Vehicles of Change

i.

Our last week together, I borrow his
car to move my boxes. Daily, I cross
the bridge with books, dishes. The brake shoes are
slipping. By Wednesday, every stop grinds
to the roar of airplanes descending,
urgent upon the car roof. I am crash-landing
through lost time. I maneuver my craft
to lose it. I want to walk away from its
burning in some farmer’s field as the camera
crew rushes to record the miracle
of my get-away. In the ditches, cow
parsnips rotate purple shafts; rank white
crowns rise above the odor of burning
metal. Black smoke trails my path and becomes
a pack of cats skulking in my shadow.

ii.

The First of June, my friend’s
driving the panel van, the radio’s
stuck on a country station, and
I’m in the passenger’s seat

with furniture rattling in
back. The world shrinks up and
jumps into the side mirrors:
the lanes are parallel and skewed

both like corridors in
perspective drawings. You could
wrap them around the earth’s
core without their crossing. Never
the twain shall meet. I tower
over traffic; below, sunlight
glints off car tops like
pebbles I could flick over

water. Across the bridge, the wind
takes the words from my mouth and
erases.

iii.

Unpacking, I re-enact the Apartment
Within I’ve carried from place to place like
an absurd parody of the Soul, the God

imprinted in my heart. Its universals
include cups eye-level on a kitchen
shelf, scissors in the left-hand utility
drawer, the vacuum cleaner plopped among
coats conspicuous as a widower
in a grocery line. In this enactment,

white walls scrape easily to reveal
a fuzzy grey almost of cardboard. I
welcome this lightness—no more solid
doors, dark cabinets. I perform my life
inside a pop-up book, every moving part
collapsible, seamed to the center.
iv.

The next day in his absence, I
clean the house, wipe away the traces—
the dust of shed skin, an ear-ring
long lost, thrums from scarves woven

for gifts, and the inevitable
hair—thrums of daily life
unwoven. The house unravels
into a place where I’ve paid

rent. Already, its hallways
darken and merge into
others, each room floats up
disjointed in my mind. My

steps no longer connect them.

v.

In my dream that night, a giraffe
wades leisurely in the wake
of a barge across shallow
waters. The big cats, one of each,

feed from my hands while I wait
in a windowed cubicle for
a ride in some vehicle I
cannot begin to imagine. Far

off, planes dive into the sea
to rise as dolphins, whales
breach and send up a horizon-
ful of sheep clouds, and the world

spins back into flickers of light
struggling to become the animals.

—Kyoko Mori