

Madonna Hamel / SISTER JUPITER'S RUBBER SOUL

1.

When in doubt both feet out.
Leaves of three let it be.

Find the nearest safe adult.
School teacher. Police officer.
Parent. Priest.

A my name is Alice.
Give the dog a bone.
There's a monster in the closet.
The cheese stands alone.

Brothers. Sisters. Paper. Stone.
You can't have any 'cause you asked for some.

Sometimes she feels 485,000,000 miles away.
And too cold for any plants to grow on.
So nobody lives there.
No murderers or guys with guns.
And sometimes she's 11 x bigger than the Earth.
So huge.
So far away.
So nobody lives there.

Sometimes she feels like a big ball that's been stepped on and
slightly squished.

2.

For these, and other reasons, she calls herself
Sister Jupiter.

For these and because Norman,
school room brain yard
head bully of bogus
bitty bitty bits
of book bark
says:

You can't be Jupiter.
Jupiter's a guy.
He's the god of lightning.
He's the warrior god of the sky.
You're a girl.
You can't be Jupiter.

(Then brightens with a benevolent consolation prize —)

You could be one of his moons!

Norman's Greek and Roman myth book goes:

Some of the moons of Jupiter are:

- a) Io. Named after a beautiful young girl Zeus fell in love with. Zeus' wife became aware of his affection for Io. So Zeus protected her by turning her into a cow.
- b) Callisto. Named after a beautiful girl Zeus fell in love with. Zeus' wife became aware of his affection for Callisto. So she turned Callisto into a bear.

c) Europa. Named after a beautiful young girl Zeus fell in love with. Zeus' wife became aware of his affection for Europa. So Zeus turned himself into a bull and carried her away.

How Romantic.

3.

Don't talk to uncles.

Kiss your stranger.

Hurry up.

Don't run.

Walk much?

She moves 29,000 miles an hour.

But a year is 4,740 days long.

She is huge-two-car-garage-real-estate-filling-up-the-space-runaway-ten-track-train-fast-vast-and-reaching-spreading-and-belching-and-grabbing-and-loading-up-the-spaces-with-made-up-languages-and-new-information-instead-of-advice-intruding-psycho-drama-in-ten-parts-harmony-of-the-spheres-put-to-tears-a-twelve-year-old-trauma-case-orbiting-around-the-nearest-star.

She is large.

She can't take a vacation when she feels like it.

And there is the matter of the

Great Red Spot.

a swirling mass of dangerous gases crazy cotton candy
sticking to the roof of the universe and a galaxy of
intensivity zippidy bobity bob bob alongity it
dawned on me I'm closing in on her shellfish it's not that
she's selfish it's just that she feels like her sphere needs
expanding she's got to see clearer than from here where
she's standing because of the lack of attention she's needing
you now to attend to the test of her best instincts finally
got back to her message she's tried to be giving but only
just now receiving it's the space race got going and it's
hard to be sure when you're not known or knowing what you
want haven't had the floor the back door is just round the
corner and in the event of a supernatural disaster I advise the
advice of the others won't last her:

are sure, dear?
do you think so?
how much does it pay?

Look both ways
but never cross over.
You'll never stay.

4.

An 11 year old sues his parents.
He says:
I just want to play
so I feel safe

and that I'm happy
and I know people will
always be there for me.

5.

At the age of 12 Sister Jupiter realized she was the only
one.

That she could not get out of her body.

That she would never experience another flesh and blood.

That, with certainty, the entire world would disappear
when she closed her eyes.

But this existential dread also provided an odd sense of
comfort because it also meant that she would always
be there for her.

6.

There is a small moon whose gravity holds the ring of dust,
those tiny particles of self-knowledge, around the Big Ball.

It is the shepherd satellite. It keeps the ring of safety
from thinning and disappearing.

She calls the moon Gregory Kingsley.

7.

Sister Jupiter wants to make some myths of her own.
Gregory Kingsley rewrites the commandments.
What does Jupiter call itself? What does it know from
Greeks and Romans? Normans and Spots? Kings and Gods?
Parents honour thy children.
Planets honour thy moons.

8.

Sister Jupiter spends her free time
making lists
hiding books
peeling crayons
counting cat's eyes
hoarding pens
going through pockets of visitors' coats hanging in the front
closet

hitting things with sticks.

9.

Once, one Christmas, she walked to the park at the end of
her street.

(It was never *her* street. It was her parents' street. It

was a street dominated by topiary, sedans, underground sprinkler systems, aluminum siding.)

Sister Jupiter sat on one of the swings in the playground and rocked and rocked and thought and thought how safe it would feel to be

Very Big and

Very Far Away.

And then little sister pumped higher and higher until she was almost around the top of the swing set almost ready to puke

and so she let go and

she flung herself into the dark cold winter air took the blind leap of faith

and sucked in the sky whose stars stung like prickly pears on swallowing and she thought

of Romeo and Juliet and how stupid it was to think

of chopping your boyfriend into tiny bits of stars

so you could look at him at night and no one better

turn her into tiny salt tear stars thank you very much but she lept off anyway and you know what happened.

She fell.

Of course.

And she got up off her knees with the skin torn back like a sardine can lid and one arm bent funny at the elbow and she got an idea to take her arm (with a hand full of stone slivers) and fling it against one of the metal poles of the swing set, swing it like a baseball bat, fling it like she's trying to shake loose a mad dog's hold, and keep hitting it and hitting it in the stark cold light of the night time playground

with snow lightly falling.
She was trying to make kindling of it.
crack it open.
cut it off.
She was silent except for inside.
Inside she was saying:
What do I have to do?

They never asked, but she told them anyway:
I fell.

10.

Q: This monster in the closet, what do you think that might be?

A: It's a monster. There's a monster in my closet.

Q: The unknown is a very frightening prospect. It can be manifested in many ways: monsters, large animals, loud noises, a foggy murky presence, just lurking in the closet, say, of your mind. As we gain knowledge of the unknown it becomes less frightening. What do you say?

A: I say: it's not unknown. I know who it is. There's a monster. And it's in my closet.

11.

She would like to float
calmly past the trouble.
She would love to trust.

She pictures Trust
like some kids picture Santa Claus.
With long arms reaching out the window
of her truck
Trust gives apples to children
who bite into them with laughter.
She comes up to the door of the house and
leans her shoulder against the house as if to
hold it up.
She holds out question-mark shaped gifts
expecting an answer shortly.
It's written in our faces, she'd say.
She plays street hockey
racing past the boys,
her legs longer than hockey sticks and
hidden by many skirts, each the colour of an exotic fruit.
Her face is as warm as central heating
her hands
are open to shake
to lift up story books
to brush your hair

She falls asleep when she is tired.

