

Note: This document contains five poems, one on each page.

Maiden Name

It was never mine
The name you gave me
Only half an echo of who I am

The ones who birthed me stamped
In my face and hands but
Never in my name

A name that changed again
But still
Was only ever borrowed.

What then, belongs to me?
How will the children know
That I am theirs?

The Screaming Pillow

Women are not
allowed to ask
for help.

Bad wife
Bad mother
Unwilling to take care of
anyone but myself.

I have no more self left.

Dinner on the table
Client meeting
Homework done
Clean clothes and bodies
Urgently needed
No red dye
Project manage
You'll give them cancer

High heels in the office
Barefoot in the kitchen
A different kind of cancer.

I fluff the pillow
And scream into it.

The Shrine

Grief hangs
limp and humid
clinging
like the air.

You breathe it in reflexively.

The world around
continues. Normal. Cruel.

We walk into the shrine
on Hope Street
too far gone for
a miracle.

But here at least
the weight of grief
is shared with strangers
who light candles too.

It will not get better.
But it will become
normal.

Cruel.

The Osprey

I do not like
vultures.

Passive scavengers
picking over the bones of
someone else's misfortune
tearing into
bloody morsels
like church ladies do
with gossip.

I prefer the ospreys.

They do not dwell
on the bones of death
as they hunt
the living.

Their eyes pierce
murky water
plucking
writhing prey
from the depths below
they return to their nests
triumphant.

The Stray

I do not want the cat
meowing pitifully
at the door.

One more living thing
When I can barely
take care of myself.

But I let it come in
out of the cold
anyway.

Now it sleeps
At the foot
of my daughter's bed.

Curled up
in the same way
I wish my broken
heart would rest.

Knowing
it is safe.