

my son

by M. F. Sullivan

his mother brought him to me
when he was very young
maybe a few months old,
born in arizona july.

at least,
i think she was his mother.

she was the five-towed cat
i knew from the neighborhood
and he had four toes
though was a whip from the start.

in two days,
he warmed to me,
and in five or six,
he was coming on his own,

mewling for the food
i usually set for his father,
the fuzzy feral who prowled
with the muscles of a jaguar.

he didn't show up much,
but benedict did,
even after his mother stopped showing up
when the family across the way
moved.

with time
he grew to three-fourths his father's size
still tremendous,

wisdom-gifted.

once he came to me
with a baby pigeon in his mouth
meowing proudly
like an athlete with the gold.

often we talk.

how was your night, sweetheart?
mrow.
oh yes, and then?
mrow-ow!
you don't say.
mrow!

once i came back from doing laundry
to find him outside the cracked-open door
and i said,
what the fuck are you doing?

mrow,
he said.

get back inside!
mrow-ow!

don't give me that,
i said,
my neighbor laughing behind me
while i chased him inside.

when i met art,
he sat in his lap
and loved him right off

and has loved him since

even though he's held down
to be kissed and tickled
by two people instead of one.

and now when we're moving
he knows what it means
to see cardboard boxes
and books disappearing on shelves--

and i know what it means
when he paces the living room
yowling discomfort
through the emptying apartment

because nobody likes it
when their parents can't stay in one place.

