

POETRY

Another Big Show Soon to Come

Jen Coleman

*Lingcod play the role of 15 million unemployed in this story.
Squirrel monkeys play the role of the carbon economy in this story.
Squid will play the role of the 46 million uninsured in this story.*

Hungry lingcod sway in swells among pinnacles
in an earthquake by no other name than earthquake
off the fourth highest coast of unemployment.
Lingcod do not like dead bait.
Lingcod are the most curious fish by far
near the bottom of the battered economy.

The world takes notice of the lingcod feeling
jobless, the analysis, fish lurking
in the deep, making decisions.
Squirrel monkeys take notice of lingcod
with their “I’m still hungry” grins. Monkeys
see colors they weren’t born with.

Squirrel monkeys see, in a triumph of science,
the heart of hearts burning, the chimney filling
the belly of the mountain.
In megawatt valley, with a hard won share of credit
squirrel monkeys know about nervousness
from the squid and its giant axon.

That a monkey knows. It knows from squid
from a red devil squid stalking fish up the coast.
Say it’s warm, and squid swim
in the warm up the coast near the end of life.
Say the squid in the North are cold
and the end of their lives wash up.

Will a lingcod worry about a crippled
squirrel monkey worrying about
squid? The squirrel monkey
asks *why* its brain is telling it this and is telling it this
right now, this nerve, this educated nerve-ending
educated by a squid.

And the lingcod are all: “thank you squid

for showing science the mechanisms of compassion”
as hourly earnings rise a penny.
Weekly wages fall with outbursts and decorum.
Outbursts hoot-hooting in congress hoot-hooting
on the shore and hoot-hooting on the tennis court.

And the brain watches through the squid and that is how
the lingcod know the squirrel monkey watches,
and feeds itself a plum,
and feeds itself and watches and exclaims, and slides and claps
and watches the lingcod dart in a near-shore lair
dozens in 30 feet of water.

The squirrel monkey watches and knows
and if the monkey goes missing ask the axon
and it will or it will not tell.
And squirrel monkeys in another big show have coal at the heart
to burn, to see in red and green, a triumph
of science, in full color, as the lingcod refuse to let go.

A 50-pound lingcod bit and held on
to a 30-pound lingcod that bit and held a squirrel
monkey in its mouth,
even with the self-inflicted tailpipe affliction,
the tacos del mar affliction, the self inflicted
illness the lingcod holds.

Will the squirrel monkey seeing red bury the carbon
in the belly of the mountain and into the pores,
looking green and red
for curious lingcod to bite in the streets
and wash up on the cold beach on northern shores
where they've never seen squid before?

If it is not about race it is about rage it is not a race.
It is rage it is not a race to rage it is a rage
race. I do not mention
the president at all in this piece.
I saw only the squid chasing the warm waters north
to die on the shore and become picturesque.