

Daddy

Seven years of dying
One day at a time, and he doesn't know

She walks to the bookstore, and spends
More than she has, to carry the weighted
Pages back to the hospital, comfort in lines

The salted wind pushes against her, and
Flirts with her hand,
She cringes as she enters the double doors
Swallows as she pads along the carefully painted concrete block walls,
The cheerful greens, subtly
Insulting everyone.

She thinks of her front porch at dawn,
Hours north,
Quiet and safe,
Begs God to stop.

Mockingbird Short

Outside his death bed window
Sang
My father's friend and foe.
Red-crested, red-breasted,
Nimble and loud,
Whispering a buzz to
Father's last hour.

The mockingbird joined
His song and bounced
Upon the gateway sill,
I wept and danced
For Father's path,
For wasted year and heart so still.

Mockingbird Long

Mockingbird through deathbed window sings, and
That there is nothing current there is maddening and comforting,
Woman waits on the father hull,
To slip away knowingly, pain like splintered wood,
The whispered word highlighted,
Above expected silence,
Jasmine snaking up the front porch columns is sickly
Sweet, just like the father; the word hisses again from a
Hushed cousin, sultry and sacred as the soil.

So, the woman bends and measures,
Turns away from the morphine bed, Seething
When for seven years it was
Woman and father.
Swallows against loneliness in the full house.

Sometimes one word repeated privately -
Chanted, chanted, can Change the day.
No worthy word today.
Deathbed window painted open, decades of salt air bedding the
Men; family.
Three inches of life sifting through,
A ruptured screen - deadly coastal sin.

Near the father, places herself, gingerly, gingerly.
Damp bed cradles slightly and she closes her eyes.
Pretends she is not there; finds her word and repeats,
Song and word the same.

Mockingbird through deathbed window sings, and she
Puts brown hand in brown hand.
Father murmurs, sweet smell of the Jordan River.
Smoothing the soft quilt, soothing the soft fear,
Triumphs in the beauty of the last sentences.

Voices

abandon; erode the insides –
things a father can do but

there were soft

voices from the kitchen while I was in bed,
building, offering – background security only they can

muffled as underwater tea parties, so the women
stepped up; roared, my pride, my large-cat female family

clutched my thin legs, thin arms with tender
ferocity to ensure I knew. now I speak what

everyone knows but won't allow, please, the dead do not
become suddenly honorable and improved.

fireflies – common they were for my father's performances,
but the real audience held me up, nodded for

me to turn my head, and move forward
choose yourself, choose yourself, they taught silently and
diligently

they things they (emphasis: they) can do, are shattering, but nothing
against what an aunt, a mother, a grand ma ma
can do

mannered and slight bodied they may have been
but told me, with perfect pitch

"You are an afternoon squall, fierce and focused; moving
unpredictably towards freedom, amidst our feminine applause."

suddenly I am that (emphasis: that) woman –
who sustained us all, my voice is marbled and brilliant

floating in from the other room
and I do not think on forgiveness for days

you: the impetus that made me strong
nothing more, Father, dancing on your grave with
each step lyrical and honest.

