

Rachel Bush

'All my feelings would have been of common things'

All my feelings are of common things
of the clock going on, of the next
meal or the last one, of the washing
on the line and if there's enough heat
to dry it, of how to clean a lawnmower
just enough to make the Salvation Army
man want to take it away, with old grey
grass stuck to the blades, the tyres that hold
dirt, like cleats in walking shoes. Also
a dryer I bought forty years ago,
I stick the manual and the expired
guarantee inside the metal drum.
All those clothes it turned and churned, the lint
that it trapped in its door. I once thought
many things would make my life happier
and now one by one I will let them go.

Tourist

The tourist lies and lies. She makes up
stories of her stay in Venice, talks
of canals, the gondolas, and oh the smells,
but the clean, spotless former convent,
the dormitory where twelve women slept
in beds with immaculate sheets, told
to have lights out by 11pm,
compelled by a fierce nun nearly five
feet tall. The tourist lies about smells
in Venice because the truth is, well,
just itself. Truth floats like scum on sea
water.

With her brothers she once folded
paper boats. Each held a small lighted
candle. They let these boats float free
on an outgoing tide. They stood on sand,
feet wet, watched the lights in the dark till
it was too cold to stay. Where the boats
ended up she does not know.

She'll send
postcards, emails and texts—images
of sinking buildings, singing gondoliers
San Marco and The Doge's palace.

She lies from a desire to oblige.
The lights of her lies bob out to the open sea.

A Song from Lapland

How often in summer I met my lover
in secret and fir forest by Lake Saimaa.
My lover looked after eight reindeer
he thought he was Father Christmas.
We rode light as bells in his sled
he held my gloved hand under
thick blankets of animal skins.
Sometimes we wanted vegetables
but made do with salt fish instead.
How glad I was to sit beside him.
We rubbed fat into our embroidered
boots to keep them waterproof.
How often I met my lover in secret
when snow covered the ground.

Stepping out

If you would open your curtains,
if you could just go outside.
But you don't
you can't.
If you could step out
of your own house
your own skin,
lay your accumulated habits
and personality on the floor,
say of a hotel foyer,
for someone else to find
after you have gone,
light and lithe, into what
ever's there, perhaps a spring
morning, pink trees surprised
by blossom. The best spring
is in your own high
free step.