

Why Apples Fall

I *The Blue Jay Told Me*

The Blue Jay told me it is true
I too was once nothing
more than a tiny bud that bloomed
and visited by bees
many times before petals shed
But all I recall are endless days
sun or rain
feeling crisp and juicy
never noticing increments of girth

At night we whispered
speculating what might be in store
Some claimed it was all about letting go
first unfettered moment
while others worshiped the rush
topsy-turvy feeling in your pit
But I always craved impact
umph and ecstasy
of accomplishment of knowing the light
is neither beginning nor end

II *Newton's Song*

My mother says
most behaviors are learned
by imitation so the apple falls tomorrow
because it watched
all the apples falling today
who fall because of what they saw
who fall because of what they saw
who fall all the way back
to our first fall and back again
to the first angel falling away

But my father believes falling
is the inevitable result of rising
striving to achieve escape velocity
ad astra and beyond
thermodynamics of capitalism

My sister the gardener lives in a world
filled with green songs
suggests apples fall
because dewy grass
sings as a siren
come come whomever you are

All Newton could calculate was force
of an apple's attraction to the earth
how fast and hard
shallow understanding
but I grok seeds need dirt
and when they finally learn to take root
in the empty air of existence
apples will fly
 one day apples will fly

III *Fumbling into the Future*

Because everyone craves
a kiss that addles
and the radio is filled with static

Because we are trapped
between curiosity
the reaper and beauty
is a blue dancer cast in bronze

Because momentum is a dragon
and the carriage pointed
toward eternity

Because we are condemned
to fall into the future
fumbling among the aliens

Because we are blessed
to fall into the future
thinking thoughts never think

Because we'll never know
who wound the clock
if they are spying or not
and somehow planets keep on spinning

Submitted to: Sixfold
<https://www.sixfold.org/>

April 20, 2023

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Because spokes roll with the wheel
and every unfurling sprout
challenges entropy's dominion

Because Granny Smith cooks
while Pink Ladies flirt
and a crisp clean bite
leaves both of us weak in the knees

Because a double-helixed chain
crawled from the ooze
and it is an astonishing thing to be alive

sixtieth birthday poem

for Indigo

twenty-one thousand nine hundred fifteen chances to be
a buoyant plum
purple orb against a field of waterlilies
blooming under a cloudless
somebody-take-a-photograph sky
kissed by perfect twin
floating beneath the surface

and she said
do not be a buddhist
be the center of stillness
do not dance for the goddess
but be her forests, oceans, skies
and all the wild things
do not be a Christian
be the loaves that feed the masses

then she asked what if
the plum is too sweet?
nearly twenty-two thousand chances
to explode brighter than superest nova
fill the air with a song
that makes all the other songs
jealous and squandered

how many?
watching reruns
aunt bea and gilligan
clicking widgets
as if the world needed faster
shinier more expensive
ways to kill itself
how many frittered away
worrying
which squirrel will win the race
and the bending
of palms in a hurricane

April 20, 2023

she said do not be
an artist be the fire
do not be a dancer
but the space between leap
and falling star
do not be a writer be the phrase
that turns laughter to wine
then bleeds

never regret
infatuations
polkas twists and cha-chas
the unexpected hallelujah
search for mythical cities
bushwhack through jungles
golden spires a machete slash from reality
and remember to converse with quarks
and shudder as needed
with grief

still she said do not invest too much
in even my most tender trace
ecstatic twining of our bodies
remember the star exploding
vanishing of nanoseconds and millimeters?
because even deepest namaste
is a cluttered desk
punctured radial
out-of-tune piano
twenty-two thousand galaxies away
from the astonishing plum

how strange

for Carol Coffee Reposa

how strange
that I am forever
wandering the halls as if life
were an art museum
and my job
to bestow meaning
upon color and form
how strange
that I am forever
listening in as Cezanne's apples
whisper to the blue dancer
relax
there is nothing beyond us
worth reaching for
how strange
not that you should die
but the shapeless gray of your absence
my inability to cadge meaning
from a swollen tumor
how strange
but perhaps less strange
than Werner Heisenberg
teaching that we cannot know
a bullet's speed or heart
without changing its impact
that certainty
is either velocity or acceleration
never both
and even though the cat is both
dead and alive
winter still gives way
and bees still choose flowers
so one ripe June morning I will
think of you before biting into
the sweetest sweetest strawberry
how strange

I am not an avocado

no oily pulp
beneath leathery green skin
nothing to spread
on morning toast
only disappointment
when mixed with onions
diced tomatoes
lime cilantro
and cayenne
nor am I the squawking
parrots flying free
carrying soft grass
across the river
as if there is no border

I could possibly be
steam rising
from a hot pool
opaque
a fog beautiful
for what remains
unseen or a dream
of snow— shroud for
forgotten graves
or regrets
of an old man
after toasting
a change of calendars
checking email
to find a note
from the girl un-kissed
so many
champagne corks ago