

MENKE KATZ

Old River

Even the old river complains life is short.
The fate of man, stars, beasts and stormlit mountains
moans in the shoal waters of the riverside.
The old river is a true friend of the doomed.

Cows in their old age, the grandfolk of the herd
with much mooing and little milk, old barrens
at five, beggars of pity, milk slaves at the
mercy of the skinning knife, all who drag the dust

of the road on their way to the slaughterhouse
are welcomed by the river to quench their thirst:
Bearded goats with broken teeth, priced only for
their raw hides, are of no use even to God.

Sheep, meek-eyed preachers who preach peace all their lives;
castrated steers raised for beef, bulls breathing fire,
face the butchers in white—the angels of death.

River willows offer wild grapes for their last meal.
Calves, jolly children with bells on, unaware
they toll their own death, leap and cheer and marvel
as if the slaughterhouse were a wonderland.

FRANCES OUELLETTE

Little Things

I've had
So many dreams
That got caught
In little things
Like the amount of time
From here to there
And having the rent due
Unaware
Of weeks that drift
And mounting golden air