

FUNERAL CHOIR

The Lord be with you.

A childhood filled to the brim
with hymns and myth—religious pith—
And mom she led the funeral choir, so once a week we went to wakes—
the Church cream-colored, all tall pillars and
cracked paint that hurts if you catch your nails on it.

Wrought-iron lights hung just above the balcony
and prompted visions of swinging in miniature Tarzan fashion—
The nave graced by angels like some Grand Guignol
Blood masterpiece theatre.
(But that came later.)
I'll get a crush on anything—
I latch to paper.
But you never fail to fascinate—
I'd sing your praise till time is spent—
Like staring at the sun and how they say it makes you blind.
I always suspected a lie in that—
some solar conspiracy.

Lord have mercy on my mother—
When I was young I'd gaze right up unfazed.
Or like the time I was convinced
stigmata was something you could give yourself.

**A RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE RE-OPENING
OF THE GOLDEN STATE KILLER CASE, MAY 2016**

Cold case tabs—nearly thirty of them,
shrunk and crammed along the top of my computer screen.
Research queen.
He came in through the window.
Not only that, but unlocked doors—
I was scared, knowing my roommates never locked ours.
And I couldn't get it out of my head.
Propped up in bed—
White cinder block walls, university brand.
Too hot for covers-up sleep.
A box fan wedged in the window—
not doing much to fix the heat but offering some noise at least.
My legs stretched out.
Slight liberation.
What the hell is wrong with men
That makes them do shit I'd never dream of
and making me dream of it
Nightmares—nine or ten.

DIAMOND AVE

In the Marathon out by your house
there's a kid behind a counter and
she doesn't have a cold but she just sneezed six times
and a man there getting cigarettes and Sunny D says sneezes are
one-seventh of an orgasm so she
holds the last one in

and later riding back to home she sticks her finger out the car
just in between the space created by the window down

and look!—they kept the lights on at the high school—
she thinks it's elegant and frightening; like looking up—
some flashlight to its chin; and in the old façade
god

and she would have been a cheerleader at school, had she gone
and she would have stayed in bio lab and graduated since
and she thinks of possibilities both in and out of reach; like

if I were an old woman's lover I might try to
buy myself scarves or expensive cravats and
(she doesn't entirely know a cravat from a necktie but's heard
of them both in a song)—
I'd travel to countries I've read of in books.

(Her sisters were in car wrecks—
Bodies messed up from the hit
They settled down somewhere back home;
A smaller town
Some thousand and convivial enough—
She misses them somewhat.)

Her fingers still twirling from out the slim opening
she holds them out happy and looks at the road—

the Driver, distracted, won't notice until a bruise starts on her knuckles
Girl exits the car.

(She was fine altogether;
could still manage to faintly press keys enough to play
That old canon in d bullshit for Sunday mass
But only when the old organ player was out sick or dead.)

TO-NIGHT GOLDEN CURLS / A DEATH IN THREE

I'd rather not be one of those
who slows down right at railroad tracks—I find it best to go;
As you were (then); as you are
As all of us will be (we'll be).

And I believe that minds are just—
That alterations make amends—
that deaths in families break or bend.
(And you've had three so far I think.
One happened while we mopped the floor—
and Heart droned on the jukebox there;
It hit us fast—the funeral brought
a microwaved lasagna feast.
Another when we barely spoke—
you called me up; we've grown since then.
The first before our faces met—
The greatest impact less was left—
a mother-witch and you without—)
I'm dreaming of your curls again.

And you've a slang with me in dreams;
we speak like keys—a map of mouths.
You understand the time it takes—
four years and some to slip my guard.
Is growth the cure for selfishness?
A self-made-less—
To flourish; fine.
And is it genuine remorse
that germinates, for better words—?
To miss the most mid-introspect;
In nourishment, a struggle felt.
A fetus forms in back my head
(it's just a sense and stays remote—
the real is hard to conjure up—
like blues or reds in lidded sleep).

THE BEST WAY TO SPIT IS STRAIGHT AND LONG

Ite, Missa est.

The best way to spit is straight and long.
You hit the ground with it. You grin.
A consecration of asphalt
or some stuck-on gum drip.
Hands washed among the innocent—
So what if you zip your fly a little late—
Big things matter.
We do what we can.

I was born a lump
seventhirteen on seventhirteen
We don't evolve much—
all we are's a pair of ears that grow some bigger year by year.

I'd make myself a sheet for you—
Spotless, cotton white. White's the most I could be.
It's a task to write assertively
And fucking hard to get there
Unrestricted.

But I believe in the air; I believe we all are
Just a part of a part—this soul-fat globe that floats somehow.
—and that cats sit in sunlit spots and know what's best.

(So ever-glory to the She who sits at the far end of the couch—
ottoman raised, cat at her leg.
It's been some dream, hasn't it?
She's put up with me longer than anyone.

I see her face—
same stubborn grace and glory-hallelujah grin.
As a kid I'd call around the house—
she'd answer half the time.
I'm sure I was a lot to take in.)