

A Poem for Keepers

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One day, I will let them,
the good things as they forage.
I will let them scamper up and prod at my knees.

Ravenous, these creatures. Unrelenting.
Searching for morsels I do not possess.
Convinced I hold their bidding,
blind to the ways I am barren.

Still, I will let them.
I will allow them to choose wrong.
For I know what it's like to go hungry,
to beg for scraps in the gaps where
nothing can grow.

I suppose I will allow it.
What harm could they cause me?
Their bellies rattle and their lurching snouts
protrude. I pity them, I think.
So hopeful and naive.

There was a time we were alike,
collecting love like street pennies,
whatever could be spared.
Groveling and destitute,
I am no beggar's kin.

They have yet to smell it on me,
my rotting hollows that decay.
They are simple-minded,
for they believe me to be good.
For they stay when I am not.
When I kick at their limbs and shoo them,
they cling still. I detest them.

"LEAVE ME BE!"
They refuse, for their teeth
are sharp and certain.
Don't they know that it is futile,
wasting venom on this snake?

They gnaw and I will let them.
I will wince and writhe and shriek.
I will jeer at them in my wretchedness,
I will allow myself to lose.

It is the purest form of agony,
to soften into peace.
To know the jaded pangs of beauty scorned
and keep the channel open.

One day, I will surrender.
I will abandon my weapons and exchange them for
seeds.
I will let the sun kiss me and accept that it is warm.
I will open the cage and set the wild thing free.

One day, I will let them,
the good things that forgive.
They will let me be their keeper,
and I will let them stay.