

Finally, I sold His Car

Chef

What I never told you is that
I really don't like fried chicken.

I was lucky, everyone said so,
to have you to feed me on recipes

you researched to find the ideal
scientific preparation for each

new dish: Beef Wellington, rosemary-scented
sweet corn, Peking Duck, quenelles de brochet.

You would pronounce them all tasteless while I
couldn't conceal my delight. But your true

intent was to discover your Southern
mother's secret chicken, brined, battered,

crisped in a tsunami of molten Crisco.
Your sky-hued eyes smiled as you announced it

as the evening menu. Jaw clenched, I would fork
a small wing and push the bones around my plate,
hoping you wouldn't notice.

The Garden

Vines choke every corner:
wisteria, English ivy, thorny
greenbriar, Virginia creeper.

Some can't be pulled up.
Draping stems drag down,
strangle all they grasp to stasis
in their ropy race to block the light.

We both knew why you didn't take the meds
per script--not for lack of pain—instead to hoard
a stash for when it all became too much.

It all became too much. Another fall—
you said *I'm done*. I talked you out of it
but didn't hide those pills.

Menu

The fruiting body erupts, grown
from rot within the earth.
Mea culpas spring from rot

within the soul, digest
the dead and mushroom forth.
You always said only half in jest

that you wanted to be laid to rest
in the woods, a banquet for creatures,
exposure as celebration.

You, who found so little pleasure
otherwise, those later years, loved
cooking for us as we sat around

a single table,—"like a big
Italian family," you said,
though we weren't.

No exposure in the woods but your ashes
planted in the church garden
will nourish mushrooms after all.

Still, when I reach for the leash

seventy pounds of raw exuberance
pound down in a sharp-clawed play
to land on the top of my bare right foot,
fine bones and tender skin. I
hop around on the other foot--I curse
and howl, but you are no longer here
to laugh. Walk completed, the dog
bounds on to whatever's next,
looks for you,
leaves me alone
and scraped.

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Radio tuned to NPR
parking pass still on the dash
tennis ball to massage his aching back
water bottle in the cupholder

in the trunk, biking shoes no longer used
navy blue sport coat, folded, in its pocket
a “note to self” about some chocolates
he planned to buy for me.