

Hercules Visits My Kitchen

Tonight, waiting for scones to rise in the oven,
the scent of warming yeast and cream
filling the room, I sit down at the table
and flip open the new *Audubon* to learn:

Carrion beetles
using organs of smell in their antennae
can locate a mouse within an hour of its death
and from as far away as two miles.
After flying to the carcass, they drop
to the ground, crash through the litter,
burrow under the body, and by heft
of their magnificent orange backs
lift the mouse remains like mini sons of Zeus,
flip and roll it several feet to a final resting place
where the beetles bulldoze the dirt
and bury the mouse deep under the soil.
(This, all done at night to prevent
rival flies from laying their eggs.) The beetles
then strip the mouse of its fur, covering
the carrion ball with a jelly-like goo,
a refuge of food for their own larvae
to feed upon.

There's more I haven't told you
but the oven timer is ringing
so I must grab my spatula to flip the hot scones
into a pine grass basket to cool . . . breakfast
fuel for my family rising hungry at dawn.

Seeing Movement

For small creatures such as we, the vastness is bearable only through love.

—Carl Sagan

In his workshirt dark from sweat
the gardener lays down his hedger
to kneel gingerly in thick ivy.

With the hands of Kuan Yin
he flutters the damaged bird up
to his chest, whispering.

While Holding A Shivering Toad In My Hands

I thought about last night's mouse
rattling inside the live trap
in the kitchen drawer.

I can't bring myself to kill
mice anymore. Tried it once
in Michigan. The cottage, quiet
as a book when the snap trap
sprung along the baseboard.
That contraption flew into the air
like a deranged bird pinching in half
the stunned mouse who only wanted
a dumb piece of cheese.

I thought only women standing on chairs
in cartoons screamed at mice
running along the floor.
I did not know a mouse would squeal
when it died like that. I did not know
I would scream.

First Moon Of A Blue Moon Month

Tonight while she's asleep
come through the kitchen window above the stove.

Follow the path of her belongings.

Climb the stairs
without making them creak.

Enter the room of her refuge.
Here she has tumbled with night into bed.

Hover awhile.
Let your roundness shimmer above her own.

Be a chandelier to her longings.

Study her lips,
two languages for truth in her sleep.

If you slip under the covers without waking her,
she will lean into you until you are full again.

She can never be touched too lightly.

Parting Word

An attendant props you up, cheerfully
rolls you to a table for a last meal.

Doesn't that look good, sweetheart?

It doesn't. I offer roses and a bag
of dark kisses though we both know
they don't make sense anymore.

What took you so long, you ask, squinting
at me through your good eye. I hold up
your head in the hammock of my hand.

Quiet resumes. No mention of love. You
ask is my other hand on your leg? *Yes.*