

The Dream of Beautiful Scooters

by Karah Stokes

1.

I walk through a grove of them in my dream.
All are old and lovely, patinated fenders curved
like dinosaur hipbones. None is rusted,
though I see silvery metal showing
through their ice cream-colored paint:
strawberry, lemon sorbet, milky aqua.
Lined up in a row, they wait for me to choose
one to ride away on.

The first are things to pedal, like kids' toys
or swan-painted paddleboats. Then I realize
what those gears on the handlebars mean.
One is three-wheeled, with a milk crate in back
for my groceries; others are larger, like mini Model T's.
We each choose one, maneuver past
the antique anti-theft by luck alone.
We are meant to have them.
Did I mention we're in Nice, or sunny Italy,
somewhere I've never seen?

2.

My husband's bumping into stuff
downstairs. Thieves or vandals would sound
more purposeful. It's the ADD
that's made his life hell, given him seven songs
so far, four books of poetry, and me.
Down in the sleeping street, the houses
look the way they looked a hundred years ago.
There's a clear star above that roof
where the sun will rise. Ours is the smallest on the street,
with ten-foot plaster walls, deep unpainted moldings,
and four of the prettiest mantelpieces I've ever seen.

I never thought I'd be here.
What killed my great-grandmother at forty
I keep at bay by one inexpensive pill a day.
What killed my kindest great-aunt takes more pills,
but they're cheap, and work for me so far.
I've found a man who's not afraid of me. He loves
my oddest ways, has made every quirk a sacrament.
Our jobs are solid. We can almost pay the bills.

3.

In that French grocery where I find the scooters, I buy
a baguette too beautiful to eat. The bike I take makes for
a fast getaway, cuts through the sudden ice (Ice?)
Like a hot knife. It's a turbocharged Zamboni.