

Sarah Henry

THE MONSTER IN THE BEDROOM

You wake to see the apparition of someone
you know at the moment of his death,
or a burglar wearing a dark mask.
You keep a nightlight on in the bathroom,
the door open a crack.
A brown recluse spider in the corner
is coming to get you. One killed
somebody's grandmother.
You fear risking catastrophe
by walking on quicksand, turned
inside a rolling cement mixer.
Poison snakes, crisscrossing a lake.
Dread of amputation, which means
separation from the parent.
The fear of dying made worse
by hitting a doorknob from behind,
cracking the spinal column.
Quadriplegic in a wheelchair.
Afraid of saying something that is not
a good subject for idle talk.
Then someone says,
"No harm done."
He laughs.
This is called, "Denial."
If you kill someone, you will die,
and then you won't live.
Fear of dying of thirst in a desert
as your limbs are carried off by four horses.
Driving is the most dangerous thing you
ever do, except smoking.
Piranhas will eat you alive if you are
lowered into a tropical stream in a cage.
A tapeworm will eat you alive while
you munch on a sub. Its forked tongue
will come right out of your mouth.
Every stomach pain could spell

POETRY

appendicitis, with five days in the hospital.
It's a bad day when you sit naked
in the doctor's exam room and hear
the awful truth. You are nude in public
in a dream. It's the same as when your
jeans slid down slightly in a card shop
and you mooned the hearts and flowers.
Dream of test failure.

Nightmare of being seated in a restaurant,
no prices, no menus.

Relief when a waiter passes by,
hoisting plates of spaghetti.

I was walking home from my piano lesson
when a man in a blue car rolled down
his window and called out,
"Hey, little girl, want to see something
you never saw before?"

Running home to safety.

Dream that Hitler was coming to my office
and how I escaped to a barn.

Fear of botulism from a bulging can.

Tetanus from a rusty nail.

Right before your eyes, as you were parked
at a red light, a rat came out of a sewer,
crossed the street in front of your car,
and disappeared down another sewer.

Fear of pouring money down a rat hole.

Being chased down a deserted beach
by a closure fairy with his black hood.

Trolls breathing in the shadows.

Troll dolls came from Denmark.

We called them DAM dolls.

They had wild, orange, stand-up
hair. It was fun to be able to hold them
and manage them with my hands.