

I Asked for a Hooker for Mother's Day

to liven things up:
a flexible tartlet, STD scares

thrifty, considering
the purchase will never charge.

My six-year-old daughter:
old times make me sad

while buttered crumbs fall
from the raspberry cake tin.

I start thinking
about writhing, historical depression

panting, generational trauma that beats anew:
did my veins infuse her with platelet grief?

Does determined DNA override
pastel egg hunts, whirring bubble guns, bursting

Easter snow in April
with a rented, real bunny from a cabbage farm?

To our wise Hypothetical Hooker,
held to the highest of hygiene
and intellectual standards,
whose well-earned rates command
more much than borrowed livestock:

Did my daughter watch
her mother's kindergarten abuse?
Ovum-swallowed those old, morose memories

before she met me?

You Never Saw the Harvest Moon

Scorning August's departure was overkill
proper pleasures: your aunt's speed boat, flaxseed striped, bees
over-pollinating our spiritual philosophizing,
messianic and vexed at the state campground;
fussily selected dried wood and a few Playboys
for kindling of course, of course.

A waning solstice
between a cancelled graduation and college,
or the military, or your dad's carpentry business
or your uncle's unlicensed roof hustle
au fait
with keen, teen urgency:
a September goodbye.

Your swim trunks
in my Santa Fe
when the sheriff documented your death
my nephew
an only a son
never a daughter;

a press conference
on my crabgrass yard
and here we mused
overdose news
was manufactured from homeless vets.

High school friends, covid-ly regathered again
ceremoniously paraded by your sacred Silverado
rubbed your peeling parking pass through the glass
grabbed the current issue's cover model from your bed
when the reporter, with honey-colored hive hair, went live.

Local Paranoia

home alone? / peek behind the fabric blinds / pointy indentations from pulling / a sharp horse hoe galloped
over the top / my beautiful vintage window, framed on both sides, all mine. //
scan the roads, roofs / wonder: has everyone gone to town without me? / the weekly park music /
the half-priced wine / the whimsical and serious events / now with spray-painted grass circles, six feet apart /
they don't think to / or wish to / invite me / even with calculated distance / I am
too much. //

you, too? / excluded by outsiders / untrusting of insiders / running the new-age domestic farm: two-story tudors
/ kids have saddle sores / the long ride of mom versus dad. //

the fabric blinds return / to the spot they remember / an offseason ladybug lands on my ear /
loose from the window pane / where the blinds pinned her down / by the dots / museum-grade archival paper /
freedom for her, a tastefully appointed penitentiary for me. //

my friends, I think / suggest: I am tormented. // slather the lavender /
massage the mint / chop the whole anxiety crop / perform a controlled burn
with or without a permit / take back your brain / hold it firm /
until you are well, again.

But I / live next to others, alone. But I /
simply lock the front door.

Reaching for Andromeda

were you in front of me
at the custard stand?
do you know the cookie dough
is fresh on tuesdays? that the peach cobbler,
is baked behind the counter?

The fourth, a damned fine holiday:
no one stresses about fireworks,
wrong gifts, meat assignments, or in-law estrangement.
Just watch: boom-boom-boom. Just sip: craft beer, enchanting sparkler children.

or maybe you like merlot?
perhaps, you are not from here at all,
and live somewhere decidedly more exotic.
maybe you are from new zealand
practicing your cello in grape vineyards, cuddling heirloom milking sheep
and, not knowing any better,
endearingly think my midwest accent
sounds like hollywood
even though
nasal noises are grating to national ears

and if you're usually at the bottom of the earth
then my celebration means nothing to you:
i remain a forever-stranger
now wondering about a billion other
un-mets, perhaps friends of yours
who also buy dairy while overthinking the limits of space
one or two paces ahead of me
while we all walk
curiously lonely
down our shared milky streets.

White Women Running

We meet where we do.
Corner of 8th and Change Street,
with beet juice, Bluetooth, and filibuster-pink sneaks.

Our music, important for rhythm and force,
synced to the smack of our feet:
The Arches of The Angry.

tension-building tempo
message-driven anthem::

click, Play Radiohead. Worn, but blindingly artistic. Ardent. Essential.
your skin makes me cry
Her mouth moves, but hush, I am thinking in the past now.

My black foreign exchange student cherishes my slips,
studies my lips when I say *African-American*. Why, that's halfway
to erasing Nigerian poverty.

He'd barter his cinder block hovel for any American cop
'cept the kneelers,
'cause they ain't prayerful and Christian like he bows to be.

We meet where we do. A sign-bearing protest
electrifies our route,
arc-resists down High Street;

even a town of a few thousand
has something to say. But I ain't hearin' nothin' today::
click, Play AM news, listen to gun violence stats and a flower shop ad.

My partner nods us north. We cross
streets and chests

running feet in cadence: hit, hit, hit.
Here, a county tax-man
spent his budget on a retired Black Hawk and tank,

lest we forget
something that never ends.

Someone's son swings a leg over the iron barrel,
blowing up bad guys in the park
like the youth in Iraq,

riding that black metal without a saddle.
An awfully expensive playground
for a perturbed hinterland::

click, Play shopping app. The boy reminds me of my own,
and we ain't havin' summer squirt guns that look like real glocks;
let's make those permanently out of stock.

Add to cart: squirty dolphin counterpart.
So what if he's ten? What happened to forever young?::

click, Play safety of nerdy public radio, dull it all down.
Here, a monthly donation buys you a reusable tote bag
in arresting beige

assurance that you're doing something,
even if I don't hear nothin', or feel it, neither:
lachrymator agents can't seep through my speakers.

At room temperature, tear gas is solid,
and crystalline white.
Are war relics the next statues to lasso and drag?

Two-toned insects
running without a hive
outrunning the day's pesticide.

My friend, with chipped nail polish in the shape of fire-busted Australia,
pulls out her ear buds
proclaims: *We have to do better*. Yes, I hear it this time.

Maybe she's got a sudden case of cultural empathy,
dosed in a sonic syringe
from the voltage march a few roads back,

or, she heard the news
of a gutted rainbow teen in a gentrification grove.
Whatever she's pushing out, I'm buying in.

We meet where we do.

We stop, too. Pull down my face mask
of neutral leaf-beetle stripes;
hers, a not-so-passive black and white

sure is hard to breathe when running
sure is hard to breathe when you just can't.

Three miles, every day, every season.
Not sure when
running women was normalized

but the extraordinary miles logged between us
and our sisters who couldn't
and those who still can't

because they don't live in sleepy hamlets
but are writhing, moaning, riot-shaking oppidans,
get counted, too::

click, Play goodbye.

At home, goosebumps in a hot shower
for running past centuries of grief
that history condensed into just one sentence:

Black Lives Matter.
No Justice, No Peace.

Defund the Police.

Make Love, Not War, you

Nasty Woman.

Nevertheless, She Persisted

even when her family tree
infested with insects

even when her shrinking galaxy
spun on without her

And so will I.

And so will I.