

SARAH MCENEANEY

Dog Beach, 2013
Egg tempera on wood, 24 x 24 in



COURTESY TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY

ANDREW BERTAINA

Something Miraculous

I'd been praying for something miraculous to happen; yesterday seemed like it might be the day until my cat threw up on the floor. The glob of star-shaped food matted into the carpet made it hard to imagine anything out of the ordinary. Today, my cat was fine. She woke me by brushing her whiskers across my cheek, and we spent the morning lying in an aquarium of light.

I poured a bowl of cereal even though I didn't have clean spoons. The prize came out first, rattling around in the bottom of the bowl. It was a new spoon. I could tell that after years of failure things were turning around. The Earth had shifted on its axis while I was sleeping and was spinning the way it was always meant to.

I read the newspaper but skipped the parts about children disappearing and fires burning near homes. I read a story about a man who saved a boy from drowning in the Pacific. Maybe life had been dirty and cruel because that's all we ever see. Maybe the world was like the surface of the ocean, where seals are flipped in the air by sharks, but underneath lie symbiotic relationships of cyclical beauty.

I decided to start a magazine that would only report good things. It would have pictures of pets that had been found, not lost. Instead of pictures of kids with distended bellies, we'd have children playing baseball or eating a bowl full of rice donated by generous people who could possibly even be us. Our front cover would not say 45 Ways to Get Him Hot in Bed. It would say 45 Ways to Love the Beautiful and Unique Person That Is You.

I didn't know if the world was ready for my happiness, so I started sweeping the floor. Sweeping the floor has always made me sad because it goes back to being dirty so fast. When I was done, I put the broom next to the stove and called Sally, the only other woman who understood me. I told her that something miraculous was happening today.

While waiting for Sally, I looked out the window; the sky looked like a bowl of cream. The air was still, and the bases of the mountains were visible. Their black outlines rose into the clouds, making a cap of light-gray snow. I thought about how geologists find the skeletal remains of long-dead sea creatures on mountaintops and the millions of years it takes for the sea to recede and the shifting of the Earth's plates to turn a valley into a mountain. I thought that if we had millions of years here something miraculous would happen to us all.