

New Poems by Elinor Nauen

Contributed by Elinor Nauen

Motor Mouth

Orson Welles has no trouble with bricks
level-headed as he is
yup he can pile about 30
in a cave of minor nationality

where a thousand posies
approach Sappho, who leans on a doorpost
like a cowboy shoots up a bar
ransomed & redeemed

cher chez la femme
behind the house is a woman
nothing is behind the house
I am the house & twice as safe

or take Italian cinema
red wine & guns, liars & lira —
every day when the sun comes up
I dress in my potbellied two-tit stove

What We Carry

X--- thought everyone despised him
because he was black
and Z--- that she didn't get her fairshare
because she was female

it was because they were jerks
there's always a prize
if we slice thin enough
I want the prize for being awake right now

the cat's perfect weight
cancels my breath
the coffee's french'd & milk'd
I hate that picture

he isn't thinking of me
what else should his life be?
what should my life be?
I could do 100 pushups

I could not do 100 pushups
I could take a bath
the inland sea, they called it
but I could say the coastal prairie

the high plains
of giant sky and prairie dog
big wind & mini pasque
the bull was a bully

only the corn was the same size
as me
I love corn
now the cat is on the floor

now the coffee is in my brain
now my brain is striped with--

now he turns over
to think of me at last

The Poem Not Called Jacaranda
for Susie

I love your book so much
Ei
that I want to borrow your
titles
for my own poems
still
don't
know
what jacaranda is
that
my failure
or yours

sorry, E

the E who is I
as I am the E
who is L

your white thighs
roll & tip & move
like mine
upended
how terrific to have
hip
sockets & a pelvic floor

pelvic clock
ibis
mermaid
swan
my life is less
stirring
than a German bodybuilder
after 25 years
we get
the jokes
& purple jacaranda

Show Me, Shower Me

what arrives
in a cascade?
rain shower, snow shower, love shower

suddenly the sun
lances ice
so bright you can't see

tumbles through
trees air
that redhead's hair

into your eyes:
that's a sun shower

The Trouble with You Is

you're not the warmth
of Louisiana in March
where we run across tar
to get out of town
with a cat on a leash
pretty
primal: are there
trees?
are there plants?
are there birds?
Yes! cuckoo or mockingbird or catbird —
something gray —
something with —
a long tail —
a cat is nature too
straight south of Minnesota snow

Great Day in the Morning

I reckon
I forgot
to marry
Ben Johnson
& now
he's dead
that boyish
lanky
cowboy
a real cowboy
&
a movie cowboy
&
a Republican
an icon
can be
whatever he
damn well
wants to be
yes ma'am

Bride May Be Icy

What if what
flashes

past
when you lie

are small debts unpaid things
lost remarks misunderstood

like everyone, I regret
only the undone

what have you forgotten?

only what I wish to forget

what have you lost?
only what I wish to abandon

what do you regret?

The Big Joke

the big joke
of all the small betrayals
is what they
add
up
to:
someone else entirely
who doesn't mind
being
dead
or over there
or over
looked who doesn't
mind
manners or rules or
the quick change
just out of sight
"her life" "your life"
might be sleeping lying
wait
for
the last betrayal

Â

Train Poem

the V train takes
me & 3

Korean women
to incorruptible Augustine

it's not as fun to be god
now that choosing

colors for monkey butts
is done

maybe god could focus
on better haircuts

or tell me if I should go blonde
or to Jamaica

where I will fall
for a handsome rasta

I could never marry

a man rushing to his grave

I could never marry
a man who didn't trip