

Fifty-Cent Seed from the dollar store

My goal in life is to grow one tomato one
full ripe tomato that I can hand to my daughter to bite
with teeth too small and evenly spaced out. If they grow
in wrong we will fix them, emaciated
white child with Jim Crow genes, we will pull
them out and press the wire into them, so that the
white trash will not show. That's what money can do,
that's what one full ripe tomato can do, not scorched
in midsummer, exposed in window pane boxes
with shallow, shriveled roots.

Bad seed can be purchased at the dollar store
for fifty cents a packet, but it takes blood meal
and chicken shit to grow a garden. Blood and shit
in exchange for food. Even then,
the worms bore through them. Steady hands
can grow a garden from fifty cent seed, but
I have my father's hands and his hands shake

Family movie night

I have more edge to me than dip spit into a Coors Light can, but it shakes and sings against the metal and I am dull, a knife sharpened over and over. It cuts into fish scales and slides along their bone and along human bone, just as easy. This is what I discover when he hands me the blunt end of it and says “shiv me,” which I don’t understand. My eyes sting. I want to look into the ghost lamp and eat sticks of butter, because I’m a child. But he forces my head toward the television and the hilt into my hand and the knife against his bone.

Ninety nine cent bacon and a box knife

Butternut squash can be fried with oil reserved for two weeks.

Two-week-old oil that is full of the crust of old chicken

and bacon bought at the commissary for ninety-nine cents.

It will not stick in your veins, will not fill you up

with maggots. You can open your veins up

with a two-dollar box knife to check. It will cost you

a hospital bill for the peace of mind.

The oil will coat your insides and protect you,

if only you can fill your lungs up with enough of it,

enough presser, pushing in and pushing out

to keep you full. Reserve your old milk

cartons and do not wash them.

the plants are the only things protecting you, your trailer,

and your bottle of two-week-old canola oil.

When your trailer is no longer full of squash

and brown paper bags and cut up milk cartons,

when you can no longer move from all the oil
in in your veins, or from all the box knife cuts,
when you have no more blood meal to give,
they will wilt and die and all of the things outside
will come in. There will be no more pressure,
pushing in, pushing out, to feel against your skin.

But for now plant your fifty cent seed and your blood meal
and feel your lungs, slick and full.

Are you full?