

## Three Poems

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*These three poems are written from the perspective of a person whose country is on the verge of economic collapse. They were taken from the news, and describe how it feels to be living in the belly of the empire while it is burning.*



9/16/08

The country on the brink of possible financial collapse,  
I get a pedicure because I have some sort of a fungus  
On my big toes. It's really disgusting  
How frail this economy is when we are supposedly the richest  
On the face of the planet. I pity the workers at Lehman  
Brothers, the nail-biting workers at AIG, but I pity the children  
In Iraq in the early 1990's until today a lot more. When I worked  
In finance, I could see this coming miles ahead, but no one  
Wanted to listen to a little marketing person who always  
Had coffee stains on her pinstriped suits. But what does it matter  
What I said, or didn't say, or thought or breathed? If I told,  
Really told, people what I thought was going to happen,  
Would they even care or believe it for a minute? Would I?  
I am here with my new feet, which are a lot better.  
I am drinking a seltzer and listening to Keith Jarrett, nothing  
Spectacular, nothing that I will remember. I have my mental  
Faculties back, and if I weren't a lowly adjunct, I could, in fact,  
Be considered dangerous. I'm not dangerous. I ate a whole pound  
Of tomatoes, and that's all I'll eat today. I do not care to civilize  
My eating habits at all--this is where I draw the line. I draw it  
Also at the level of sex, which is still really abstract to me,  
And I like it that way. Rome is burning, Rome is burning,  
And all I smell are the black tea leaves brewing in a pot given  
To me by my great Aunt Lee, as I sit and read the news from inside  
This temporary dwelling-place, 38 years old in real years,  
In a real time period where history fleshes itself out like a bull.

9/25/08

Trying to be good.  
Trying to rid oneself of all self-righteousness.  
It isn't easy, when a woman in front of you  
Takes too long at the bank.  
I see from the younger poets that you can  
Basically write about anything at any time  
In any way. No images required. This is a good thing,  
Or, maybe a neutral thing, at the beginning of the fall  
Of an empire. Or is that self-righteous, to think I know  
When the fall will happen? But it will happen, and I may  
Be alive for it, writing poems, singing songs, the cat,  
Always, the cat. A branch tumbles out of a tree.  
It is not a sign. It's just a branch that someone someday  
Will cut up into little pieces and drag out of the yard.

9/26/08

There is no bailout yet. We are all waiting anxiously  
For what is next. The presidential debate is tonight.  
I predict the bailout will not ultimately help things,  
But what do I know? I eat tuna, the cats eat their food.  
Maybe soon we will all be eating rice, who knows,  
I've done it before. Is it shocking to me, how bad  
Things are and have gotten? I have been preparing my  
Whole life for these events, ones that Damon will have  
To miss, because he is dead, but he was preparing,  
Too, before he was on heroin for six months and died.  
The world is crazy, it is a mystery, this is what Lizzette  
Has to say. I have nothing else to say, really, as the wind  
Blows the first leaves out of the trees. It is autumn,  
Not fall, not yet, and I take some papers over to the desk  
To be graded. There is nothing clever to possibly add.