

# Six Poems



*Rae Armantrout*

## Count

1

The future  
is a sweetener

children have to learn  
to crave.

2

As cushy clouds  
in full sun

are taken  
to betoken—

## Provisions

To suck dry.

To mean anything  
by.

By itself, each breath  
is a sample.

I come in, decide  
what's missing.

Ions,  
a concentration gradient,  
and a means of transcription

just to scratch the surface.

Just to get ahead  
of myself

I will need a special  
proboscis.

## Destinations

“You want nuggets; You got nuggets. Here!  
You gonna *not* eat nuggets after I bought them.  
You're gonna just eat Cheetos” she snaps

“when we’re almost to our destination?”

Yes, she said “destination.”

What story follows them where they’re headed?

Alone at another table, a man who, like the kids,  
holds a bag of Cheetos, cackles and coughs

Where does he fit in?

“Oh, I dropped my candies,” he says,  
in a high-pitched tone, as if imitating,  
maybe mocking, a child’s voice.

### **The Mysteries**

When seen from a certain angle,  
she is “mysterious and dark.”  
You love that about her.

Angle or distance?

\*

Or you’ve got her number.

She’s a nihilist,  
an exhibitionist,

a tad precious,  
pointlessly fastidious,

hermetic, cold.

\*

People are obvious  
until you love them.

Then they're black boxes,  
deep-sixed flight recorders,  
or presents that won't open.

This is why  
the word why  
so often sounds  
like an accusation.

### **Dimensions**

Think of

a cowboy hat  
on a bobble-head  
AI  
atop the dash  
of an electric car  
in China

as depth.

Then length  
is the difference

between these bare ribs  
of cloud

and your white hair  
somewhere

in the scrum.

**Fox**

To cover the material,

“trace the historic path  
of a doomed train  
line.”

\*

To identify

as

a cloth fox  
puppet.

\*

To see your way  
into  
a circle of six blue flowers  
beneath an indigo plateau  
itself composed  
of tiny blossoms –

the “hydrangea.”

\*

To be named.

Some deranged water

## Talking Points

Processing plant blames  
living conditions.

\*

Incredulity  
mimics boredom.

\*

Children prefer to listen  
to a talking animal.

This tells us something  
about the world,

but what?

\*

There is thought  
at work here,

but it's not traceable

to a known speaker  
or agent.

\*

"I'm Tiger, Tigger, Trigger,"  
says the sock puppet.