

TERRI WITEK

## The Manual Proper

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*How to Affect an Ice Rescue*

1 inch Keep Off!  
2 inches one may,  
3 inches small groups,  
4 inches "O. K.!"  
—*Girl Scout Handbook*, 1947

Nothing reaches where we've gone under  
so no talk, no plank, no red plastic bucket

skidding sideways toward winter's volunteer well.  
And don't trust your feet

(the left still taps directions).  
Forget the sky's blue distraction.

As bystanders tie themselves  
sleeve by wool sleeve together,

count expertly to nine  
then redistribute your weight.

Via arms, breasts, genitals and knees,  
slide across the opaque skin of the lake,

which may, under this heat,  
give way just a little.

Water birds plummet past, laughing.  
A doctor's been sent for.

Back on shore?  
Blankets. Hot chocolate. Fire in a barrel.

But don't take your eyes from the spot,  
now glazing over, once gladly burned through.

*How to Put Sound in the Movie*

Remember, forests have mastered this game,  
so while they gather up fireflies,  
whisper like rain.

It's not a matter of love or of pain.  
Any light wants a voice.  
Any dark needs the same.

Whisper bigger to see figured  
(still economically)  
love of eclipse and philosophy.

*How to Make Friends Using Bat Wings*

Maybe the first time you tried them on  
they somehow galled or grounded you.

Now if you hang them up  
 (you've also been trying to sleep lanternless)

they hover, sighing.  
 Perhaps it's time to move more than air.

Pulling them a body's width apart,  
 ask a stranger to slip the left wing on

then stand out-of-doors together  
 until night alone can fill the chinks.

"Oh, but the body's everything,"  
 sign some real bats then,

caroming among the palm trees  
 like smaller, more frantic fronds.

*How to Make the Sky Stay Up*

# Think how sky swaths every head  
 like a turban. In houses it breathes  
 via furnace or air conditioning.

# Be more technical still:  
 down + up = up.

# Keep your eyes on your feet.  
 Gravity will help.  
 On your feet, on your feet.

# Mostly water yourself,  
 you're also part sky.  
 Let no one touch this,

not even you at your dirty weepiest.

- # Bribe lightning to groan  
“Don’t shower “ and  
“Together we’re electric.”
- # Take a job moonlighting  
and keep moving up.
- # Don’t change anything else into sky.  
You’ll be intoxicatingly unsuccessful.  
You’ll waste your life.