

At a Pawn Shop in Reno, Nevada

Four bracelets from Tiffany
make four silver circles,
four objects with no beginning
and no end, or four premature endings
in a purgatory, from clasp to clasp,
of eternal return.

But what did Nietzsche understand
of fine jewelry or pawn shops
or the four silver hearts stamped,
“Please return to Tiffany,”
the lie girls who read *Vogue*
grow up believing?

And where is the man we all hoped
the 5th Avenue Flagship Store,
too fantastic to imagine
with that yellow diamond
only Audrey Hepburn once wore,
would deploy to the middle
of a Reno city street
to collect and curate
an army of fallen hearts
then carry home the infinite burden
of fusing all the broken pieces
back together,
each silver fissure too small to see,
each insurmountable longing
to again be whole.

Dessert at the Bacchanal Buffet

Caesar's Palace

More than the meditation
of Pie vs. Cake,
this feels religious
the way all of Las Vegas
flashes itself into fleeting reverence.

Cookies, soufflés, crème brulees,
the flour and sugar details,
the colors brown and pink,
chocolate covered strawberries,
glass jars of Chantilly cream

matter less than the permission
this place grants for over-excess

as if we do not come here to be adults
like the advertising says
but to exist as children again
in a wonderland
bordering on the grotesque,

silent vespers to spent cupcake wrappers,
innumerable sweet morsels photographed

so back home we can try to remember
that secret aspect inside all of us
spectacular enough to deserve this.

Showgirls

They come in twos.

Part of Noah's menagerie,
a different kind of flood story,
the narrative arc of local girls
who pretend to be showgirls
for dollar tips.

Some have feathers.
Some don't bother with feathers.

They treat everyone
like an easy mark,
two blondes more
yellow than Champagne,
more bottle than salon
like the kits we used in high school
to pretend to be anyone but us.

Maybe Jean Seberg wearing
a *Herald Tribune* T-shirt.
Maybe Courtney Love kissing
Kurt on the cover of *Sassy* magazine
but never a showgirl

with or without feathers

in the kind of town where
local girls found love at county fairs
with boys who got thrown from bulls
or dirtbiked their way
into emergency rooms

all of our fake blonde concern
trailing after them
with no idea that spotlight
could ever shine on us.

Elegy to an Elvis Impersonator

Without sideburns your profile
could be the profile of an astronaut
in those 60's *Life* magazine spreads,
emphatic good breeding, heroic
the way firemen once rescued
kittens from every tree

before the real Elvis competed
with Tom Jones who sang
about giving flowers to a pussycat
the same year you were born.

You are standing there
not really dead
the way the real Elvis is dead

but not really alive
in your own skin,
for tips forced to bear
your cross of blue rhinestones,
your fake microphone,
your oversized sunglasses
to shield yourself
from the paparazzi
that never hold up their cameras
close to your face without asking.

Upon Seeing Teller's "Shadows"

Does it spoil the illusion
to say there is blood at the end
like most things
that bloom before you?

Maybe a rose is never really a rose
but the deep red shadow
of our own lonely heart
caught for a moment
 between beating
 and not beating

between magic
 and not magic

between the silhouette on the walk
we can never overtake
no matter how much our own bodies bloom,
no matter how many magicians
tell us to look for the thread,
the wand, the two-sided card

and us becoming the thread,
the wand, the two-sided card,

the rose who surrenders its petals
like the promise of a better beauty unfolding.

The trick we fall for every time.