

Saving Seeds

Amazing, how a little seed
Can turn a woman into a witch
I look closely, at all your possibility
And perfect form

And see the past, your mother
That perfect sunny day I worked the earth
Loosened the dirt
Added the manure
And placed her with the others
In a perfect circle, a five point star

Covered her up and added water
To start the transformation
To tell her the ingredients were right
To reach out into the earth
And pull in pieces to weave into herself
To take earth and air and make something more than a sum of the parts

I look at all the seeds she gave me
From just one large orange fruit
Some now covered with oil and salt, pepper, paprika, and garlic
Roasted and ready to become part of me,
Some raw and drying, waiting for next year

I marvel at the magic of the multiplication
Makes me raise my hands, my head, my heart
Makes me dance as they go down, the roasted ones
Makes me want to make tea
And a poem
And light a candle, my ceremony for inspiration

Makes me think of my mother
And the magic she makes
How she heals me, every time she feeds me
How she takes common ingredients, lets them simmer
And finishes with something more than a sum of the parts

Makes me think of your grandmother, or great grandmother
I watched her grow, as a child
And helped her become
As she did me

I remember the way my heart leapt when she first emerged
Like freedom, and heaven, warm and wild
Remember the sting of mosquitos if I watered at dusk
Remember the reprieve from the world she offered
A timeless space, where everything was right

They taught me how to work with the earth- our mothers, and grandmothers
Taught me how to be quiet and listen
How to stand tall
How to receive
How to take common ingredients, like these words
And make something more, than a sum, of the parts

Writing My Story

I like to inspect my pencil before I write
to see the way the light shines on its dark tip
on its many curves and angles of
sparkling graphite

I like to feel the soft fuzz on its shaved part
and to slide my fingers up and down the length of it
so hard and smooth that I giggle at
this Cra-Z-Art

And I wonder who else has touched it
and if anyone has ever looked at it the way I have
with thoughtful doe eyes
curious for its story
of where its been and how it came to be

And I notice so many markings
a large gouge on one side, and two smaller ones
exposing the flesh colored body
beneath the orange coat of paint

And I feel its depressions, little valleys
and I wonder what forces it caved under
and I see its silver cap is a little misshapen
a little bit scruffy

And it's almost free of its #2 label
that has all but worn off
and its surface has many lines, some deeper than others
I add 3 lines, in the shape of my initial
I cannot help myself, but to leave my mark on him also

This wise old man has many secrets to tell
Like me
So I take him in hand and begin
to write

Those Summer Days

There were long summer days
So many so long summer days
For an only child
To pass
Alone
With her grandparents
In a small yard
With a big fluffy white dog, Buffy
Who lived only until she was 7 or so
And then she was really alone

Especially alone during the hour of soap operas
While the World Turns
Or something like that
At which time the real world refused to turn
And the sun stood still in the sky;
Curious how the program would play through that static hour

The slowest hour of the day
One can only attempt so many headstands, and climb the same tree so many times
And inspect every inch of the garage, all the ancient tools, covered in grease and dust, in so
many ways
Until you give in to the green hammock
The boring
Green
Warm
Hammock

Branded

Branded

By the man made world
Like the desolate cows
In the factory farms
I burned my calves
With the back of my boots

Rubber boots on bare legs
Back and forth
They rubbed as I ran

Deeper and deeper
Into the woods
And into my flesh
They went

A tattoo
Of two lines
Marking my 7th grade summer
12 inches high
On the back of my legs
Like the back of the cupboard door
My mother etched into
So we could look back and say
Remember when
You were yay high?
Remember when
You ran away?

Away from parents screaming
At each other
Toward adventure-
The real reason
If I remember right
To go deeper and deeper
Into the woods

Until the way back
Was gone, erased, misplaced
It all looked the same:
Pines and maples and last years leaves
Turning to soil

And a hush
Broken by a girl and her dog
Running then stopping
Wandering, running

Adrenaline pumping
Upon finding that your
Sunset calculations
Have not brought you home
But to an unknown swamp
And the sun keeps setting
And you swear the sun sets in the west
And so home *must* be that way
Across the swamp
There is no way around it
Each step taking you deeper
And deeper
Waist deep and wondering if you will have to swim
Through the muck and the shrubs

Shrub hopping
So many scratches
Across the sky
Streaks of yellow and orange
Marking the hour of the day
So temporary
Compared to the marks
Being made on your legs
“Why didn’t you just fold your boots down?”
They’ll ask

The answer so simple
The problem that you don’t notice the problem
Don’t know what your heart beats for
Don’t sit still enough to listen
Don’t notice the pain
Until you are in so deep that there is no way back
Only forward
Through the muck and the brush
To the beauty this is beyond
That is hard to notice
When you are so far lost.

Eventually you do make it

Out of the swamp
To find a strange sound for the woods to make
A rumbling in the distance
That you immediately place
A rescue call
Something man made
A car on the road
And you head that way

Breathing easier but faster
As you run to beat the setting sun
And the faster you run
The deeper the rubber cuts
Making a warm, moist place
A nice new home
For the swamp bacteria
Still sloshing in your boots
They don't think about causing you pain
They just need a place to be and to eat and breed
Not so different from the way you call the Earth your own.

Finally you and your new house guests
Cross the boundary of forest to roadside
And you can't believe where the journey brought you
A whole 180 from where you thought you would be

And you will never again forget
On what side of your house
The sun actually sets

The Grab Bag

I reach down deep deep into my heart
the way I reached into the "grab bag" my father kept when I was a small child.

When I'd been especially good, he'd bring that army-green satchel from the cellarway and let
me feel around for the best prize to pull.

I feel the same excitement now as I did then
and I see my 6 year old self, eyes gleaming, fingers and toes tingling,

fully present to that perfect moment.
I hold my breath and dive in, into a whole nother world

A whole nother way of seeing and being
A peaceful playfulness full of brothers and sisters

Brothers and sisters I always wished for
Always so deeply ached for

A place where emotions flow freely, so freely. My tears, the ones from a lonely little girl long ago,
wash me from the inside out, clean my windows, my vision.

Barking, Charlie, my senior, raspy, rickety, but full of love chocolate lab, asks to take my
glistening cheeks out for a walk.

We go, tears and all, into the brisk dark night
And a neighbor comes out and offers a beer, and I accept gratefully, and we heal each other

as we chat, in a sort of unnamed celebration and we share some unnamed prayer wishes, then
continue on our ways,

And another neighbor comes out, two actually, the witch and wizard next door
And they bathe me in their light, their love and warm peaceful presence and my soul receives

gratefully and offers the same and we relish in each other's company, the expressions and
comfortable silence. I hear them beyond their words and I imagine they hear me too

and then we continue on our ways, in the dark bright night. When I return to my driveway, my
cat, Midnight Velvet, greets me with a deep rumbling, a full heart offering, and walks us home.

I wonder what it will be like, when we all offer our fully opened, cleaned out hearts, the way the
birds sing and the trees grow, purposefully, playfully, naturally, wide open and

shamelessly. I return to the place I started this, to finish it, for now, and I imagine that my heart really is like that grab bag from my childhood, holding gifts that can't be seen, but must be felt,

and I prepare to reach in again, removing any expectations as best as I possibly can. I dive in again, and find music and love and my ancestors, and the whole world actually,

the whole world. And my son sees the neighbor's beer beside me and exclaims "Mommy's getting drunk!" and I think maybe "I am"

and I giggle at how funny this life is and I get dolled up for once and put purple in my hair, because I can, and because it is time to play.