

Foreign Affairs

BY AVERY K. SLATER

You will have to teach me the words for this.
Even in my own tongue I can hardly say...
I feel as mute and helpless as
A lost house animal would. For now
I'm making do with smiles, though in this darkness
my hands are all I've got. My mouth has suddenly
turned lips and tongue and teeth,
but nothing more.

Although,
what could I ever explain about a kiss?
Why must I know the word that means "embrace"?
A light from somewhere somehow shows your face
just next to mine. Is it the moon?
I'm not sure how to ask.

Your mouth is dark. Your eyes are darker. How
do I tell you this? Has your language a name
for the sudden pain that wings behind my breath
like an opening moth
when your body comes so close and your kiss
comes closer?

What should I say during moments of confusion
when your nearness seems to remind me,
all at once
of everything?

Although nothing needs explaining in a kiss,
I want your tongue in my mouth.
Your neck, your voice...

All that I have are my hands and this wing-light feeling,
but if I try explaining,
please,
would you help
with the words?