

Thusly they burnished their reputations, unburdening the hours—striped socks crumbled on the floor, a joint perched between fingers—

It wouldn't be easy, they were reminded.

It would take several months of dreams coalescing into a heavy golden silence in their chest. Several months of dreaming the suffering beloved crouching wounded behind a couch or howling numb-fingered in the wet blue ice of a mountaintop—

It's never easy. It's very difficult to even approach these shifts with anything like ease.

They make a counselling appointment, then cancel it, then make another one, then cancel it too. Perhaps they imagine their therapist crunching an apple in their absence, contemplating their neuroses—but this is just another fantasy, like the lover on the hill ravaged equally by circumstance and his own painful choices.

They didn't leave any paper in the future, and the past—

A flood dissolved their cache of books with something like ease.

The shimmering koi surfaced to eat the bright orange pollen with its ever-gulping mouth.

They were not about to give up on this difficulty.