

THE KINGDOM OF IGNORANCE

Armillaria bulbosa,

a common mushroom, can grow
larger than a blue whale.

One was found in Minnesota
whose cytoplasm spans
thirty-seven acres underground.

It weighs fifteen-hundred tons
and is as many years old.

No other mushroom
dares to grow in its realm.

Let us toast to invisible spores
extending the Kingdom of Fungi.

And across the savanna
elephants signal each other
in sounds too low for human ears.
They tell about water, poachers,
or to come to the funeral of one of their fallen.

Oh, the boulder aflame
with migrating Monarch butterflies,
the salmon's return
to the scent of its spawning,
the data dance of bumblebees,
the vastness of *armillaria bulbosa*.

We could trek to Minnesota
to honor this mushroom monarch,
then on to the boundless domain
of Siberian tundra
claimed by a single slime mold.
Here's to fungal reigns

unmapped and unexplained.

Praise be to mold
on the food that we hoard,
to shaved heads of ringworm,
to stinky feet and itchy crotch.
And to the universe of scents,
of which the common dog
is a scholar.

Here's to the solemn procession
of elephants
and to our ignorance
and awe.

EASTER AND

It is Easter and
spurred by the vernal sun
I'm turning the earth with my spade

Behind pollen and wind
is the sun
warming the tunnels of ants

winding the skeins of geese
rouging the cheeks
of church-bound dames

Easter and
the resurrection
of girls in white dresses

Easter and the ritual
of hiding from my son
the eggs which contain

the truth about death
everlasting
And the sun eggs me on

moving my arms and my legs
to lever the shovel
that turns the earth

and turns the earth

SEARCHING SIGMUND'S SUITCASE

As long as my tongue doesn't slip,
no one will tell that I stole
into his nightmare room.

Nor will I admit what I long to do
with these infernal elastic straps

he's used to bind his portmanteau.
Inside are crammed the underpants that smell
as strong as anyone's unspeakables.

Rummaging through his effects, I come
upon the compass my analyst dangled

to spell me back to the shed
where my sister's envy swelled.

The scent of this tin of long cigars
summons the uncle with the monocle
he'd fix on me as he twitched.

Within the doctor's riding boot
is stowed the spyglass
for peering into the parlor
where Mother bent over in martyrdom.
Whose falsies are these in the bottom,

why does he keep in this pouch
the teeth that fell out in my dream?
Deepest down is stashed the jew's-harp
he absently twangs as he ponders
the cases in which he is clueless.

ASTROLOGER WAITING FOR A TRAIN

Just me and the galaxy of fruit flies in the basement
when I came to remembering the dream
 where my horse fell and rolled over me
 breaking every bone
and I woke with my face frozen on one side

The last I remember was vinegar smell
and the net of fruit flies
turning blackberry sugar to sluggish flight
 then the horse groaning
and my cries funneled through half of my face

My lover has turned from my grimace kisses

How can this half moon visage
be trusted to speak the future
Me with the smirk for a smile
Star struck soothsayer alone in a depot

And when I tripped on cobblestone
and fell beside the old well
again the dream replayed
 with the groaning horse rolling over me
 cracking my bones

And I remembered coming to in the basement
inside the knitting of fruit flies my face gone Picasso

Once with confidence I read the stars

Once my smile was pleasing to myself

Now a chartless star has seized

one side of my face

at the station where strangers

keep looking away

MOBILE

Not his fault that midtown traffic
comes across as war to his wife

on the other end of his mobile call.

Yesterday it was the damn wind

that scattered their talk,
so he texted he'd be late.

And how his other woman hates
when he does dishes on a call—

the clash of silverware, she gripes,
shrieks in her ears like braking subways.

En-route he's got both women in his palm,
facile at thumbing excuses.

He puts his lover on hold to tap home
for the grocery list, and when he switches

back, the cool sax behind her in the bar
sounds through his device like

a wounded seal. But now his wife
is at the airport, and last call to board

crackles in his ear buds like a house on fire,
devouring their good-byes.

SPIDER

To make a joyful sound,
allow the divine spider
to climb out of your mouth
and go about its business
tying knots around your life.

So you get jerked around,
you still can dance
no matter who's pulling the strings.
Even as your divorce decree
is signed, the spider

goes on marrying you
to corners of household dust.
Eight legs, a ravenous mouth,
and the yen to spin silk in shadows.
Who wouldn't sing?

PREVIOUS LIVES

Back from her session she claims
she was once a Native princess
who made love with her brave
in full regalia, so much more spiritually
than our sucking and grinding

moaning *yes don't stop Oh Yes.*

Next morning a woman on the bus
waved her hand as if to dismiss us—
skinny schoolgirl with impish smile,
stubble-chinned drifter smelling of beer,

matron wearing a pillbox hat, and me.

She proclaimed, *None of you were there
when I was Queen of England.*

There was no denying her. But when
my partner's shaman guided me

through the tunnel of my previous lives,
it was like passing another subway train
on Hallowe'en, and when the rocking
of the ages stopped, the doors opened—

I was an ordinary Joe in well-worn brogues,

serving a harsh lord for a pittance,
unread, unadorned, wart prone;
yet loving a sad song or a lively dance,
strong ale, a wild and funny story,
aye, and a rollicking roll in the hay.

IMPLACABLE FORCE

There's no AA for stealing buses and trains
—Darius McCollum

I get caught, I do my time. I am released.

It's not so hard to steal a subway train.

I memorized the routes, befriended transit workers.

My first success—age 15—the Lex express to Wall Street.

To steal a bus or train is not so hard.

Stabbed in the back in 2nd grade, I retreated into trains.

At age 15, my first success—a Lex express to Wall Street.

I watch for bus drivers heading to the restroom.

Stabbed in the back when I was 8, I retreated into trains.

I know the shift-change drill, I've got uniforms and keys.

I watch for motormen taking smoke breaks.

To steal, one must mingle with routine.

I know the shift-change drill, I own uniforms and keys.

I do not speed or deviate from scheduled stops.

Successful stealing is to mingle with routine.

Passengers don't know it's me who's in control.

I never speed or deviate from scheduled stops.

To brake a racing train is to master implacable force.

It's me who's in control—the passengers don't know.

Harper's told my story, photographed my stabbing scar.

To master implacable force is to brake a racing train.

My friends were transit workers; I memorized the routes.

Harper's did an article, showed my stabbing scar.

I do my time, I am released. I get caught.