

John

I come out of the bathroom,  
he's sprawled on the bed—  
face turned away from me.  
I follow the line of his spine down  
to the smooth, tan butt  
down to average- strong, but not muscular, legs.  
Down past his feet to his  
jeans crumpled at the bottom  
of my bed.  
I can't suppress my smile.  
He looks like a Tom...or maybe a Jim or John.  
A face that would be cute if you loved him,  
or cared about him.  
A pack of Camels lies by his jeans,  
I prop one between my lips—  
light it on the stove. I grab  
clean clothes, bring them to the  
bathroom, where I shower.

## My First Baby

I lost my baby last night;  
lost it like I dropped it,  
into my panties with a cough.  
I felt it against my body, moving  
along my crevices, oozing like the blood.

Covered in blood I moved to the toilet  
and turned to discover him  
shriveled at the bottom, the water clear despite  
the blood.

He looked just as he should have  
at eight weeks when he died  
head, tail-like rump,  
stubs like arms and legs but  
everything shriveled,  
drained of life.

I stared at him, burning holes  
in my eyes or maybe it was  
the tears.

I saw a little line, an indentation  
I imagined it was his mouth,  
just beginning to form.  
With dot-like eyes, he seemed  
to be looking up at me.

To My Sick Boy, at 3

\_Sitting next to your bed,  
my hand on your chest,

feeling the air move in and out with each breath.

I wish I could take your pain, your sickness,

But at the same time I know I can't keep those things away forever.

Body twisted to reach across,

I hope you get some sort of comfort from  
my presence at your side, even as you sleep.

You wake, moaning, crying out-

all I can do is sit next to you and

hope you aren't lonely.

I kiss your cheek, press my face against yours,

hoping my cool feels good against your hot skin.

Your hand rests atop my wrist, although I don't know if you're intentionally or just coincidentally  
holding on.

## Forgotten

I found myself tonight.

I know you're thinking "Not this again. I heard that song, read that poem already. "

It wasn't in the warm, soft, flesh,

I didn't even go there tonight.

It wasn't in Jesus or any religious or spiritual deity.

I drove home, singing loudly to the radio, then a CD, wondering

What it was exactly that led to the temporary collapse of myself.

Naturally, my lousy husband came to mind.

He doesn't want me enough, worship me enough, take out the trash enough.

He's never pushed me up against a wall in the throes of passion.

As I set the cruise control for the third time in my drive, I suddenly missed the rush of the accelerator beneath my foot,

the power flowing from me to the engine in

a mix of sparks and flammable liquid.

I thought of the bitter, middle-aged housewife living

in the suburbs, snorting

her way into oblivion.

Driven by the unrelenting duties of raising children or

maybe being driven by the monotony of it all, the pressure pushing down her younger, carefree ways.

Not that, I think to myself.

My life has been far from monotonous.

The stress of constantly wringing and stretching our dollars, of one lower class tragedy after another pulling

us further from the coveted middle.

Now that is an obvious answer. The constant stress, surely that erodes away one's quirks and personality.

Marriage, kids, money, stress, all

sound perfectly legitimate.

Then i thought about sex appeal, confidence that if nothing else, men will be caught, staring, assessing.

The proud look when a man understands the power my sex appeal holds and can claim it as his own.

Can I claim it?

I thought about just the demure looks, feigned innocence.

Cleavage, long hair, just the right amount

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"A Handful of Life"

of makeup.

Confidence that if nothing else, I have one thing everyone wants.

I'm not mean, not constantly negative. I'm not a slob, not lazy.

I don't complain too much, appreciate too little.

I'm not perfect, but not abusive, not reckless, not careless.

At some point i forgot myself, how to really enjoy myself, how to even be that version of myself.

## Great-Grandma

A small child, sock clad feet, treading carefully across the carpet, heeding the warning without understanding it.

Watching Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm or Heidi, hearing about the things Shirley Temple has accomplished.

Pulling the toys out from a top shelf in the closet, the same toys I'm sure my father had, maybe my grandfather.

No concept of the age of everything, but knowing that with age all things are delicate.

A small wooden box, dark velvet inside, with a key that the children love, you say.

Sitting at the kitchen table, two chairs, learning to play rummy, or sharing a home-cooked meal.

Sugary, minty candies in a tall white glass dish.

Curry on Christmas Eve, choose your toppings, kids pick at it.

A college student deep into a family interview, learning your life lessons, about strength, independence.

Never let anyone hold you back, from yourself.

I winced, when my own child pulled out those toys, battered by then, some parts broken, missing.

Pulled books from the shelves, tossing them down

Don't stop him, he's curious.

Corners wrinkled in the haste, to explore another page.

I just love that child.