

*Muse Redux*

I am making a photograph of you,  
right now, in black and white. It is the right  
medium for its immediacy,  
its focus on both light and shadow—  
chiaroscuro, its ability to  
decisively capture and forever  
nowcast this moment. But I will not let  
you see it yet, as if just looking out  
your own window, or happening upon  
its image hanging on a gallery  
wall. Such an execution would make this  
moment only prey; such a display would  
make a trophy of this artistry. And  
if you saw it now you might think it was  
just a portrait of yourself in all its  
limitation, or a projection of  
myself in all its expectation. If  
you could guess the words just said, "It's all I  
can do," or "I can't do this," you might think  
it was resolute or definitive.  
Even if I define the beauty, you  
might not see the subtle craft not ours to  
critique; the equivalence; that something  
has made this moment aware of itself.  
The muse can't choose when the artist may find  
inspiration, and the artist always  
does the best work in collaboration.

## *Addiction*

It's not a choice that keeps me here. I know  
there's no accounting for attraction, but  
could I have been more measured, not allowed  
in, not relied on, whatever the lust  
between us? Under the circumstances?  
Such potential, so much room for failure...  
Desire is. I will not make excuses  
for human weakness, or just wanting more.  
I just wasn't yet aware of the rules  
of happiness: that it doesn't answer  
to the hunger, that it can create its  
own addiction, that it doesn't linger  
like the pain of its absence, that the more  
to despair the closer to the rapture.

## *Dracula's Twin*

I can smell your fear. You didn't expect to find yourself here, a new low, begging for a painless death. I may have your head yet, but your decent began long before I invited you in. I think you can still recall the deep breath of the night, still can hear the strings bowed low; my violin, your cello. Don't forget, you begged to be let in, even after I said I was Dracula's twin. You said you were sent to heal me, with the blush of new life; pretty good line, right? Shall we blame the poetry, the cunning illumination of the cursed seclusion of the soul, where the sun cannot go? Or were you exercising your own daemon; not a feral wolf, just a domestic dog, out for a lonely walk around the block? What was the value in trading tombs, mine, yours, when both are filled with cold guilts pressing close? And why feed on life, growing younger with each bite, but not give your heart to the flock of dark cherubs in the night? Was I not your Lilith, your first? Was that what you said, or that I should have been? No difference, in this place where time has no meaning, except, alas, you can't undo the past. Is there ever a good time to admit defeat? In another light it might seem noble to hesitate, but you will never be exalted as a saint. Still, who knows what form the healing will take, though the unexpected stake is a surprise... no worries, my revenant friend, you can't kill what never dies. So, join me in penance, kneeling on rice, counting grains like prayers for another life. Then you can go in search of redemption, or to renew the vows to which your conscience is bound. The only sin will be if you still do not see your face in this mirror.

## *Chocolate*

Chocolate has never kissed my lips with a dark moist tongue, leaving traces that my own tongue might reach out through parted lips to taste; no silky vapor of chocolate's breath on my cheek, no whisper of a passionate feast, and no sweet aroma rising up again from warming skin. Never before had I cause to question, was I worthy of its delicacy? Nor had I been asked to burden the weight of choices I could not make, in the desperate conflict of temptation and restraint. But, if you thought it was your last taste, would you also choose the darkest kind? So that its pungent bite would strike you, hold you present, sting, just for a moment, and linger like a whisper-- Might you try to penetrate its mystery of comfort and shame, and after the seduction know you'd never be the same?

*When Love Died*

She wasn't very good company when  
Love died unexpectedly; burying  
herself in the philosophy and weight  
of loss, sifting through the dross for shining  
memories to keep close and rearrange  
daily in the pallid light, shifting them  
over and over to reflect on each  
side, again and again fading to a  
black cavernous absence permeated  
only with questions. Was it Love, the great  
emissary of the monumental  
mystery, or just a vigilant keeper  
of the gate keeping back existential  
angst? Ultimately, it's just hard to let  
beauty go, just so hard to watch without  
knowing. Time has a way of affirming  
life, for its own sake, is enough, but meaning...  
It may be a concession, to say some  
things are just meant to be, but a life with  
Love isn't meant to be happy, just as  
life without Love isn't death though you may  
want it to be. Eventually, she  
remembered that while Eros lived, it was  
Psyche to whom he was wed, and she was  
always just the other woman.