

ALISON GORMAN

January water dragons

All summer he watches
me heft my basket down
the grassy slope and slip
on fallen longan fruit.

Today, he lies on sandstone,
next to the pegs
pressing a push up,
with muscled forearms
and a rusted belly.

He wears reptilian plaid.

A grey, nubbled suit
splashed with ink. A tiny
crest runs down his spine
and he is still, except
for one sweeping eye.

A small, dark moon ringed
with gold.

Peg by peg, towel by towel,
sheets and shorts, I move
along the line. My bare legs.
His black claws. I taste
the salt on my top lip.

Two towels away from him
I drop a peg. His head

begins to bob and tilt
as he warns his hidden
harem.

A dragoness tail
disappears in a thin
streak through the fence.
Others run like overwound
toys through a flurry
of leaves up into the loquat
tree. As I walk backward
to collect my basket,
he lies still again, his eye
half closed.

At our back door, three
baby dragons drink
from a dripping tap.
Heirs to a dynasty
from the Miocene.
We are tenants in their kingdom,
living on summer's lease.
I step closer and the babies
slide into the drain.
They swim as the water
eddies and pulls them
into the pipe that will take
them back to the garden
and beyond.