

*Daughter of Pasiphae*

How did you feel, love, when I found  
the lipstick drawn in mazes on the bathtub  
like labyrinths dragged across the tile  
until they melted into crimson wax  
against the Minotaur's smile? Did

you find comfort in the color, in the  
temporary tattoo? Did it tickle your  
fancy to see your cosmetics staining  
the rudimentary body of the basin,  
which lifted its pelvis upward on clubbed  
feet, limping its way to the nearest wall?

Art is meant to be seen, and this femme  
display brings back your father's migraine.  
What would he say to this, this modern  
canvas left to suffocate with crushed carnauba  
congealing in its mouth? Or did you, perhaps,  
want him to find it, too, much to your sense  
of humor - much less to your mother's  
sense of shame? Crete be damned.

I did not wipe away the offending  
residue until you had a chance to  
admire your masterpiece. Your hair  
still wet from the kitchen sink. Your hands  
soft like clay after so much scrubbing  
against running water. You wore mascara  
like curtains over your face, only  
drawing them apart for the occasional  
first act of tears that threatened  
to compromise your personal  
cabaret. You left beads on the carpet, so

I could step on them and make them pop  
like little plastic planets disrupted in their  
orbit around a Holbein sun, its red and gold  
rays stretched outward like a scarab beetle  
stuck on its back and exposing its belly to  
an uncaring world. You sketched  
portraits in eyeliner on your

arms and legs, the vessel dipped in black  
like charcoal, charred horns and ebony  
bulls leaving scattered hoof prints, like  
lust, fading against your own calves  
and knees. Yes, I am sure you felt great

pride when I found the lipstick drawn  
in mazes on the bathtub. Your brother  
the beast sleeps in its enameled maw.  
I look away from its dreams and seize  
the golden thread that leads me from the  
labyrinth, where by the cold and narrow  
entrance, you already wait for me.

*Bless The Bones Of California*

These days are getting short enough  
to chew on. You can feel the sunsets  
swelling right on your molars, melting  
like butter in between your lips. On the side

of the road, a dirt scarred truck  
sits on a lopsided slope. One headlight  
is gouged out, like a wandering eye  
ripped out of its metal socket.

Deep in the fields of Cotati,  
you can drink the September heat  
like soup still in its can, the salt boiled  
away, leaving only the cream to scald  
your mouth after the first sip. Only a few

neighborhoods away, the fires have taken  
everything. Our relatives are left with  
silhouettes of ash, but we still have  
our house, our two acres, our banalities.

I can hear your boots assault the  
skeletons of leaves on the patio outside. I am  
old enough to understand the profanity  
that you use to button up your  
one-size-too-small shirt.

You are young enough to still carry me

on your shoulders, but once it gets dark  
too quickly, your shadow weighs  
us both down, and the North Bay swallows  
us up in its maw until the sunrise  
is cool enough to eat with a spoon.

*Era*

There were days when scratching  
numbers into the leaves was all we had,  
and counting the stars was comforting  
because we didn't have to worry about  
how many there were, or how many of them  
would submit to the cold inferno above  
our ill-conceiving eyes.

*The end of an era.*

That was before we cared  
about dynasties.  
That was before

we carried around our names on staves  
and pounded the need for recognition into  
faceless marble. Before we gave ourselves  
the sign of the cross because we feared  
that the air we breathed would suck away  
our dignity, or our newly minted,  
false divinity. We thought

the robes we wore were proof  
that we deserved the freedom of immortality,  
and that the right color, when donned  
properly, spared us from premature death  
and artificially grafted omens on  
metal as thin as paper, and as hot  
as the volcanic ash we studied in school.

The professor insisted that we be capable  
of holding our destinies in our own hands.

Far, far harder times had been wrought  
before we etched our anxieties

into the tombstones we kept hidden  
in our attics. We always locked the doors,  
too. That way, we could pretend  
that we didn't have tombstones at all.

The most difficult part is that,  
when I leave the bricks tumbling behind me  
in the morning, red as the lack of hope,  
I find no passion in scraping  
a lucky seven into the raw vein

of a tree's autumn locks. The stuff is  
so brittle, and the colors so faded, because,  
the more I think about it, the more this world,  
riddled with the faulty desire to feel more alive,  
turns further into an impending supernova.