

Commendation in 2022 Wirral Poetry Festival, Port Sunlight, UK

Communication Error

The University of Kentucky mistakenly sent acceptance letters to 500,000 high school seniors. The school blamed a “communication error”.

Brimming with self-pity,
she submerged disappointment
inside a glass of rancid wine.

Petulant vowels flowed
into her mouth, her breath
a sea monster, tentacles cinching
the waist, as bile
and bilgewater flooded her being.

“Liars!” she howled,
stumbling to the lake, baying like
a wolf at the moon.

Somehow,
her genius, an ancient god
she’d had since childhood,
had not earned a dock in academia.

Somehow,
that college application slipped
beneath the waves, as half
a million others splashed aboard.

Her fountain of intellect,
lacking scrutiny,
forfeited to a pagan,
subterranean Luperclia
of heated baths of pleasure.

That communication error
doused her hopes for medicine.
Instead, she drifted into becoming
a sous chef, spending the next
decade drowning in onions.