

BURN

You are a magnificent
And thorough burner of bridges
Thick skinned and thick headed
You lay your barrage of hurt on
Fat and sticky

You are disabled
None of your senses working
Quite properly
And see and feel and smell the world
With your skewed reality

Your knives are sharp
And you lay waste in good fields
Where the sun used to shine
And berries ripen
You color everything with your own
Sorry and cruel paint

I'm not your
Beast of burden
Your sad sack
Your drama queen

You have never seen me
Only your idea of who I am-
The character that suits
Your fairytale or horror story of choice

Truth is
It's never about me
It's always about you
And that's the lesson
You teach
You perpetuate
You publish

It's too bad
You never knew me

PLACES TO SEARCH FOR YOUR MOTHER

I was never as good at hiding as I thought I was
But I was good at closing my eyes and running
You can't see me
You can't see me

I loved dark closets and haymows
Ditches and the nook behind the beaver den
The smells of earth made me so much happier than
Chanel Number Five and lemon cold crème and Pledge

The crack of a hand
On my face
Like fire
And shame
And shame

Penny loafers scuffling in the dirt
Pails of water and weeds and blown dandelions
A river running lazy gold and green
The cry of a hawk
Snakes
And bees

I searched for you in books and movies
I searched for you in lovers and tellers of lies
Walking down mean sidewalks I searched for you
Under blankets
In the hospital
In a pill
I searched for soft words and soft arms
Pillowey breasts and kind eyes
In pancakes cooked just right with real maple syrup
I searched and all I saw
Was the back of your starched blouse
Your hard heel and your iron curls
In your wake the icy air swirling, swirling

The icy air swirling
Freezing my heart
Making it stop

SEE WHAT HAPPENS

Lay your damage on the table for me to
Suck up between my hesitant lips
Let me taste its bitter edges and sickly sweet
And sorry center
Chewing slowly
Deciding whether to spit or swallow

We all need the shirt that says
DON'T HURT ME
DON'T HURT ME
DON'T HURT ME

Honesty is a double-edged knife
This is what is wrong with me
Can you handle it?
Will you please?

Each body of truth has its own secret scent
A perfume so intoxicating or repulsive
Changed only by the compatibility
Of the skin it graces
Of acid levels
Temperature
Temperance
Time

Would that we were quivering pups
Able to scent out safety
Or danger
The hand that will nurture
And the one that will harm

Lay your damage out
On the table
See what happens

THIS DARK GARDEN

Burn all these malignant seeds
So they may never touch
My heart's fertile earth

I blamed you when all the while
I was the one sowing and tending this dark garden

I planted distain in your eyes
Silence in your mouth
You were an innocent really
And I self-righteously interpreted
Your movements and words like a bastard queen

Dig these pestilential roots
Laid so deep and festering
These ancient roots of my first understanding
Of cutting words and stinging hands
Of purposeful embarrassment
Dig them with a vigor and rusted spade
Catch all their juicy pith
And leave them in the sun to wither and die
To become benign

You were a bystander
Watching my eyes love you
And listening to my mouth commit
The tender suicide of us

Who can blame you for standing back
From this compulsive Judas' kiss?

And now the new moon comes
And I must dig these roots
Must burn these seeds
Must not take them into my mouth
Must not swallow them into my belly

TREES CALL ME HOME

My real mother
Was an oak tree
Round bark
Breasts suckled me
To life
Sap running up roots
Into my limbs
The earth my grand anchor

Oh, Mother,
Your green abundance
And cool leaves
Steady me
Make me remember
The truth

My hands on your rough
Skin touching the
Pulsing drumbeats of the
Ancients-
My fingers umbilici
Connecting us
And you stretching
Above and Below
Extending limbs and roots
One with sky and earth-

Oh, Wonderous!
You are my true mother!
I could always depend on you
You've worn my tears
And blood
Have hidden me in
Your arms
Bore the brunt
Of my anger
And never complained

You are bigger than
I'll ever be

Please tell me
You will never
Die

