

Ed McFadden

Not Made for Humans

Seal bladders, cesium, deep buoyed sea [insert
rest of silk pupae tiger paw listicle tumblr here,
a hodgepodge of tenuously connected curiosities
croque monsieurs and cirque soleils

parameters, paramours, Estaban Loizas
one that your writing coach fails
in love with, showers you with cranes
submits to some horseless press

and receives zero likes (no one's on
that platform, it's just fancy paper with
bolt marks). Meanwhile, in real life
my kid can read dead end and wonders

what it means, harsh it sounds, some final
resting place to have his MEASLES on
BUTTERED TOAST, as if one were on
the other, stuck to it like gluttony, the master

sees to the end of the field of bracken]
sees bladders, cesium, as I was saying
there are things in this world not made
for us, get over it, I think, I have.

Glut

Meal moths in the oats.
All the things we have
too much of: bullets, glass
castles. Sperm. Anchovies off
the coast of Spain. Echinoderms.
Hallucinations. Hard wires.

My boys raucous. And me mad at them
in the tub. Dumb. A glut of emojis. I'm trying
not to get too near. It's just so hard to take
such a visceral world. Corn.
Neonicotinoids. A glut of immemorable
memes. Shocked, they were
to find her dead so. A clot they said.

A clot.

Not so easy for a boy to get
death. Either a fish or a person,
they can be resting, shadows
triangles, pointing north. Outside,
torn scraps of asphalt
shingles litter the pale lawn.

Sometimes you saw oil
glistening from her forehead
if you saw her at all. An excess
of sebum. Or too many chips. People
the list goes on.

Faces on the train. My son on tiptoe
at the glass, watches flashing
lights of the ambulance through leafless
trees. I can be cold here
from a distance. And yet, she was
someone's baby once. Freckles. Bilious.
An excess of phlegm.

Purple toes.

Coast of Spain

I eat puffs in the morning, trying not to let
the frozen raspberries bleed inside the pillows.

It isn't easy, this constant separating and managing,
this keeping one thing out and another in.

Like someone you know had some great, dark
secret growing inside her, discovered

too late, the way it always is. Tell that to the scars
and the yellow ribbons and organized fate.

You take his hand under the white pine
to console him, but it's not enough, it's nothing

maudlin doesn't suit me — easier to be paddling
on a pillow down the coast of Spain, not caring

which coast, or with whom, drifting further
from shore, the sun blasting a hole

through my vinyl heart, reddish blue
blood seeping into places it shouldn't.

He walks back home under the pine. Fatigues
limp, shoulders slumped. Off toward the coast of Spain.

Scars Throb

Tropical arctic doesn't scare me
so much — just a different place
for palm fronds.

And roosters
working the overnight
 shift, crack house lawn
across the street bursting
with them. roosters. when I came home.

An air conditioner would have drowned
them out. I was too cheap or poor
to get one — kept a pile of stones
on the corner of the deck
near the scraggly key lime
instead.

In San Francisco my scars throbbed
 in the fog. The K Line took me
to Ocean Beach, rattling –
 toast wasn't a thing
back then. Didn't know
 about colony collapse
 or cherries retreating
up mountainsides
but the San Bruno Mission Blue knew
 something about habitat loss.

Now I have other questions: like why
did I say freedom
meant more to me
than happiness or new shoes
or that the rooster in the checked frame
in your kitchen was ersatz?

Know that the word ersatz is itself, well,
ersatz
and the truth about roosters
is that nobody
likes roosters.
Not even other roosters.

That's why my scars
throb.

Meditation on Mangoes

There are tiny black flecks
on my mangoes. If I stare
at the fruit long enough,
the skin starts to wrinkle.

I could sit here all day
and watch them rot. I could sit
here all night too, and never
let them out of my sight.

Doing nothing is hard. I mean
really doing nothing.
Nothing to the nth degree.
They call that meditation.

No mangoes.
No tiny black flecks. No skin.
No wrinkles. No sight. No doing.
No nothing.

There are tiny black flecks
on my mangoes.