

Solar System Safari

No, Even Canada Won't Do

The intergalactic hopeful did not consult the embassy
did not notify his buzzing 85 offspring, did not
buy that rocket fuel legally

In his tiny approved carry-on:

four jerky sticks, since they'll keep in neon, helium and hydrogen
three strands of blinky Christmas lights, for whimsy and nostalgia
two Bibles—NIV and KJV—for balanced scripture reading
one picture of his leggy wife, in risqué boudoir sheeting

He clicks his space helmet
loads the celebratory confetti gun
waves goodbye to the suburban backyard,
the nursery for this season's hatching.
“Adios, 2020!” the lightning bug screams
overcome with the manic glee of thruster-propelled freedom

Inside his office
complying with Safer at Home,
a mild-mannered computer programmer jumps at the sonic
whiz-bang-pop!
of a rugged little spaceship leaving Earth's atmosphere,
bits of colored party paper
gently decorating the neighborhood ash trees

Jurassic Lizards

Mama was a femme-power dinosaur
in asteroid life, and fireball death:
crocodile skin clutch, black glitter lipstick and
pro-science environmental rallies,
visible, tyrannical warnings
to closed-minded leggy-fish oppressors
that she'd take no shit between hits,
until Earth took one anyway.

Reptilian eggheads
Indiana Jones-ing from the university's
Intro to Paleontology class
theatrically tangoed across the tar pits.
Someone started digging: a flawed hero?
Dipping under waving police tape, hatchet in hand,
comfy Keds slipped over sorority-squeezed toes.
Stepping out of line earned an Alpha Phi
an above-the-fold headline in our western paper:
Undergrad Finds Stegosaurus Skull.
No mention of trespassing, which mama

slimeballed every Sunday, stealing fresh flowers from the cemetery.
She didn't respect boundaries, either. Unless you're famous,
and the kids roar for you on birthday cakes and
ask for you in plastic,
obituaries
never run on the front page.

Select Red Cumaru

I. Brazilian teak, rainforest hardwood
a catalog choice for upper middle class in the '80s
now denounced by mid-level managers and
Howler monkeys in the Amazon:
prefabricate sustainable selections for prehensile primates.

Flooring stores rename their back-log
select red cumaru. The cynical capybara,
lazing beside chink-pocked trunks before
lumber immigrates to our two-story colonial,
knows it's the same damned ruse. Jungle reform, fleabite claptrap.

II. The day treads and risers curtsied in the foyer,
the calendar read Tuesday, but you read in the den
because of polyurethane toxins swirling overhead,
air wiggly with indoor pollution. In South America,
a shallow-breathing capybara Loraxes again, pulpiteer-ing

product taxation and wholesale bans on humans.
Save the Rainforests! Remember us? School kids with take-a-stand shirts,
endangered species backpack buttons, too. I favored the black-footed ferret.

III. Standing on photogenic stairs, select red cumaru,
posing with a newborn, her first time inside.
And again: two sisters, long-grained, mahogany hair.
The sound of cumaru, the resonant squeaks and shifts, is not the same
as other boards. Low notes from a rare-wood cello:

stage-left, ready for a paying audience
after our pandemic, after performing arts bankruptcy, after you filed
for a divorce I never saw coming, holding the pulp-grade papers
on the varnished staircase, creased and sealed by a lawyer
just a few towns south of these kindling sticks.

IV. Remember us? Did you count the rings
Christmas Day, 2019? Carried our seventeen-year-old cat
dead, down our forest, wrapped in a souvenir beach towel.
Reflected at the railing. Heard our kids praying
to Jesus, the youngest asking for a new pet, under the twinkling tree.

Oceanborn

- I. I mentor another seahorse
trendy icon of Club Activist, drifting in plankton.
- II. Sea-marketing charm: fragility and strength
tattooed, bony plates. Peculiar beauty in an enviable body.
- III. A young, prehensile tail that smartly curls
away from protest pollution: what attractive evolution.
- IV. I am wet-suited for his waves, too.
- V. But oh, my vulnerable snout! Long enough
to clamp shut with Pacific microplastics from gender riots.
- VI. Just flutter faster; but no—me, sHe, is a slow swimmer.
- VII. I know it is easy for you,
to kill the boy pony with eggs inside.
- VIII. Don't waste your fishing net:
I could never breathe, living under these waters.

Birds of the Americas

Isla Isabela, Galápagos

pink pencils stab the sky
sharpened beaks
write protest poems, budget-print pamphlets
in shaded, lead-filled twilight:
corrupt local leaders
auctioning family legacy lagoons
to *stimulate*, to *rejuvenate*

bring pertussis, bring disease!
the one-leggers chant,
exercising their freedom to assemble
despite public gathering restrictions
on waterfowl and non-essential mammals.

Feathers fray, wings beat:
could a pandemic, bring a taste for exotic meat?

A tourist girl, quarantined from Cleveland,
plastic pail and Dollar Store shovel in hand
the kind banned here, for the precious,
precious wildlife,
studies the flamboyance with ecotourism eyes

musta 'scaped a zoo, she dryly concludes
didn't know 'mingos could fly

Madison, Wisconsin

I'm unnerved
when the robins
shoot too low

red-breasted, lead-colored bullets,
our state standard
aiming right at the ankles
of rightful property owners

too territorial,

I warn a repressed female
who pings by the capitol on her lunch break,
limp clover curled in her feet

as evening quiets nests
through tear gas and flock arrests
the well-equipped waders,
and persistent songbirds,
smear-out tomorrow's protest signs
mouthing ink from picked-through forest berries;
free, on the edge of town.

A divided aviary,
a curious safari
across hemisphere lines,
that land-walkers migrated through
without stopping
to fill out permission papers
pressed from the pulpy trees