

From Grass to Grass

When I was happy, I washed my dishes by hand and watched the rabbit crouch in the neighbors' hostas through the kitchen window which I think of as blue. I watched the rabbit become rabbits in the riffling of leaves, the purple stems, one then another in the flush grass, and placed cups in a row to dry. I was happy, and felt gratitude, and then, there was rape, which is a word, like blue, that fills the frame before one can detail its definition. Cottontail rabbits live, in the wild, less than one year. That was the longest I have been happy. Then there was rape. Gratitude, like shelter, let me count my cups of coffee, or blue light through the kitchen window in evenings, one following the other, never having felt such completion in slowness. My gratitude prospered, and I felt warm with each person I met: gratitude for them. This let me feel slower, and happier, and days didn't pass, but grew. Then, I was raped. Like a boot or a mower blade, the sky brash white for a flash but I continue living. I continued living, but I had been raped. Every day, the rape prospered in me, my shelter. Like blue in the evening, the rape would return. Where could gratitude grow or happiness wash her dishes, singly? Slowness became, like experiencing time, the horror of feeling your gratitude, which once flooded my mind like morning light—the happiest feeling I imagine—become polar winter, then the absence of it. Winter a secret. Where does the rabbit go—underground, perhaps—and gratitude became a word thin as air, and as still. I lifted my head and my hands and felt nothing. This was because I'd been raped, which meant that I lost the happy world of the window, the house, though that was where I still lived. I kept it a secret, from myself also, all winter, the winter in me, becoming stiller and stiller. I washed my cups and dishes, wrote poems, continued to live. After the rape, I drew myself a bath and wept with no tears. I asked myself, in the blue of memory filling the frame, how could rape happen again. Rape is an event, its slowness the secret contracting the frame. Rape has no season, I know. I left the house and the hostas one summer and began again trying to live because the world is a happy one, and prosperous, and I was still living. I planned and placed my things in the new house because no one has time for the slowness of having been raped, or not showing gratitude. There was even a dishwasher, and there was still rape, like a hood, completing itself again and again. The secret I shared with the people I met, who said I was blue. They were hostile. Purple stems shot through the spring ground where I planted them in summer, framing the yard. I'd forgotten them, but they lived, underground. The house in the morning floods with light, and I rested and was forgotten. Rape and forgetting rustle together in the leaves. The things of a world make a contract with me,



less a shelter than order I place myself in, for the mornings I hardly can lift myself from the blue. The new people I'd met and the city were cruel, and I felt a flood of regret, which prospered in me, in the prosperous city. Definition of anger: rape, being raped, the days passing slowly but never in slowness. But how could I tell you that I am unhappy, when I have shelter and flowers that waited through winter, become blue stars in the grass for the rabbits to graze. Some seasons have passed. The few poems I write do not include rape, which frames me though I continue to live, purchase cups, wash them and myself, with a slowness I do not feel. The contract defines rape as a secret, that my life will pass slowly, in warm baths and watching the world through the window, the glass a stillness, a slowness, forgetting myself in the hostas, for which I should be grateful.