To Follow the Loba path

Elizabeth Paddock

When you are ready
to find your teacher,
your mother, your friend
and lover: to find Loba

You must breathe the quiet.
You must enter Loba’s land
intending to stay.
You must be beyond the questions,
must say in your sleep—
"I want Loba. No doubt, no doubt."

You must know her terrain.
Watch her for months.

Learn her shape:
each curve a bend
in the river of her body.

Learn her smell:
the evergreen glow that dilutes in water,
faint musky scent across a stream.

Learn her footprints,
on the paths at dawn.
See the shadows of her dark breath
hanging in frozen air.

Learn how she hunts:
muscles taut, ready to spring
at any opening in the wind.

THE
RED
WHEELBARROW

October 1993

Editors:
Adam Smith
Liz Paddock
Raquel Smith
Putnam Trumbull
Kate Angus
Anton P. Janulis
Elizabeth Savage
An ugly girl with an ugly guy stare into each other and make me sick.

Behind a locked door with my curtains drawn my fingers turned to page 54.

Boys are dumb. I hate the piano.
14 and I haven't kissed a boy yet.

piano lessons for nine years and no life. 14 and I still know everything.

my sister was lucky she read teen and watched MTV and sucked at the piano.

the mail came today around eleven a.m. and the new issue of teen arrived. the cover story, learn how to kiss.

I don't think my sister will miss this if I decide to read.

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Elizabeth Paddock
they removed my arm, and one pushed his snout into my shoulder. The water became cloudy, and when they could carry no more they disappeared back to the surface. I lay there, quiet and still, prey to the rat kings.

I do not think that you really care. I do not believe that it matters. I am not sad, or cold, or lonely, or uncomfortable. I am not very good looking these days either, but I don’t care. I tell you this because when I was alive I did care. I had a name too. People called me by a name that my parents had given me at birth. It was a good hearty name, that meant prosperity. I think that is pretty funny. I would walk down the street, flipping my shirt collar up, smoking, leaning on buildings, waiting at crosswalks, shooting pool, eating potatoes, laughing out loud, sitting in the back of taxis, sweating in the summer and freezing in the winter, soaking when it rained, drinking tea when it was sunny, taking ladies dancing, going to sleep at four in the morning, winking, drinking, flipping coins in my hands, and my good strong hearty family name and I prospered among the living and I knew that I sure as hell was going some place. I just didn’t know where. I thought then, as you all think now, that I was the chosen one. I tell you this because after all of the tea and cake I am only dead and buried in the sewer, and my cheap suit has outlasted the rest of me.

And every so often the rats sneak up to me when I am resting, and they whisper my nickname in my ear. "Mud," they say, "Mud."
They found a place, and the sewer emptied into a giant pool, and the rats abandoned our backs and swam to the edges of the sewer. We floated into the pool, along with the deodorants and half eaten apricots of the living. The procession was long, a hundred and fifty bodies easy. I floated alongside a man wearing a dark suit. His face was turned to me, and he looked rather upset. He was pale and his hair was thick with sewage. We looked at each other for a while. There isn't a whole bunch dead folk have to say to each other. You can't say "hi" or "good morning" or "how are things". You can't tell the dead any stories. You can't say to the dead that everything is going to turn out fine. The only thing you can say is "I know how you feel". So I said nothing to the guy, and he said nothing to me.

We kept floating, and I rolled onto my stomach and looked under the water. Dead people don't close their eyes very much. The water was dark, and at the bottom of the pool I could make out large shapes, hunks of darkness under the water, like old logs. Finally I could see that the shapes were not logs, but humans. The things I thought to be seaweed were the arms and legs and hair of those on the bottom. My mouth began to fill up with water. I could feel it pouring into my lungs and stomach, and I began to sink. I rolled onto my back and the last of my oxygen escaped and bubbled upwards. I looked around and saw all of the other bodies fall like silent ships, and I fell also. My head hit first, and then the rest of my body fell into place. A fat lady right beneath me kept me comfortable and warm. Her arm fell across my chest and I nuzzled her fat chin for a pillow. Another body fell along my legs, another across my arm. The fabric from a red dress fell over my face, and then a female's soft thin body covered my eyes and I was buried. This was my burial. Not the earth.

I could hear the fish around me, and the rats that would swim to the bottom and take an ear or finger back up with them. My skin had been burnt from the electricity of the subway, the rats had cooked food to yank off of me. Each of my fingers was a small rat hot dog. So they attacked me first. I could feel them pushing through the pile of bodies searching for the best parts. Three of them sat on my chest. They tugged at my clothes and when one of them got a shirt button open they tugged at my flesh. They found my fingers and broke them off, they bit at my nose and ears. In the darkness they worked, efficiently and without haste. As a team

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The Escape

Jennifer Feeley

On the shingle

Beaten by waves
He sleeps with his head
Amongst the rocks.

--Hitomaro

I.

I lay with my head
pressed into a thick patch of clover,
my fingers crushing the stars
as if they are fireflies.
My toes pluck smooth blades
of grass and scatter them everywhere,
little arrows
pointing me towards the lake.

II.

I want to be carried away
by the waves of some great body
of water, swaying softly then hard,
hoping to meet the horizon
at a place where my thoughts will
erode into sand.
Concerning Grass

Katie Eyer

I. A Birthplace

Reaching through the most intimate of places, weaving legs into my chest, my thighs, they point their fingers towards the sun:

Even in death, my womb will give life.

II. Violation

Standing upon the houses of the dead, we will search and find the places where you dwell; lodging between your legs, ripping apart your empty shell. Just as your first, we will tear through you, just as your first, we will leave at the end of the summer, our love fading past the dead brown of autumn.

My grandchildren would need to climb down into the sewers with flashlights, and dig through piles of bodies with shovels to worship me. And they would see my bones and know that I was only human, and they would see my cheap suit around my bones, and they would see that I was in the sewer, where the rats were, and know that I was only less than human.

When the graveyards were all full, they put an article in the paper. It said that due to the war and the war efforts during the war during war time the graveyards had been filled up with good dead soldiers. They began to stack the coffins. Some gravestones had five or six names on them, and five or six people shared that plot of earth. Then they began to stack the bodies in the coffins. Then five or six people shared one coffin, and thirty people shared one plot of earth. And then they declared that the graveyards were all full.

I heard about this while eating dinner with my family. We thought it was comical. We thought that the world had gone crazy, and we had thought that for years, so we just sort of laughed and loaded more au gratin potatoes on our plates. I told them that I was going to go to the park, and I put on my hat and jacket, and I lit up a cigarette out in the hall. I took the elevator down and walked out to the street. I turned left on sixth, I turned right on fifth, I walked down to the corner and took the steps into the subway. I bought a token. I went through the turnstile and I leaned on a wall to wait for my train. I smoked a second cigarette. The station was empty, and I had to pee. I walked over to the railroad tracks, unzipped my fly, I began to pee on the railroad tracks. From down the tunnel I heard my train coming. I looked down the track and saw a giant light on the front car, I felt the ground shake, I felt electricity running through my urine, through my bladder, my stomach, my chest, my shoulders, my arms, my hands. I let go of myself and peed on my leg. I felt electricity running through my legs, my knees, my feet. And then I was dead, but I could hear the train pull up along side of me and open its door. I could hear it sit there. I could hear the doors closing, and the train disappearing down the line, wailing and screaming. I thought that it was funny, and I thought now they were going to have to find a place to bury me because the graveyards were all full.
Several of the bodies were carried down the current deeper into the sewer. For those of us that stayed put, a man from the garbage truck came down into the sewer with boots and gloves and a shovel and nudged us until we were free. I watched him climb back up to the surface world, and I watched the last light vanish when he closed the manhole. The rats were sitting on our backs to stay dry, and riding us farther into their tunnels like captains of great ships. They squeaked amongst themselves, and swam from body to body to visit their friends. The rats stood upon us with long sticks and paddled us down the correct pipes and drains to Rat Venice, where rats were king. And they were bringing back to their rat villages and rat families what they had found in the sewer, and what they had found was us, the dead. Because that's where we had been buried.

The rats prodded the back of my head with their poles, and their squeaking turned into language, and they said to me, "Do you know where you are?"

"Yes," I said.

The rats all laughed their high pitched laughs, like the breaks of garbage trucks. "You know what we like about you?" they said.

"What?" I said.

"Nothing."

A rat hopped onto the back of my neck and, placing his snout in my ear, whispered, "You are dead now."

"Yes," I said, "I know."

The rats chuckled and began to sing a song in chorus. The song consisted of these words only, "You are dead now," and they repeated them over and over, the one rat licking his tongue into my ear and hissing, until tears formed in my eyes, and when they saw the tears they laughed louder.

"You know what your name is down here?" they asked.

"What?" I said.

"Mud," they said. "Your name is Mud."

I remember going to the grave of my grandfather. I remember walking with my grandmother through the long lines of gravestones, across the well kept earth, the green grass and the pink or red flowers, to the spot where she would kneel, and this was where Grandfather was buried. I remember that. Grandmother wore black, and she carried a small black purse. And while she would cry I had a sense of nobility, that Grandfather was a great man, a great dead man. I had a sense that he had saved entire planets from destruction, that he had ridden a huge white horse, that he had charged the Nazi's alone with only his pocket knife, and that he breathed fire. Grandmother was weeping to a great man, surely.
I am not Buddha/
And I do not practice Zen.

Adam Smith

I sweep.
That’s my job-
a Sweeper.

I sweep steps,
preferably blue steps,
though I have been known
to sweep green, red, and,
in unusual circumstances,
pink steps.

My job doesn’t add much
to my build or bones.

My job has
no perks, no fringe benefits,
no 20-30 minute coffee breaks.

My job leaves little room
to meet "new and exciting people".

My job doesn’t pay the bills.

My job is sweeping steps
which are preferably
blue.

Dead

Putnam Riley Trumbull

You know they bury people in the sewers. All of the
graveyards have been filled up and they bury people in the sewers.
I died on a subway, and they took my body and had a priest say the
appropriate things and then they put me in the back of a dump
truck, with all of the other dead bodies, and threw us all in the
sewers. I was very surprised. I would have said something to
somebody, I would have told the dump truck driver to drop me off in
the park, leave me on a park bench, but it is hard for a dead
person to talk. Partially out of embarrassment for being dead, and
partially because dead people don’t move their mouths.

The other dead people were very surprised about being buried
in the sewers also. I could tell by the looks on their faces.
Maybe dead people just have really surprised faces all the time, it
is quite a shock to die. A person who is hit with a car dies with
a very surprised look on his face. I have a very surprised look on
my face.

So they drove us in a dump truck, there were about thirty
bodies on top of me, and I know we were all thinking the same
thing. Right about when they dumped us in the sewer we were all
thinking exactly the same thing. We were thinking that we wanted
to be buried in a graveyard, some place in the country, under an
apple tree, or a fig tree. But they were burying us in the sewer.
The dump truck made three or four stops for garbage at people’s
houses on the way. They tossed the garbage bags on top of us, and
when they dumped us into the sewer I could feel banana peals and
newspapers along with the flailing arms and legs of other dead
people. We just flopped down into a big pile in the darkness,
where some sewer water ran past us, and rats and squirrels slipped
into our sleeves and jackets and began to gnaw on our backs.
Prints

Matthew Kreuder

The wet pavement
warp my reflection
under emaciated
worms that scatter
the sidewalk.

I follow the trails
of water leading off
my sneakers and do not
waver from the path.

I look over my shoulder
to see the third print back
dissolve into nothing.
I stop
and turn.

My feet find the grass,
soft and willing to give,
and I stare backward--
over my shoulder
I see lasting prints,
however faint.

Taking Care of Mother
(an excerpt)

Ani Kasten

Mother is at home in the bedroom now. I can see her through
the crack in my door as she is sitting at her dresser pressing
powder the color of rosy cream into the wrinkles at the corners of
her eyes. She has already brushed the black lines on the edges of
her eyelids, and her lips are gleaming a sort of rusty red. Mother
is pretty like a movie star, even though she is old. The top of
her dresser flows over with tubes of lipstick, containers of powder
and old bottles of perfume that smell like dust. I like to watch
her when she sits before the mirror under the light of the amber-
colored lamp spilling honey over her hair.

She is getting ready to go out now. I suppose I will stay at
home in my room, fall asleep without taking my clothes off. I know
I will have to put her in bed in the morning--she falls asleep
curled under the kitchen table. I hear her always when she comes
home, usually close to four, and she knocks things over sometimes.
I've seen her through the crack in my door even when there's barely
any light, but I always wait until she falls asleep--she gets
embarrassed when I see her up at night.

It is eleven o'clock and there is someone at the front door.
I think I will not answer it. I don't want to see which one it is.
There is a different one every week or so. Once I snuck down to
the Gaslight Tavern to see where she gets them all. It smelled
dusty and sour in there, like father's neck, and they were all
lined up on round stools, drinking and laughing with red faces in
the half-light of the yellow lanterns. I wonder if she just walks
down the line and picks which ever one she likes best, like when
she buys pineapple at the supermarket--turning the fruit over in
her hands, looking for ones without bruises.

Mother has gone to the door and both are gone now. I hear an
old car grunt and rumble over into gear. In the living room I can
smell that sour man smell and Mother's dust perfume all mixed
together. I see she has left au gratin potatoes, a little cold for
me to eat on the table. I'm glad to see she's eaten a few.
Usually I see her eat nothing but Ritz crackers and herb dip, or
Carnation Breakfast Bars, or sometimes just a protein drink. I
don't know that the protein drink does her any good--possibly the
Breakfast Bars and crackers defeat its purpose.
I don't like au gratin potatoes very much. They are from Betty Crocker and they are too orange. I stepped on a caterpillar once and it oozed on the ground—it looked as though it had eaten au gratin potatoes. I wonder if Mother remembers cooking au gratin potatoes last night. I think I will give it to the cat and cook something else. The cat is not shaped like other cats I've seen. It is entirely bone, with a bulge just before the hips—also it has hardly any hair. Perhaps the potatoes will help.

I have eaten celery sticks with peanut butter and a plain Kaiser roll. The refrigerator is craving food, but we have no car and Mother keeps forgetting about food save Breakfast Bars, crackers and protein drink. I keep thinking I will hear that old car grumble and heave itself up the driveway, or hear loud voices, louder in the nighttime when it is still. But of course no one comes. It is 1:37.

I did not intend to fall asleep. It is now morning—I've noticed the light is whiter in the morning as though it has been flushed through with clean blue water, and left to dry and be stained yellow by the sun in the afternoon. I dreamt last night that Father was here, dreamt that he lay beside Mother. It was like he had walked back from the race track in one piece. I am awake now though; it was only a nightmare. I will put Mother to bed now. It is hard to pick her up sometimes—she is so heavy, maybe waterlogged—and she moans softly like she thinks it's all a dream.

I did not find Mother under the table. I found her in her bed where she should be, only there is a man in her bed. I almost knew from the sour smell in the hallway. At first when I saw she was not under the table, I thought she might not have come home, but then in the bedroom I thought I might still be dreaming of those two lying side by side in the sunflower print sheets, but his hair was brown, not gold like my father's.

I think I will not say anything about it. I will pretend like I didn't see, pretend like I was in bed the whole time. It is silly for me to say anything. What can be said? It will only be hard to hide my eyes.

I won't tell Mother about my dream either. A long time ago we would sit at breakfast, and I would tell her stories that were dreams. Now they don't interest her. She says that I have a hard time distinguishing between dreams and reality. I wonder if that is true. I dream a lot lately, mostly nightmares, and sometimes they are very much like real.

"Where do you want to go," he asked.

I stared down the road, past the small western town and the wide valley, into the mountains. I couldn't see them for the thunder clouds, but I knew that they were there. The lightening near the foothills flashed in symphony with my indecision. I hesitated for a minute of maybe two, and then I turned to him.

"Drive me to the lightning," I said.

David opened the driver's side door, climbed in, and turned the key in the ignition. He didn't bother to wipe the hair away from his mouth. I got in my side and kicked my flooded tennis shoes onto the gritty floor. I slammed my door and rolled down the window. David pulled back onto the highway.

"You sure?" he asked and looked at me with gray eyes.

"Yes," I said and the rain drove into my open face all of the way to the mountains.
Lightning Storm

Kate Wilkinson

The first boom of thunder rolled over my head and the rain followed, but I didn’t pull on my hood. Telleroy, the next town, was eight miles down the highway near the middle of the valley. No one was going to give me a ride. People just didn’t; not in storms. I tightened the drawstring on top of my pack to make sure my books wouldn’t get wet. The thunder engulfed me again.

As I walked down the side of the highway, fast to keep warm, the tall, dark, sodden weeds snapped at my wrists and thighs. The expanse of sky behind me in the East was light, but ahead was a turmoil of grays and blacks. The rain was not a cleansing rain; it was an exorcising rain. No gophers ran across the road.

A mile and a half towards Telleroy my sweat jacket was clutching my T-shirt and my T-shirt was slapping my cold skin. I stopped by a turnout to check my watch against the eastern light. Four thirty-seven. I was turning to continue down the highway when the truck pulled up. The fractured windshield glittered in the rain, but the dark green paint was as sorry as the bale of hay that rotted in the back. A ranch hand’s vehicle, older than its owner, no doubt. The driver got out and leaned his elbows on the hood.

He was dark, but not pure Mexican or Indian—mixed blood. His features were blurred in the downpour.

"Hell of a storm to be out in," he said conversationally over the argument of the rain. "My name’s David Manse."

"I’m Breta."

I held out my hand palm upward into the storm.

"Sorry about the weather," I said. "The highway god is angry with me."

David tipped his head up towards the sky.

"Me too," he said.

We stood in the swirling rivers of icewater and mud that were flooding around the pickup. I could feel the water in the bottom of my tennis shoes. David looked at me from across the hood through the shredded curtain of rain. His long, dark hair was plastered to his scalp. One piece stuck to the corner of his mouth.

Le sacre du printemps

Anton P. Janulis

I sat one day with a head cold on the benches between the administration buildings of the school where I studied. The sun hadn’t come out yet, so I went to the lake to hope. At the water’s edge, nothing happened. It seemed some sacrifice was wanted before the sun would show. I searched my pockets, felt the keys, the coins, the mint wrappers. Found nothing. Perhaps if I ran, I thought, if I removed myself from the spot where I was standing, then the sun would come out. So I ran. Ran with my cold in my lungs until I came to a place I thought was beautiful. I was coughing so hard when I got there that I had to sit with my head between my knees. I didn’t notice it when the sun came out and warmed the back of my neck.
Traveling

Elizabeth Savage

March, and the rain is beating
against the bare tree branches
the ground is soft, moist from
last winter’s melted snow.

This is when I travel,
migrating for home by instinct
I point my shoes to the north
and follow the Great Bear at night
across the river through the pine forest

the way my father showed me
to move soundless.
I run until my body falls away,
my ribs become a flock of birds,

my arms two snakes, my ankles
a pair of beavers.
When nothing is left in my brain,
when all the pieces have melted away
into space, there will still be the memory
of solid earth beneath my feet.

In the Dark

Mika Perrine

I need you now
to spread
your blanket of comfort
across my aching shoulders.
My desire is twisted
like licorice
into a craving
for sanity.
I breath you in,
your woodsmoke fingers
moving slowly up my leg.
I wish this were more
than an escape, I wish
I could be born again
by your touch.
But there is still this empty space
in the air between our souls.
There are still these aimless words
circling the true fear,
and I am sorry,
but I can breathe
without you.
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Mother is at home in the bedroom now. I can see her through
the crack in my door as she is sitting at her dresser pressing
powder the color of rosy cream into the wrinkles at the corners
of her eyes. She has already brushed the black lines on the edges
of her eyelids, and her lips are gleaming a sort of rusty red. Mother
is pretty like a movie star, even though she is old. The top of
her dresser flows over with tubes of lipstick, containers of powder
and old bottles of perfume that smell like dust. I like to watch
her when she sits before the mirror under the light of the amber-
colored lamp spilling honey over her hair.

She is getting ready to go out now. I suppose I will stay at
home in my room, fall asleep without taking my clothes off. I know
I will have to put her in bed in the morning--she falls asleep
curled under the kitchen table. I hear her always when she comes
home, usually close to four, and she knocks things over sometimes.
I've seen her through the crack in my door even when there's barely
any light, but I always wait until she falls asleep--she gets
embarrassed when I see her up at night.

It is eleven o'clock and there is someone at the front door.
I think I will not answer it. I don't want to see which one it is.
There is a different one every week or so. Once I snuck down to
the Gaslight Tavern to see where she gets them all. It smelled
dusty and sour in there, like father's neck, and they were all
lined up on round stools, drinking and laughing with red faces in
the half-light of the yellow lanterns. I wonder if she just walks
down the line and picks which ever one she likes best, like when
she buys pineapple at the supermarket--turning the fruit over in
her hands, looking for ones without bruises.

Mother has gone to the door and both are gone now. I hear an
old car grunt and rumble over into gear. In the living room I can
smell that sour man smell and Mother's dust perfume all mixed
_together. I see she has left au gratin potatoes, a little cold for
me to eat on the table. I'm glad to see she's eaten a few.
Usually I see her eat nothing but Ritz crackers and herb dip, or
Carnation Breakfast Bars, or sometimes just a protein drink. I
don't know that the protein drink does her any good--possibly the
Breakfast Bars and crackers defeat its purpose.
I am not Buddha/
And I do not practice Zen.

Adam Smith

I sweep.
That's my job-
a Sweeper.

I sweep steps,
preferably blue steps,
though I have been known
to sweep green, red, and,
in unusual circumstances,
pink steps.

My job doesn't add much
to my build or bones.

My job has
no perks, no fringe benefits,
no 20-30 minute coffee breaks.

My job leaves little room
to meet "new and exciting people".

My job doesn't pay the bills.

My job is sweeping steps
which are preferably
blue.

Dead

Putnam Riley Trumbull

You know they bury people in the sewers. All of the graveyards have been filled up and they bury people in the sewers. I died on a subway, and they took my body and had a priest say the appropriate things and then they put me in the back of a dump truck, with all of the other dead bodies, and threw us all in the sewers. I was very surprised. I would have said something to somebody, I would have told the dump truck driver to drop me off in the park, leave me on a park bench, but it is hard for a dead person to talk. Partially out of embarrassment for being dead, and partially because dead people don't move their mouths.

The other dead people were very surprised about being buried in the sewers also. I could tell by the looks on their faces. Maybe dead people just have really surprised faces all the time, it is quite a shock to die. A person who is hit with a car dies with a very surprised look on his face. I have a very surprised look on my face.

So they drove us in a dump truck, there were about thirty bodies on top of me, and I know we were all thinking the same thing. Right about when they dumped us in the sewer we were all thinking exactly the same thing. We were thinking that we wanted to be buried in a graveyard, some place in the country, under an apple tree, or a fig tree. But they were burying us in the sewer. The dump truck made three or four stops for garbage at people's houses on the way. They tossed the garbage bags on top of us, and when they dumped us into the sewer I could feel banana peels and newspapers along with the flailing arms and legs of other dead people. We just flopped down into a big pile in the darkness, where some sewer water ran past us, and rats and squirrels slipped into our sleeves and jackets and began to gnaw on our backs.
Several of the bodies were carried down the current deeper into the sewer. For those of us that stayed put, a man from the garbage truck came down into the sewer with boots and gloves and a shovel and nudged us until we were free. I watched him climb back up to the surface world, and I watched the last light vanish when he closed the manhole. The rats were sitting on our backs to stay dry, and riding us farther into their tunnels like captains of great ships. They squeaked amongst themselves, and swam from body to body to visit their friends. The rats stood upon us with long sticks and paddled us down the correct pipes and drains to Rat Venice, where rats were king. And they were bringing back to their rat villages and rat families what they had found in the sewer, and what they had found was us, the dead. Because that's where we had been buried.

The rats prodded the back of my head with their poles, and their squeaking turned into language, and they said to me, "Do you know where you are?"

"Yes," I said.
The rats all laughed their high pitched laughs, like the breaks of garbage trucks. "You know what we like about you?" they said.

"What?" I said.

"Nothing."

A rat hopped onto the back of my neck and, placing his snout in my ear, whispered, "You are dead now."

"Yes," I said, "I know."
The rats chuckled and began to sing a song in chorus. The song consisted of these words only, "You are dead now," and they repeated them over and over, the one rat licking his tongue into my ear and hissing, until tears formed in my eyes, and when they saw the tears they laughed louder.

"You know what your name is down here?" they asked.

"What?" I said.

"Mud," they said, "Your name is Mud."

I remember going to the grave of my grandfather. I remember walking with my grandmother through the long lines of gravestones, across the well kept earth, the green grass and the pink or red flowers, to the spot where she would kneel, and this was where Grandfather was buried. I remember that. Grandmother wore black, and she carried a small black purse. And while she would cry I had a sense of nobility, that Grandfather was a great man, a great dead man. I had a sense that he had saved entire planets from destruction, that he had ridden a huge white horse, that he had charged the Nazi's alone with only his pocket knife, and that he breathed fire. Grandmother was weeping to a great man, surely.
Concerning Grass

Katie Eyer

I. A Birthplace

Reaching through the most intimate of places, weaving legs into my chest, my thighs, they point their fingers towards the sun:

Even in death, my womb will give life.

II. Violation

Standing upon the houses of the dead, we will search and find the places where you dwell; lodging between your legs, ripping apart your empty shell.

Just as your first, we will tear through you, just as your first, we will leave at the end of the summer, our love fading past the dead brown of autumn.

My grandchildren would need to climb down into the sewers with flashlights, and dig through piles of bodies with shovels to worship me. And they would see my bones and know that I was only human, and they would see my cheap suit around my bones, and they would see that I was in the sewer, where the rats were, and know that I was only less than human.

When the graveyards were all full, they put an article in the paper. It said that due to the war and the war efforts during the war during war time the graveyards had been filled up with good dead soldiers. They began to stack the coffins. Some gravestones had five or six names on them, and five or six people shared that plot of earth. Then they began to stack the bodies in the coffins. Then five or six people shared one coffin, and thirty people shared one plot of earth. And then they declared that the graveyards were all full.

I heard about this while eating dinner with my family. We thought it was comical. We thought that the world had gone crazy, and we had thought that for years, so we just sort of laughed and loaded more au gratin potatoes on our plates. I told them that I was going to go to the park, and I put on my hat and jacket, and lit up a cigarette out in the hall. I took the elevator down and walked out to the street. I turned left on sixth, I turned right on fifth, I walked down to the corner and took the steps into the subway. I bought a token. I went through the turnstile and I leaned on a wall to wait for my train.

I thought that it was funny, and I thought now they were going to have to find a place to bury me because the graveyards were all full.
They found a place, and the sewer emptied into a giant pool, and the rats abandoned our backs and swam to the edges of the sewer. We floated into the pool, along with the deodorants and half eaten apricots of the living. The procession was long, a hundred and fifty bodies easy. I floated alongside a man wearing a dark suit. His face was turned to me, and he looked rather upset. He was pale and his hair was thick with sewage. We looked at each other for a while. There isn't a whole bunch dead folk have to say to each other. You can't say "hi" or "good morning" or "how are things". You can't tell the dead any stories. You can't say to the dead that everything is going to turn out fine. The only thing you can say is "I know how you feel". So I said nothing to the guy, and he said nothing to me.

We kept floating, and I rolled onto my stomach and looked under the water. Dead people don't close their eyes very much. The water was dark, and at the bottom of the pool I could make out large shapes, hunks of darkness under the water, like old logs. Finally I could see that the shapes were not logs, but humans. The things I thought to be seaweed were the arms and legs and hair of those on the bottom. My mouth began to fill up with water. I could feel it pouring into my lungs and stomach, and I began to sink. I rolled onto my back and the last of my oxygen escaped and bubbled upwards. I looked around and saw all of the other bodies fall like silent ships, and I fell also. My head hit first, and then the rest of my body fell into place. A fat lady right beneath me kept me comfortable and warm. Her arm fell across my chest and I nuzzled her fat chin for a pillow. Another body fell along my legs, another across my arm. The fabric from a red dress fell over my face, and then a female's soft thin body covered my eyes and I was buried. This was my burial. Not the earth.

I could hear the fish around me, and the rats that would swim to the bottom and take an ear or finger back up with them. My skin had been burnt from the electricity of the subway, the rats had cooked food to yank off of me. Each of my fingers was a small rat hot dog. So they attacked me first. I could feel them pushing through the pile of bodies searching for the best parts. Three of them sat on my chest. They tugged at my clothes and when one of them got a shirt button open they tugged at my flesh. They found my fingers and broke them off, they bit at my nose and ears. In the darkness they worked, efficiently and without haste. As a team

The Escape

Jennifer Feeley

On the shingle
Beaten by waves
He sleeps with his head
Amongst the rocks.

---Hitomaro

I.
I lay with my head
pressed into a thick patch of clover,
my fingers crushing the stars
as if they are fireflies.
My toes pluck smooth blades
of grass and scatter them everywhere,
little arrows
pointing me towards the lake.

II.
I want to be carried away
by the waves of some great body
of water, swaying softly then hard,
hoping to meet the horizon
at a place where my thoughts will
erode into sand.
they removed my arm, and one pushed his snout into my shoulder. The water became cloudy, and when they could carry no more they disappeared back to the surface. I lay there, quiet and still, prey to the rat kings.

I do not think that you really care. I do not believe that it matters. I am not sad, or cold, or lonely, or uncomfortable. I am not very good looking these days either, but I don’t care. I tell you this because when I was alive I did care. I had a name too.

People called me by a name that my parents had given me at birth. It was a good hearty name, that meant prosperity. I think that is pretty funny. I would walk down the street, flipping my shirt collar up, smoking, leaning on buildings, waiting at crosswalks, shooting pool, eating potatoes, laughing out loud, sitting in the back of taxis, sweating in the summer and freezing in the winter, soaking when it rained, drinking tea when it was sunny, taking ladies dancing, going to sleep at four in the morning, winking, drinking, flipping coins in my hands, and my good strong hearty family name and I prospered among the living and I knew that I sure as hell was going some place. I just didn’t know where. I thought then, as you all think now, that I was the chosen one. I tell you this because after all of the tea and cake I am only dead and buried in the sewer, and my cheap suit has outlasted the rest of me.

And every so often the rats sneak up to me when I am resting, and they whisper my nickname in my ear. "Mud," they say, "Mud."
teen magazine

Kanako Wynkoop

14 and I haven't kissed a boy yet
piano lessons for nine years and no life
14 and I still know everything
my sister was lucky she read
teen and watched MTV and sucked at the piano
the mail came today around eleven a.m.
and the new issue of teen arrived
the cover story, learn how to kiss
I don't think my sister will miss this if I decide to read

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I hate the piano
To Follow the Loba path

Elizabeth Paddock

When you are ready
to find your teacher,
your mother, your friend
and lover: to find Loba

You must breathe the quiet.
You must enter Loba's land
intending to stay.
You must be beyond the questions,
must say in your sleep-
"I want Loba. No doubt, no doubt."

You must know her terrain.
Watch her for months.

Learn her shape:
each curve a bend
in the river of her body.

Learn her smell:
the evergreen glow that dilutes in water,
faint musky scent across a stream.

Learn her footprints,
on the paths at dawn.
See the shadows of her dark breath
hanging in frozen air.

Learn how she hunts:
muscles taut, ready to spring
at any opening in the wind.
Where does she sleep and how long
and how deep?
Is it the sleeping death?

You have spent a long time waiting.
Wait longer.
Wait till you can breathe
along with her, miles apart.
Wait until her heartbeats fall
as your feet do, into the earth.
Your energy travels through Loba
until she glows, lighting your path.

Do not imagine you are her only one.
You are not alone in your desire.
Loba knows lovers like God knows sinners.
Loba remembers Eve.

Do not be fooled by her body of nerves,
the sheer strength of her muscles,
the power to stretch distance into solitude.

There is something in your eyes,
your small tender feet,
that Loba watches from the corners of her eyes.

If you practice patience
leave your scent of honey
in the trees around her bed,
your breath as clear as water
at her favorite hunting spot,
your footprints light as dew
on the path.
Loba will want your comfort:
your gentle timidity.
Where does she sleep and how long
and how deep?
Is it the sleeping death?

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