

BAKE SALE

Don't eat the wrapper.
Nobody doesn't know this.
So when my mother ate the cupcake
paper and all, in one shoved-in bite and hissed
"don't you say a word,"
all the way home
from the Ockley Green Middle School bake sale
I thought about the paper in her stomach.

What if anyone saw her?
What would they say? Like my best friend's mother
who taught us how to count to ten in Cherokee
and caught my father's eye. I thought
it was because he liked her slacks
or because she worked part-time at Sears,
but my mother said it was because
she was petite and had a stick
up her ass. What would she say?

I carried my cupcake in both hands, its top
a coiled green snake with gold sprinkles.

To want anything so much, to devour it like that,
must be deadly.

**In The Week Before Her
Death My Mother
Hallucinates in Email:**

I was thirsty. I walked to the yard shed
where the women were selling water. I had
no money. I was so glad
to see the only friend I had at church.
I held out my hands and she filled them
with sweet, cool water.

I was followed by a priest. She said
she could see my unhappiness.
I told her everything
right there in the yard
it poured like white words, gushed
from my mouth like a river of tumors.

The priest said, "*Come with me, my dear.*"
I said the only thing I know
in Japanese, the word for pocket,
"ポケット, poketto"
and pulled from my own, a note
and unfolded it.
"*Just love them,*" it read.

Two great white Pyrenees came to tell me
all of the beautiful things in dying.
When I asked them to walk me there,
they stood at my side and waited. This is why
I'm afraid to close my eyes.

BREASTS

The first time I kissed a woman's breasts
I understood

men
how they root and paw

how they knead and pull
to prove they're really here

how they suck a bruise
around the nipple

how they get completely lost
in between

how they smash and grab
apologize and hang on anyway

or, how they hold two birds so gently
they can only feel them

when they let go.

LATE BLOOMER

“Mama had a baby and its head popped off.”

The severed head of the dandelion
drops from my guillotine thumb

the yellow burst of weed
held under my chin

“Do you like butter?”

A little blonde girl whose parents are deaf
opens her mouth. *“Talk like your parents,”* I insist,
shoving in a cud of grass.

She cries without sound—so hard
that the daisy chain crown
shakes from her head.

I just want her to speak with her hands.

I LOVE PARASITES

I love parasites for their barbs and hooks
for their many names & forms:
Tapeworm, Poinsettia, Blood Fluke,
Twin, Mother, Jehovah's Witness.
I love them for their shameless
savagery & nerve.

I love fetuses—also parasites
who live off the mother's body.
Then, as nature dictates,
the mother becomes the parasite,
depositing into her offspring
her tumors, hair & teeth.

I love my twin brother who stays
alive siphoning off my blood
& laughing about it from his lovely
teratoma mouth.

I love the Jehovah's Witness ladies
who feed off my politeness.
I love to invite them in.
We take turns holding my mother's upper denture
like a poison leaf. I love passing around
the bag that was my mother's prosthetic breast,
the silicone pellets hissing inside.

I love the cup of my mother's hair
the gray curls like smoke. Before we burned her body,
she asked me if I would wear her bones
around my neck.

I already wear them, will always
wear them. I couldn't take them off
if I wanted to.