

## Annouchka in the Rain

No umbrella today, so she tilts  
her head back, raindrops cold on her  
cheeks, opens herself up like a smile  
with teeth. How certain people radiate  
goodness like heat, how their faces  
(no matter the shape or form) are beautiful,

like Annouchka facing everything in  
one instant. How you knew when you met  
her that she was your friend, because  
she believed in you as you would like  
to believe in yourself. How you know her  
from the bookshop, the customers in

tin foil hats, or in a future where humans become  
robots, and men and women in suits perform  
Shakespeare. You know her from a French  
boot camp where she was a clown named Inkydoo  
taught by a man with a voice like a chicken.  
You know her in a Freddie Mercury moustache, or

long and lovely in her high heels. You know her  
eating okonomiyaki and warm saki, or buying  
a hat and throat-singing through Mongolia. You know  
that journal article, the book she was writing, or  
that Tedx talk she gave in a clown nose. You know  
her voice singing like a cry underwater

tinged with honey and rose petals. You know  
her in the taste of barberries. You know her gyrating  
on a pole, or wrestling like a bear. You know  
her through the parties – always the parties –  
wearing jeans, wearing a gown, talking or  
arguing, playing or singing, dancing

or laughing and not caring, until bodies slump

together and a film unwinds on the wall.

What you don't know is Annouchka as a girl, pain  
wracking her small body as a door slams again  
and again. You might not know Annouchka, but she  
knows you: Annouchka in the rain, smiling her rare

and disarming smile, the fight  
of her singeing the edges  
of a grey day:

Annouchka in the rain  
is dancing  
on her toes:

always dancing  
away

Dear Annouchka,

This poem is adapted from the memories and stories of your friends, and it is dedicated to you. I loved hearing these stories, and I wanted to write something that might offer a flavour of the gifts you have given to the people around you. All power to you, and I hope to meet you some day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zoë Brigley', written in a cursive style.

Zoë Brigley

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018, Columbus, Ohio, USA.