

## THE DEAD WOMAN WHO CHANGED MY TASTE IN CLOTHING

She did it by dying, just my size, in early June.  
Fine forest greens, creamy ivory, linens and wool.  
Pressed cotton and lacey things. Clean. Discreet.

He wept  
as he carried the boxes,  
wrapped in tissue, smelling of cedar  
to the door, where I stood  
the next day, alive  
on the other side,  
browsing.

It was an ordinary day.  
I just happened to be alive  
on the other side,  
browsing.

I wear her taste now.  
Her death elegantly covers  
my bones. I can feel it  
seeping in, not entirely  
unwelcome.

Sometimes my breath catches  
in the slide of her silk on my skin  
and I share my thrusting lover,  
pulsing life, whip-poor-will  
beating sun  
and she and I and death and life  
are one.

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## EQUATIONS

I am taking a bit of sweetness from this morning.  
Against the odds, I found it. An old packet of  
brown sugar. A found poem. An old saying  
from someone now dead  
but wise. A chapter about  
the power of belonging. A chilly bike ride  
through the quiet park.

It all adds up. Believe me.  
This is the math  
we must attend to  
should we wish to stay alive.

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## AN ODE TO FRUIT

Oh the taste of Orange is a common wonder,  
the tongue rolling around  
the breaking of membranes  
the splash of sparkling memory  
and the spiraling escalating up down welcome  
of edge against soft compliance. Orange.  
Oh, Orange. You open orb of Oh. You strong odor.  
You tangy trail enticing my tongue to curl in  
on itself, so happy and self-contained.

Banana Banana to sing hosanna  
such invitation such inhalation  
such yeilding yellow  
no need for cutting, no need for teeth  
it's a long slice of mellow  
you hereby bequeath. Thank you Banana.  
You rest in my hands like a silly  
promise--a long yellow smile--  
for a very short while.

Apricot.  
So much you are not.

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## AFTER THE INAUGRAL BALL

My skin  
is destined  
to be paper thin  
before it comes  
completely off my bones.

It turns out  
I would like  
another life  
after all.

I wouldn't get that one  
entirely right either.

The anonymity  
of leaving is heavy today.  
Cities do that to me.

A single red balloon  
has escaped.  
It floats alone  
at half-mast  
just above the debris  
along the off-peak train  
to Greenwich.

School buses glide by  
in that certain shade  
of yellow. For some reason  
they make me sad enough  
to cry. The emotion stings  
like wasabi.  
I look away.  
Swallow.

It helps to remember  
the crystalline ginger chocolate  
my daughter slipped me  
at Union Station  
and the pillows we covered in flannel  
before we slept.

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## A DIRECT QUESTION

If you were asked directly  
given pictures  
touched the smooth soft hair  
of a baby

If you had looked into the  
liquid brown eyes  
wide open in the light

If you were asked directly  
and you'd felt all five fingers  
curl around your own...

Say you lived  
in Oklahoma City  
or Houston Texas

If you were asked directly  
by the child's loving mother  
to give up cooled air  
the rest of your life  
so her child could have a life  
at all

Could you? Would you do this?

## II

Let's make it easier.  
Cola? Football games?  
Chewing gum? Movies? Joy rides?  
Remember. This is only if  
you'd touched the child  
and you were asked  
directly.

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