

"CHILD'S PLAY"

A Completely Improbable, Thoroughly Unforgettable
Marathon in Kindergarten

Mister –
I need a hug.
Her tiny head burrows
in my hip
while I scan the classroom.
Chaos. Always.
Ants march in line
with more purpose.

Mister!
Her finger jabs
my always anxious gut.
I need a hug!

In a corner of the room
one ambles about,
scissors pointing out.
I stretch my arms,
one hand on the back
of her clammy neck.

In another corner
a sink runs free.
 Alone.
Her arms
squeeze around me.

Crying from another corner
Unbidden
Unyielding
 Louder
Another squeeze
Louder

She lets go
looks up
a gap-tooth smile –

I feel better.

She turns around
and skips off

I hold a piece of paper,
which he has handed me,
on which it says To Mister,
and From Me.

The portrait of me looks up
from the paper.
He smiles at me.

I am a pig, shirtless,
a cigar hangs
from grinning red lips,
a pagoda hat
on top of my head.
My pig has nipples.

You're welcome,
he says

How do you know that I smoke?
(I quit ten years ago!)
He is walking away,
and turns.

Cuz your teeth –
They're yellow

Constant lunchtime chatter.
One voice squeaks
over it
all -

I only like Chicago potatoes,
heads nod
 in agreement.

From another table
 I venture,
what are Chicago potatoes?

Chatter stops.

Mister -

she looks through me,
her head bobbles
 sideways,
a jane-in-the-box
that tilts
this way
 that way
every way

I'm chewing.

 She sighs ...

a boardroom chairman
has less authority
less heft
more patience.

They're potatoes from Chicago.

I swallow

You don't smile anymore –
Mister.

His words.
Icy water
on my face,

impossibly long lashes
flicker,
up and down,
deep dark clear eyes
up and down

How come?

Words don't come.
Bile creeps in my throat,
piercing –
up and down

You're right

Deep breath.
My palm rests
on his head,
I stand

my eyes
on the
classroom door,
his still on me

I scurry away.