

Three Poems

Skunk, Alive

It's 4 am, and you're as sleek as tar
It's really not your fault you're marked like roads—
Your asphalt backside broken by the white
That lines your sides above your shoulder blades—

Like you've nowhere else to be but on them,
You descend from midnight onto highways
When we forget the stench of paving roads,
Reminding us with sacrifice: that scent

That stretches miles before the wind makes you
Anonymous, again. Please, find a stream,
Be washed away in that instead of smashed
By bumpers. There's no glory in your guts,

They're only feeding hungry buzzards now
Don't you get it? I don't want to smell you.

Wolfbait

Why, why do we feel / (we all feel) this sweet / sensation of joy?

--"The Moose" Elizabeth Bishop

Wolfbait,
they called her
 sagging radio
collar
 knobbed joints
lob her
 forward, or back,
who knows anymore
 where she
came from or what for.

Wolfbait's skin
 is nicked from barbed
wire fence
 lines she climbs
over, thin
 frame splayed
over flat fields, car dealerships
 long behind where
she's been left, working her way home.

Wolfbait only wants
 one thing,
to find the dents
 she made and fit back
into them, bend
 back into herself
into the half-formed
 moose-butt she rubbed
into that old green Subaru.

Wolfbait maybe
 wants two things,
the other being
 to bite the woman stupid
enough to beat
 her with a purse
to keep
 her rhubarb intact, to leave
them no choice but to take her,
 track her,

tranquelize her, find her bones later,

because there are wolves

out there,

Wolfbait.

This poem originally appeared in *Human Nature: Poems for Pacuare*. Milton Keynes UK:
Lightning Source UK, 2015. Print.

Diagnostics

Every blind squirrel
finds an acorn
once in a while.

Chittering around,
we think we might be
squirrels, too.

Let me show you my nest,
the cavity of leaves
and twigs, the parts

of trees believed
to be the oak, the aspen,
the sharp mesquite,

planted places
they shouldn't be.
Even blind, we can

feel the sting
of scrapes, and pricks
of thorns like needles,

or the smoothness
of paper bark, or the brail
of rough trunks, we can feel

for acorns, too, the knobs
and lumps we've gathered,
each defined by one last feeling--

take the squirrel now,
feel all its organs
with your thumb

and index finger,
run along its abdomen
and feel its history,

any ticks or parasites
any changes in its feed,
do its eyes respond

to light? Use
your other senses
now to read disease

like bookwork,
remember over and over
in the trees,

other squirrels you've seen,
remember anatomy,
the body you learned

for so long, guiding you
to be comparative, relentless,
careful, you have to be consistent

in this science of the tactile,
the only thing between
us, stupid, and blind,

and the diagnosis, the sweet,
nutty, flesh we finally know
fell from oaks.