

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.