

How to Love the World

Leah Alsaker

They will call you naïve, you
with your soft doe-eyed wonder.
Be doe-eyed anyway.
Make a career out of it.
Throw your best smile at the woman
eating gummi bears at the bus stop,

collect memories like flowers
pressed between the pages of a book,
let your joy bubble as brightly as a child's
lava lamp. Do not despair. There will be nights
when you lay awake (as those
in unrequited love do) watching
your alarm clock flicker, running
your fingers over the scars

spider-webbed across your arm.
The memories groan
with voices like blood.
Try not to listen. Trace prayers
on your worry beads or memorize
the cracks in the ceiling.

If it helps, think about sporks.
(little longnecked halflings
with tines like the legs
of an infant giraffe)
and the other beloved things—red velvet
cake from your sister's birthday, teacup
chihuahuas, streetlights that glow
like starlight hung on a shepherd's hook.

And when that fails, count your breaths
until the morning comes
wander outside as the world wakes
take out your journal,
pick a nearby thistle,
press another memory between the pages.