

Pines the fingers cupped for the sun

My demon, brass and fur, goes with me, a rascal,
pencil goatee and forked tongue, I will attest
to his power, the salt in the white lines of his hair,

he swirls around me like spaghetti around a fork.
He writes *ponderosa* and I say *no, pines the fingers
cupped for the sun*. My lover has built a box

that is too small for him. Easter Island and there's
no one left to marry. I hand him a pencil
to draw himself a bride, he reaches up

and draws himself on my skin.
My demon sleeps leashed to my ankle—
I am his dream, he is mine. In the morning

we wake and scurry into another den of snakes
and hot showers, a cool sea-breeze
drying the bee-sweat from our backs.

So Much Fascination About the Children

Here is today's blank sheet,
a pith helmet pedals past on Stults,
English flag flying. I am a costume

worn by a snake, that's why the arms
and legs sometimes flail. So much
fascination about the children,

were they eaten or merely strangled--
the snake rides into the mountains
with people he does not know

or knows intimately, the sun is just
coming up, people are chattering
against the sunrise. In the house on Rose

Avenue, containers of yogurt from before
mother died, from before father
died, alone the snake walks past the corner

where the chickens are soft against traffic,
white shirt, dark tie flapping, selling something,
always selling, sometimes the sunrise,

sometimes haircuts two for a dollar,
or a god named Phobius
who will predict your future by reading

the pattern of feathers in the street.
The snake does not need, but I am freezing,
I didn't know we'd be river, the book

said sand, grassy lawns, mailboxes
swollen with postcards. Nobody wants
to go back for my coat or the map,

Sam's typewriter with its dropped
capitals, the desire his poem brings
for my lacquered music box, my father's

whitewashed footlocker, blackjack trees.
Here is a list of the dead written
in invisible ink. I suggest you collect

all the scissors, the hammers, bury them
where blind Atropos cannot find them.
Learn to cast your voice into the trees, sing.

Favorites

You ask my mother's
favorites, you do not specify—
daughters, colors, flavors of ice cream.

My mother's letter was the hammer,
I can't find it now, could not find it
when my sister was dying

and I wanted to tell her I'd burnt it—
told her anyway, since she could not know
I was lying. My mother wasn't subtle,

she built monuments to herself
out of house flies, all I remember
is drama, there must have been ordinary

time, but when the curtains open
on her it's always opera. My father's name
was Cuba, an island of heat and old machines.

Everyone in this poem is dead now,
even the audience, my brother still
invisible, the traffic out on the boulevard

below gray sky. My mother's favorites:
Chopin, vanilla, Days of Our Lives,
Neal Diamond, Israel, Nixon, me.

Cunt and Motherfucker

I heard them yelling through the gauze of late morning,
swimming up and sinking back into the dark.
Cunt and Motherfucker, out for an early or late stroll,
looking for their first or last drink of the day,

hoping to score something to quiet
the armored creep of the skin,
the locked muscles behind their eyes.
She, a Fucking Piece of Scum, didn't

have the fucking money and he demanded,
by reason of his cock, that colossal worm,
that she get it now and give it to him.
He, cocksucker, eyesores inked on his tongue,

could not understand, her Art Deco hair,
coral pink and black at the root, she'd given it all
to a zebra, a silver dollar earlobe down at the Greyhound
station yesterday who said he'd get her something

so good this whole shithole town would disappear,
it'd be like the fucking rapture, no shit, but when she came out
of the bathroom the sumbitch was gone, and it wasn't her fault,
so Fuck Off. Motherfucker hollered she should

go on back to Tucson, You Nasty Skank, You Whacked-Out
Disease, and she, Cunt, threw a kitchen knife
and pinned his foot to the ground with one lucky shot.
That's when the real screaming started.