  
    like a swimmer pressing up  
Against the lip of a pool.  
*Earth*, his book says,  
    *is the most forgiving element.*

~

She leans like a ladder  
Laid in the grass and thought  
To be lost for a season,  
Propped at the window to watch  
A dust-colored horse  
With a white mane  
Graze in a close paddock.  
The horse is so close that when  
Her heart goes out to it,  
She can almost feel something  
Coming back.  
The mountains beyond  
Like an engine of light  
and beyond them, Nebraska.  
Tonight, no one else is staying here,  
The motel pool still and blue as a pill.  
The bony clerk at reception lives  
In a sequence of rooms  
Like a frail smoked honeycomb.  
Tonight, the clerk sits late at the desk,  
Lining up stale pastel mints  
Like cars streaming by on the freeway,  
Like cars sitting dead in a yard,  
Some wild flower growing beneath.