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Dominique

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Nadya Pittendrigh

Dominique

Today we ride in a tungsten train
with bogwood seats,
to Rhinelandia, passing some bowls around.

Sheila cups her left hand
behind my ear, opens the airlock,
and stills the metal with her right hand.
We both wear needlefish brooches.

We got dressed inside the meat locker.
I remember keys—
the taste of mint.

Yesterday my mother called from a gondola
on her picture phone. The hot-air vent
fell out of the ceiling at night.
She said it reminded her of Karate.

Don't leave Dominique, she said.
Don't leave Dominique without
some instrument please.

I wear three sweaters
at the sink this morning.
And I can think only of the sink.

Where is Dominique?
Down on the lower level
people are asleep on the gaslit
roller rink. I step over rows of
bedrolls. Two women,

faces hidden, sleep with leather
gloves next to a man beneath the exit sign.
Their gloves and his face
are two of the shiny things visible.

I bow at the elevator man. He bows
too, and his helmet falls off. I ask
about the mining business,
bumping into a gramophone.

He takes me inside the room next door,
saying: old music sounds better through a wall.
You know, snakes hear through the roofs
of their mouths. Or is it a membrane
outside on the forehead?

He pours himself cognac while I read his papers.
He follows me to the bathroom
where we don't speak at all—
though he's using the stall right next to mine.

Have you been to the Sandwich
Islands? They don't use streets— don't
have any. And Guatemala?
They use the gas chamber there.