

Classic Poetry Series

Jenny Factor
- poems -

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Jenny Factor()

Jenny Factor became interested in poetry from a very young age. In first and second grade, she began to study seriously with Poet-in-the-Schools, Myra Cohn Livingston, who sharpened her eye for imagery, and ultimately helped her practice sonnets, pentameters, iambics, and falling meters with daily exercises on the page.

At Harvard College, where she was the only incoming freshman admitted to Seamus Heaney's master class, Factor received an A.B summa cum laude, studying Anthropology on Heaney's advice, and completing special projects in Spanish translation and writing for young people. Later, she supported her family and her writing as an archaeologist, a preschool teacher, and a Web editor and journalist.

Jenny received her M.F.A. in Literature from the Bennington College Writing Seminars. Her graduate thesis became her first volume of verse. Her second collection is almost complete.

Jenny's (poetry) poem collection, *Unraveling at the Name* (Copper Canyon Press), won a Hayden Carruth Award and was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award. Factor's poems and reviews have appeared in the *Paris Review* and more than a dozen anthologies, including *The Best American Erotic Poems* (Scribner, 2008). Her work has been supported by an Astraea Grant in poetry

Battle Of Will & Exhaustion, Mother & Child

Two knights surrounded by dinosaurs
are cornered in the kitchen--all threat and bluster.
Action figures always act
even as night tries to soothe them under.

I am the one who laid a nervous hand
on a child's exhausted threat and bluster.
The bunk bed creaks as the story settles,
as night's cool hand tries to soothe us. Under

a Seussian drone I am thinking, anxious,
about someone with a nervous hand.
Will he sleep? Will he sleep? When will he sleep?
The bunk bed creaks as the shipboard settles.

What is the myth of a woman alone
who's thinking through Seuss? Her thoughts are drones
serving a terrible queen of their own.
Can she sleep? Will she sleep? When will she sleep?

The toilet's crystalline drip and the ghosts
of the walls are a myth. And this woman, alone,
is a captain steering too close to the rocks
where the ocean is serving a terrible queen.

Up on the cliff of a Friday midnight
the toilet's crystalline drip and the ghost-
ly snore of the sleepy one riding his dragons
can steer this sad captain away from her rocks.

"Rock me to sleep," cries the wild girl at twenty
up on the cliff with a young man at midnight.
Far below, waves from the sea of Alaska
snore back and forth filled with moon's breath and dragon.

Up on the cliff of a Friday's midnight,
rock me to sleep with the sound that the fridge makes.
Warmth of a tub, hole of a drain.
Memories sleep in the seas of Alaska.

Action figures always act
upon the cliff of a Friday's midnight.
Warmth of a bird's heart. Chill of a stone.
Two knights surrendered. The dinos snore.

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Settling In

How I loved
each bare floor, each
naked wall, the shadows on

newly empty halls.
By day, my head humming
to itself of dreams, I cleaned and

scrubbed
to make life
new; dislodging from the corner,

the old
moths and cicadas
pinned to the screen, the carcasses

of grasshoppers
dangling from beams,
and each windowsill's clutter of

dried beetles
and dead bees. But,
through each opening, each closing door,

the old life
returns on six legs, or
spins a musty web as it roosts over

a poison pot, or
descends from above
to drink blood in. This is how it

happens: the
settling in—the press
of wilderness returns to carved-out space, to skin.

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Song Beside A Sippy Cup

In the never truly ever
truly dark dark night, ever
blinds-zipped, slat-cut,
dark-parked light,
you (late) touch my toes
with your broad flat own
horny-nailed cold toes.
Clock-tock, wake-shock.

In the ever truly never
truly long long night, our
little snoring-snarling
wild-child mild-child
starling-darling wakes every
two, three (you-sleep) hours,
in the never truly ever
truly lawn brawn fawn dawn.

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