

DANCING QUEEN

All those “how-to” poetry guides,
that I stumble across in my moments of
deep fear tell me:

“Give ‘em too much.”

More detail.

More words.

More (likely) made-up mantras.

I’ve never struggled in that measure—
it’s more that I can’t keep my mouth shut.
Adjectives and heartbroken verbs stumble out in
a fast-paced lindy hop, where the lead is making it all up.

Little tap shoes of tangents.

Jazz hands of jitters.

Just a modern class in racing thoughts.

I hear the beat of my heart and dance to the ever-increasing
rhythm, as I hope a single word finds its way to you.

I’ve always loved a prop, a costume, a theme—
a recital and a performance to orchestrate those tiny dancers
in my head.

Baby ballerinas losing their spots and falling
down dizzy in winding stories and forgotten woes.

Oh, did I give you too much?

Or do I see your foot a tapp’n?

TAKE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED FROM ME

You're supposed to wish on 11:11,
but what about 2011?

Where were you—when I was sitting on a
porch in the humid evenings, getting drunk
with fresh hipsters and farmer's daughters?
Getting burned on open pipes in stranger's basements
screaming the words to "Kids," as if we weren't ones?

Where were you—when you realized that what is present,
has become past.
Being passed by, picked over, pissed off.
Wearing slutty dresses and snow boots,
foreshadowing a future of anachronism.

Where were you—when I said everything but.
When I couldn't keep my mouth shut.
When your tears turned into mine.
Control yourself, I thought this wouldn't hurt a lot—
I guess not.

Where were you—when my heart exploded in size,
tiny precious pieces floating around you
like bubbles in the sun.
Where were you, my dear—when fear and you,
became one?

NEON NOSTALGIA

Looking at the lights at night
is almost like seeing bites from the sun.
Small moments of neon—twinkles of dust
and hair on film photos of memory.

Holding phrases I can remember, from a
time so rose-colored: my skin on a July
day. A life that lives in black lights, the white
of smiles brighter than the rest.

A feeling of warmth in midsummer,
sweating on porches in dusky evenings,
Drinking boxed rosé out of stolen pasta jars,
eating scraps of food made together,
listening to the record player:
Bonnie Rait singing “Thank You:”
as I breathe in humidity and youth.

Grasping that version of me tightly,
like when the carnival comes to town,
when the drive-in plays a classic.
It was here for one night only, one life only,
one light only.

TOWER OF BABBLE

According to an encore episode of This American Life,
birds babble like human babies do.
Like how cats only meow at humans,
and we've evolved to hear over 30 different moods from dogs.

Giant satellites in the middle of the San Augustin plains
reach for radio waves to
tell us cosmic secrets:
searching for remnants of supernovas.
Crossing dirt roads covered in cattle guards and
tiny fallen juniper berries—
we're just trying to hear the songs of the sphere.

What is it like to sit in the center of those satellites,
late at night, in what feels like can't be August (still)?
The murmurs of birds of New Mexico just waking with the dawn,
crows on dilapidated windmills and wildflowers
still blooming despite the late heat.

The spark bird: the one that started it all, is
perhaps just mimicking all that is in our
radio universe.
It's like we're all just trying to be understood.

COMMUNION

Dogs have something called “contentment ceremonies”
when they’re happy—rolling around and
rubbing their faces and wiggling their furry little butts.

When’s the last time you practiced being content?
Noticing how the baby finches are feeding,
how magically chemical tomatoes fresh from the garden taste,
or that the nature of a song, is to end?

Happiness apparently does not mean being joyful—
what is joy, anyway?
Is it the evidence of rain in the desert,
suddenly green mesas on the horizon when you’ve
forgotten to look?
Is it when you gave the postman 5 quarters
to give you the beer coaster I sent
across the ocean
to remind you, I love you?

It’s a ceremony
a ritual a routine
a liturgy
a sacrament
affirmation.