

## Splinter wisdom

A place on the dock  
I enjoy the mornings,  
a handful of them each year,  
cross-legged jeans,  
onto the splintering planks.

Ducks bicker over waterlogged bread,  
and a rare boater starts the engine  
to catch almondine dinner.  
Between those, ripples chirp  
gray wood sideways.

I invite thoughts to explore my mind,  
questioning my tolerances,  
quiet delights its wandering  
chipping away at the underneath.  
Will neighbors fault a dawn observer  
pondering the dock's crisp ending,  
pen in hand to detail the squeaks?  
In the end I'm determined  
not to tailor my actions  
based on others' impression of me.

A sliver of North Idaho wilderness  
runs through my Evergreen soul  
aside a skipping  
of southwest red rock heartbeat  
and a zest of Miami lime and mango rhythm.

Floating above the waters where my life began,  
are these the moments we're most determined  
to emit our true selves?  
Bottle the ripples, the feeling of Me,  
secured with a cork and red melted wax,  
openable to whenever  
I most require a memory,  
pull the sliver of my mind, to be me.

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## Lap, breathe, hope, fail, repeat

The soft, repeated lapping at my cheek,  
damp but less than soggy,  
and the almost undetectable exhales  
calm nerves frayed at both ends.

Count my breaths,  
each one a different color,  
a different length and depth,  
engage a whisker of hers,  
prodding my relaxed dimple.  
Her breath slows and laps renew.

She walks away, turning back at me, expectantly,  
reminding me it's close to bedtime,  
where I can shut my eyes and release the anxiety  
built up from shattered hopes  
and newly made next steps,  
each one as exhausting as its predecessor.

An unfortunate day  
that becomes a bedtime  
brought into focus  
by her caring kibble-scented kisses,  
and her reminder that it's time  
to snuggle with eyes closed.

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## Auntie Boobs

Auntie boobs are different from  
other boobs you know,  
they're larger than those of your girlfriend,  
but also not as cute.  
Their grandness might not be from  
the nourishment of a little one,  
it's from ages of eating cinnamon rolls.

They're lower than they were in youth,  
from running road races and carrying  
too many school books at once.  
They get in the way,  
and advance shirt sizes  
so now fabric hangs off them,  
cotton waterfalls, ending in pant legs.

Once an attractive set, they're now hidden,  
satisfied in their tucked-away comfort,  
not wanting to gather eyes - they're confident where they are.  
Less cinnamon rolls and more running  
will help shirt size decrease,  
but wrinkles and leaning on  
our own cinnamon rolls tends to follow.

Proportionally, they balance the  
other curves I'm actively trying to grow,  
repeatedly pretending a chair  
exists behind to sit down  
and mimicking a male dog's  
back leg at the watering tree.

Big or small, flat or inflated,  
auntie's boobs are pressed between  
two sheets of clear plastic  
every March  
near my birthday so I don't forget  
and the pinch only lasts a few seconds.  
Compared to the pain of surgery,  
sweaty palms  
and nauseous gastro reflux,  
the squeeze is but a black pepper sneeze.

I guess they served their purpose.  
They attracted the one  
I want to share my life with,  
adorned with black sequin  
cocktail dress and pearls.  
He was amused and I knew  
how to use them to my reward  
and benefit.

Now they prefer coverage,  
support, redundancy in layers.  
If one were to escape, it wouldn't be  
a cute and subtle  
costume malfunction.  
Red face, running away while tucking  
with both hands.  
They're sophisticated now, appreciating  
the sideways spotlight sweep to another set.

Auntie's boobs,  
are best purposed  
in the middle of a hug.  
For niece or nephew, sibling or friend,  
for the one who never calls me auntie,  
but honey instead.

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## Happy little synapses

Elastic snap of release,  
endorphins flush  
vacant synapses  
when shower's wash  
finally steams hot.  
Standing with face tilted inward,  
full jet stream  
and hands cupped to cradle chin,  
pampering high in the morning or night.

First spoon of green curry,  
ordered with an extra dose  
of smoked Japanese eggplant.  
The umami hits hard,  
sit back on the metal patio chair  
under lit string lights  
and wait for each note  
sweet, creamy, smoke, spice,  
underlined with comforting jasmine rice.

Coasting motor down a paved hill  
in a wooded park,  
an imposing creature swoops low and fast.  
I brake in fascination,  
an owl lands in mossy branch  
eyes already closed  
canceling the daylight.  
Car parked in the road's middle  
so I can lean towards him  
and admire his soundless feathers,  
his daytime slumber,  
in my awed state,  
before driving minutes farther  
to gaze over the lighthouse and reflected Sound.  
Has discovery always been this marvelous,  
even if I'm not around?

Rain-softened rich earth,  
rhythmic patting of red-laced boots,  
tall socks and a prancing pup ahead,  
tail waving me to follow.  
Trail curves up switches

and thin air invites a lean  
on hearty, bumpy bark  
breathing in cedar  
and tiniest red fungi  
sprouting up through lacy lichen.  
A delight in color, unexpected.  
I know artists who can paint them,  
friends who consume them  
in altering minds,  
but I'm only an observer left to wonder.

Why don't I join them  
they ask with inclusion,  
start back at the beginning  
of my thoughts  
and it's clear why.

If a steaming shower,  
first bites of curry,  
or the occurrence with an owl's slumber  
can release racing endorphins  
of which I'm the owner,  
why would I go awry?  
Knowing true,  
I delight in the details  
of an unaltered mind.

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## Just south of equinox

Equinox slanted sun  
sly morning rays  
blinking through  
skeleton trees  
awake later than proposed  
still warm from flirting  
deciding whether to stay or go.  
Second lover  
dazzles tiny green buds  
bunny-soft digits  
luring desires south.

Where we're left  
pulling on jackets  
on blue sky days  
memory of the years' past grays,  
admiring warm hues  
those once-green buds  
are transforming to magic.

We continue our walks,  
lungs pull deeply,  
admitting she's already leaving us.  
Candle flames won't bring her back yet,  
she needs this southern fling.  
Sydney's surfers wetsuits  
rolled down halfway.  
But once she settles in,  
we bundle in down  
and taste tinny snowflakes  
on red tongues,  
her soul will burn for our crisp apples  
and leave her surfers  
to warm our cheeks.

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