

SELF-PORTRAIT AS FOX IN DAYLIGHT

I should be darkness, twitch of haunch
and rumor among brush,
should skulk and den where my blue-eyed kits
burrow themselves in sleep,

should not be walking this road's tar
parade, its swindling itch
of light. I stretch long, troubling
a nearby scent of mouse

or vole, then sit, then rise to trot
the double lines—my tail
a flare to puzzled honks and rear-
view stares—then muzzle on,

the heat a fence I follow. How
explain? I've been unmasked
by sun, it's bitter yellow reach
that pins me sure as want

or stone to this bald stage. I've lost
the trick of you, my shade.

SELF-PORTRAIT WITH ALTERNATE ENDING

Keep 5:30, perfect June almost evening. Keep forgetting
dinner and walking out into the day exhaling
sweat, exhaust, and unseen sea like a lost gull.
Keep the mile-away bay we head for now,
the baby in her stroller, queen at ship's prow,
trying her new word—*kitty, kitty*—
on every moving thing. Keep *kitty, kitty*. Keep
the humped driveway that catches the stroller's wheels,
the cracked sidewalk and ragged curb,
where we stop to let three boys run past—
t-shirts flashing white. They don't turn to see us.
Keep the boys as we start out again to cross our street
and, *kitty, kitty*, keep three more boys running,
not so fast but tracking the first three. They stop
for us who have interrupted, we think, their game, the tallest one—
his red and white striped shirt, his hand in his pocket.
Keep the shirt. Keep the hand, but not the pocket.
Keep the movement of his legs as he again begins to run,
keep the neighbor who waves and calls to us as we cross over.
Keep the mother who is sitting home with supper, or who is working
in a hotel changing other people's sheets, or who is pulling
into her driveway and calling to her neighbor *Have you seen him?*
her boy who stops now to take the gun out of his pocket
to fire it's *pop-pop-pop* at the other boys retreating,
their t-shirt flags unwavering— how can we keep this?
And the unsound as it tunnels, as it tumbles through the air,
and the whirring of the stroller's wheels as our legs unfurl—
no wall or open door, but endless pavement and a bullet that is somewhere.
Keep it somewhere, somewhere fallen in the grass,
where later plainclothes cops will find it, reassure us
that we weren't *an intended target*. Take out target. Take out
intention. Keep the baby in her stroller
singing softer now her *kitty, kitty*
as we jolt home, the sky a mask behind us.

SELF-PORTRAIT AS GIRL

You were looking for balloons.
Or not balloons, themselves,

but the feeling that they might appear
at any time.

You looked for roads where there should not
be roads, checking them off

inside yourself. In the absence of dogs,
you were brave about dogs.

You felt you should love horses
but preferred trees—the way they moved

without leaving.
Once, you twisted an apple stem

to learn the initials of the man
you would marry. Once,

you held your breath
long enough to swim the pool's width

fastest of all,
then gave the apple prize away.

SELF-PORTRAIT WITH CATASTROPHE

In the market, I'm searching
for the aisle of substitutions—sour milk
for memory, molasses for temper—and the aisle of more
sky view—near the aisle of escaped eggs,
but not the aisle of lost needles
and the buttons that rolled with them
or the aisle of always the wrong dress.
People are fleeing the aisle of unsent letters
like frogs before an earthquake as I wheel by,
but where is the aisle of measures—how tall
the children will grow by morning, how many miles left
for that rattle in the exhaust, how many years
to feed the tornado in each lung.
And what will I remember I've forgotten,
when I leave?