

## **Frog Prince**

*For D.*

She swore she'd change me,  
and she did. Unzipped  
the old skin and hid it,  
somewhere, ripped out  
the webbing between my fingers,  
snipped off a few inches  
of my too-long and sticky tongue.  
And she had the swamp  
behind the house drained,  
convinced her dad that  
I was just like him, her mom  
that I wouldn't return  
to my old ways, herself  
that she could make it work,  
that she would make it work.  
Perhaps I'd thought she could,  
perhaps I'd hoped.  
But now this new skin,  
itchy and dry, wrinkled  
when wet, and always hot.  
And there is this new face  
I wear like my own.  
And the ring on my finger,  
the gold hoop I couldn't jump through.

So now I see us everywhere,  
trapped in these bodies  
and these lives, our frantic  
gray-green eyes like fires  
banked into coals, nostalgic  
for other places, other desires.

-Ed Madden

from Gents, Bad Boys and Barbarians. 1994.