

# Pandemic Dreams

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My family wants dinner, but a suitcase is not a cooler.  
Its leather straps will not cook down to tender.  
I never wear socks with sandals. I don't paint  
my toenails, but they are now cherry red. My lips  
are stained. I spit out a pit. I'm at the cabin again.

I try to pack a very small suitcase. We're ready  
to leave, and the case is a clown car. Tackle  
and bait, lake-damp preserver, neon net. Anything  
I think of can fit. Anything I don't want to forget  
can fit. I've locked the case by sitting on its lid.

I'm alone at the cabin. I don't know what day it is.  
A stack of suitcases on porch steps. Have we arrived,  
or are we leaving? Doorways stay closed to black bears,  
but open for silver fox. A rattlesnake sleeps one step  
below the suitcases. I try not to wake it as I reach

for a leather handle. At the cabin again, I am bit.  
My wrist beads blood the size of cherry pits.  
I've sucked out the venom, my lips stained red  
as my suitcase. To make a savory fish pie, I pick bones  
from fillets, muster a flaky crust, sweat onions to base

a thick sauce. But no one here will eat fresh pike,  
and the onions keep making me cry. I'm bit,  
and the rattlesnake seems satisfied the cabin is hers,  
one tiny red suitcase holding all she could want  
for a trip north. Beyond her species range, she politely

asks me to plug in the space heater. She's forgot  
I am bit by her own mouth, my blood painting  
her fangs. I can't fit into my suitcase, even if I sit  
on the lid. At the cabin. Alone again. Loon cries.  
Bear cries. A fox carrying a rattlesnake across a lane

as I cry. I'm hungry. My sandal's red leather  
can't make me forget the taste of cherries, how  
my tooth chipped on a pit. I taste blood on my lip.  
The suitcase, red as a clown nose, slips open down  
the steps. Anything I think of, I don't want to forget.

