

My Children's Friends are Having Babies

crying, smush-faced,
ugly babies suckle
mamas breasts,
inflated, tumid breasts.
The babies dangle
like christmas bulbs,
fleshy, star-shaped
christmas bulbs.

Their bulbous heads
hide the bosoms
I want to see.
I feel guilty, a bit
queasy, still,
I wonder.

Could I place my head
between a woman's breasts,
find sweet deafness,
muffled news of rampage,
muted voices transformed
into slurred melodies?
This is how I want to die,
cuddled in the bosom
of a mother who strokes my hair,
pats my back, changes me.

We Moved to Scottsdale and Bought a House

On Rancho Vista, north of *Old Town*
where there are no ranches and the vistas
are miles of cinder block walls,
hidden pools, hibiscus,
stubborn bougainvillea,
grapefruit trees,
patio sets purchased at Home Depot
on credit – wicker davenports and chairs.

This is not our native landscape --
front yards of pink gravel,
houses shaded by palms,
fronds like comb-over hair.
No elm trees or locusts or evening breezes.
No pill bugs under rocks or worms in rain gutters.

Days are carbon copies of before and after,
high sky sun, overexposure,
bare legs, bellies, blistered shoulders,
water bottles in every weathered hand.
I hide in the house, dark, cold, and wonder
why I left my parents to age and die.

Evenings I sit poolside,
dip my toe and write names
in cursive lace ripples,
people I love, my name –
watch the words wash away.

What Doesn't Kill You

I plucked the wings from a housefly –
he didn't die.

He skittered
along the top post of the porch rail,
straining each leg segment
for take-off.

It was no longer a fly
and will never savor shit or coleslaw
without reliance on the kindness
of winged strangers.

How curious to wonder,
even with a fly's brain,
why an action as natural
as breathing suddenly ceases.

There Were Promises

The streetlamp burns yellow at day's end,
reaches with light fingers into shadows,
past moths and insects flitting
against the filament in spastic rhythms.
They hum around the glow like cherubim
singing *glory, glory to you, oh bulb.*

You've been taught about this intersection -
the corner of Flaxen & Goldbrick.
Past the buzz and hum you think
you hear whispers and laughter.
One voice sounds like your grandmother.

And you expect it to be. And you expect
to see your cat Fred, your first pet,
who died on the back porch in December
snow and your mom picked him up
with a shovel and placed him in a Converse
shoe box and then in the basement freezer.

In the spring, when the ground thawed
you and your brother buried Fred
under the cedar tree in your back yard.
You went back late one night after everyone
was in bed and sat under the tree, away
from the porch light. You asked questions.

Fred didn't answer. Neither did grandma.
And the preacher didn't seem to know,
not exactly, although there were promises.

Trayvon isn't Emmett - still . . .

Justice adjusted her blindfold,
peaked at the colors of skin --
a brown loaded man, a black
hooded boy. Cynodon
fear winds around midnight
Reason, extends runners of Hate.

Or is it the power of a dime
store star, a faux patrol car,
a zealous protector of the paler
shuddered in their homes under
delicate chandeliers, manicured
lawns maintained by cheap labor.

And the Right sides with the brown
his registered gun, standing his ground,
and the Left demands more law,
this must be the last straw, after
Newtown & Boston & daily L.A.

I read my newsfeed, shake my head
see pictures of Trayvon dead, sprawled
on a lawn, as if he's going to make angels
in the grass, eyes wide, arms
at his side. The rage I read —
justified it seems. One more dead boy.
One more rift, one more punch
In the gut of idealistic America,
The world's Eddie Haskell.

In other news today, someone
slipped into Philadelphia
carrying a ball peen hammer,
tapped the Liberty Bell
and the crack widened.