

The Whole Picture

The female body is offensive, apparently. I sit,
Half nude at my desk and paint a mermaid
In a bathtub while drinking stevia leaf sweetened
Root beer. My boyfriend watching from a video call,
Tells me that customers were ticked off when Starbucks
Coffee gave their logo a bodice, breasts, feeding tubes
For hungry infant mouths. How could they unveil
Our skinny vanilla lattes and passionfruit ice teas?
We need the double-shot, but no nipples, tuck those
Away. The sailor prefers disguise, long hair to bellow
Down and hide the body performing its only job.
Like me, she'd like to let him watch.

Full Moon

my dog was given the name Rachel by people
either obsessed with the television show, *Friends*
or inspired by B-list Bible characters. once
my mom said I reminded her of Jennifer Aniston
but I have never worn a wedding dress in a café,
and I'll be the first to admit, *yes*, we were on a break
no one wants to admit that the sky is falling,
but I keep dropping food off my fork, into
the lap of mother earth and I feel shitty for it.
apologizing on behalf of gravity, are you listening?
I have dirtied the floor, but she never
blames me. in fact, she lounges back to look up
at the night sky. "you are just adding texture."
as if all my mistakes are bright sequins woven
into fabric, catching light. I beg her to explain
to me why it felt wrong then. why did my worry
craft such a calmness in others? why did Rachel
run all the way to the busiest road? why was
her blond hair, now stained another color,
the most beautiful red I had ever seen. why
did I stare at the moon and wait for it to bleed?

Your Birthday's Past

Last year on your birthday, we constructed two Lego cars
On the wooden floor of a tiny home on some stranger's
Property. The turn down the country road was oblivion.
Bury me there. Under the gravel where you walked to buy
A red onion and I screamed out, "turn around, turn around,
He is bringing us one."

A Freaking Lizard

“Did you read the article,” my grandma asks?
Lately, I can’t catch a break. My car rolled
Right out of my driveway and hit the neighbor’s
Stationed white sedan. Yes, the keys were in the
Ignition. No, I would not exit a vehicle in any
Other gear than park. “What did the article say?”
That morning she drove me to my tax appointment
Where they wrangled me out of owing the state of Missouri
Seven hundred dollars. Last year when I left Colorado
My ex-boyfriend told me I could come back any time
I needed to get an abortion. I dip a piece of chicken
In a pool of Thai peanut sauce, look at my grandma.
Two toes. The pastor of this local mega-church re-grew
A woman’s missing toes. *Miraculous.* The story made headlines.
She forks into her fishcakes and coats the chunk in dill cream.
“Like a freaking lizard.” She is whispering now, afraid
We might get struck down by God-lightning. She shrugs,
we laugh. Nothing can bring me down. I got three hundred
Back from the state of Missouri. Kind of a miracle.

Magic Eight Ball

I bring up spiritual warfare, and then hear a sound
coming from the closet, must be a coat or demon.
I am not superstitious anymore, but still, I enjoy
shaking things up. The other night, I saw pepper
flakes collapse onto the inflatable pizza crust, and even
the kale began to cry after listening to this story:
1000 Ways to Die was a television show that hit
Comedy Central in the late 2000s. it is described
as a docufiction anthology series, but that's a stretch.
more like a band-aid over the sadistic civilian trope,
a shot of concentrate to ease our fear of death.
I would know, I used to hold funerals for my stuffed
animals, for my mother's collection of wooden
figurines, and her Amish-themed nativity set.
the black orbs I spotted, floating above my bed,
and then again in the hallway, and lastly, at the bottom
of the basement stairs were not necessarily ghosts,
the priest told my parents, but rather proof the devil
was pining for my attention. instead of entertaining
other explanations, like a profound ability to see
Methane gas particles or telepathically produce
rain clouds, my parents labeled me *disturbed*.
the whole house was doused in holy water. they
tossed my scary stories in the garbage, trashed
the witch hat from Halloween, and my dad,
he took a baseball bat to my magic eight ball.
no more forecasting my future, I guess.
fast forward a few years, and a boy and I
exchange horror stories while gripping knives,
stabbing tomatoes until they bleed red gunk.
episode #65 of *1000 Ways to Die* is titled "Midnight Choker."
the setting is a biker bar and a dude named Sonny.
he swallows whole-ass pool balls to get a laugh
from the ladies, but one night, after a few too many,
the cue ball gets lodged in his trachea, and he dies,
the result of asphyxiation and stupidity.
at the dinner table, I chew so slowly, I complete
all three digestion phases with my fangs, still I wonder,
what type of oracle could have rescued the guy from himself?
a palm reader to trace his lifeline: "I see death by balls."
a magic eight ball shaken so hard all letters
rearrange to spell: 'don't even think about it.'
we are on the phone when I ask the boy
if the tarot cards make him uncomfortable; *most likely*.
I ask if he has ever seen a ghost; *my sources say no*.
I crumble feta, drop it in his mouth, and ask,
"do you believe in magic?" *ask again later*.

as the hours grow toward midnight,

I repeat my question and, this time,
all signs point to yes.