

Fitting Mom on the Page

Stop fidgeting. Stand still.

Mom, clenching pins
in her mouth, is giving me my orders.
She almost sounds like one
of those western cowboy heroes who rode
across our 1950s' console TV screen.

I'm standing on a small stool.
Mom is pinning my new dress pants
so she'll know where to sew the cuffs.
The pants are for my first holy communion.

She's also fitting me with a memory.
I've placed it here upon this page,
trying again to pin her down.

The problem is my memory's flawed.
I can't recall the clothes *she* wore,
what *she* was fitted in.
Even her voice eludes me now,
along with her face and how she smelled.
My measuring tape has blurry lines.
My threads are all unraveling.
I can't get the measurements right.

The woman from then has been replaced.
Her pattern's tossed; she's scissored out.
She lives more now in her ending days,
the ones I wish I could forget.

When you leave

a persona poem after Kris Bigalk

Take all your expired prescriptions,
especially those that kept you up.

Take the golf clubs you never used
the whole time we were together —
I sure won't be needing them.

Take your torn tennis shoes —
the ones you just couldn't bear
to throw out. I'll bear it. Trust me.

Take the expression you always used
whenever "I embarrassed you."

Take what you hid under the bed —
I won't shift or touch or grab
whatever's lurking there.

Take the faded jacket you embroidered
with shrugs and stitched with smirks
whenever I asked you why
you didn't give the thing away.

Take the male pronouncements —
you'll need a big bag —
I wasn't to have an opinion on
(females just don't have a clue, right?).

Take the stack of magazines —
you said you only kept the ones "to die for."
Since I will not be doing that,
get the whole stack out of here.

And be sure to take the care you sewed
into the fabric of what we had . . .

. . . since some pathetic baby socks
are all I could knit from those poor shreds.

God / no-god

Talk of God, of what it's all about.
Around a candle that's supposed to keep the bugs away.
Backyard, beer, wine, pot. The candle doesn't do its job.

So bugs buzz; I think that I buzz as well.
And I try to keep what I think is a buzz
a buzz, try to stay on point, on task, to keep the discussion
relevant, to hold the feeling I'm profound like a prof
in love with his words and sound. I try to slip past all
the shit to reach the point of sky, of land, of me, of you,
of stars, of dust — of every goddamn thing that is —
and hope some kind of word exists that can describe it all.

Talk of no-god, the one that says God's never been.
Why anything? Yes, good point, but why can't God show
its damn face? I try to slip between the cracks
of what's cemented in our brains that can't get around
the size of it all, the unbelievable — yet it's there —
cannot-fathom-it size of it all.

Dishes clink inside the house.
It's a signal — time to leave, time to file the buzz away.
God/no-god must wait for when
God/no-god gets buzzed again.
Now it's time to drive back home, confident that we'll
survive. The thought will not occur to us that you can be
stopped for driving while Black because God put us in
a skin that works at night for police patrols.

Soon we'll sleep beneath a gift, a gift of stars, a gift of black,
a massive stupendous of speckled-up dark
that God supposedly made for us. We're part of a party,
a wonderful party, a marvelous party we're meant to enjoy
(though some enjoy it much, much more
and some don't get to smile at all).

But once no-god had heard of it,
the party proved irresistible.
no-god really had no choice —
it would simply have to crash.

No scars

Take me
south to rough
till sin unto directionless
severs every timeless cry.

Take my sigh and fill up
clouds with cups of
tilt and tough and far,
calls of camber, rails of stars.

Take me with
your nightmare knives,
your burning keys,
your dreams, untied,
Take me with
your danger jars,
your diviner's unstuck pride.

If this be done,
our holiness will altar on
till setting moons have realized
it isn't time to stay the night.

Take me.
No promises.
No strings attached.

And absolutely no scars.

Nothing Tea

Pour nothing
into empty cups.
Pretend to drink it up.
Make sure to make
a *lot* of noise
with mouth and spoon.
Slurping? Highly

recommended.
As are scraping and
banging your saucer

with your plastic cup.
Why do all this —
and even more?
For the prize you seek.
And nothing tea
is a perfect way to bring

its warm to you.