

Baby Names

Let's call him Baby Doom
or maybe Tricycle Madness
would better suit him
or Lester's Little Secret, Braunze, Fire Catcher
Blood Drinker or The Dream Machine
Samuel is nice, too, but I know
you ruled that one out months ago

You also ruled out Jacob, Peter, Daniel, Addison
and Joseph
which was my baby name brainchild but
oh well
you are right to want something flashier
like Superjerk, Gnashings St. Claire, Lydio
Brother's Bane, Davidson
or even just Slice

He will go on to do great things potentially
your blonde winged friend left little doubt
so long, he said, as we pick just the right name
and so we must ask ourselves
would Cookies N' Cream rid the world of evil
or merely turn the other cheek?
could an angry Clementine overturn a money table?
I think not, but Jesus might
Why not Jesus?

Or what about Jeezus
now there is a boy destined for something greater
a boy who could easily hold his own inside the ring
maybe an Italian with a great sob story
I can already see the headlines and the VIP tickets proclaiming
Red Foam Drinker versus Little Baby Jeezus
I see our root beer cups overflowing as our heavenly son

deals RFD a left hook for the ages
fated, unable to hold back, winning
all the fruits of our careful planning

Out of Time

My father is flowing clockwise
in a holiday sweater vest and a gold chain watch
He is down in the groove, swimming through
the electric grey rooms
kept warm by the stove light, and on the table
a bowl of ham and pea soup
Immigration was his grandfather's story
yet he too finds comfort in the small
At night, laying himself in the arms of his armchair
he can at last afford to go nowhere

My mother is flowing counter-clockwise
still as beautiful as she was
fifteen years ago, twenty years ago
back when the sun and sky made a point
to match everything that she wore
I believe now that they even changed colors
for her secret moods
Had I known it then
I might have seen her apart from me

Her jade necklace is timeless
Her laughter is timeless, his records and her red coat
that he gave her that she always wore
I grow
I am the clock—the testament to the full length of things
I tell it like it is
The dinner plates with the hearts on the rims, they are timeless
until another one breaks (not out of anger)

Not out of anger, I dropped it
Out of time
She asks, How many are left?
A wedding present, he says, it was our very first set

How many are left?

I point:

Two

We Can Sell the Antiques

On most East Coast beaches
the shorelines and their crowds tend to look the same
so long as you don't look at either too long or too hard
or lift your eyes to see a lighthouse
twirling about in some other town's coat of paint
you can fool yourself

There is a mansion in Asbury Park filled with junk you will never quite unsee
six door knocker faces, a pair of red kissing manikin torsos, twenty-three beautician's scissors
dulling in the back of your brain's dark closet
sorry-eyed, turning undead
and grooming a monstrous shadow
until there might be anything in that house
and everything there might remind you of it

Today it is crowded
on the beach where kids seem to have only one kind of scream
small talk, heavy feet, dark eyes
she must know that she is not the one walking beside you today
but so long as she doesn't risk everything with a look, two distressed searchlights, blue
she can fool herself too

Death Considers the Buttercups

One track, one mind
Death must glide among these buttercups
without pausing to consider them
even as they hug the train of his cloak
in their harmless fervor to be chosen
by truly anyone

Though in a small and secret way
as hidden as his hands and feet
that are weary for his journey's end
at the shed where his old man waits
still humming in his wife's wide-brimmed hat
Death considers the buttercups

Who let him go just as quietly, no thorns
leaving only a yellow signature (a suggestion) to be remembered by
he would have sucked them dry
or at least taken a few lazy, arching swipes at their heads
but this isn't their time and besides
he still has a long way to go

On Lent

Low ceilings are still en vogue
as is setting aside money in small increments
to prepare for the wise and lonely years
We all at times need God's wrath or a Great Depression
to keep our thoughts from becoming too silly or from towering precariously
I vow to not be so outlandish
with my spending
and to apply this kind of discipline to future relationships
so that one day I may find and keep true adult love

For Lent I used to give up red squash
which I hated just as much as the other colors of squash
the purple, the green, the blue
I still do
I regret the bacon bits that ended up on my salad yesterday
that were not supposed to end up there
I pray for the strength to avoid the near occasion of future bacon bits
And to understand that true love is made up of sacrifices both small and silly
True love is unsexy and is nothing to be ashamed of

Last night I dreamed
that something surprised me so much that I
swallowed the whole world
knowledge, wealth, and power drifted silently across a lake in my belly
I considered hurling them back into the void
but was scared that I might start a new world war and possibly get shot in it
I had firmly resolved to never give up anything
when a searching voice called out my name from deep inside of me
and I felt a great relief at being judged