

Haiku for the Cat

Will Reger

The fever is on me now.
Since morning I can do nothing
but crack pistachios between
my thumbs and listen
to the woody tinkle of their shells
hitting the floor.
I mutter haiku at the cat
who bats them as they fall.

As antidote, someone sent me
a new book of poems today.
Carefully, I unlimber its spine
the way my father taught.
A few pages, front and back,
press them gently flat and open
not unlike a trembling groom
opens the darkness of his new world.

I ravish the book,
peeling each poem from its page
like a slice of mandarin orange.
I breathe the delicate scent,
take each one into my mouth and
taste its bitter but nourishing skin.
Then, with a violent push I am in—
oh tang of understanding—

And give myself over to this rushing
awareness: something greater is ahead,
something beyond, out of my reach,
something I want more than anything
I have or am or ever will have or be.
This fit of longing and discontent
comes when I am most fulfilled,
most—dare I use the word?—*happy*.

I need to clear my palate, refresh
my head, so I put down the book
and crack more pistachios.
Make up more haiku.

Oh and here comes
the cat.