

Leah Holleran
In Another Fantasy Outside of Time

we climbed trees at thirty

and got whiskey-drunk in a field of blueberries
celebrating a rebellion made of ink and paint
voices raised in folk songs and fuck yous.

we fought fascism at forty-five
and felt
fifteen
and forgot to fear spectres
of failure and loneliness
but befriended the night
and drove dark desert highways on a bus
sleeping under stars and
planting seeds that might sprout
if another soul behind us
followed in our footsteps

we cleared the air
with words and with work
and the only smoke stacks were
the tiny ones from our lips and
the cigarettes we picked up in New Jersey
and finished in Flagstaff.

we transcended time and rejected
responsibilities
that we deemed distractions from
reality
valuing vitality
and not just our own.

my imagination is of two minds
it mourns what you missed
what we missed
I miss you.
and it wonders if maybe you left the
party on time
before the lights came on and all that was left
was to clean up the mess.

Who are you? she said. I answered no one
but it was a lie.
An easy lie, easier than explaining that yesterday
I was a green-footed toad, and the day before that
I was music when the notes are silent
and the day before that I was the color evergreen
and today
I haven't decided yet.

She still took me home.

Who are you? he said. I asked who do you want me to be
but I already knew the answer.
What I didn't know was if
I was it
because I was only half-pixie
and the other half was gremlin
castrated
and I was trying to love them both the same.

He did.

Who are you?
The answers go missing when
I am the questioner
because there are faces made of stars in the dark
and all of them are mine
and I shed the words like an exoskeleton, and every time,
another skin, pink and tender, is still there underneath
and it longs to be touched
and it likes to be touched
and it fears to be touched
because already multitudes are bursting inside of it
and it doubts whether it can hold any more
and so it wonders Who am I?
The longing and the loving to be touched?

(Multitudes, continued, no stanza break)

by him and her and them?
The indifference like the skins already gone, that says
I am plenty without holding someone else
inside me?

When they ask, who am I?
I say
I contain multitudes.

“Oh, *I* know where you're going,”
says the watcher at the crossroads
with a voice like the wind.
“Do you?” you say. “Please, tell me”

The watcher snickers, their laugh like
a rock when you kick it down the street.
“If I tell you where you're going, you'll never get there.”

What advice can the watcher give? “Only these directions:
From this crossroads, carry straight on, whichever path you choose.
When you reach the gorge of fearing failure
(a gaping maw in the calloused road
you can't—literally can't—miss it)
Push right on past.”

“Through it?” you ask. “Or around?”
The watcher at the crossroads cackles again

“Either way, it'll claim you. If you aren't careful. If you don't keep going.
Then, at the ridge of rejection
walk along it.
Look down at the pretty river
gurgling lies
but don't descend. Then turn to be on your way again.”

You hesitate, but can't help inquiring, “Left or right?”

The rock gets kicked further down the road.

“Then you'll reach the pool of passivity.
Don't drink.
From there, you'll go up.”

“Up?”

“Yes, up. Or down...Yes, or down.”

(A Stone's Throw Down the Road, continued, stanza break)

You don't bother asking which.

"And you won't tell me
where I'll find myself?"

"Oh, I'll tell you *that* dear.

You'll find yourself along the way."