

Sandra Kolankiewicz

## What It Would Take

If I take a man who is ill to the  
public square, he can slay others with his  
disease. And what would be better for him  
than to be sacrificed in his sickness  
for the betterment of all, to convince  
us to acknowledge we are indeed the  
centers of the galaxy only so  
much as we can destroy ourselves in a  
minute while the universe looks on. If

we carry him on a stretcher and place

him in the bus station, we'll send droplets to  
all the poor corners of the region. Or  
stick him in a pew so that women will  
care for him, take his disease back home.  
Easier than war or resurrecting  
some temple, without all that exploding!  
Nothing to rebuild but the crops, little  
to do after the burn-out but dispose  
as we wait for the heavens to open.

## Wasting Water

Naturally, one wonders why we aren't  
born knowing everything, driven just by instinct, aware  
in advance of where to  
build the nest, guided by stars even when we can't see  
them, clearly refusing the wrong for the right. We stand  
on the highway in the headlights, hesitate like  
any critter, our beloveds grateful if on  
our deathbeds a glazed calm comes on  
us, shock shutting fear off as is intended. When you  
leave a chair and I sit down, the seat is full of the same  
warmth that fills the bedsheets now as I gather them up  
and listen to you on the other side of wall, brushing your  
teeth with the water running.

## Summer Stalled

Summer stalled, the air cool and full of rain,  
doves dozing under the eaves, the basement

wet in the corner. Tornadoes string across  
the red map, the entire region on

watch, waiting. Tomorrow we will know what  
happened, our efforts done by then, come to

something or nothing, the pale sun perhaps  
breaking through the roil, gone but always there,

stems of flowers snapping or surviving  
heartless exposure like the rest of us.

## Experts

For years I said if I had never heard  
before, something did not exist, and so  
avoided disease. Thirteen days of rain,  
and still we hope for sun, seek treatment for  
the fungi doctors insist is not here. We ask  
ourselves, "Have they blinders on their eyes  
that they can't tell this brown fuzz here on  
your arms, that faint orange, right there, creeping  
up my pale foot?" Never mind what is on  
my face, they don't see it! Perhaps their fault  
is relative, some parental trait which  
looks the other way when appearing to  
examine closely and in the lamp. What  
shall we do with them, we wonder, since they  
have the key to the sky, the light we need  
to melt away these insistent, microscopic  
colonies, the ones so insistent on us?

## Hosts

Though symbiosis is everything, rising  
above codependence to creation,  
the refusal to devolve anything  
we love on our path through life, here we are,  
living off each another until one  
of us succumbs to superior strength,  
ingenious design, an attraction  
earlier than thought, that keeps us moving.  
The parasite in me loves the leech in  
you. In fact, when we encircle our tongues,  
embrace through the night, they communicate  
to ensure their survival. Such is the  
primary urge of the pathogen and  
brothers of *ascaris lubricoides*:  
to control, make us behave in ways that  
help them survive, persistence primary.