

St. Cocaine of Lines, St. Anisette, St. Marijuana, St. Horse

My mother owned a cauldron so rusted, nothing could live in it.

Sometimes, I swore, I could feel the sharp tips of the orange crescent moon.

Back then, my favorite Beatle was George, best color, black, best day Wednesday.

I liked to be strange and I was. But that's a lie. I'd just want and want.

And Grandma said: *wanting wanting wanting wanting wanting*.

Once, in the farms, I picked up a long willow stick and immediately

it transformed into a garter snake. Nixon was the President.

Even now, I question the symmetry of his name, the heart of cross.

In the golden church I sat tonight, I watched a sweet young girl itch—

delicious nod, her long arms like the ivory saint with the plate of eyes,

her crown of lit candles. I want to read illuminated mysteries:

I want to read about the woman saints, the drunk ones, the wrecked and wasted.

Once, in the farms near my ranch house, I dug down to rutted earth for clay.

I could mold small figures with the soft gray mud, bake them hard in the sun.

Contemplating Vegetarianism

The night the spiders fell
covering the dark windows

with their red bellies and silk
spit, I saw a tiny chamber quartet

inside the emptied ribcage
of the twenty-pound fowl

I'd boiled clean of meat for soup. The whole
kitchen smelled of rosemary

and the cellist--the only man
sitting--tuned his instrument,

but still couldn't play
the notes right: the savory warped the wood

curved it, like a woman
resting her tired self

on his chest and through
the kitchen window

above the stone sink, I saw
them fall,

the spiders, I thought it was a miracle,
I saw them fall

through the layer of gray
lace moths

who had been there all night
clinging

to the steamy glass
out in the cold

and I felt the gut strings pulled
taut by the bow's low moan.

Sobriety

When I left today after being cruel
to my kids, I saw a black and yellow

garter snake along the footpath
behind the high school

and the temple. Its back was broke,
and when a snake breaks its back

its whole body is lame. The snake
dragged itself from one bush to the other--

the juniper not yet ginned up. I fear
snakes and I fear my children

being lonely, as I am lonely. Some men
take up snakes knotted in a wooden latch box

at the church's altar. A thirsty snake (diamond
back, copperhead) can't make venom, and so

the bites around the men's wrists
come to nothing more

than a headache. The snake on the path
looked like a slow train

at night, its cars (reading car, club and
bar car, diner) lit up,

busy. That's how it looked
anyway from my distance above.

I Hear About Couples in America While Stuck on the Massachusetts Turnpike

A poet and their partner restore medieval liturgical robes.

Some vestments are embroidered with Bible stories: snakes, floods, the holy rood.

Some so old they crumble with the weight and oily poison of fingers.

Some nest and feed small white worms: the robes, big mothers lactating spit.

Stoles, copes, chimeres, tippets: purple loden green and gold silk, wine-stained.

The air is velvet pomegranate at dusk, but by moonrise, ripe plum.

Every car in front of me is turning a slow creak double-lane left.

Every tail light in front of me looks like two red lollipops, broken.

A man deep in America and his bride shoot at doomed fireflies

flashing for sexual partners on the last warm night of their bright lives.

The couple under the American sky doesn't know what glows and glows.

Every car in front of me rides with their brake lights on: someone might cross.

Nothing flies well in this wet night heat: not moths, not fat gold June bugs, not
bullets, not owls, not souls. When someone dies tonight, they'll have to wait.

Cremins

I make my squirrels fat, feed them oatmeal apple bars, bread slathered with almond butter. My last living cat likes to watch them scurry down from the maple in my neighbor's yard, likes to watch them on the patio bricks and her eyes become moons. Upstairs, in my bedroom which rests in the middle branches, I keep three small oak boxes filled with cremains. Good kitty, good kitty, good kitty. The boxes remind me of the hope chest samples they gave us back in high school: little coffins to fit a doll. I've been sober over thirty years, more than half my life spent dry as a god's unused flute. If I opened up a hole in my skin, filled that hole with anything, my heart would explode.