

## Twin Sister, Stillborn

*liana* — (Fr. to bind): Any luxuriantly growing vine that roots in the ground and climbs, as around a tree trunk.

I am the one who knew you,  
the only one who will ever know.

I felt the push of your new heart,  
the swim of your limbs, the turn of your self  
as you turned toward me. We were wild fish,  
smooth wet dancers side by side,  
entwined. Our cells divided

then our selves divided and  
in a liquid mirror we were a double face  
with identical sightless eyes,  
same nubby fingers, same zippered spines.

If they had known we were us,  
had seen through the stretched wall into  
the cave of our shared life,

they would have seen two shadows  
bobbing and would have sung lullabies  
twice. They would have found  
a name that could divide

not into half, but evenly into itself.

And then they would have seen  
one shadow quiet,  
one wild fish fail, forever imprinting loss  
in the growing bones of the other.

By the time I rushed us into the world,  
one name was all we needed—  
a name for me.

Forty years later,  
I choose our birth—death—day  
to name you now.

Lianna, tenacious vine holding me,

I have called your unnamed name  
across the years, never knowing you  
were the absence I was trying to fill, the end  
of a sentence I didn't know how to begin.

I am echo to your silence,

you are the loss I took all these years  
to find.