

Four Poems · *Laura Jensen*

AMAZING

I was myself, the tattered who can.
The sky autumn, the fog
standing down in the pool of bay.

Far up, many stories,
your desperate flag was waving,
signalling for rescue.
But only polishing the inside
of the sliding door.
You came outside
in your white uniform.
And all of us were watching
from far below – a lady
with a permanent, an older lady
with a red umbrella
against the sun, myself
who just mailed two letters. You became

amazing, a gyration
of the psyche. You were cleaning,
so many stories above us,
and it was not your house.
It became like a circus,
you were flying from the trapeze
and it was not your house.

If it is your house
and you wear the uniform
only to clean
then my poem is meaningless,
then uniforms know no respect
in this town, then your psyche

performs something dangerous
to us, to our country
of women and poets, something
aberrant and cruel.

No one could be so cruel to a poet.
You were performing, walking
a tightwire of the mind,
raising cleaning to its rightful
elevation, polishing
the windows, so many stories
above us, when it was not your house.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

The rajah, when he meant to honor
(or ruin) his subject, presented him
with a white elephant
he could not sell nor give away
nor kill, but must feed and shelter
all its days in leisure
for it must not labor under the lash
nor perform in public for money.

In the beginning, there were the almond
and poppyseed muffins

I bought for Thanksgiving, telling
my mother she could pay me for them later.

Then I kept telling her no, it does not matter.
And the day after, I went to my mother's
to pick up vegetables and fruits
from my sister, and a pale aqua scarf