

from Abel, to a reproachful correspondent

by strannikov

whatever else—your innocence, your youth, your hair—
you have not lost nerve.

the snake coiled behind our parents' backs you left me
to escape alone.

(does it do to vilify our poor dead parents,
their legacy dead?
did you hear consolations whispered by some snake
and then believe them?)

the blazing hope you chose for our breath was not ours,
no joint birthright, no.

the music you taught me you never learned to play—
mine, you hardly heard.

to me you confessed the wet substance of those fears
I never betrayed:
once, darkness in my most hidden basement arrived,
you could not be found.

reproach me for your exile, but I kept you, yes,
kept you to the end.

when you betrayed the vain ambition of my death,
I did not complain.

if now I have moved my tomb without telling you,

you might wonder why:
instead, you accost me with stealing boxes found
already empty.

the blood, the bone, the brain diverted from my head
drains not just from me.

my shards sink and scatter, soil . . .

