

Memoir of a Disorderly Mind

Balto

I am just a dog
Lying in a cold grave.
My only company, worms;
Dumb, blind, indifferent.

Lying in a cold grave,
I, whom they called family,
Haunt foul eternity,
Forgotten and replaced.

I, whom they called family,
Despite my watchful eye
And tender loving care
Received no visits or thanks.

Despite my watchful eye
And muzzle gray and wise,
Never did I suspect
The cruelty of man.

Muzzle gray and wise,
Races in the yard
Were difficult, but I tried
Because it brought them joy.

No more races in the yard.
Just the unbearable still
Of dirt and blades of grass,
Of becoming bones.

Just the unbearable still.
Envy and pity intertwine
Making my thoughts too loud
For peaceful slumber.

Envy and pity intertwine
For the pup who will share my fate;
Human love is temporary.
I am just a dog.

Memories

It's strange what the mind chooses to remember;
An antique wooden attic where I received a quilt
From Aunt Naomi, but I can't remember her face.
A Church house room, every Sunday, for years,
My Mom-mom Gale sitting across from me;
I can see it when I close my eyes,
Clear as you see this sheet,
But none of the words remain.

My first memory; learning to open the baby gate,
Running to my mother in the dining room.
Her eyes were laughing; she was proud.
The scent of mint gum chewed for too long traveled
On my mother's gasping, hoarse laugh, and yet
What do I know about her besides what I've been told?
My last memory of her was also her eyes;
Gray-green and glazed; no memories anymore.

If I still my breathing, I can hear her sing a hymn.
I can feel the smooth, polished pew beneath me,
Taste the candy Aunt Anne gave to keep me still.
It's strange what the mind chooses to remember;
Small dioramas collected over the years;
Unimportant but beautiful details
Immortalized forever.

Exhaultation of the Worm

No eyes to see, it humbly feeds
On fungal spores and rotten leaves.
Assaulted from both earth and sky,
Worm, simple since the dawn of time,
Does not want change, though it could try.
A perfect creature; dumb, divine.
Evolution lies contented,
Even Darwin, fascinated.
Few can recognize its true worth
Yet it's the worm that moves the earth.

Waiting

More than half our lives are wasted waiting:
Waiting for the bus, waiting in lines,
Waiting for your headache to go away,
Waiting for your next paycheck,
Waiting for your friend at the bar,
Waiting for the news about your father.

More than half this waiting is wasted,
Waiting until there is a better opportunity,
Waiting for better days that may not come.
Waiting for someone to apologize
Waiting until you lose your patience
And decide not to wait anymore.

Mother

Mother was far from perfect,
But she tried her best.
Fighting cancer, holding a babe
To her sickly breast,
Attending her children's events Despite her twisted spine
Crying out in protest.
Sometimes she couldn't get out of bed

Mother was not the brightest,
Although she thought she was.
I was sick so to cheer me up
She gave me my favorite food,
I ate gratefully but threw up right away.
Well that wasn't a good idea, she said
No it wasn't, I replied,
And we laughed off her mistake.

She tended to believe in wives' tales
And put onions in my socks for my cold until I begged and pleaded
for her to take them out, by God the smell.
Then there was the ice bath, which I protested and protested against.
I was six and knew this wouldn't work,
But she couldn't be dissuaded.

She tended to bend the truth a bit.
I knew dad wasn't spending all the money on beer,
Even if it was too much, she spent
As much if not more on God;
Missionaries, food for Africa, tithe
She would kick him out from time to time
But he would always come back soon.

My mother was far from perfect.
One night she didn't wear her mask,
Disobeyed the doctor's orders,
Said the oxygen made her feel sick.
They say the dead can't speak, but they do.
They speak through their eyes.
In her glazed eyes I saw regret
For all the things she could not do,
Could no longer give, could not correct.

My mother was far from perfect.
I want her to know I forgive her,
In all her ignorance, unacceptance,
In all her waste and folly, in all her
stubbornness, in all her impatience.
Despite her vice-grip sheltering,
Despite her wives-tale remedies,
Despite it all, she was my mother.