

The Gift

I was born under a gentle star,  
that formed my molecules too tender for the world.  
Other people seemed to walk in rhino hide, and I wanted it too,  
alas  
I dressed in the skin of a red balloon,  
the underflesh of a rose petal  
Pale as a shell-less lobster.

A fawn can be dealt grievous wounds by the jaws of a dog as like the mouth of a wolf.  
So words and slights took bites from me,  
growling beasts and yapping dogs alike.  
And I learned how to lay down.

I remember falling out with the dearest friends of my childhood.  
I remember being too afraid of their glares to leave my room.  
I remember sneaking out to eat, like a rat, in the dead night  
Just to avoid them.

And then the gift.  
My sister, Saint Michael.  
Packing boxes and laughing.  
Making dinner in the kitchen with a haughty air, irrepressible.  
Her presence warming frostbitten extremities,  
a hot shot of whiskey against disdainful winter.  
I raised my eyes in the glow of her light,  
and felt at peace.

Now I've learned to stand up.  
Now I wield my own sword and shield to turn dogs and wolves away.  
She wouldn't name it such or realize its value  
but her tucking shirts into boxes, spatula scraping up a pan,  
is still one of the best gifts I've ever received.

### Walking Alone in the Dark

I send out Eternal gratitude for the sound of water over stones.  
For electricity.  
For safety.  
For the mysteries in the depths and the certainties of the skies.  
For Grief and Bliss  
both  
I send out my gratitude.

How could I predict the miraculous mundanities?  
That cream goes in coffee and I get to taste it  
gravity, oxygen, the impeccable angle the Earth tilts towards the stars.  
Our Mother  
I consider what could be  
if the slightest atom had altered at her dawn  
and I quake  
awed that I was born at all.

Such a being as I  
made of meat and soul light, starshine, consciousness.  
How could I not exalt with thanks  
with eternal gratitude  
for my breasts and back  
for the sacred abiding heart of me  
sweet fruit ready  
unfolding in exquisite communion.

In the fust smelling night, among these monoliths of stark, black glass  
I give thanks for the unknown places  
the wild places  
empty fields and quiet mountains  
clean rivers still full of fish.  
My footfalls clang in a cave of concrete  
the very walls the instrument of my holy fane.

I send out gratitude enough to float the entire city.  
It swells within me, an unstoppable wave  
crests high over buildings and people, all the way  
Up  
Up  
Up  
to the mountains ringing this valley like a crown.

Eulogy

I took the Eulogy I read aloud  
    Under my stiff black hat  
        Throat all tight and full of nails  
And cut it up  
Like a skein of silk  
The pieces now  
Something new

My memories of you  
Are a kaleidoscope  
Crashing together  
In ways that never happened

But I know for sure  
I used to sneak to your room  
And touch the forbidden perfume bottles with their bulbous plastic pumps  
And clack your big gold bracelets  
And clip on your baubled earrings  
That pinched so bad  
And turned my ears red as the skin  
Of the tomatoes you grew outside  
With the apricot trees  
And the flowers, flowers, flowers

Mom's a fairy too. With fingers  
Wiggling in the soil like happy worms  
Convincing things to grow  
I killed a rosebush and then a sage plant and then a rosemary vine  
    *Extremely hardy!*  
    Said the man at the store  
And finally  
A graceful, purple succulent withered and died  
I took it to Mama, for triage, but too late

Even when you moved from farm country  
    wet black loam  
To the desert  
    powdery white sand,  
    fine as flour  
    the entire valley an ancient seabed, parched from the sun  
your yard was beautiful

The only one that was green  
The only one with tall grass and fruiting trees and  
Flowers  
Flowers  
Flowers

You were magic  
Everything you did  
Every place you went  
You made things just a little more beautiful  
With no particular effort  
You just shone

And now for the part that I didn't say  
Crying in my best black dress  
The part that makes your memory  
Nearly unbearable

You languished in a state home  
Poor shattered mind  
For years  
While your son beggared the last of your savings  
And I, no better than him  
Lived my own life  
Far away and never nearer  
A plastic bucket on my bathtub  
Dirt hard as brick  
Leaves curled up like the legs of a dead spider

I'll never have your green thumb

Good

I don't deserve it