

Onward to Floodwood
A collection of random poems
By Katherine L. Barrett

Chapter One

Fuzz

Fuzz the deer from across the years,
Thousands, in fact, through geologic time
She comes in a different form to make real the fears
Of humans, so that they know nature and their crime

Once alive on Planet Earth, she evolved long ago
Among the Placoderms, mosses, ferns,
She even saw life emerge and disappear, when species went where no one knows
Five extinctions: Ordovician, Devonian, Permian, Triassic, Cretaceous
But the 6th one, it is underway, she warns

Recovery of the earth is not rapid, Fuzz must say,
Diversity, evolving, adapting-animals each have their own way
However, you humans cannot delay!
“I am here to see a young girl, but for long I cannot stay.”

Fuzz the deer, of the western wind,
Hails from the Planet Zephyr
She comes to share her story,
the story of extinction, to an ordinary girl

Each visit from Fuzz is not the same
One day a deer, the next a long-gone fish
She does this, to make humans see, not to enact shame
Yesterday she was a Pyrenean Ibex, extinct at the turn of the century,
The next a Zanzibar leopard, the day after a Madeiran white butterfly

But I only represent these legacies,
You can never undo what you have done
Once I am gone, I am never to be seen again...

Chapter 2
Earth Man

In the floodwood plains the Earth Man stays,
canoe, oar, and eyes and hands and feet are all he needs
For living among the coastal dunes the cottonwoods sing of olden tunes

When man remembered his roots

Floodwood is river, pond, land and all
It is where Earth Man finds his heart
Black terns nest in the dunes
And the skimmers and darners guard the bulrush,
while the damselflies glide over the lilies

In Goose Pond Earth Man lives
He is not seen but once every few years
when a human who wants to learn passes through
There is an island, at the entrance from the lake, where he waits

Two girls, both ecologically-astute, were kayaking the blue waters of Floodwood
where one was looking at vials and watching the bugs
and the other was eager to paddle on through
The one who was steering did not see the Island

But the one with the bugs wanted to keep going
“Look!” straight ahead, she declared
Dunes with cottonwoods and fire pits!
Nonsense, said the other, there is only Lake Ontario ahead

But the girl with the scuds and damselflies and water bugs insisted:
“Kate, look, why don’t you see?!”
Right before our eyes, the Odonata and Ephemeroptera,
with man and brother, they together keep the peace”

Kate replied, “Sure, that all sounds nice, but really you must be mad!
For there is nothing but water ahead of my eyes.
Why do you insist that something is there, when obviously it is not!

The girl who loved the bugs and things you cannot see,
Decided right then, to be who she was meant to be.
She lay down the paddles and asked that her bugs be free,
Stood up, stretched her fingers, and dove into the river-mouth in peace

Kate gasped as she watched her friend leave the boat,
But not just leave, she disappeared, into the water,
As if she was a water bug herself
“Where are you?! Come back!” she cried incessantly.
But there was no response, for the girl entered the island of dunes and
cottonwoods and beach grass.

The girl who loved bugs laughed as she dove into the water,
the currents from the Lake Ontario swept away her old reality
She was now in the company of the Earth Man.

He stood at the shores of the island, where the young cottonwoods danced in the wind
She walked through the shallow clear water and felt the sand tickle between her toes
Amphibious, she crawled onto the sandy land and was now on the Island

“Bug girl, you’ve been gone too long,” said the Earth Man, “Why did you leave us for the humans?”

She twisted her brow and thought very hard, but all she could say was:
“I don’t know.”

“Welcome back home, my friend, for the damsels and dragons and mayflies have anxiously awaited your return!”

The bug girl slowly turned her head and beheld the island, the shore, the sea.
And she cringed as she looked behind her, to find her friend, frantically searching for her
Why can’t she see me? the bug girl asks.
Earth Man frowns and says: “Only those who truly see may see the grandeur of the hidden shores.”

The bug girl cried out toward the kayak that held her friend: “Kate! I’m over here! You just aren’t seeing us!”

“She cannot hear you,” the Earth Man says, “And she will learn her own way to find you.”

“But she is my friend, and we have to get back to the truck, for our crew awaits.”

The Earth Man looked troubled, but Aesh and Ischnura flew over and landed on his shoulder.

“Joshua,” said Ischnura, the beautiful narrow-winged damselfly, “Bug girl must go back to her people to finish important work. She is here now, to share with us the news and warnings that Fuzz once spoke of.”

The Earth Man nodded solemnly. “Yes, I know that is the way. Bug girl, come with us to the top of the dunes, and tell us the new story of the humans.”

Bug girl wished she could bring her friend here, but it was no use. Kate was so accustomed to seeing the end result of things, and not the actual process. But, it was not up to Bug girl to fix how people saw things.

Earth Man extended his hand to her. “Please, we only have so much time.”

Bug girl nodded her head and followed willingly up the slope of the dune. Ischnura and Aesh flew alongside their human companions. For a moment, Ischnura wondered how her life as a human would

have played out. But, looking at Bug Girl, she knew life as a winged insect involved fewer worries than life as a human.

“Bug Girl, we have no more views of endless water and wetland,” said Earth Man. “Look over there,” he said, pointing to the south, “roads, houses, dug out pits. We can’t lose our home!”

“I don’t want you to lose your home either! The work I do, we don’t have much say in what developers do with the land.”

Earth Man was visibly not satisfied with her answer. “What is the point of your work if you just look at the system and do nothing!”

Microplastics!

Bug girl looked at Earth Man with eyes wide open, and tried to convince him. “We not only look, but we analyze and keep looking so that one day we may be able to restore these lands.”

What, thought the Earth Man, does “one day may restore?” It means nothing, since things that may happen, may also not happen. And restore? What kind of self-important jargon is that?

“You MAY do something? Or perhaps your kind MAY NOT do anything?”

Bug girl was getting frustrated, since everything she said only seemed to make Earth Man more disgruntled. “I am only one person; what do you expect me to do?!”

“TO CHANGE!!!” shouted Earth Man. “What good is it if you talk to the dragonflies and damselflies but you do not act on anything you say? It is empty, a void of perhaps, maybe, tomorrows...we don’t have anymore time for this.”

“I want to help, so tell me what I should do!” Shouted Bug Girl, exhausted from this conversation.

Meanwhile, Kate was frantic on the shores of Floodwood. She made sure their boat was secured on the sandy beach, and she ran across the beach grass searching for Amy.

“Amy! Amy! Where are you!”

No reply. Just the sounds of Lake Ontario’s waves.

“What did I miss?” Kate thought to herself. “What if I am responsible for her going missing?” She reached for her GPS and sent a message to Brad and the rest of the crew.

“This is Kate. Amy is missing. I don’t know where she went, or how it happened. I’m at the mouth of Floodwood, since that is where I last saw her.”

TO BE CONTINUED... :)

