

SALLY SMITS

MEDITATION ON LOOSE CHANGE

toll

a crescent can be a bowl, can be a scythe. the pennsylvania turnpike
unspooled toward night sky. geese and cars honk on, headed away.
she's been driving since day broke over his third story window, leaving
the same story for a different story. one dangling quarter-moon, stars
like coins in the glovebox. at the tollbooth, will there be enough to get home?

moon

like god shook out his sunday jacket pockets and they landed here:
a bus shelter in the dark, the weight of him pinning her
to the plastic fogged wall. drunken scottish stars teetered
from the sky, the wind an uncertain howl asking the moon *who*
are you, who are you? his mouth an answer on her neck.
the story told another way: make the moon a tarnished nickel,
start with the girl on a train, headed for collision, start with the man
on a ruined sidewalk, feeding pigeons from his backpack.
both of them counting out their hours left on this mountain,
while a bankrupt god scrapes for his two pennies.

tithe

a bargain struck, then: ten percent for tenfold. *what the lord giveth*
the lord also taketh away. what kind of unsteady bargain is that?
what she gave was gasoline, quarters for the toll, and thirty-seven cent
stamps. she waited under expectant bloomless cherry trees.
this is a different story, this is the same story.

housetlight

just off the highway, in the pink corner house, a blind sailor loves
a woman named swanny for fifty years. this is how to survive.
know the weight of each coin. sort quarters and pennies in one pocket,
dimes and nickels in the other. know her knuckles, the way a needle knows
the grooves of an old record. he asks *who?* when she opens the door,

Sou'wester

and he knows but wants to hear her say, today like all the others,
just your old swanny. she is a safe inlet, they are dancing to sinatra
in the living room, cleared of coffee table and davenport. this is how to go on.

parable

one lamp lit, one broom, moonlight dusting the floor. hands not a safe place
for even two pennies. how much we can't hold. shadows and quilt scraps
under the bed. how he slipped through her pocket's torn seam,
even the angels with their clear-water eyes can't spot the lost thin coin.
a woman's thrift like god's. she turns her car around, against
the Vs of geese, to find him. right here, in the middle of the story.