

Once Upon a Time

I'll fuck you hard,
Cinderella,
said Prince
Charming.

Her tiny feet
made his cock
stiffer than a
slipper made of glass.

He dressed her in rags,
humiliated,
scrubbing on her
bruised knees.
In her place.

Bestiality,
with the Little Mermaid,
he kept her in a glass tank.

Her lower half of
slippery scales,
erotic asphyxiation,
gills straining uselessly
as he forced her
to breathe air
instead of water –
she knew her body
was monstrous.

He smothered Sleeping Beauty
with a satin pillow.

Nothing was
more lovely than
her stiff acquiescence,
the way she could
only do what
he wanted,
unspeakable things
with the wooden prick
of a spinning wheel,
she deserved it.

I won't say
what he did with Snow White,

Only that she was found,
bloodless and naked
at the bottom of a stone well,
the branch of an apple tree
lodged in her throat.

Once upon a time,
there was a
beautiful princess.
happily ever after,
glass, blood, and bones,
glass, wood, and stone,

The End.

Butter, Sugar, or Bone

He says he can make anything
out of butter, sugar, or bone.

Roses, birds, carved with knives he's
honed over years since childhood.

He says he's not proud of the ribs,
the jaws he's broken, fights he's lost

by being the last one standing,
but proud of his way of shaping with knives

the delicate confectionary swan he holds inside
his bone-cracking hands,

a live fledgeling sacrifice
like the ten-year-old boy with bleeding knuckles,

pounding his own image from
the face of the meanest boy in school.

Before the Thunderstorm

Before the thunderstorm Albuquerque
I'm too short to climb up to the roof myself so dad helps me.
We watch clouds bruise and lightning crack bones
count between flashes raindrops sting and slap
until mom yells as us to get down off the roof in a
thunderstorm Patrick what are you thinking
so we do.

Before the thunderstorm dad and mom are in the
bathroom dad's shouting I fucked up Lisa,
I fucked up, I know I fucked up I realize we don't have money
I'm outside the door they don't know
and dad's outside beating on the shopping cart with his baseball bat.

Before the thunderstorm I'm at school and I tell the teacher
I fucked up she writes a note to mom, she tells dad
and I realize I fucked up doesn't mean the same thing as I'm sorry
I didn't say to anyone I fucked up Lisa
and dad's standing outside again staring at the shopping cart with mean knuckles.

Before the important test so I can go to the nice school
on the other side of town we're thirty minutes late because we
fucked up the location directions dad's yelling at the lady to fucking let me
take the test anyway she'll catch up to the other kids she's quick.
The lady lets me in so he'll stop shouting fuck and I get to go to the nice school.

Before the thunderstorm Albuquerque
dad's working on his dissertation in a Ramones T-shirt and baseball cap.
My crayons lie abandoned on the floor.
I want to watch the storm sweep forward, clouds bruising towards us
like clenched fists. I'm too short to climb up to the roof alone.
Dad stops writing, to lift me.

Anticipating Mango

Cold and dark February,
I buy a green mango
during my orbit of the
usual grocery store.

The fruit is taut, firm,
only beginning to hint
at ripeness, a green mango
the size of a human heart.

I see myself for a moment,
mango held aloft like an Aztec
Priestess offering a bloody sacrifice
for the crazed and jealous Gods,

ripe juice runs red- gold rivulets
down my chin and throat as my teeth
penetrate the soft, rhythmic flesh
the sweet, sticky heat, ripping,
pulsing, tasting the throb and quiver
of torn heart muscle,

veins lunging as dazzling flowers
erupt like spilled constellations,
as lush vines ejaculate towards the sun,
the jaguars in the dark of the jungle
yowl in heat, in agony as doomed dragonflies
mate in the syrupy air, winged jewels stuck heavy

as the hole inside my chest aches
with warmth for the abandoned earth
while my blood drips to water mango seeds,
to appease Gods with no hearts of their own,

which is why I buy the green mango
in the deserted ruins of the grocery store,
the reason I take it home and place it upon
the bare altar of my kitchen table,

to wait for the sharp throb of ripeness,
for the dark re-alignment of planets.

Life Imitates Art Imitates Life

Later, while you're coughing blood into the sink,
I'll remember this moment;

You choose your favorite painting in the gallery –
portrait of a poet, scowling and bespectacled
more dizzily alive than a photo.

My choice puzzles you. A choppy, lopsided
breakfast – blueberries, egg, and lemon
“because I can taste it” is my defense.

You nod against the blocks of gold and napkin,
I struggle against shrugging.
We press on.

For some reason, I remember all this now,
while you're standing naked in the bathroom,
while I'm warm as an egg in your bed,

tasting salt and tinfoil each time you spit
red against a round white canvas.