

NIKI NEEMS

Like a Built-In Doubletake

*after "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter" by Ezra Pound
after Li Po*

Sometimes moss grows near the gate, near the roses. Sometimes, where no grass grows, moss fuzzes the bare wet earth, even in the footpath, where I am growing still. Because it makes me want to lie, I drag my feet enough to pull smooth stones along. Even if I force myself to gather force, even if I stop and scrape with my heel back toward myself, even if I kick to dig deep, still the soft green holds.

Sometimes must be recognized for its singularity. Sometimes must be kept in a jar with a punctured tin lid. Even if you haven't been trapped, even if you've never set up camp on long wind sand, anything put in your mouth must hold, must be both flower and stone. The humid secret of any cloud world is both a heart flapping wildly to reach pink sky and a hedged bet.

Sometimes wants a hurried hundred scratches and the tentative placement of color. A hero to pull up just shy. Stubborn and wayward, I write again: please let me know beforehand. The roses need tending, and the morning glory beg to be counted. I write again, into what never stops moving, not to prove anything but pretending, because pretending is an unfinished conversation and sometimes all life wants is more life.