

HOW GOD IS LIKE A TRUFFLE

Like a goat
 in a stall
with a thoroughbred,
 a truffle sealed
in a plastic
 bag
with a dozen eggs
 or raw
uncooked
 rice. Like
an apple slice
 or piece
of bread shut
 away in an
airtight container
 with brown sugar—
or a small
 bowl of water
placed next to
 the hardened
lump
 and microwaved,
my god
 calms me,
flavors me, restores
 my softness. I tried
to explain to
 my husband
about the love
 animals have
for each
 other. How,
at Christy's,
 the donkey, Vinny,
herds and
 nibbles Love Bug,
white pony who wears
 an eye mask, who
just returned from
 cancer surgery. The
two of them
 in the sun.
The donkey
 nibbled my arm
too, but

never bit. Don sat
across from
me in my room
under a poster of van
Gogh's *Yellow House*,
his eyes
at half-mast.
He couldn't be
less interested
in my "sacred."

To be permeated
with God,
I sit with him. I keep
a red zafu on
the floor.

Take
the waitlist
letter for Lucy's
college, I said
to my husband
and daughter
this morning,
place it
in a sealed
plastic bag
with
an apple core or
dried flower,
wait to open
and there will
be the acceptance
you have been
waiting for.

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MY HOBBY NEEDED A HOBBY

My hobby needed a hobby you know how you get a dog and you have a dog and then Kurt says we need to get the dog a puppy the dog needs somebody

to play with her to teach and then you have a baby bossy baby needs a little baby and littler baby and then like you have a thing that you don't get paid

any money for it's like an art you do it for the love of it sooner or later though it gets you know it starts to make you nervous you get caught up

in politics it doesn't matter that there's not any money it's prestige rankings and who's up and who's down so that thing you were calling this

vocation the thing you did for art's sake you know you didn't want to get paid for because you loved it so much it was like you loved

the work it felt like play I mean you looked up after several hours you were so absorbed you didn't even know where the time went then it

gets onerous because this currency is being traded and you know it is starting to get heavy it starts to be as heavy as coins people even use expressions

like coin of the realm my stock went up or my stock went down or somebody or other didn't use their political capital all that kind of crap so now

your hobby your art needs a hobby that feels completely free and doesn't have anything to do with the buying and selling attaching your worth to some

chips or tokens markers or whatever so you've got to get a new free thing where you get completely absorbed and work feels like play well so I found

one my pet the pet little sister of my first pet is some horses well then I get to the stable forget about time waste like five hours at a pop after a few years

start wearing a watch but am not going to worry yet so I am washing off Berto the horse that I am helping to pay for but still it feels pretty free I don't

go to horse shows I'm like sixty-three years old people consider it a miracle that I'm even staying on which I'm barely doing my trainer and I spend half

the time gossiping to the point where we decide we probably have to go to lunch so I am washing Berto off and Berto is starting to squirm a little about

his pet out in the pasture he can just make out through the fence I can tell

he has a pet the horses all have buddies his pet is Vinny the donkey and when

I went to get him before my lesson he was chasing the red horses because
he thought they were bothering Vinny he does tolerate Love Bug the white pony

though because Love Bug is Vinny's little brother his inseparable companion
his familiar I go to get Berto he's in a herd of the black horses and one starts

to pin its ears and foment a little stampede but I yell my hateful yell and it stops
and Berto walks peacefully to the gate with me he acts sometimes like I'm his buddy

which makes me shine all over never mind the transactional aspect the treats and
carrots I'm loaded down with most of the time ban the word "transactional"

and also any consideration of the fantasy lovers mine and probably my husband's
not exactly pets or little brothers the priest tonight said we each have an angel

this is really the first I'd heard of it and I started picturing my crush
bathed in light oops no my angel I mean my real one though I don't think

it he she is my pet but more like I'm its I'm surrendered as somebody's distraction
from their day job their support poodle crossing buddy safe space spice cake

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HIS CHEMIC BEAUTY

Your chemic beauty burned my muscles through.
—William Empson

Oh I don't know,
I'm just not that enthusiastic

about eating meat anymore,
my husband says, and I think

what is the weird
visceral pull for me, sucking

on bones of an animal that
recently ran around a barnyard

in the sun. Creepy. Pleasurable. Viscous.
I eat some red rubbery burst

blood vessels, think fleetingly of lethal bacteria,
salmonella, etc. I wrestled it raw on a cutting board,

trying to remember to use the special
polyethylene one for meat we got when

I was switched onto this diet
from pesce-ovotarian.

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I stand between two cigarettes
after the twelve-step meeting. Lucia's

and Raymond's. We're discussing
Lucia's hypoglycemia. What they

had thought was gestational
diabetes. I stand between two roses,

a man I loved once said. That's
when I realized the woman on

the other side—Franny—was his new
girlfriend. I was frigging glad I didn't

get a chance with him. It would have
ruined my life! I saw him putting

a shine on eight-months-pregnant
Lucia, too. She came in the next week

with her hair all clean and falling around
her shoulders.

+ + +

I live my life between two
injections, one on Friday morning,
one on Monday. Which is not working too

well because each makes me sick.
I'm not fairy-dancing down

Vegetarian Lane anymore.
It's more like pan grease caramelized onions

and my mouth on the thigh bone
of someone who may have struggled

against the knife. Cleaved between the chemo
drug that "may cause lymphoma" and the

biologic that "may cause lymphoma,
rare blood cancers, neurological problems,

MS, heart failure, and death." And if you happen
to have some kind of sleeper

TB when you start taking the drug
or are unwittingly exposed to it,

you're toast. What I mean is I can't
make it down the list of side effects

to grogginess, faint nausea, dizziness,
brain fog, and a shitty headache. I get

stuck midway in the catalog, the dense black print on the
pharmacist's warning sheet before me.

Forget the inch-thick package insert! "Site irritation"—
the least of my worries, right?

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I live my life between two roses, my husband
and this other man. Or my husband
as heterosexual and my husband as
person with “homoerotic
desires”—or the two injections, their
toxins coming at me through a needle from
two sides—I keep a chart of shot sites for each
of my thighs—my elder daughter on
the upswing or the downward
plunge of her bipolar, or my would-be
lover and his two would-be flowers. I gnaw
the juicy bone of a recently
running-around chicken, the stubborn sinew,
blood vessels in my teeth, gristle. Hyper-
plumped-up thigh meat I tear off with
my cutting teeth, my incisors, but
it was raised in “humane conditions” and
done in “gently”
with a head fake and a hatchet. I suck
its fat its juice. It was between two roses.

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