

Problem Poems

1.

They are a danger to the world,
both bearing and enjoying
this weight on their shoulders,
like Atlas under it all at midnight—
in every stage of disbelief—
searching for love
in the sudden circle
of a yellow streetlight
when everywhere around
there is darkness.

2.

Beyond the city limits
some speed without headlights.
They feel their way through the night—
reading minds, gripping steering wheels—
all along the hard road,
even if it means they might
hurt someone else
who also feels.

Others threaten—
with outstretched arms—
to jump cliffs
if they aren't given
what they demand:
courage, strength, a dream
so hard to believe
it will ruin the eyes
and keep a body
awake at night.

3.

When some of them were born,
they were abandoned
because they cried
too much. If they survive
even a few lives longer—
saying all the things
no one wants to hear—
their pouting mouths
are washed out
with soap.

Then they are
slipped into dark files
because they will not do
what they are told.

4.

Eventually,
without anyone knowing,
they gather in the tight corners
of a long, hard day.

They snarl and claw as they reach
for air and hope and light.
They are tired and hungry,
so very hungry.