

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Annelyse Gelman: Three Poems

Annelyse Gelman · Wednesday, February 18th, 2015

Annelyse Gelman is a California Arts Scholar, the inaugural poet-in-residence at UCSD's Brain Observatory, and recipient of the 2013 Mary Barnard Academy of American Poets Prize and the 2013 Lavinia Winter Fellowship. She has new work in *Hobart* (where "Escape Artist" first appeared), *Indiana Review*, *Swarm*, and elsewhere, and is the author of the poetry collection *Everyone I Love is a Stranger to Someone* (Write Bloody, 2014). Find her at www.annelysegelman.com.

Escape Artist

I've listened to this album so many times
I can't hear it anymore and I'm worried
my sex life is boring. Even our handcuffs
are cheap, the kind you can slip open
with a corkscrew and a little patience.

My drummer says he feels like he's hitting me
when he uses sticks. I can't tell if he's flirting.
I can't tell if that's okay. He's kind of a slut
but he calls himself a curator so he gets away
with it. Meanwhile I feel an obligation to mistrust

the missionary position because I had sex
in a graveyard one time and need to prove
I'm still adventurous. You have no such need.
More than once you have straddled me, gazed lovingly
into my eyes, and whispered: "What is a shallot?"

I bought you an aluminum abacus for our
anniversary because anniversaries are dumb.
At night we get naked and you start counting
evil thoughts. Click, click, go the little beads
like tiny clocks every time you come.

The Pillowcase

is printed with iridescent fish, each facing
a different direction. I bought it for you
at the Portland Goodwill our last semester

in college. Spring break we brought it camping.
I pretended I'd eaten sardines before, pretended
I liked them. I don't remember what you said

when the condom broke. Probably 'Oh, shit.'
The next day we drove into town. I took a pill
and another pill and it was over. I couldn't tell

the difference, could have told my friends
but didn't, just made lots of dead baby jokes
and went to bed in your dorm room.

You'd put painter's tape on all the edges.
With the pillowcase, it was like living in
the blueprint of an aquarium. I slept there

the night I smoked Sasha's weed and you
stayed up for hours rubbing my back, telling
fairytale so I wouldn't totally lose it.

I slept there the night I tried reading you
Haruki Murakami's *Sleep* but fell asleep. I slept
there the night after the day I lost

the bet and had to wear a lampshade on my
head and your professor said 'Nice hat.' Later I learned
she owns a lamp in the shape of a woman.

I slept there the night you said 'I think I'm
falling in love with you,' igniting a great unendurable
belongingness, like a match in a forest fire.

I burned so long so quiet you must have wondered
if I loved you back. I did, I did, I do.

How to Be Mysterious

There is a trick to brushing your hair
from your eyes, to leaning one-legged

against the lemon tree in your front yard
with a red ribbon around your wrist

to watch the white picket fence
sink into the white snow.

A mayfly dies the same day it's born.
A long-lived mayfly.

Nothing in this world is unlike anything else.
So many people will ask you to be

beautiful and urgent, to discover
what you cannot have and desire it.

Don't desire. Don't despair.
Rain is only rain in mid-air.

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