

Winning Poems in 2022 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

4. Light or Humorous, First Place

**Mercurial Poem**

I

I found the poem crouched under the sofa,  
secreting words like bubbles of an expiring fish.  
I tried to coax her out, but she nipped my fingers.  
I shone a light on her shriveled countenance.  
I saw a shredded fin with cat claw marks,  
a torso dented by the vacuum cleaner.  
Shards of crockery punctuated her head.  
She blew a pile of broom dust at me.  
I stressed to think I might have done this to her,  
poor thing, who just wanted to be, not mean.

II

The poem basked in sunlight, contented cat.  
She stretched her spine, yoga style, and yawned.  
I thought she'd like her back scratched, but when  
I approached, she hissed and bared her teeth.  
I lay on grass as close to her as I dared,  
attempted all the same poses. I, too, enjoy warmth  
but too noisy, too much in motion, so imitative,  
I crawled, banished to dark corners of my mind.

III

The poem scuttled up the wall, close to the corner  
near the ceiling, settled there to spin a sort  
of hammock. She rocked back and forth  
then twisted it like a swing. She crafted a jungle gym  
of gossamer ropes she played like a harp. Next  
she spit black ink on the wall. With tiny legs  
she painted a scene of brazen dancers who hurled  
themselves in the air above my head. I fled,  
drew sheets of discarded words over  
my aching brain, tried to tune her out.

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