

Four Poems · *Marianne Boruch*

AT SCHOOL

They write and read to know everything worth knowing
each fall past snow to spring.

The yellow buses stop
and children wander off, this place a dream
their first dream
empties into. But the teachers
so real and quick, open their trunks
wide to the parking lot—woven bags they carry in,
books, bottles, all business this
early, the dim hall, dim
until they step there.

One teacher doubts herself, and the children
love that darkness.

She stands at the window
looking out so much she could be weather
or a kind of light they've seen in pictures,
scary, depending.
The room slips then, like ice
on ice. They fiddle at their desks,
walk around, know she knows at heart who
they are—fish or giant
ancient squids at seabottom, not kids at all.
Certain moments her darkness floods
the whole room at a thing
one says by accident
or because it sounded close. They watch her
whisper back
the awkward word or phrase, whatever it is,
whatever hung in the air those twenty seconds
like a kite wounded,
coming down.

At recess, she's in there, quiet.
She's in there, I know
she is, two of them say, two
who should be out on the playground, screaming.
Not one of them moves
though they want to—oh, they want to.
It's neither happiness
nor sadness
how they lean their heads
against her door that way.

GEESE

They open their beaks and something comes out—
a long ribbon.
And nothing to do with fear, what
they see up there.
It's like breathing to them
to swoop and glide,
a full bellows in those bodies
gives out a great foghorn.
A boat too lost in the water
might mistake it
for rescue, and signal hopelessly
with a flag, that flag
once a shirt.
To them, such a tiny flapping thing below
on the blue expanse
is—
no, not a wing.
Still their fine broad voices circle
and come down.
Oh heart of the world
briefly,
as the heart is pierced.