

An Old Fool's Distractions: A Parable

*Inspired by Rembrandt van Rijn's Parable of the Rich Fool. 1627.
Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.*

He sharpens his pencil until it is too short
to hold; he uses one of those electric sharpeners.
His gaze is elsewhere, unfocused—perhaps too
focused. When he realizes what he has done,
he smiles, quietly chastising himself. The real
admonishment comes later, when he tries to write
with it, with a pencil that cannot rest
in the hollow of the hand between finger and thumb.

He is all fingers and thumbs, ashamed of how poorly
he has handled his instrument. He has been
an oboe player accompanying a country band
covering some song about broken hearts and
broken horses. He is a broken horse. There are
too many fences, the kind that make great firewood
once they have outlived their usefulness.
If pencils, oboes, horses and fences have regrets,
he wonders if he is one of them.

Urban Sprawl

They call it “urban sprawl,”
but I say a cat licked the landscape
with its rough tongue,
scratching away our pastures
for concrete and cappuccinos.

Transit lines,
balls of twine,
unravel to tease the tamed, born indoors.

The farm cats hide now, displaced
by the neutered and de-clawed
(avant-garde) escaping gentrified neighbourhoods.

There is nowhere left to prowl;
taxidermied when the litter pan is full.

Here, we prime before we die,
grooming away our knowledge of the fleas
that live just as well on kittens.

Cupid

Cupid drives a truck.
His fat belly barter with the wheel,
and no-one seems to care that he is naked.
He burps and farts, and laughs
through blackened teeth.

It wasn't always this way:
He used to ride the clouds
and fling his arrows with sweet and careless charm,
cute and chubby. Flying diaperless,
his feces graced more hearts than arrows hit.

Not My Ars Poetica

This is a polite poem (so,
thank you for attending). It
does not pretend to take responsibility
for itself; it is here to expose the poet.
Not the truth, for goodness sake. But
do remember that the poet lives
here, so you must gain permission
before using the bathroom
or opening the fridge.

This poem invites you in, no pressure.
Please do not feel obliged
to return the courtesy of investing
in the reading as much as
the poet invested in the writing.
You're welcome.

When you remove your hat,
each word appreciates the
contextual ambiguity you drape
across the page. When you pin laundry,
remember that there is no difference
between thrifty and cheap.
There is no need to use a single peg
to join two items of clothing.
Keep the line taut and find
somewhere else to hang your knickers.

Be carefree about taking your leave,
and take nothing with you, lest
you be considered a thief and not be
invited back again. Do not *ever*
take the unopened bottle of wine,
even though you brought it. It's a gift.
Consider the poet your host; do not
get up from the table before she does.
And avoid, at all costs,
being the guest who will not leave.

Bedroom Light

our ceiling spins
around the great electrical sun
pure white stipple
drops dust as it circulates
and I, sucked into its gravitational pull
inhale and disperse—
an atheistic supplication
that systematically transforms

crushed into the bed
by meteorites that fail to vaporize
when they enter our atmosphere
I am drawn to the burning
like the moth that caught
my attention, last month
when we made love