

Collected Poems by Mark Statman

Table of Contents

Fly Fishing

Losing Buttons

Please Read This

She Wanted To Be Looked At

Tourist

Click the title of the poem above to skip to that page!

Fly Fishing

I didn't know all the rules
I was breaking and inventing
as love, turning into a river,
turned away
and left the countryside
for the more familiar city.

Did I write love
I meant silence
and music
So I left, returned
unbridled, rose
smiled, turned, clipped, shook
withdrew, mistook
mis-stepped, undid.

But I had something,

a small mouth bass
or a rainbow trout
the river early spring freezing
fingers numb
legs, feelings numb.

This became an unexpected education.
Watch yourself, I heard myself think.
Always watch yourself.

Losing Buttons

if I had a different
sense of things I'd write
with different words

it would still
be about avoiding
which is what I write about
but different words
would add another layer
to the unknown
and unacknowledged

there must be a museum
full of this:
a museum of falling away

I put stones on the graves
of people I don't know
and miss the ones
where my family
would be

I have a stone left
flat and black
so I engrave my initials
on it, put it
into my pocket
then change my mind
and throw it into the river

in the dark
the letters glow
like ghosts

Please Read This

that's how the page started
no salutation
no *dear* or *hello* or
I was thinking of you
just
please read this
but then there was no more
a blank paper page
that on a computer
would have been
an empty screen
that in the sky
would have been cloudless
at the movies
there'd have been no movie
how do you explain disappeared urgency
how do you explain
what doesn't follow
it seemed terrible
yet something to have been expected
surf sounds, wind sounds,
what makes wordlessness so painful
and so normal
the word *please*
it covers it all
we can explain the absent *this*
explain what can't be read
but not the *please*
we can explain
so much of *everything*
but not this
not here

She Wanted To Be Looked At

you name it, he said
as the train left West 4th to go uptown
they've got everything you want
juice, coffee, all that stuff
you like for breakfast
she listened and leaned
on his shoulder
deep breath, her eyes closed
I warned you, he said,
I told you you weren't
going to sleep enough
you stay up all night with the tv
all your parties
she didn't want to answer
she turned to her sister
sitting next to her
her other side
you know, she said
you shouldn't dress like that
sister still in last night's clothes
both were still in last night's clothes
your tits are *flying* out
men walked by
their eyes dragged to her chest
the sister looked back at her sister
who was leaning against her boyfriend
thought how it was easy for her sister to talk
when *she* already had
someone to lean on
you'll be there, he said,
after that night last night
your music and your drinking and your drugs
but you won't remember a damned thing
your brain just melts
she closed her eyes again
so that's what it was
her brain was melting
her sister's breasts
floated in front of her closed eyes
we've got to take the bus cross town
he said, it's too far for me to walk

Tourist

hubo un milagro, she said,
a miracle
but in such a quiet voice
I had to ask her
to say it again
which she did
she didn't like it like that
a voces (loud)
it didn't seem as true anymore
she looked at me
it seemed just then
she must hate me
must hate anyone like me
she pointed down the road
curving, dusty
she said it was the way to the ruins
I didn't know
if I wanted to go
I already knew
I wouldn't see what she had seen