

Philly Sparrows

In Philly
Sparrows eat ham sandwiches
Gathered
a dozen on park bench
nipping, pushing
contesting for space
but there is plenty for
all, plenty grain
on this feast and
ham and mayo for
flavor. Is that really
in your nature little
birds?
Beaks stained with
cholesterol
A percher
delicate frame
rounded beak
When did you turn to
the streets to survive?
Abandoning berries
nuts, seeds, worms
to eat
A true omnivore

City life has taken its toll
on you and me
but you adapt
fittest to survive
daintily peeling back
the plastic wrap
to cease your prize
you smart little bird
equipped with wit
that secures your place
in an insecure world
So, all I can say is:
"Can you save me a piece?"

I'll let you be their Superman

Their tiny red hearts skip beats whenever the name Daddy floats into their ears. Your older daughter said it best: "You are Daddy's arch enemy." I will never misplace those words.

You are ice-cream and movies and fun times on high shoulders that easily bare the weight of little girls. I am homework and "Eat your dinner!" and timeouts and minding of manners.

So does that make me your arch-nemesis? The one that everyone loves to hate. The one that makes the audience cringe, then cheer when you sweep in for above with your glorious spotless red cape.

But when the movie ends I am the one that vacuums the popcorn off the floor, scrubbing up the soda-pop, scraping the gum that is stuck to the bottom of the theater seat, preparing for the next show.

When the curtains close, it is I who has to put in the real work, because life really isn't a movie and little girls need to be cared for. Boo-boos need to be dressed and ice-cream is never proper nutrition.

I dab tears when they awake in the night screaming for their super-hero. "I want Daddy!" they scream, and I assure them they will catch the next show whenever you feel like donning your cape and flexing your big muscles.

Sorry, but the movie is not playing right now, at least not in this theater, not at this time. Sorry little girls, you are too early, too late, too needy, too real for your super-hero to be here always like a real daddy should.

But not to fear, Mommy is here, Mommy is here! Then I feverishly go through my closet, cutting out red and blue fabric, fashioning something that looks like a Halloween costume that is homemade and ill-fitted.

Then I tip-toe down the hall and squeal "Surprise!" And they look at my with watery chestnut eyes and say, "Silly mommy. Mommies can be Superman, only Daddies." And then I embrace the tiny audience, kissing soft foreheads good-night, praying you will appear again soon. I will let you be their Superman.

Beautiful Details

If I asked you to
name all the beautiful
things you passed by every day
in your normal routine,
you couldn't tell me.
Fire ants and praying mantis
in prostration constant
grateful tiny lives
graffitied art bearing
souls
bearing gifts
bearing stories
bearing hurt and sorrow

A four leaf clover amidst triplets
but luck not
perfectly planned
divinity
rusted out car claims the
other side of tracks
burnt out
tales of regret
The real CSI
doing real work
unglamour
youth lost
youth forgotten
under your dead stare
into abyss
lost below the cut
where worldly things
bare more value than souls
in the belly of the beast
where animals are slaughtered
animals are coats
and shoes
and hamburgers
not Godly things

not things encompassing souls
abandoned warehouses
tell a thousand unions woes
reminiscent of
the lost middle class
of mom and pop joints
where everyone said hello

A lone squirrel out his order
chewing on chicken bone
on chips
on potato salad
selected from trash can fare
garbage from weekend park barbeques
parties where even drunks
and lost daddies
and welfare mommas
have fun
getting down to James Brown
Blasting out parked car speakers
blasting numbness
blasting woes

Monday arrives
and life returns hum drum glum
no refunds
just hands dealt
just contentment
just drones
unaware of world apparent
unaware of little things
details that beg for attention

The City from Locust Walk

See

Henna beards hawking bootleg bags
Sun beating down eyelids
squinting to view the world apparent
Fast Food chains
slanging poisonous fare
Fruit Trucks with slanted eyes
chopping melons, kiwi, grapes- one dollar
Green saris flapping in the wind,
carried by worn out Nikes
Homeless man slumbers on campus bench,
belongings tethered to him
The young, the old, the leaders and
those who blindly follow and
the societal banished
overlap orbits just for this brief interval

Smell

Charbroiled kabob
halal lunch hour
Somehow I can still whiff the breeze
cleansed by strategic leaves on purposeful trees
maple, sweet chlorophyll
Slightly choking on smog,
quickly replaced by gentle breeze
Sweat and urine and flowery scents
cultimate on Locust Walk
High-priced colognes blend with cheap knock-offs
diluted by alcohol and H2O
Far East incense burn out suspicions,
begging peace and remembrance

Taste

Salty, sweet, bitter lemons
biting on distasteful words
First bite satiates a palate for tree fruit
trying to figure from where the honeydew hailed
Peru, Cali, or some secret government lab?
"Who Cares?" say lovers

feasting on tongues and necks
soft and wet, wanting, yearning and hungry
for something tangy and spicy
Something like sex or curry chicken
or some vegan specialty

Feel

Curled wooden benches hosting visitors
from intellect to common man
Prickly grass under deserving toes
after tight shoes slip off and
pants and skirts slide up
just enough to caress emerald blades
and solar bathe
Just enough to tease passers-by
Warm rays heat up hearts gone cold from
long winters and
occasional gusts relieve the heat that
beats on us, pressuring workers to
retreat to shade of
Maple trees, Oaks and Cherry Blossoms that
cry petals of joy and sorrow on
overdone crowns

Hear

Babies laugh with blissful ignorance and
knowledge they soon will lose
Mufflers pop, taxis screech to halts
to make a few bucks as
rap music blares and swears, as
sprinklers spray forced nourishment on
corporate lawns
Construction persist with weighty machinery
Reminders of union cries and red tape crossed
Drilling some sense into muted psyches
unaware of drone-like existence
“Wake-Up! Wake-Up!”
cry the sparrows and pigeons
Wake up to world beauty
Wake up to consciousness

A Mugging

2 am, walking hurriedly down Chew Ave, with a cheap phone, and the papers, the papers explaining what is going on; in the Aldo purse, a fancy purse for me back then, rhinestones in a rainbow pattern in the corner, seeing two hooded men, two black men in two black hoods, then regretting leaving out after the argument with my parents- I insisted on keeping it- regretting taking my studded purse, regretting meeting that guy, Randy, the one who told me he was planting his seed, and I just laid there, taking it all in, all of him on the floor of his friend's apartment where the dishes hadn't been washed in a month; when I asked the friend what he was going to do with the dishes, actually I offered to do them, he protested, he laughed, "no! I will just throw them out! They are disgusting"; yes they are. So the two hooded males walked towards me, I got that feeling, that feeling deep in my gut, visceral, cutting into my liver and kidneys, where is dialysis when you need it to save your life? "You know what it is!" those were the exact words that will never fade from my mind, and those words will never be amended. Then the shiny cold black metal was revealed, and the papers were taken and the confidence was gone, the will to keep the baby was gone; "run, and don't turn around!" no sir, I won't turn around and I won't snitch and I won't have this baby by the guy who didn't have a better place to lay his head, or a better place to take his girl than to a small pallet of dingy covers in the back room wannabe rap studio of the friend with the never ending moldy dishes that are just going to be thrown out.