

Spilled Milk

When short hair Ann lies on the soft green lawn and looks up at the sky, sometimes she notices it is blue. Ann watches the clouds make their way over her parents' roof and thinks of school, how Mrs. McKenzie read a book to her class about spilled milk, and all the white blots on the deep blue pages. Mrs. McKenzie asked, "What do you see? What do *you* see?"

And other kids saw dinosaurs, other kids saw ice cream cones, other kids saw bunnies. But Ann saw spilled milk. Ann saw Mrs. McKenzie's bright red fingernail polish blotched over rough ragged cuticles pressing hard into the shiny sheen of the pages where milk had been absentmindedly spilled.

Ann can smell the grass clippings left by her father's mower. She can hear the sheets snap on her mother's line. She can sense the day disappearing. And when short hair Ann stares at the clouds from her backyard, she sees clouds, and nothing more no matter how hard she tries.

Attention Deficit

Ann is one of those people who reads out loud in her head, feels the heavy weight of each word. Poetry is a better match for the length of her mind.

She can be drawn into swift hours of short lines, but is often unable to surrender the time. The trees want her attention too. And the cats need scratching behind their ears. And today

is one of those days she is having trouble waking up, even after a shower, even after two cups of black coffee. Today she reads Rilke in a British accent, tries to make him stick.

Ever since her fifth grade teacher told her to stop staring at the window, she's been aware others might not also imagine puppet shows or sudden sunsets. Mrs. Frieberg's classroom

had National Geographics in the back and the polished pages pulled on her brain. Almost no words got through, just touchable color, oceans of open faces.

The photos moved like lightening compared to her row-boat-read-out-loud pace. How could she slow down? How could she not jump feet first, eyes widened toward the sky?

Bread & Puppet

When she talks about puppets she isn't talking about hand held
creations, like finger manipulations or strings

on a cross. And she isn't talking about dummies either.
When short hair Ann talks about puppets,

she's thinking larger than life, larger than school busses.
She's been to the farm in Vermont

where puppets, molded and built by the pond, are housed
in old hay lofts, hung from the rafters.

These giants play in nature's theater, rolling greens
for a stage, thick hemlock curtains.

Ann brings her pencils and crayons and draws what she sees:
mothers' heads with monsters' bodies, firefly dragons

and four footed snakes, toad kings and fairy whales.
She fills page after page, kinetic and color,

and laughs out loud with the children who are mesmerized
by the enormity, stunned

by the dark shiny crow figures dancing down
into the open field.

Blue Ribbon Milk

She flashes on the dairy bar at the fair, black and white cows
surrendering milk to stainless steel machines
that tug and relieve them, tug and relieve them.
People wait in long lines to suckle this fresh
sweetness served in open plastic cups.

She pumps in her kitchen where her children skitter,
eat bits of dry cereal, spill Tupperware from open
cabinets. Lost in the rhythmic work of making
not a poem, not a pot, not a photograph,
she struggles

to remember raising a family is important.
Like the Amazing Colossal Man she stumbles
over Lego bricks, Thomas tracks, Dr. Seuss books
turned inside out; sometimes Ann feels lost
and out of place.

Eight minutes of dual action pumping and she holds up
her whole milk milkshake to the morning sun, imagines
herself beside the giant pumpkin growers, apple pie bakers
wool gatherers, and says to no one over three,
Look what I made. Look what I made.

Catwalk

Between the Hudson River and Times Square
the street smells of sweet samosas and sometimes
garbage. Dressed up folk sit on gum stuck stoops
hoping to score tickets and everyone is double parked.

Two broken boots kick from beneath a dingy fleece
that rolls back and forth on the sidewalk in front of
the theater-cum-worship house. A block farther
steaming industrial soap scum clings

to the curb, they are busy washing busses here.
Ann is wearing flip flops, but will soon learn flip flops
are not in style. Inside the westside-warehouse
people preen, push forward to see diaphanous dresses

float and fly on the runway. It is fantastical. Everyone is
clean here, the air expensive white, beaming and high heeled.
The music is loud, like traffic, like the jackhammer ads
on 42nd Street. Ann feels deaf and giddy and blind.