



# *Lusus naturae*

by: Gina Marie Bernard

I circle blocks. Lope concrete walks. Pad through parks and playgrounds. Palm galvanized links of futile chain. Practice pantomimes and memorized lines into resplendent mirrors of obscene silver. Feign. Fawn. Soften the crow's feet about my eyes. Perfect a grin that bears no teeth. Push empty carts with tremulous wheels down filthy Walmart aisles. Finger fevered flesh through scissor-severed pockets. Coming ever closer.

Elusive sleep.

Lick fissured lips. Count each fleecy sheep. Censure the callousness of a culpable God.

Reach through dark to the verge of dawn. Rest my ear against its glass. Hark! Mark mice whispering, each to ach—patterned pleas beneath leaf litter. Repeat Yes, yes! I swear, my loves!—a fetish to their hallowed names.

Burn!—Lift chin and turn, tendons taut as piano wire!—Hunt!—Grasp!—Clasp!—Thrust!—Thrash!—Gulp!—Gnash! Pant. Shudder, spent—rent—quaking over tonight's broken body.

Awake, slaked; naked in the light of insufferable sun.

And return—your father, uncle, favored one. Eldest brother's childhood friend. Soda jerk. Tenth-grade crush. Top recruit. Classroom clown. Third-chair shit bassoon.

And while you dread these myths? I'll merely pause for next month's thirsty moon.