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## Shadow Boxing Unhappiness Under the Apartment Steps

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## SHADOW BOXING UNHAPPINESS UNDER THE APARTMENT STEPS

Rose Swartz

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Today the bumper of a Toyota Camry told me that "happiness is  
being Finnish"  
and I'm thinking about my ethnicity and deciding I won't let it get  
me down  
until I'm walking behind the house under the balcony when  
unhappiness corners me between the tree and the fence and says  
"Hey, you're boyfriend doesn't hug you enough  
and you're bicycle isn't even the right size,  
I saw you crying on your way out of the dentist's today,  
why you gotta be talking shit, huh?"  
So I start off wincing "uhh, uhhh my parents love me," wringing  
my hands,  
"he would hug me more if i asked him,"  
and unhappiness glowers there with the sick neighborhood beer smells  
sneering at me sayin' "you timid bitch, you aint even Finnish,"  
So I get my fighting face on, say "hey-  
I may not be Finnish but I just saw the harvest moon  
up in the sky like an old tangerine  
or a Dutch man's weather beaten face (uppercut)  
and the guy in front of me at the cafe ordered  
a whole cup of milk it was lovely,"  
digging my toes in the dirt now thinking of the way kids in high school  
said 'scuffle,' and I go (jab-jab)  
"you should see me giggle at bedtime,  
hear my bicycle squeek and ka-chunk over the railroad  
tracks at night when I ride home from my love's house,  
my old Schwinn singing as we fly through neon ditches  
my hair exploding and so in love like a novel.  
Did you know that my great aunt worked in a button factory,  
just like that song? My grandma gave me a mason jar fulla buttons  
some of 'em big and bright and others that look like elephants."  
"Unhappiness is panting now, holding his bloody head,  
but I'm ruthless, I keep going:  
"I live in a dirty yellow house filled with typewriter noise  
and anarchistic basil plants, when I dance  
it's by accident, don't tell me I'm unhappy."  
"I got a sweater that covers my whole hands  
and a roommate that laughs like a movie star in training,

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we got a pet spider the size of a quarter, my brother's  
six foot four," "I'm going to see my favorite band next week."  
Unhappiness is on the ground now rolling in pain, "last time  
I fell asleep in class I took notes on my dream.  
Last time I went to a party we were up till four am banging  
on pots and pans screaming 'we are not depressed.'  
Unhappiness' face a proverbial catastrophe, "one more thing, yesterday  
I ollied down a set of stairs and a cute boy saw me land it,  
I work with the elderly and like it (kick to the groin!)  
Unhappiness is down for the count passed out in the gold  
light against bricks and my hips dance me all the way up  
the wooden steps to laugh for an hour before I sleep.