

Tip

When what is
becomes what was,
when everything frozen
melts into the tea
of the waking,
what makes sense
is a booth for one
and a scrambled egg
topped by a tomato
that was sliced yesterday
by a machine.

At this hour,
the watered-down Tetley
is as tasteless as the toast
the 9:30 workers swallow
with their excuses.
The red cubes called jam
disguise nothing.
All phones are on mute.

This is the morning
of the unemployed and formerly
loved, women wearing the dark dresses
of last night, still smelling
of the ones who rose and went,
poking at canned fruit
and promises made when
sleep was the last thing

that mattered, when the clock
was a limerick of numbers
brushed away like tears
from the face of a girl.

This is the date without
a name of its own,
a mad tea party of one,
where strength means
being able to lift a cup
and swallow,
where kindness is a dollar bill
left beside a saucer.

Gingerbread Women

They lie on the counter,
turning to sugar.

I have formed each
in my image.

I give them
red buttons, silver
Orphan Annie eyes,
soft mouths that open
at my touch, each
in my image.

Here is the mother.

I put her in the middle,
the daughters and cousins
holding on
like paper dolls.

They can be shuffled.

They can be dealt
and stacked.

They do not bite back
anymore.

I have formed them each,
dressing them
in the clothes
from my closet,
brushing the crumbs
from their faces as

I lick my fingers
like an animal
that eats its young.

Cornbread

What if Carver was wrong?

What if that extra time life offered
at the end is an opening up and a taking in?

What if it is a bottle of Meridian
you leave on your birthday
at a homeless camp by the river,
imagining the grabbing of the fingers,
a stranger's head shaking in disbelief?

What if it is a long-ago meal
swirling back without the people
but with a scent so strong it translates
to your fingers, until you find yourself
baking something you thought you
would never again taste, never again desire?

What if Carver was wrong?

What if the extra time handed to you
at the end isn't gravy, after all?

What if it's cornbread?