



# **What Snakes Want**

**Poems by  
Kita Shantiris**

**Mayapple Press 2015**

# Contents

I	1
Beyond Fort Worth	3
The Fall	4
Consonants	5
That Which Is Wanting	6
Girls' Hobbies	7
Homage to Gilberto Guidarelli	8
Three Chairs in Creel, Mexico	9
No Te Preocupes, Blanca	10
The Laundromat on the Road to Nirvana	11
Rickrack	12
Gratification	13
As Close As I Can Come to a Love Poem with Three Sides	14
Ansel Adams' Calendar	15
What Snakes Want	16
Goethe's Girdle	17
Rounding Out	18
Detour	19
Chameleon	20
Travelers' Scrabble	21
The Last Lake	22
The Weight of Snow	23
Doubt	24
Scars	25
Black Lake	26
Remedy	27
Nightlight I	28
II	29
Nightlight II	31
Rear View Mirror	32
The Border	33
Searchlight	35
Groundwork	36
Chagall's Village	37

Making Sparks	38
The Builder	39
Lactarius Deliciosus	40
The Good Guy	41
My Racy Mind	42
Parsing The Body	43
Pair-Bonding	44
Oranges	45
The Ledge	46
An Honest Moon	47
III	49
Pins	51
Theft	52
Henry Darger's Faith	53
The Shelf Life of Grief	54
P.O. Box 434	55
Jettison	56
Fabric	57
Handiwork	58
Swing Low Sweet Chariot	59
Hope Is a Thing with Feathers	60
Darting Light	61
Lures	62
Tuning the Sails	63
Maidenhair Trees	64
Four-Letter Words	65
Notes	66
About the Author	67



I

Man stands in his own shadow  
and wonders why it is dark.

*Zen proverb*

## Beyond Fort Worth

Mama killed a chicken snake  
and tarantula. She wrapped us  
in blankets before the tornado.  
Come morning, everything  
that was tall had fallen.  
One tree. The brick chimney.

Every window was squint.  
The dust insidious.  
I wrote *clean me*  
on the Venetian blinds.  
Mama sliced her thumb  
washing them with ammonia

in the same bathtub  
where the dog quivered  
when he heard thunder.  
When Mama heard gravel,  
she knew what it meant.  
She knew my father's engine,

how dust accelerates.  
There was no good reason  
for him to come home early  
or my brother to draw  
deserts without people.  
No good reason for me

to yearn in the scrub  
for another dose of sunset.  
If I pushed up a chair,  
I could reach Mama's pills  
for blood poisoning.  
They were yellow like candy.

## The Fall

Not the brilliance of October  
but the descent from a limb—  
like a leaf changing into a verb.

Like crows succumbing  
to the West Nile Virus.  
So many gone now, so many

dead on the ground, no longer  
connecting subject and predicate.  
As if they were punished

for relishing success,  
for crowing with raucous joy.  
So sad how verbs evolved

for the birds and the beasts.  
How it's unseemly  
to dog the one you love.

The horse shakes its mane  
and becomes a boy  
in the principal's office.

A boy who smells the world outside  
and wants to race in the grass  
and be rewarded

with a hand full of sugar.  
Not the hard note home  
or the hand that will hurt him.

A boy that still has the lungs to crow  
but could so easily  
be broken.

## Consonants

The H is silent in Hermés.  
All those silk tongues  
in your father's tie rack.

Not like the S in scream. Yours  
when you found your mother  
asleep in a tub of red water.

Sometimes the W is silent.  
It was when she shouted  
whore across her DMZ,

forbidding you from crossing  
to the family with Legos.  
You didn't hear their TV

spreading lies about her,  
didn't want to play  
with fire or mumbly pegs.

All you wanted  
was to build forts  
on their spotless parquet.