

## Rachel Bush

### 'All my feelings would have been of common things'

All my feelings are of common things  
of the clock going on, of the next  
meal or the last one, of the washing  
on the line and if there's enough heat  
to dry it, of how to clean a lawnmower  
just enough to make the Salvation Army  
man want to take it away, with old grey  
grass stuck to the blades, the tyres that hold  
dirt, like cleats in walking shoes. Also  
a dryer I bought forty years ago,  
I stick the manual and the expired  
guarantee inside the metal drum.  
All those clothes it turned and churned, the lint  
that it trapped in its door. I once thought  
many things would make my life happier  
and now one by one I will let them go.

### Tourist

The tourist lies and lies. She makes up  
stories of her stay in Venice, talks  
of canals, the gondolas, and oh the smells,  
but the clean, spotless former convent,  
the dormitory where twelve women slept  
in beds with immaculate sheets, told  
to have lights out by 11pm,  
compelled by a fierce nun nearly five  
feet tall. The tourist lies about smells  
in Venice because the truth is, well,  
just itself. Truth floats like scum on sea  
water.

With her brothers she once folded  
paper boats. Each held a small lighted  
candle. They let these boats float free  
on an outgoing tide. They stood on sand,  
feet wet, watched the lights in the dark till  
it was too cold to stay. Where the boats  
ended up she does not know.

She'll send  
postcards, emails and texts—images  
of sinking buildings, singing gondoliers  
San Marco and The Doge's palace.

She lies from a desire to oblige.  
The lights of her lies bob out to the open sea.

### A Song from Lapland

How often in summer I met my lover  
in secret and fir forest by Lake Saimaa.  
My lover looked after eight reindeer  
he thought he was Father Christmas.  
We rode light as bells in his sled  
he held my gloved hand under  
thick blankets of animal skins.  
Sometimes we wanted vegetables  
but made do with salt fish instead.  
How glad I was to sit beside him.  
We rubbed fat into our embroidered  
boots to keep them waterproof.  
How often I met my lover in secret  
when snow covered the ground.

### Stepping out

If you would open your curtains,  
if you could just go outside.  
But you don't  
you can't.  
If you could step out  
of your own house  
your own skin,  
lay your accumulated habits  
and personality on the floor,  
say of a hotel foyer,  
for someone else to find  
after you have gone,  
light and lithe, into what  
ever's there, perhaps a spring  
morning, pink trees surprised  
by blossom. The best spring  
is in your own high  
free step.