

For a Traveler

By Jessica Greenbaum

I only have a moment so let me tell you the shortest story,
about arriving at a long loved place, the house of friends in Maine,
their lawn of wildflowers, their grandfather clock and candid
portraits, their gabled attic rooms, and woodstove in the kitchen,
all accessories of the genuine summer years before, when I was
their son's girlfriend and tied an apron behind my neck, beneath
my braids, and took from their garden the harvest for a dinner
I would make alone and serve at their big table with the gladness
of the found, and loved. The eggplant shone like polished wood,
the tomatoes smelled like their furred collars, the dozen zucchini
lined up on the counter like placid troops with the onions, their
minions, and I even remember the garlic, each clove from its airmail
envelope brought to the cutting board, ready for my instruction.
And in this very slight story, a decade later, I came by myself,
having been dropped by the airport cab, and waited for the family
to arrive home from work. I walked into the lawn, waist-high
in the swaying, purple lupines, the subject of June's afternoon light
as I had never been addressed — a displaced young woman with
cropped hair, no place to which I wished to return, and no one
to gather me in his arms. That day the lupines received me,
and I was in love with them, because they were all I had left,
and in that same manner I have loved much of the world since then,
and who is to say there is more of a reason, or more to love?

Source: *Poetry* (May 2014)