

The End of Science Fiction

By Lisel Mueller

This is not fantasy, this is our life.

We are the characters

who have invaded the moon,

who cannot stop their computers.

We are the gods who can unmake

the world in seven days.

Both hands are stopped at noon.

We are beginning to live forever,

in lightweight, aluminum bodies

with numbers stamped on our backs.

We dial our words like Muzak.

We hear each other through water.

The genre is dead. Invent something new.

Invent a man and a woman

naked in a garden,

invent a child that will save the world,

a man who carries his father

out of a burning city.

Invent a spool of thread

that leads a hero to safety,

invent an island on which he abandons

the woman who saved his life

with no loss of sleep over his betrayal.

Invent us as we were
before our bodies glittered
and we stopped bleeding:
invent a shepherd who kills a giant,
a girl who grows into a tree,
a woman who refuses to turn
her back on the past and is changed to salt,
a boy who steals his brother's birthright
and becomes the head of a nation.
Invent real tears, hard love,
slow-spoken, ancient words,
difficult as a child's
first steps across a room.

Lisel Mueller, "The End of Science Fiction" from *Alive Together: New and Selected Poems*.
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