

ON BEING REPRIMANDED FOR BEING "TOO WOMEN'S LIBBISH"

We don't like your feelings, said the boss.
He was reading my file.
His desk was surrounded by barbed wire
and topped with broken glass.
I knelt in front of it.

You feel angry, he said.
You feel shamed by the official cruelties you commit.
You feel.
"I'll change," I promised.
I rummaged hastily in my bag for a mask.

Your eyes are too blue, he went on.
Be green eyed.
"Right," I agreed.
"contact lenses," I jotted down.

You're too tall, he said,
raising his eyes from his notes.
Be shorter. Your feet...
"amputation," I wrote quickly.
But a thought occurred.
"How will I be able to work?" I ventured.
Live on your knees, he said.

by K.B. Emmott

PROSTHETICS

He gives me eyes
to stare back at
hands me a nipple
he made himself
He admits that sometimes
his people are disappointed
He has to remind them
gently
he isn't God
though he's laboured longer
on the blues of an iris
or an ear's
curled
mystery

The spare parts man
does brave work
but he shies away
from my praise
When he gives me his hand
it's warm
and his smile is genuine

by Glen Downie



PHYSICIAN DRUG ABUSE

Studies have shown
doctors are compulsives who never achieve
the impossible standards they have set for themselves
they suffer from rescue fantasies
and an excessive need to be needed
this causes them to take on too much work
and to lie awake
worrying about the patients
and then to drink
or to dope themselves in solitude
so you see
if I don't care about you
the way I used to
it's a sign of my improving mental health.

by K.B. Emmott

OPINIONS

They're personal
like the teeth glistening on their wire
next to the bedside
like the numeric IDs rigid between leather
the new upholstery and the prescription for rest
Each morning a fresh catalog
sprouts rolled-up on the doorstep

for Him something restrained and conservative
polished mandibles and gunmetal finish
for Her the very thing fluffy with lots of tiny bells
A whole set on foreign affairs
nestles in the purses or the lunchbox
So many we're giving them away
by the squirming handful

At party time they whine and scratch at the door
you let them in and they frolic
on the carpet trailing silvery threads of drool
How cute where did he learn that
I prefer eight legs myself
But careful after a few drinks they can get nasty
a toothy little skull crunched underfoot
and *Who asked for yours*

Best to keep them on a leash at all times
make sure they get plenty of blood for when
our smile comes to the door with a clipboard
asking to see them
then bet on the favorite and watch it come in ahead
Friday on the late news
Above all be sure to lock them indoors at night
safe from the floating shadow with owl's eyes
whose wingbeats
trouble your sleep into sweat and waking rage
Remember they alone are the measure of your freedom
Without them we could never decide
what is best for you

by Adam Cornford

INSURANCE BENEFITS

I think more of myself
when there's less of me
to think about
if I can't subtract years
I can always
take amnesia pills
I'm at my best
just after a haircut
I'll go on a diet
even though I'm underweight
thank god for the company's
insurance benefits
I can get warts fingers
internal organs
removed at no cost to myself
second opinions always concur
if you want to survive
you have to travel light

by William Talcott