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**Stretch of Closures**

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*This book is dedicated to Anna Maria and Eric*

*I like a  
loved one to  
be apt in  
the wing*

Lorine Niedecker





## **Next Door Moon**



## Reconstructive Fortressing

They were moving about the rooms, two men.  
My daughter said, I don't want to live with them.  
No, no, I said, they will live here alone  
if they buy our place. We will have gone.  
Do you remember that large patch of green  
I called the country? That's where we will be.

I've been wearing this flat for far too long.  
It's dark though I've accessorised it in turquoise.  
It works best when my skin is palest in winter.  
In summer it makes me look tacky. I am ready  
to invest in a house as well-fitted as a bra,  
none of that faux leopard skin, no balconettes.

How to explain this perfectly reasonable reason?  
From her Juliet balcony, she squints at the Eye,  
a toy Big Ben fixed, neat, inside it.  
She is going to have to give up her view.

## Next Door Moon

The boat man is throwing Claire de Lune  
in the bin. Tiny jackets of sound  
hang on the curl of his next door moon.

Black nails. Her hair ripples like sand  
when the sea has packed its big blue bag  
and run. Driving home, we startled an owl.

It rushed across the motorway, ruffed up  
and tabby. *The bridge of your nose will break  
if you sniff at moonlight through the wall.*

## Wouldn't Couldn't Weren't

The child is running on and off the doorstep. She won't  
Come back when the mother calls. Or when she comes, doesn't  
Stay. Puts one foot on the step. The cul-de-sac isn't  
Busy but such a small breath flashing on the camber wouldn't  
Necessarily alert a reversing car. Before these, there wasn't  
A single dysfunctional family hereabouts. Their neighbour mightn't  
Condemn it openly but panics in case . . . I'll murder you – can't  
People drum up a kinder language of control? Mrs Raine couldn't  
Ever have said that to her long dead son – the woman mustn't  
Push the child further but has to catch her. They don't  
Take more than seconds to regain the pavement and it shouldn't  
Matter that the lemon squeezer in the mother's hand didn't  
Hold its juice but stung both, making them yell more. Mrs Raine  
hasn't  
Breathed so deeply for years through lungs she half believed weren't.

## Parent

All I have to tuck around her, sleeping  
on the grass, is this  
transparent mac,  
  
a cellophane as tough as the gravity  
that makes a child thunder  
like a pulpit.

## Wyvern

They're millinery, roofs, pinned with cranes.  
Or dirty sweatbands, the sweeps of concrete  
topping blocks. We bang the slats,  
kneeling above the Carphone Warehouse,  
unroll felt like a black towel.

The boys say once I'd have been forced  
to stay down there, on the pavement,  
selling eggs and heart-cakes.  
Wrong.

There would have been women, hammering,  
smelling this smoke from a bitumen bin chimney.  
The female dragons.

Me, I carry a hose of fire.  
I can stand to walk the metal sky  
and land on scaffolding like pigeon shit.  
I steer by the brown reins of the Wharf.

Two of us roll up the material  
to the beginning again, lay it out more slowly.

I flame each turn.

In the days of smocks, I'd have been drunk  
from scurvy grass ale like the boys  
around Wandsworth Plain, sobering up  
on saloop, made of cuckoo flowers.

## Pollen

*O Source du Possible, alimente à jamais*

*Des pollens des soleils d'exils . . .*

Jules Laforgue

*(Complaint du Temps et de sa Commère L'Espace)*

Broken red slats of a blind horizon  
hanging  
behind a rope  
suspended  
between an oak and a concrete post in a clearing  
light up a honey-green leaf of girl  
fluttering  
down the line. Once, boys grasped the handgrip and  
launched  
into a draft of unsure sky.  
Such machinery of  
grabbing,  
diving,  
falling  
to the ground once made a cloud  
of men, a storm that  
rushed  
in from a sea. The sun has no time  
left for fire. A torch  
drops  
spots of gold, tiny as pollen grains.  
The slats are  
sheered  
off from the sky, worn out.  
She runs beneath them while they  
fly down  
again and again like rare Red Wakes.



## Persephone's Refusal

Coming on her drunk, death hunches over the girl lying near the  
station snack stand.

An advert flowers from the marble –Top Shop. Smells are a  
polygamy of soups,  
minestrone, bouillabaisse, clam chowder.

Images of food and clothes,

she struggles to think,

they'll be all death will have of me.

Tries to read aloud,

Bright New,

Don't Miss Out.

He touches neck through hair.

Pushing away the paunch heavy with souls, she stands, walks  
towards the soup-eaters and tells them stories – letters hidden in  
log-piles, five sisters kissed by the same blackguard, policemen  
falling off hay carts, the shooting of Canon O'Keefe in mistake  
for a rabbit – while the cooks ladle today's special, Big Jack's  
Split Pea, into thin cartons.

## Ticket Language

Across the barrier flashing Seek Assistance,  
Soda waves her special low-cost ticket.

The metal palms stay up. From a closed circuit  
TV camera, local resident Stain

is spotted having trouble articulating  
her ankles on six inch stilettos. The guard

reads Soda's claim in ticket language:  
Valid As Advertised South Central STD

DaySave Any Ctrl Stn while  
a stranger supports Stain's attempts to rebalance

a severe lateral wobble. Two guards search  
for material relevant to the promotion

that issued Soda's ticket. White plastic  
bats wave off fresh trains. Stain hears

her mobile, clenched against her ear,  
say: Listen, we are running to time.