

To the Otter Who Snuck into the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden and Ate the Koi by Kelsey Andrews

I'm told there are pictures of you on Facebook
scuttering through Chinatown like a long rat,
tourists happy to see a little nature.

I don't have a phone for Facebook
and I never saw you as I ghosted
those same streets, invisible.

On stony beaches
where rich people are housed,
otters live under docks and smell terrible,
musk and rotting fish.
I wonder, do they roll in the mess like dogs,
silver spangles adhering to their fur?

In the Garden, your concrete-bruised
paws were soothed by moss and mud.
All those koi caged in a stream
that didn't go anywhere.

I too was feral
but am caged now in luxury,
an SRO inspected periodically
for bedbugs.

The Park Board tried to catch you
but you winkled the fish
from their live traps
and laughed at them,
while I must be polite to the social worker
who scrunches up her nose
when I get too near.

Buttons sold to the crowd
were printed "Team Otter" or "Team Koi".
One you ate was fifty.

You tore the liver, the fatty bits
from the bright stomach,
left the rest.

Meanwhile they're trying to tame me,
medicate me well
enough to get some kind of job,
stop winkling money from Disability.

You disappeared one day.
No one saw you leave.

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