

If Love Were Lemons

I have fallen
in love precisely
three times
a million

I fell
from an oak tree
and landed
on my back out of breath
staring unblinking
at the blue sky as
every ancient clock
stopped and even the swatch
on my wrist cracked
slow motion
commotion
his eager face appearing
hearing his cracked pitch
I rose from the slumber
of youth
it was world's fair lemonade
in a souvenir glass
frothy and sugar-rimmed
mustache
I licked it and liked it
love was the flavor

I fell
down the stairs
of my college dorm
no railings to hold
wide concrete that looked
easy but was
a trap for the unwary
knees ripped open
with red tears of
graffiti left behind
his deep concern appearing
vast hands leading me
to rise from the ground
blinded by sunlight
shifting to shade and made
lemonade from the tree

ME BECOMING

planted that day
adding helpings
on heapings of sugar
so it tasted sweet
sometimes
but the lemons
were bad

I fell
from grace
in a courtroom filled
with lawyers shuffling paper
and the sound of my heels
clicking tile
as I stared
at my knees and traced
the scars from the fall
shifting forward in seats
making room
for the wings
I was homegrown
and whole
bright
dozens of me
ripe
a new recipe
to make
the sweetest love

me

Good Girl

momma said not
to say the *four-letter word*
that jumped out and danced salsa
across the dining room table

swishing back and forth
to the tune of glaring eyes
and the tsk tsk beat as
I admired its reflection

in spotty spoons
and second-hand corelle
from the thrift store
down on 96th

it looked *good*
on me even though
momma said good girls
don't dance like that

I Still Shiver

the tree that sits on the edge of the field
my daddy leased out for hay where
he'd put us on his lap and drive
the tractor in figure eights

had a tree stand where daddy used to
sit on cold mornings while I slept and
he shivered cold cocked scouting the
next freezer full of stew meat

chili and ground and sausage
that lasted through the winter while
I'd sleep by the wood stove
until it burned out and cold I'd

wake up icy on the rug in a draft
after daddy went to bed so I drug
frosty feet upstairs to the back
bedroom with stacks of quilts from daddy's

mom who knew once the wood burns out
the air ices over so I stacked quilts
in layers and shivered to sleep 'til dawn
while daddy went to the tree

the heat worked on the farm but daddy
saved money with shivers and quilts
and I inhaled the cost of comfort
and the price of farm freedom

he keeps the heat on now
no quilts in the toasty new house
empty shade trees lining the cul-de-sac
winding back through paved and planned

a manicured fairway replaces the hay field
scouting round white sadness and
a freezer full of colorful plastic
so I still shiver when I visit