

SELF-PITY POEM

Would I be better off without you, left to my own devices?
Sometimes I feel like Godzilla, stomping around
in a pair of painted Dutch clogs the size of tugboats,
ripping up your buildings and roasting them
with my sulfurous flames, striking fear into the loins
of all who know my wrath, and giving everyone else
the heebie-jeebies. But, then, if I'm Godzilla,
I'm probably one of those windup ones
with little mechanized feet that shuffle me forward
and a pathetic shower of sparks spraying
from my mouth—yeah, that's the kind of Godzilla
I am, though I would still wear clogs, if I could
find a pair small enough—or maybe I'm the Godzilla
that guarded the window of the pizza place
down the street from my parent's house,
a glorified action figure, the 12 inch deluxe, posed
in eternal wrestler's stance, painted sclera
glowing, glowering, jaw aching and tongue dusty
from a decade-long roar—maybe it's a pubescent, *I don't care,*
or better yet, *you don't know the first thing*
about me or, *I never asked to be born* or *PLEASE,*
or *PUH-LEASE,* though I can't remember
if I ever really said that kind of stuff, but maybe,
and after all, this morning I roared at you, *just*
do your fucking dishes! then stormed out of the apartment,
not before smashing holes in the walls
and crashing my clogs through the linoleum
and punting the toilet right out of the bathroom window
into the street—or so I thought. But more likely,
I just hobbled out, spitting a barrage of curses
like little sparks under my breath, or I merely

cast you a death look and locked myself in my room.
Poor Godzilla. She doesn't even know who she is,
or remember the way things went down. She doesn't
know if she's the hero or the villain of her life.

WHEN YOU TELL ME OF YOUR KIDNAPPERS, AND THEIR KINDNESS

Against our backs were barn boards
of rough-hewn hemlock, thick like country bread.

Before us lay an expanse cracked open, green
at the edges, the honey-pot center lit with sun.

You said something like, *this field reminds me
of the field where the kidnappers left me*

and I had to ask what I couldn't ask,
and I was trespassing in foreign lands—

clouds patterned the sky in waves,
like the scales of king mackerels,

and leached red
from the setting sun, spreading

like blood on the water—it was the year
I took whatever I could get

and swallowed it:
pink pills, cat morphine, pure grain alcohol,

yeasty, watery beer, piss yellow.
I breathed in your story, got drunk off it.

That afternoon, I could taste the honey cakes,
I could feel between my teeth the flaky dough

they fed you on a humid night

when they stroked your hair

and told you jungle stories—
the clouded leopard, the macaque—

until at last you fell asleep
in a field of long grass, dreamed of tigers,

and woke to silence. Yet I wonder
what you softened for my sake. I imagine

the kidnapers' cruelty, and then —break—
their kindness, and then their alarm,
fugitives, but feeling no different
than before. I don't know.

Sometimes stories are best left
the way they are. And so I think of you,

just waking, the sun thrown in stripes
of shadow across your face

and though you are alone,
you begin to hear, far off, the hum of tires.

of rain becoming fog again, and something broke
through brick and stone streets, something
a long time burning,
smoldering just under
the surface of things, of him, and yes, now it scorched white
inside his mind—the brand
of the vast
and the violent, of the rapid
chain unbound, that
he tried to look inside
some mornings, while drinking coffee in the bathtub—he stepped up
on the other side of the street,
maybe touched his temple, maybe wondered: what eyes spoke
in lightning
behind the curtain of his own? Who
and what got loose
that London afternoon?

THE LUNAR MARIA

Kelly loves the lunar maria, the way they grace the moon, full or in profile, like wide, overlapping, rough-edged moles—Kelly sets up her telescope in the backyard and photographs them with her digital camera, a trick she learned from her Earth Science teacher's *How to Photograph the Planets With Your Digital Camera*.

The moon reflects twelve percent of what radiates onto it—a number named *albedo*. Kelly has an albedo too, somewhere between fresh snow and charcoal, though it changes depending on what kind of shirt she's wearing or how much time she's been spending in the sun.

The rest of the light must fall in the lunar maria, Kelly thinks the words sound like a girl in dark silver, cobwebby, held down on the moon by the weight of her sneakers. She'd like to visit the Lunar Maria, bring her something, maybe a radio or one of Kelly's photographs, or a sandwich they could share at the edges of Maria's seas: the Sea of Nectar, the Sea of Vapours, the Sea That Has Become Known. The Lunar Maria arranges fake flowers in vases each night, which is always, with her smooth, tapered fingers. She's been doing this for what feels like four billion years. The Lunar Maria has a nightgown that she wears to anticipate visitors, blue flannel, with a hole in the hem patched with a girl scout badge.

On certain nights, the Lunar Maria's exquisite boredom, like clarified butter, drips down through earth's atmosphere, that layer cake of heat and gas, down into Kelly's backyard, where she stands in the dark, hands at the ready, shaking, waiting to catch it and drink it and make it her own.

ANOTHER FOUR O'CLOCK, BENNINGTON, VT

It is four o'clock: she,
 (on the back porch), is
beginning to wonder

if this is always
 the way she will come
 into this feeling—
so suddenly

 itchy, so
 threadbare. She,
rewriting memory,
 obliterating it
 over cups of tea,
and what a drag it is,

 she thinks,
 that the then-nows
become the now-thens—
 what shame in the way
 the sun slants the day.

How quietly the shadows

 of a fox and kit nip out of
 the shadows of the trees; she
will remember black
 paper cutouts when
 the now becomes then.

And strange, how

familiar this day has been.

What makes us, if not
some gentle memory
repeated again
and again?