



Photo credit: Alessandra Capodacqua

The other manual

check your equipment for signs of wear
and procure back-ups if needed

bolt as many doors as possible
(or wedge chairs under the handles)

there is the note of course - a poem is good -
send a copy to a friend for safe-keeping

a last bath
dress in white
or go naked entirely

tie your knees together for a ladylike posture
you'll fall forwards if you kneel on your sleeves

if in public, think of the passers-by:
find a cave well back from the picnic area
a ditch screened from the road

do not choose a train full of schoolchildren

decide which way to face
toward the city? toward the ocean?

these are sacred and pivotal matters
you seek the privilege

of ordering these things for yourself
you would steal this from Fate, from Chance, from any and all gods:

they do not take theft lightly
they will try, until the last moment,

to break the belt, dilute the dose, cut the power
you can win, but

you have to start thinking like a god
you know what to do

Considering Lake Canobolas

we alive, we awake
we, the water in the dammed-up lake
we were river once
we were river once
we enter, eddy,

sink and rise
take contamination, host blooms of algae, get on
with our molecular lives
cradle bits of duck shit and blown leaves
or preserve ourselves crystalline despite
the little this achieves
until we reach the wall that waits
patiently with its grey sluice gates
fast or slow
long years or no
tumbled in cold currents we go
bobbed or dragged
over and down
a long blind leap
to the rocks below
back to the river bed
back to sleep
(only one way we can run)
small wonder then
that some of us
jostle and fret
surge and rush
early to slip
over the lip
to get the dread drop over and done

There will be

There will be time for the last walk in the garden
for the spears of lavender, for the little
half-hearted yellow roses

There will be time
to snip
a handful of stems
to bear them gently
into the cool kitchen, to place them
just so in the slim chipped vase There will be quiet
into which will fall small pebbles of sound
the neat chirp of the door, locking,
the wobble of the fruit bowl
set down on the table
the flesh of the last
nectarine
coming away
from the stone, like
fabric tearing There will be
reasons without number, reasons to
stop, every one impeccable There will be
a trapped moth, beating its soft dust of panic
onto the high curtain There will be pain
There will be light flaring
along the windowsill
There will be
nausea
which for once
will be precisely as bad
as it feels There will be the blur
of the wrong focal length, of looking,
too closely, through a flyscreen Inhale
There will be a sense of something almost
becoming clear, resolving, a faint scent of rosemary
Exhale There will be a feeling of coming apart, petal
by petal, dropping and scattering, strewing
the clean tablecloth There will be peace
and infinite understanding, buzzing

on the wrong side of the pane
but then there will be
no more
time

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Melinda Smith

Australian poet Melinda Smith won the Prime Minister's Literary Award for her fourth book of poems, *Drag down to unlock or place an emergency call* (Pitt St Poetry, 2013). Her work has been widely anthologised both inside and outside Australia and has been translated into Indonesian, Chinese, Burmese and Italian. She is based in the capital city, Canberra, and is currently poetry editor of The Canberra Times. Her fifth collection, *Goodybe, Cruel*, will be out in April 2017, also from Pitt St Poetry. The poems in *Voyages* are all from the central section of the book, which is a collection of poems on the theme of suicide.