

Karen Loeb – Two Poems

Items Left Behind

The cigarette butts—snow covered,
the bicycle wheel that the thieves left,
the hose we never brought in but meant to,
a paperback book that will never be read again,
loose change, a green feather from our
parakeet that flew away, a lottery ticket
that would have been worth at least
a thousand if we'd turned it in, a bucket
of sand meant to thwart the ice build-up
on the sidewalk, a Bic pen weeping ink,
the electric bill, unopened, a flat of
impatience I never got around to planting,
a master key to every door I've ever opened
and will need to open. We discover these
things when the snow melts, and we hurry
to make the lottery ticket work, to pay
the electric bill, to revive the impatiens,
to find the bird which has probably taken
the jet stream across an ocean.

Eight Ways to Break Up

1. Say "I no longer want to take a space ship to Pluto with you, let alone meet you at Wide Open Eyes Coffee Shop."
2. Ask "Where are you going on vacation? Then pause. "Sounds like you'll have fun."
3. Offer to dog sit. Give your hourly rate.
4. Explain with sorrow in your voice that there's no more room in your closet— all visiting clothes must leave.
5. Put your foot down. "No you may not still come over to do laundry."
6. Don't ask again for the \$20 borrowed last year. Put it in the loss column and move on.

7. If you find yourselves at the same party wave but do not approach.
8. If you're feeling lonely, do not message your ex, do not phone your ex. That is not breaking up—that is breaking down.

Karen Loeb's poems and stories have appeared recently in *Big City Lit*, *Halfway Down the Stairs*, *Thema*, *Foreign Literary Journal*, and *Hope is the Thing*, an anthology from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press. Her work has won both the fiction and poetry contests in *Wisconsin People and Ideas*. She was Eau Claire, Wisconsin writer-in-residence 2018-2020.