

Sawgrass: SixFold Poems: Apr 23, 2016

Sawgrass

If you love me
 don't pull away
because I'll let you. It would be easy,
the blades pitched in the direction
of your leaving.

 If you love me
come closer, separate the stalks, spread
them apart where I am most tender. Move
slowly down the path because my teeth will
grip and rip your skin away.

 If you love me
crawl deeper into the shadows, suffer the biting
mosquitoes that swarm down my long thin legs.
As you approach the root near its center
—your fingertips bleeding—

 my heart
grows abundant where it enters the ropey marl
that feeds it—as it will even you.
One love ends, another begins. The pain
goes on for a hundred miles.

 If you love me
you'll footslog the drowned prairie and sloughs
where alligators bellow, skirting hardwood
hammocks infested with bird's nests,
panther dens and spider webs.

If you love me
 you'll lie down like prey,
saying, "Yes, I will," your bones like kindling
to start a fire in this endless river of grass
that will waste everything—
even me.

 If you love me
 you'll ache
for the piercing incisors of my sharp bite.

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Love At Seventy

He:

How many women have you known? you ask.
When I tell you, another woman looks back at me.
You'd been with one man your whole life.
The art that fills your house is his.
I have sixty-two portraits in my heart.
I can't remember all the names.
Have you ever had to look for love?

She:

I watch the sunrise, lying in bed, burning,
happy. I think about being number sixty-three.
Birds outside the window, carry twigs, don't count lovers.
I smell coffee. There's a wine tasting at the café tonight.
My friends ask: Is he the *sommelier* or a collector?
I tell them: I believe him when he says:
I've been looking for you all my life.

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Nursing Home Thrift Shop

Here's Bernie Smith's blue silk suit,
Brooks Brothers, size 42 Long.
Bernice, Bernie's wife, bought the suit
for him to wear at the opera.
So, not much wear, at all.
Just a small tear in the button hole.
A rose, perhaps? No one will notice it.
Better fabric than today's cheap suits. \$20.
His black polished slip ons, size 11, \$5 more.
We'll throw in the red Italian silk tie for free.
She especially liked arias sung by Italian tenors.
Sorry, we don't have any of the dresses she wore.
But we found a picture in the breast pocket
of Bernie and Bernice at the Met in '82.
The Marriage of Figaro, we think.

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Betrayal

Two women
 in little black dresses,
martini smiles on their lips. I stop
in their décolletage, as would any man.
New Year's Eve, Key West, a bar everyone
knows by name.

 As I pass, one raises
her glass, cold gin spills over the edge, drips
onto her crossed and exposed left knee. Two
women in little black dresses smiling up at me.
It would be

 ungentlemanly, I think,
to leave without lending a hand, as the one
brushes my fingers with her own and drops
a napkin to her knee.

 In that moment,
my girlfriend's eyes are quantum coupled
to my own, all the way from NYC. Her hand
reaches out to me as I reach down to the napkin
on the knee.

 Guilt's fission splits my heart in two.
One part, the left, whose hand wipes martini from
that knee beats twice as fast, the other on the right,
feels regret for what hasn't even
happened yet.

 The left, imagines two
black dresses slipping to the floor, the right, the right,
the right, connected over 1,500 miles, knows what
I'm supposed to do.

 But music beats a drum.
I can't hear what the right side tries to say, though
it shouts louder, as the second black dress
turns a chair for me to stay.

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Cast Iron

I lost one after my first divorce. Another
after the second. How else to be rid of them?
Even if the house burns down they survive.
One of the few man-made things that won't
fall apart before you're done
with it.

I look for them at lawn sales.
Flawed, with permanent bits burned on
and scars across the surface from good
home cooking. Fried eggs swimming in butter
and sizzling ribeyes make the boredom
until heaven bearable.

Buy one, you're in it
for the long haul, that act, a promise to care for it.
It's not glamorous, but sensible, and the weight's
a burden, a wrist breaker,
muscle maker.

Mistreated, rusting,
it can be salvaged, and easily recovers
from hard loving. Use a paper towel
and gentle hand for clean up
after.

It seems unbreakable
because it's made from cast iron;
you think it will endure, but it needs good oil
and heat for seasoning.

Leave it on the stove top,
you'll use it every day.