

SONG FOR THE OTHER BOYS

MELISSA JONES

And then there were the boys
who were barely boys,
short boys too short, long lanky boys
who were nothing but math.
Who wouldn't fist-fight, kick out
their roommates. Boys with trombones,
with an Ingrid stashed somewhere.
I was all lipgloss and longing
for aftershave. The boys said *You're naughty*
but didn't mean it. Those were the worst boys,
passing like politicians on the staircase, flexing their
philosophies—when you were this close.
Boys who just lay there
listening to the ocean then faint-praised
you to friends, folded on full houses.
Boys who stalked
then balked. Where were the bad boys,
with mouths that seared
ice cubes? Who dealt drugs, went straight,
alighted unexpectedly on road trips
just to tell the story after.
Not the boys
from New York City, all syntax and subway
tokens, doormen and free passes to culture
nets cast wide. No, I wanted
the boys with suburbs, 7-11's off asphalt roads,
twin sisters with the radio on
all night in their rooms.
Boys with six special fingers
who arrived sober and calculating
suffered cigarette smoke gladly
said *I know, I know*, walked with you two miles
out of the way.
Time travel boys.
With clean pockets empty of lint,
With intentions.
Boys who name family pigs,
jump off docks not waiting
to wet their hair.
Boys who were once girls

or still are girls,
who power-clean and toe no line, who
hell or high water
hang on to the boat.
With a hole right here
and good cloth to fill it with.
Boys with burros
in their teak ballrooms, muddy hands
proffering Cartier diamonds and fresh key limes,
synonyms on top of synonyms,
a tiara of fire and a Batman cloak
the original dark comic book Batman
not the money launderer resplendent in spandex.
Milky faced boys reading Dickens who were *in the shit*,
boys on tractors with Ferris wheels and candy floss
and a big brass band. Where
are the boys with blades between their teeth
and seventeen secret sorrows
that will turn them white overnight?
Buying lottery tickets with the wine
and making it home in time
for bath night, feeding your wounded
phoenix with a doll syringe, wearing
breeches and waistcoats
when the situation warrants.
Writing letters home, waiting.
Waiting breathless for Thursday.
Catamaraning cartwheeling
cakemaking boys
sitting on lawns with you after the exertion,
boys on top and on bottom, boys always
in the first flush.
One-eyed no-names, grinning,
hugging themselves and stopping to talk on sidewalks
when frisbees are flying
right at their heads.
Oh plain Jane, oh Miranda daughter of Prospero,
oh Saint Mama and Andalusian princess:
Where is the blue flower
that sends a boy to the dogs, inspires
a man to hop a Snow Cat
at the barest rumor of snow?

UNTITLED MOON POEM

1

Our subject, as always, is the moon

The old legends say
bathe in milk
blood or moonlight and you'll never
grow old

My mother said, Show silver
to the new moon for money
all month—I believed
her—sometimes the moon itself near

silver I am flush
with moonlight; the moon owns nothing

The moon is a cliché I thought I had coined myself

2

From the churchyard playground
my friends and I saw
the great Harvest Moon, yellow and menacing,

uncoupling from the shingles of their roof. I was thinking:
The moon's middle name is obsession

The moon has no last name

3

I named all my children after the moon
though the moon has more names than I have children

4

The moon and something to do with virgins
The moon at the ice bar
doing shots of vodka
Moonbase Alpha
as far as I know
still straying
in deep space

The moon: a patented storyline

The moon, footprinted by hubris

5

The moon enters my field of vision and fireflies are caught in my hair
I am the moon: everywhere at once, nowhere at home. I am a virgin, licking
moonshine from rims of Mason jars. I am all strung out
and will live as long as the solar system

6

The moon does have a last name
which it dropped since going so Hollywood

7

My sweetheart tells me he thought the Goodyear blimp followed him
all through childhood. I think of the moon.
My sweetheart has a kind moon face.
I am always praying to the moon

even when cursing

8

We think the moon prays for the earth but really
it's the other way around. The moon is godless.
Famewhore w/ soft-planed face and Medieval breasts

Watching earthrise from the moon is like dying twice a day

I eat the clean, clean moon
and it coats my throat like malted milk
I eat the moon and the moon eats me. I'm always hungry,
only the moon gets its fill

9

I can't talk about anything but this thing, this moon
I am changing the moon's name to my own

THE FAR AWAY CLOSE AT HAND

At the end of the world
I will wish for you a few long afternoons
playing capture the flag in a field of wheat
with friends. A far away that's close at hand.
Picturebook village strung with saint's day lights.
Make sure to drink the villagers' young wine
from plastic liter jugs, stand just touching
elbow to elbow. As the sun winks out,
I hope you remember to wave back
graciously, wear your party dresses
—the Dupioni silk and scratchy taffeta—
do quotidien, unglamorous things
like gardening. Sing whatever songs you still know
the words to. Hum after that. Say goodbye
to God. Goodbye, pride of possession
and starched pleats and good grades.
Goodbye, savings on the dollar
and too-shiny ocean liners, impossibly crooked
Gothic towers you lied and said
you climbed. Smoke your last smoke fast
so there's all the time in the world to mourn it.
Braid your hair. Name the things, each after each,
one last time: hasp, rivet, chilblain, azalea.
Titter inappropriately. Pick up strangers' babies
just to squeeze them. When
you sign out, leave no instructions.
Watch your last words scatter like frightened fish.
Watch the moon alone
make a graceful exit
long after you lie down and become the wind
talking
to all these other husks.

MOON SPELL FOR SMALL FRAGMENTS

Lay ash down.
Catch shimmering:
spoon in the shut
chest of silver.
Make this bed
a bed of soft metal,
soft, softly molten.
Break like glass
all icy things
all ice things slivers
all glass things broken.
You are here:
last slug of white
wine in paper cup
hangtime
between death and service,
coffined old body
aboveground, future
shroud just a form
from the patternmaker.
Song for the new
baby to sleep by
All spells I can't make
out in the dark
sighing of light
dying on windowpanes,
you give the earth
its aspens, keep a map
of all items lost
under slow melting snows.
All stolen goods
stolen from you.
All stolen things
borrowed. Patron saint
of stopped clocks,
impersonator
of ghosts in mirrors,
constant companion
always creeping, diamond
scratching in my eye:
—*Thank you.*
Children wake when you

are gone, God
willing.

NOLA

She was beautiful but tawdry Fell
asleep in her bubble bath, woke up
dead in her cot She came to us
barefoot Two years old
in soiled diaper Pushing
out her baby on a bus Nobody's
sister Filthy in pink Lucky
in love Once played
the numbers Once dyed her muff
Once pulled taffy for tourists
Once got everywhere *fast* She used to dance
just because Used to take no guff
and nothing back She lost her fakebook
in the flood but knows the words by heart
She has no words When on Thursday
the milk dries in her ducts and she lays,
she lays her burden down, the wrong song
stuck like gum in her head

She is never going home There is no going back
She's changing her name to address unknown
There wasn't time to pack

(Once I thought I saw her on the street but it was someone else and I gave her a dollar
and she gave me the finger and I gave her my jacket but just then the sun cleared the olly-
oxen-free and we spent, oh, twelve years sittin and smokin the flat flat butts we peeled off
the soles of our damn dirty swampstink feet)

She could see the moon from where she stood
but the moon looked away
Miss Otis regrets she's unable to lunch today
We locked her in the closet
saying: *There now, there there*
We will never get her funk out of our hair

WHAT I KNOW

is not much
ice and sky
often the same
all flowers
azaleas
one baby
always
weaning
my shadow
in the glass
my mother's
looking brown-eyed
back from a distance
of no new bones,
old contentions