

Running With Metaphors and Other Poems

Running With Metaphors

Filth

It's easy to praise the neighbors roses

The Downstairs World circa early 1970's

Return to Sender

Running with Metaphors

1

The scientist has fathered a mother.
He has built a big spaceship.
He calls it the mother ship and names her Rosetta.

He said the comet is a huge hairball hurtling through space.
He said the surface is a Dove bar. Frozen on the outside. Filled with icy goo.
The comet is not a snowball, as previously claimed.
It has cliffs and dunes. There is no wind on a comet.
The comet gathers as it goes. He wants to know its core.
The earth, he says, could not exist without comets.
The scientist sent his mother to chase the comet.

The mother ship took years to get up to comet speed.
Four sling shot trips around Mars, around the earth.
The mother ship carries a cub in her belly—
a spaceship cub named Philae—the size of a refrigerator.
That's how big the scientist says the cub is.
We believe him.

The mother ship finally runs alongside the comet—
the way a rodeo lasso artist comes up alongside a calf—
and tosses her cub through space at the speeding comet.
It does not land exactly flat on the comet. It bounces.
Its harpoon heels fail to emerge.
A refrigerator spaceship bounces on a hurtling hairball.
The scientist sips champagne.

2

Some people listen to the Aurora Borealis.
The Northern Lights sing in radio signals.
The Lights have been talking to us all along.
The sky behind the sky we see makes music out of angles.
When the scientist thinks of his comet, he makes this his soundtrack.
Until he hears his comet singing.

3

Here, on earth, in Northern Amsterdam, a 3-D printer rigged
of wood and wires sings to itself.
It is singing a champagne glass into the world.

Its needle lays down thin layer after layer
of plastic across a map fashioned by an architect
who wants to call the house of her heart into being.

This Science Fair Exhibit-sized printer hums
at its champagne flute mapping the way,
helping the architect plan her house, get up to speed.

The small printer is helping her run alongside
the 3-D house in her mind. The giant printer,
a helmet-shaped one much bigger than a refrigerator,
will lasso the architect's dream. Bring
it into the fog and dripping Dutch light.

4

The refrigerator spaceship cub clings to the comet
riding the radio light, the color music. The spaceship
will bring the scientist closer, let him know his love—
his hurtling hairball, his Dove bar, his windless landscape.

FILTH

After receiving a vacuum cleaner sales pitch.

“Thank God for dust mites. Without them we’d surf dead skin.”
He worries my air with his work light. “Filth,” he pronounces.
“You never know where it will land.” I wonder if he knows
we’re made of this stuff. Motes dance quadrilles as we turn
reflecting constellations that whirl above us. Shake a dust mop,
set a galaxy spinning. Free kingdoms with a broom.

We move arms, gesture with hands luxuriant with particles
from the moon perhaps, or fallen from some passing comet.
Easy as blue jeans we walk our molecular dust all over the place,
settling our little clouds on the sofa, driving our uproar downtown.

Let dust mites dine at our bodacious banquet even if, as the salesman
says, they climb into our eyes as we sleep leaving sandy defecation.
We wake rubbing away the mites’ detritus gathering our selves back
from the tide where we drift like incandescent bodies stitching our blueprint
forward, so rich in stardust we can shed a universe on a Monday afternoon.

It's easy to praise the neighbor's roses

White silk against deep green, and answering
golden yellow blossoms throating swallowed embers.
The silver head bent over trowel and gloves mutters
about weeding. My neighbor cannot hear about beauty
in the face of infidel vines, creepers advancing from below.

On my own deck, last year's lipstick-pink geraniums persist
despite neglect. They rise from planters like favorite scarves
cast in a drawer opened to release the scent of cedar
and mothballs. Today I jammed more hopeful flowers
into pots, digging with my hands, watering with a saucepan.
This new cacophony of petals—survivors and fresh gamblers
leans into a season irrepressible as a river drawing all like things into its path.

The Downstairs World Circa Early 1970's

Architecture

My brothers and I had bedrooms downstairs. This was our Domain.
As the only girl, I had a sink in my room below the garbage disposal upstairs,
which vomited up my drain. We shared a bathroom under

a bathroom that leaked into our ceiling. Sound, too, carried upstairs to down.
Vacuum. The dishwasher. Laughter. But not vice versa. Once my brother's pal from up
the street camped out under the pool table undetected for days.

Cuisine

Our folks left us TV dinners on evenings out. We preferred to fend
for ourselves. Pressed beef roasted over the open gas flame of the stove
skewered on forks. Milk and OJ straight from the carton by the light of the fridge.

contraband Ding Dongs from the freezer downstairs. We had Tang,
and Space Sticks—astronaut food was all the rage. Deputized
to cut a frozen chicken, I shut my eyes and cleaved it into smithereens.

Operation

Battery powered! Cavity Sam on his Operating Table lay with his light bulb nose
and tweezers so kids could cure his Butterflies in the Stomach,
his Broken Heart. It took nerves of steel to dig the Wrench out of his Ankle.

The slightest shake and you'd click the tweezer-scalpel against his metal body
provoking a buzzer, a lit up nose. Botched Operation! And your turn was up.
Or turn the tin Chinese Checkers board over and roar the marbles all around.

The Telephone

Heavy. Rotary dial. Retro even for those days. The black phone crouched
next to the pool table. Call the Time and Temperature lady anytime
for anything— even recipes. Just outside, the dog ran in her run. We pitched

her poop right over the fence, out into the woods where a raccoon or coyote would later
eat our cat leaving just the collar. And where my brothers would
build a full-blown skate board ramp made entirely of liberated wood.

Entertainment

My brothers roughhoused like chimps. I mooned to Carol King's songs
and tried to learn to read palms. We slept in our swimsuits to rise
before dawn— pad down to the waiting carpool in suits, flip flops and parkas.

Through chlorine squinting eyes we followed Batman and the Monkeys.
I adored Davey, my brothers crowed about Mickey's Tony Home Permanent.
Above us, Coca Cola signs on the ceiling were studded with pool cue pock marks.

The World Book Encyclopedia: 1973 edition

My brothers and I loved the human anatomy page. Flat man laid out
with clear plastic overlays for the systems. Skeletal. Muscular. Lift a layer,
the body gets cleaner, lay it down, and it all gets more complicated.

Source of Knowledge. All of it. Right there. A-Z. With a bonus "Best Of" volume.
This was before computers. Before we learned there is more we will never know
about everything than anything we could really understand about the world.

— For my brothers

Return to Sender

In the end, each one leaves the body like cast-off clothing, puppet dress that's lost its magic. Nobody really knows what to do with the ashes. There are rules and guidelines: if you're scattering remains beware of breezes or do not wear lip gloss. There will be chunks of bone.

The Medical Examiner's shelves are crowded with the unclaimed. Here a rusty urn, tin heart and roses found in a suitcase in a Walmart parking lot. There ashes left at the airport, in a Greyhound bus, on the steps of the Methodist Chapel. Remains sent to a last known address arrived at the office marked Return To Sender. Everybody else died first. Or nobody cared. Today the Examiner will scatter the orphan ashes over Puget Sound and the sky will only almost ever rain— like stuck tears.

Bury the body, or broadcast the ashes over water or mountain trail. Send abandoned sand of person to salt, water, air. We are simply delivering those who've dampened their bathmats, ridden shotgun in pick ups wandered through our ill-lit malls back to where they came from.