

Christine Stark

Sleep on Big Pine Lake

A bobcat howling across the frozen lake
its wail trailing deep into the black night,
a comet of fear. A small dog in a garage,
the snow, the breath-taking cold, ice smothering it
all—the walk ways, windshields, porch railings,
bottoms of boats turned up like dead fish, naked tree
branches. Why was I there, a girl of four cast into a
small house with a devouring man-child,
a half-eaten woman-child?

Sunsets were severe, casting ochre blades off
the lake, an eye of ice in the middle of nowhere,
northern Minnesota. I waited for night fall,
steely blades of light, the bobcat, the screaming
to begin. The father hitting mother, then protruding
into my room, the clack-clack of the sticks outside
the window, someone knitting, someone rolling die.
I tried to sleep, crouched under blankets, a rabbit or mouse
burrowed against the cold, thinking, would the bobcat
get in the garage? Would I wake the next day?

The Peggy Hill Show

Working out is hard work, too hard.
I don't want to be a car jacker-
god no! My dog clings to me, a baby
ape so fearful of lightning slashing
eyelids all night long so terrible, so dark,
he misses the latest King of the Hill
rerun where Peggy hits the ground with an
unopened dinner mat tied to her back. Someone
ripped the tags off: Do Not Remove Under Penalty of Law.
Oh, it's as serious as a mattress and she paid the price, I tell you.

My god this dog's little ankles bend like monkey
paws. I say read Anne Carson versus working out.
So what if you're fat as a bookend, you know,
the kind they use to achieve unity.
Opening image: man in red, arms crossed, spaghetti
sauce on chin:: closing: someone else also in red
perhaps spilling decadent wine in Olive Garden.
The subtly is stunning, surely worthy of a Pullitzer
depending, of course, on the level and weight
and variance of the space between the red.
How would I know! It rains most all the time.
You're a genius, girl, your feet itching for school,
mostly the bottoms, why waste thought there where
they run lines of acerbic non thought like fish in a
puddle when you have an ape for a dog you could
display at nearly every county fair in the state?

Really, I say, put the cell phone on hold
take pictures of my buttocks. What about
Anne Carson, do you think she lifts
pink weights in the back of her van
hidden from the view of her curious Greek
mythology students? Zeus oh Zeus, you have
nothing on Nanaboozhoo, I say nothing,
not even the red stain on the chin of your chinny

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/1

chin chin or paws so dextrous you'd think they
belonged to the next set of humans who will
take over once *maa maa aki* banishes this
set from the Peggy Hill Show now airing on
TBS. Gawd, she got so sick of Hank and his square head.
Who wouldn't? I ask you who wouldn't and I hear
nothing other than the breath of a goldfish being
sucked down a toilet nine miles away. Oh,
the glories of contemporary life wondering
day after rain soaked day whether McCafe
will renounce the once famous Starbucks lady, pigeon
holing her to a reversed image of a lifetime of wine tasting at
some mediocre pasta bar in the strip mall while the
rest of us, the dear rest of us, tremble in anticipation of
achieving unity and wearing clean green underwear to bed.

(Nanaboozhoo is an Ojibwe trickster spirit)