



Emily Leider

Two Poems

While You Were Out

Something alive needs you. The violet
 drooping in its pretty Chinese pot
 reproaches your neglect, as does
 a neighbor's neutered cat,
 armored against progeny and fleas
 who's learned to place her silky trust
 in your occasional good offices,
 the dish of milk left by the door.
 A homeless man rests on your stoop.

The house wants you back.
 Clocks need resetting,
 window sills collect soot,
 newsprint softens in rain.
 A yellow leaflet proffers mushroom sausage pizza.
 Another, neon fuchsia, ballyhoos its
 home-delivered sticky-rice
 and sautéed Happy Family.

Bored, out of sorts, sleep-deprived,
 the red-blinking eye on the sentry
 machine by the phone wants to know why you haven't
 picked up by ring three, or remotely
 called in. *Answer me. Where is she?*

And that big-shot desk-top,
 the house know-it-all, darkly
 sulks in its tent
 as it yearns for Return.
Dits, it rehearses. *Fly-by-night.*
Home, home, Jiggedy-Joan.

Black, with Tiny Blue Flowers

M guided the boat, tan hand on the sputtering
rudder. A green-blue day. Sun, umbrella,
jellyfish, other boats plashing nearby.
Oars slowed by the heft of cargo.
I'd taken on too many clothes,
I can't explain why. Was I planning
to stay?

My red pack
overboard. Did it fall? Did I dump it
to lighten the tow? Jetsam shirts and
bras billow, B-cups, white socks afloat.

Spinning back to retrieve, I reach out,
my arm a crude hook. I grab in the reeds
at dark cloth, at what passes for red.

Things come back to me, M, the boat. We're
heavy again. I scoop up the wet pack plus
one seaweedy shoe,
not just soaked but too huge for a human, a
Godzilla size twelve.

But the prize catch, my black pucker-cloth
bathing suit with the tiny
blue flowers all over,
drifted out
beyond any arm's reach, any-
body.

Emily Leider has recent poetry in *Pearl* magazine. The paperback edition of her biography of Myrna Loy, *Myrna Loy: The Only Good Girl in Hollywood*, is due to be released in July 2012 by the University California Press. A native of New York City, she lives in San Francisco.