

Contains five poems

### **When Your Mother Grows Old**

When your mother grows old  
her voice gets tiny and decamps,  
nestles in a tootling drum,  
a bee winging in your ear.

Just like her body, insect rump  
with ineffectual arms and stick legs,  
medically preserves its physicality,  
reverse-births in your womb.

You point her around pylons, mortally afraid  
of the siren when your back will bear her shell,  
when her sandals deflate, her wheels  
splay, her wings snap. There you go

pitch her porcelain chalice on the column,  
high as a voltage mast. She balls up, while you're a ball of  
strength. The wind plucks her vocal chords,  
how she was everything to you.

It was true. It was by design.  
You are her tomb.

## Staying Power

To avoid the queue I  
jumped through the window. My shin  
caught a new moon of a curtain.  
The wisecrack consulted, manning a desk. He  
donned a black frock and didn't look at me  
because I was a woman.  
It took him long till he had cracked his knuckles  
into place. Before we began,  
he tickled his beard, of uneven  
color, a ghost of old and new.  
His room made a terrible impression on me.  
That may be why I was profoundly shaken when  
he said: "Just follow the rules,  
and I will tell you your future."

At gym practice, the former prime minister  
was profusely sweating it out on the stepper:  
"Hey, how is it you're not someone else.  
But no, it was him. Was he training for  
rehabilitation? I heard the instructors  
squabbling to teach him Pilates. Apparently  
he wants it for free, alongside with sun  
and air. And that's  
what he got and cheers for longevity.

In the kaleidoscope  
made-up portraits  
flit by, one by one, and I light them through,  
remember their lines, their memorable  
works, as well as I can, as I sit on the edge  
of my bedstead at night, under the lamp  
and creak.

"I'd better go to sleep now."  
I lie down, douse the lamp. I will dream,  
steadily now, of my own insignificance, but I will  
do no harm, and rise on the sustainable pj's list.

## Book Sprite

It's perfectly fine to feel envy. Say yes, snatch  
up the extra mug with cocoa. Wraith, get lost.

At the birthday bash that leather football  
and speaking doll should be mine. My parents fib,

as money shakes their tree. They don't get  
that the organ teases my fingers, but grates

my ears. I pine for Debussy instead of Bach,  
all the vast ocean of emotions kept in or

thrown out: not sure! Their company I'll tame  
like the pony I would kick then whip in its stomach.

My parents, wary, deprived. Listen to them, nah,  
maybe when I'm as old. I flex my toes, appoint

myself guard in the schoolyard. Bash a weak  
undergrown clock. My hair is pulled, my name

abused. I take refuge in the library  
as I got nowhere with people. Winnow

books. The wind will but the devil won't  
play with me. Some sprites have got an easy

life, but this at least I don't want.



## What She Got

The lady in the next seat looks at my face,  
and leggings, to ask where I got them.

We came here to listen to antiquated music,  
but she is more interested in the plastic,

sly fashion imitation. The applause winds  
down, and we chat, after she says this

Mendelssohn reminds her of old Hollywood  
in the thirties. Me, I love all ages. Schmaltz,

she says, in the seat of schmaltz. Yet you never  
know, last year Mendelssohn was magnificent.

I lean over the balustrade and give  
her some leg space, the urbane immigrant

from the plain. We share the same profession  
but unlike me she doesn't enjoy it.

She whittled her students, so quick today,  
eluding her caustic wit, down to three.

Adults, please, she does not want to be  
a slow-coach psychologist. Next week

she'll fly to Amsterdam -- a coarse city  
I know well -- but not for the museums;

she's seen those already. I think I am getting  
this lady. When the full-blown Beethoven

bursts loose I poke my condom leg.  
Very real, very new, her cries are swamped.