

Daylily

I inspected the buds at night with my dad
to see which might bloom by morning.
But I was always surprised by the red
or peach that burst forth from the heart
of the blossoms and enlivened the quiet
green bank. We made sure to get a picture;

they were only there for the day, but the picture
would last much longer. You think of becoming a dad
when I come home today as we sit in the quiet
kitchen smiling. You make toast in the morning,
ask how I feel, say you love me with all of your heart.
I laugh at your dotting and ask for the red

raspberry jam, but you say there's no red
only black. I look at my belly and try to picture
how it will pop out and how the little heart
beat will get strong. I've been watching, like my dad,
for the daylilies, but it's early yet, only May this morning.
The green swords protect the roots, but the top's pursed lips are quiet.

I leave the radio off and enjoy the quiet
drive to work. The coats of the thoroughbreds
steam; the rain has hushed the morning.
At lunch I go to the library and leaf through picture
books, ones I had as a child. A young dad
guides the scissors as his daughter cuts a heart

from construction paper. *It's an I Love You Heart*,
she beams to her father, forgetting the rule about quiet.
He puts his finger to his lips, and I see you as a dad.
When I go to the bathroom, I find a bright red
has filled the bowl. At the doctor's they scan another picture,
but this one no longer shows the pulse of the first morning.

The blood comes heavy in the night, and in mourning
you're still awake by my side. I lay my head on your heart,
am soothed by its beat. I think of the small paper picture
and the glowing shape that was its center. I stay quiet,
hold my hand to my belly and wait.. I watch the red
blossom on the sheet, I say, *Someday, you'll be a good dad.*

I remember the morning you thought you'd be a dad,
a picture of the future as clear as the coming red
or peach daylilies, before the heart went quiet.

The Cert

My grandmother's blue raincoat takes me by surprise
Here is her closet behind dry-cleaner's plastic, the rip
In the pocket finally fixed. I remember her eyes

Finding me crouched in the darkness of her perfumed dresses, my lip
bit, eyes clenched (instantly invisible), broken beads ready to rain
From my clutched hands. But, innocent now, into the cuff I slip

My hand to find her—smooth nails, rings, the pillowy veins
She hated, wishing gloves still a must in ladies fashion. I tear
The clear sheath--crinkle—and look for missed stains

That might map the course we traveled—but that root beer
Spill from lunch at Friendly's is now just shadow.
I press my face to the wide lapel but don't find her there

Either. Guiding my arms through the sleeves--too short, though
In the mirror I make her move again, feel her low
Voice in the warmth of the upturned collar,
In the pocket, a Cert, like her, half-way to powder.

Love Saves the Day

That's what the eponymous store on Second Avenue and & 7th Street promises.
A gruff voice breaks lipsticked lips and reads: "Unattended children will be sold
as slaves," her dark acrylics tapping the glass beneath the sign.
My boy's blonde head turns and announces, "I think that lady's being a man today."

By the bright heart of my dark-haired husband my son and I may have been saved.
Perfect Christmas card, the package squarely sold--sold but not bought.
And maybe it's a good thing my boy's beacon of blonde belies
what might be harder to uncover otherwise.

Nothing is what it seems. Sure, there's a clichéd affair story
but before that happened is what's hidden—hundreds
of IVF hormone needles buried in old seltzer bottles in the back of my closet--
my private feminism101 art installation directed at the doctors' casual promises.

Still twenty-something then, but shots in the ass turned my marriage
old and it shriveled and died like my three pregnancies—all boys.
A foolish infidelity turned to unexpected heart blips on the sonogram screen.
I took that white stick out of the garbage three times to check the blue, to be safe

enough to hope. Now my hope is my son's bright hair—just enough mismatch
to reveal the truth, like the trannie's voice to his new ears. And someday—
perhaps catching a glimpse of our family in a store window

my boy will know. He will remember the vague birth story from my lips
and in my imagining, I

will fade-- the reflection holding only son and husband, eyes pained and waiting,
and in that moment, I won't know which one of us needs saving.

The Properties of Water

Carrying your son across the street
I stop short—he has kissed my cheek

And murmured “Soft, like water,”
as the hearse honks by. I caught you

there behind his eyes and missed,
already, bok choy at the beach. I wished

like a child, you hadn’t jumped,
and saw you suspended, not lumped

on the sand beneath the monstrous bridge
after a three-day search. From the edge

did you know that below
the sea would turn to stone?

Manhattan Divorce

Location, location, location.
She wanted to be behind,
get the view unobserved, but
there was no way around it, the front
affronting her every time time turned
round to him turning her around,
ending up behind her behind.
She just couldn't get in front
of the whole "coitus thing" as she turned
the phrase but could not turn
him around on the issue, just couldn't find
a back way in or really on and he just couldn't
get behind the strap-on idea try as he wouldn't.
It's just that she wanted for once to observe
without being observed,
to become invisible in the whole
production for once to forget
about how others, how everyone
was always watching her as she
wanted to watch them but couldn't attain
the "Classic 8" that would afford
such a panoramic view.