

Maureen Thorson

And Always Laughs at Your Stupid Jokes

Love forgot your name on the way to Walmart,
came back with seeds for the bird feeder all the same.
Always been hazy on personal details, Love, but good
at the trivialities of care. Whether your hair is black
or blond, Love can't seem to recall, but knows you
should be easier on yourself. Love flings a hand
across you reflexively while braking, always reminds you
of your doctor's appointments, once biked over
the bridge to bring you a flower, has a habit of staring
deep into your eyes with eyes just a bit unfocused.
As if relaxing into your image. As if you could be anyone.
You could be anyone, Love thinks, and still I would be there.

It's All Wheatgrass From Here on Out

O twenty-somethings of Sunday at 10 a.m., unsteady
on your pins, pie-eyed and looking for the hair of the dog,
I too have been sloshed, hammered, tanked, blitzed.
One over the eight and three sheets to the wind, I've wound
my nightly way, jobber as a sudge, from bed to toilet and back.
I've roused my pot-valiant, rat-legged ass out into mornings
only mimosas could love, sunglassed and shuddering.
Over omelettes, I've met my fellow slozzled tosspots
for a salutary swig, winced with them through the pains
of the sauced. Now I'm twenty years older, one table over,
and if it looks like I'm sniffing at you over the rim
of my prim smoothie (shot of wheatgrass, baby spinach, blueberries,
positively brimming with antioxidants), I'm not. Just surprised—
its own kind of inebriation—at how young you seem, and at myself
for assuming I'd do things differently, if I could do them over again.

C Student

In the example
of the daffodil
seen from the window,
yawning in slow motion,
the toucan-colored sideways saucer
and its cup, there's a lesson—
something to do, I think,
with rain. Or maybe it's forbearance.
Pestilence? A plot point
from a Victorian novel?
The daffodil nods its chin
like a teacher, prompting,
but it's no use. Faced
with reality, reality's
the thing I forget.

They Can't All Be Polar Bears

Among pecan leaves and sweetgum,
here comes a caterpillar as long as a hot dog.
Do not kill it, the naturalists urge.
If biodiversity means otters, giraffes
and sloths, it also means 6-inch, green,
multi-segmented walking tubes
of toothpaste with barbed antlers protruding
at regular intervals from their backs.
It means the Hickory Horned Devil, larvae
of the rust-red, fuzzy, Regal Moth,
flapping its egg-laden way toward a pecan
through the alarming southern night.

Let's Welcome Our Next Contestant

Every so often, America
rediscovers its beating heart
through the medium of the game show.

Those that survive, on tv
and in our memories, better attest
to our nature than any monument.

Consider: This commonwealth
of eggheads has watched
Jeopardy! for 45 years.

Wheel of Fortune requires
both outward pleasantness
and inward cunning, while

The Price is Right and *Let's
Make a Deal* marry a huckster's
cash-crop spirit with

a willingness to play the fool—
so long as it pays. Land
of the brave, of the pennywise

and pound-foolish, I've seen
thunderheads slam your parched prairies,
your cities drown in swampwater.

I've watched fogs thicker
than your own coarse-carded cotton
muffle your brain, and still

you buzz in, frenetic

as a coke-addled hornet.
You're the nation that thinks

vowels can be bought, an answer
can take the form of a question,
that only quitters quit at a dinette set.

There's something a little—
okay, a lot—wrong with you,
wrong with us, but of all

our national diseases,
the refusal to lose
might be the only one

I wouldn't care to cure—
the way that when the survey says *chance*,
what we hear is *guarantee*.



Maureen Thorson is the author of two collections of poetry, *My Resignation* (Shearsman Books 2014) and *Applies to Oranges* (Ugly Duckling Presse 2011). Individual poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Ploughshares*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, and The Poetry Foundation's *PoetryNow* podcast. A book of lyric essays, "On Dreams," is forthcoming from Bloof Books this fall. Visit Maureen at www.maureenthorson.com