Accordingly

Tess Gallagher
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It’s begun to dawn on you that love
is a two-headed monkey and
you are its sad accordian. It bites, spits,
mugs for the cameras, swills
the popcorn of strangers and steals
from itself. How else
could it serve up passion to a naked, barbaric
race? You are
stupified enough to trust this
embarrassment: lucky thing
it only has two hands to pull your stops
and ram the scales.
All those notes should be played at once—un-hunh—
like inviting the fire
to the firesale—yes, you want it all
to go. Love music? There’s more
where that came from. “Am I to suffer
always?” the customer intones into
the tin cup. The echo is a discrete balcony
where an ocelot in a tiara has,
against all odds, been
charmed by that last accidental
harmony. Old monkey-business certainly has
a lucrative pattern of
frustration. The crowd is stacking up like
cordwood near the parsonage. But she
isn’t there, the one you want to intoxicate
with truthfulness, useful myths
like how the doodlebug got its name—some fool
on his knees in the garden
calling “doodle! doodle!” until one came out.
Meanwhile the monkeys is heading into another chorus of the Banana Belt Mazurka. It’s enough to make you turn heartless and predatory. But what’s the good if the “rewarding soup” is cold? Always the inevitable cry to “play something uplifting, for Chrissake!” And anyway who knows when your Beloved might saunter by to watch these monsters groom your misery with commercial hope. Under duress you indulged her fantasies about teaching the monkey-heads to share. Better fall ambassador to an outrage! Love shareable? As well to say: “My body belongs to science,” and switch off the light.