

## *My Muse*

It started innocently enough  
at the kitchen window, over the sink,  
cleaning out the kitchen crevices  
and we surprised each other.

I pulled my arm back in revulsion,  
cocking the rag for a quick kill,  
but little Spider, you!  
Scurried hurriedly awash in anxiety  
your web suddenly erased  
your home effaced  
neat corners hollowed out where  
your soft layers once wrapped.  
If you hadn't captured my heart  
with your frantic dash back and forth  
you would have died right then.

I felt your pain of loss  
the confusion from the void

I reasoned that if I let you live,  
you would soon dispatch  
the fruit flies floating  
around the blackening bananas.  
While your web grew again,  
I acquiesced.

But as I stand here today,  
your pale veil has sprawled, usurping  
the wind-fell tomatoes on the sill.  
The backyard vista interrupted  
with hovering bug carcasses  
and cat hair trapped in your lair.  
Too much! Too much!

I begin to clean those cataracts  
out of my corners

when the early October chill  
makes my hand resist  
what my eyes now wish once more.

Today, we make a deal:  
you are my muse  
and your home is safe,  
but as the winter approaches,  
we must know that this cannot last.

## ***Morning Refrain***

December fog sits with barren trees:  
Ethereal silhouettes layered  
Into an oblivion of white

Thick ebony trunks  
Succumb to mere mist,  
Arborescence erased  
As boughs go missing  
Vapor clinging  
to their desolate canopy

Just when all seems lost,  
A reluctant frozen sun  
Sees through it and

The mist dissipates,  
Reveals specks of limbs fragmenting  
Rejoining other branches:  
Precious sparrows floating into boughs  
Suddenly multitudinous,  
Mesmerizing in this first light

The monochromatic scene ends  
With a crimson cardinal  
Darting through shadows  
Black turning red then black again  
A bold drop of blood on a limb  
He calls to his lover:  
*What cheer! What cheer cheer cheer!*  
Vanishes as a heartening ray  
Lifts the lingering ground clouds  
Wafting like ghosts  
While his lover echoes  
the winter's morning refrain: *What cheer!*

## ***Her Poem***

It waits  
folded, tucked into a file  
in my desk's third drawer

It begins  
with the metaphor:  
my heart is the color orange

It continues  
so precious, so novel

It grows  
so that when I finish,  
I know orange, her heart, her  
in a way nobody else gets to  
if they haven't read her poem

Yet, it is unfinished

Tuesday, she started it.  
Tuesday, second period -  
Her black ink scratching  
words between designs  
that framed all of her assignments;  
her nose barely inches from the paper.  
The bell rang and she kept writing,  
the next class filing in,  
I tell her to finish later;  
she smiles,  
turns it in,  
says peace out, girl scout

Wednesday, she tried to kill herself  
Wednesday, after school,  
but they found her in time that time  
and so I saved her poem  
while she got help

I thought she'd be helped

I thought she'd return.  
Return to her poem -  
extend the metaphor,  
elaborate on her  
misunderstood fiery orange heart.

I thought she'd continue all of it.  
But it is  
unfinished.

## ***Dreamers' Dread***

I dreamt they came for my cats last night  
They came in stealthy but I spied them  
Heavy steps, thick necks  
ICE jackets, blurred faces

Sonny slipped under the bed, tail tucked,  
Looking over his shoulder at me, terrified

I screamed  
You can't take them  
We rescued them  
They belong here  
This is their home

Oh, they're going home, they laughed

I'm in the doorway defiant  
Ratty bathrobe hastily tied  
Blocking them, crying to them

They are frigid, efficient  
Close in and pass right through me

The cats are already in cages  
Our neighbors watch silently  
Some turn their heads away

The cages stack high on a truck  
Tiny fingers reach out of each cage  
I can't scream loud enough  
I retch and awake to find  
The cats asleep at my feet  
The dread still there

### ***Holy Bad Bat Simile***

He told me that I was like that moment when falling  
Batman shoots out his Batline with the grappling hook  
And it stops the fall  
Saves him  
Then lifts him up  
20-story buildings

He was Batman  
I was the moment  
Pulling him up  
after some dark shit

The idea of his groin  
Leading him to me  
Was satisfying  
And likely true

But he got to be the Superhero

And I was made a moment  
Set whirring into motion by him  
Attached to him  
Clutching rooftops to haul  
His batty-ass up

If he'd called me his  
Robin or Commissioner  
Catwoman or Riddler  
Or even his Batbelt  
Maybe it could've played