

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Frances Klein: Three Poems

Frances Klein · Wednesday, December 13th, 2023

Schoenbar Road, Midwinter

Freezing rain, and branches rebelling
against sky to bow earthward, wind
spread like a sheet on a new-made bed.

Love drove us out, sled-laden: love of
speed, of icicles snapped from gutters,
their iron tint filming our tongues, love of our
father and his love of an empty kitchen.

Hill where margin trades places
with center—top and bottom both safe as
stationary, between stretches treacherous
with rise, lilt, cadence of chance and reflex.

Street sleeping dormant under winter, save
places where it roused and kicked covers
just enough, flint-thin asphalt bones exposed.

Dangling from his coattails, stepping in snow
where his boots have been, feet too small
to fill prints, head swiveling to breathe in

puffs of stories spilling out. We posed
on the crest as if framed, then fell to earth,
vessels off the edge of the world, and here
is where memory goes hazy, mixed with fable:

you say the street roused long enough to reach out
one long, bony finger. You say I, neither lucky
nor careful, chin-kissed curb, added red confetti

to falling flakes, ended the outing. I say smooth
skin without scar, I say green sled over blue-white snow
all day into evening, and again, again, again.

*

Prayer for the Dudes who Catcalled Me in Front of my Toddler

after Lucille Clifton

I pray you reach your destination safely,
but upon arriving realize that you have forgotten
all the balloons for the douchebag parade.

I pray the other douchebags never forgive you.

I pray you get your heart broken by a mediocre white girl
while your favorite song is playing.
The joy the notes once conjured dissipates
like her cucumber melon body mist.

I pray that the people with whom you are most open
and vulnerable describe you as a friend
of a friend.

I pray your every drive-thru order comes out
just wrong enough to rankle—nine nuggets in the box,
mild wings instead of spicy.

I pray unending taint-itch through all of your days.

I pray doctors who care for you
as lovingly and attentively as they do women in pain.

I pray rain, and the window of your car cracked just enough.

I pray two dollars in your account
and two weeks until payday.

I pray crunch of dry ramen when the power company cuts the cord.

I pray your loved ones are alive, healthy,
and disappointed in what you have made of yourself.

I pray all the porn videos you watch glitch right before the money shot.

I pray for you fear, hot and coppery.

I pray every time you step on an elevator
you feel the bottom fall out from your stomach,
that same startled alarm I saw in my son's eyes

when he heard the doppler keen of your scream going by.

*

Embarcadero, 2013

Harbor seals don't care
about your photograph.

They don't care about
your pose, the angle.

They don't care that you
are so in love

you pull on a sundress
over your sunburn,

put on the cute sandals
with soles like paper,

and walk out onto the pier
to stand with him in a way

that radiates newness,
two people who have not

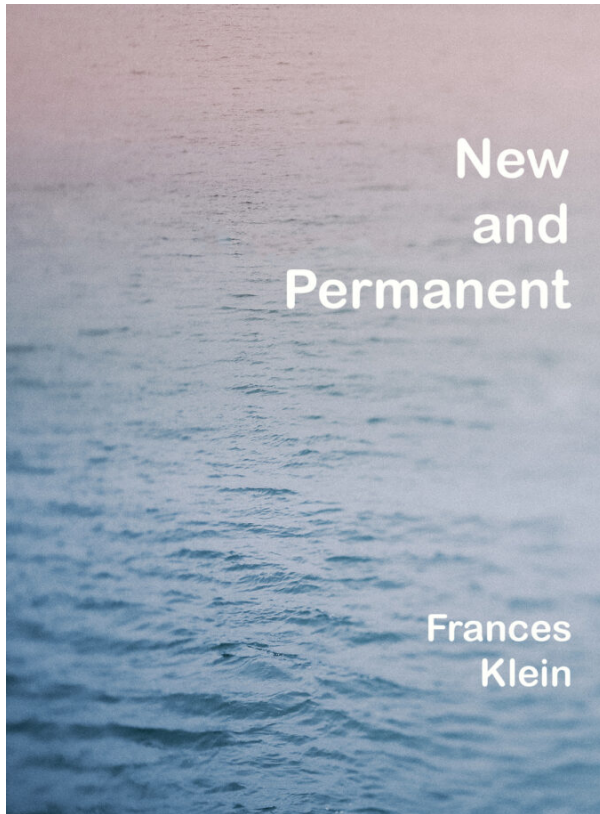
yet learned how to lace
their fingers together

without tangling thumbs.
All the harbor seals want

is to lounge in the sun
unencumbered, to ignore

the pretzels thrown by tourists,
to roll off the pier, tuck into

the covers of the ocean bed
under unlined blue skies.



New and Permanent by Frances Klein

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