

Theresa of Avila in the Garden

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The strawberry fills my mouth, a rude kiss, a soft bruise against the back of my teeth. Red and ripe, voluptuous and sweet. Juice bleeds down the sides of my mouth. It's permissible to slowly lick one's stained fingers, one at a time, eyes closed in prolonged ecstasy. Theresa of Avila in the Garden. I hesitate. The next berry might disappoint, lack the perfection of the first berry: warm and ripe and willing. Hands on my hips, I contemplate my garden, disapproving of its unwillingness to yield. Ogallala Everbearing, guaranteed to bear and yet they stubbornly refuse to send out runners. They tease me with deep green leaves, hopeful white blossoms, yellow-eyed. They hide beneath the wild lupine that cruelly invade my bed. They lure yarrow into their domain, and the yarrow, too, conspires to deny me berries. Too long I have accepted their wild undisciplined ways. No more. I uproot the bed, lupine and berries and yarrow all together. Glean the berries and start over: add compost and ashes. The detritus of life dug into the soil, unwelcome wild yarrow and lupine exiled, unruly scrub oak expelled. The bed now fallow until next Spring, until the Gurney Seed Catalog arrives and the ever-bearing strawberries, glossy and perfect and unattainable, sing their sweet siren song, and I again succumb.

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Kids Don't Float

kids don't float
we bear them up with
love, with
blood and bone and hope -
and hope that it's enough.

we bleed tears and sweat
money
and hope that it's enough

we pray to the saints and angels,
lest they forget to pray for us -
we cannot pray enough

kids don't float
they are borne upon
the breath of god

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Dancing with the Angels

We dance with the angels,
you whisper in my ear.
We drive along in that Oldsmobile
you had
before the radiator blew.

Your sweet breath
in my ear, our deep kisses
soft and warm
in the long summer nights,
hot and dark by the silent river.

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I Used to Be Cute

I used to be cute:
tight and sweet,
juicy lips
warm.

You would have noticed
the long line of my waist,
my slender feet in strappy sandals with
high high heels
accentuating my calves
and my short,
tight
skirt.

I would toss my dark hair
Pretending not to notice you
noticing
me.

I used to be cute.

You would have seen me.

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Heat Lightning

I saw August in your eyes,
in the sun-faded sky.
A scrap of the past,
past the summer heat and dog days
along the Mississippi.

Hot nights and windows steaming,
radio turned low.
We lived in the heartland,
heartbeat to heartbeat,
deep kisses on hot summer nights.

Late August clouds scuttle across
a fading sky, August blue.
Thunder booms,
the electric night returns,
blood hot.