

The Asphalt flower and the Knightly Skunk
(A Tale in Five Poems)

I.

Nestled between curb and asphalt
exists a small crack in the pavement
A miniscule little trench less than a centimeter wide

Against reasonable odds
a little petunia flourishes

In its petal-ed wisdom it has decided
this barren lot of grey (desolate concrete infrastructure)
is a perfect place
to raise its vibrant purple head and lush green leaves

Standing tall (In utter defiance of circumstance)
it thrives

In its own way this audacious little flower
(By virtue of its existence outside a garden)
challenges me

“SEE HOW I LIVE!”

It makes me hate that I only really *exist*

I am the pavement
I am the grey

What I wouldn't give for a spark of life
a defiant little Petunia
to blossom from inside me

Against all odds

II.

Above the trees, with their green swaying tops.
I look down across the city and wonder
If I could fly, would the view still seem glorious?

 This place was supposed to be my escape

I left behind
the world I belonged to
 (a world of static
 of angry air)
to come here and find my own place

Instead I have found a new cage

I grip the metal rail - rusted and old
the bars of my new cell

 Ten stories up
and
 still
 tied
 down

III.

She knows my weakness

I told her about slamming doors
how the sound of wood against frame
shakes me to core

Now the wind
from her arm
rattles the hinges

I remember early on
in our living arrangement
walking home from groceries
her feet decidedly on the bike path
a young man ran his bell
when he nearly hit her.

“Watch where you are going.” – she yelled
“Asshole” – she muttered to me

He turned around
wheels in our direction (for a flickering moment I worried he would be angry...
dangerous)

With no red in face or voice he
politely pointed that she was on the bike path
(while I was on the sidewalk)
she told him to fuck off

He looked at me with sad eyes
I looked trying to apologize
and said nothing (I did not know what to say)

Even then I think I recognized
that she was the same
as the ones who gave me chills with slammed doors (I had left to escape)

I tried to stay out of her way
in my own lane

Now she hits me
with the sound of doors

And she is happy
she knows my weakness

IV.

To escape the tower
cement walls

...angry arms

and coarse wind

I take two thousand forty three steps

down fourteen hundred stairs

past the audacious petunia

(closed in sleep for the night)

Across a green valley

between parking structures

to a little pub

where people come after their shift

for a quiet beer

or a game of pool

Not a rowdy place

a little oasis in the night

I come for peace

for calm

and comradery

I nurse a beer

for far longer than the taste lasts

with far more limes

than any beer deserves to be laden with

I never drink enough

to escape or forget

(Though some days I wish I could)

V.

Tiny paws

White stripes
black body

My little saviour
'Peppy'

Small angel
in a danger coat

Each night
I sing to him
as I walk the distance home
from the bar to my door

He would walk with me
as if listening

Always made me smile

I named him after an old cartoon
"Pepe le Pew"

Strange how a little skunk
would enjoy my warbling
enough to rise up out of its burrow
and walk along with me

A gift

One night
one stranger
one thing on his mind
follow me home

From the dark Peppy rose up
and stepped between the two of us
stomping the ground

Small Angel in a danger coat

No words had dissuaded this man
but tiny paws and stripped coat
turned him pale

I smiled when he walked away

Thank you