

The Son's Prayer

My father who (I hope) art in heaven
From whom I could not have
Fallen farther
What makes a name hallowed?
Your kingdom came and crumbled
Your will was done at least while you were here and
What occurs in the ether I know not
If you could, would you give me this day what you did not in life
The words you could have said
That would have nourished more than bread
Lead me not down the path you took
At the end, we agreed that ruin lay there
(That day in church, maybe it was Easter, when
Our relationship arose from the grave
When I, now a man, and you still in the trappings of man, skin and bones, but mostly
spirit
So ethereal that I felt you slip away even as we embraced)
Forgive me for my sins for they are many
As I forgave yours which were innumerable
For I am your glory forever and ever
Or at least until I too create
What did not ask to be
And name him after you and me
Amen

Cornbread

The waiting is the worst
I stand hands wringing, bouncing from foot to foot
My mother shakes her head, assures me they are almost done
The smell sets my stomach to churning
I must have at least two pieces
Everyone else will have to make
do with one
The oven door opens, like the sky opening to reveal the sun, and the sight of them makes
me happy, truly happy
I race to the table, the first shall be first
I am precariously perched on a phonebook that allows vantage over the battlefield
All the soldiers are lined up
My sisters guard my right flank
Mommy to my left
The enemy, the reflection into my future, is dead ahead
All is set . . .

Where is the butter?
There must be butter
I am about to ask when my mother sets it down along with my plate
Before me, a feast of chicken, potatoes, and greens, but
I only have eyes for it
The first bite is ecstasy, pure utter, unadulterated ecstasy
I kick my legs uncontrollably as the pleasure surges through me
I want to run, to jump, to scream
And perhaps sensing this my father tells me to sit still
I reluctantly obey for
He cannot destroy this moment, my moment
When I am five and my mother has prepared my favorite food in all the world . . .

My Father is Close

My father is close
I can sense him
The way predator and prey are
Aware of one another
A satiated lion is no threat to a wounded gazelle
So my sister is safe

My wounds will heal
The cuts and bruises and aches will
Be gone in days
The deeper ones will take years
But I am young and unaware of those

My sister is tired
Violence is draining for all involved
I sit beside her, to allow her head a place to fall
Sleep now, I will keep watch

My father is not eternal