Tales Unsuitable for Children and Other Poems

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

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This thesis titled
Tales Unsuitable for Children and Other Poems

by

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ABSTRACT

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Tales Unsuitable for Children and Other Poems

Director of Thesis: Mark Halliday

My thesis is a collection of poetry that documents my experience with relationships, jobs, parenthood, life in a "bar family," and working in a nursing facility. Crafted, mostly, in free verse, these poems are meant to serve as a representation of my own life.
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CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

One of the wonderful things about poetry is that it has the benefit of being able to be fiction or non-fiction or some weird love child of the two. This creates a freedom to write in a more liberal way than you can in a non-fiction piece where you have an obligation to the truth or in fiction, where elaborating on something that actually happened can hurt the credibility of the piece. A commitment to truth can sometimes lead to ethical issues in writing. Sometimes I find it difficult to lie in my writing when I'm documenting something that actually happened. This leads to a problem I frequently find myself dealing with in my writing: when you make a commitment to the truth in your work, how far can you ethically go before you end up either going too far and hurting people or simply looking like an ass.

The first time I really thought about this issue was when Michelle Herman, a nonfiction writer and professor at The Ohio State University, spoke in a creative non-fiction class I was enrolled in as an undergraduate. She talked about how every time she wrote something that had her daughter in it, whether just in passing or as a central character, she would consult her child and get her approval for the piece. She actually said it was rare for her to write about her daughter because she didn't want to infringe upon her young privacy before the child really had the experience to know how it could be an infringement upon her privacy. It was a delicate conversation that made me think that, one: Michelle Herman is a really good mom, and two: she's a writer who knows what she's doing.
I, too, have this sort of primal, protective nature when it comes to my kids; however, I'm afraid I might not have the restraint Michelle has when it comes to writing. Where do I draw the line when it comes to writing about those that I love, or those whom I no longer love for that matter? I have this tendency with the latter that leads to "out of sight, out of mind" type writing, where I just say whatever I want about the person without concern over whether that person will get his feelings hurt. What is he going to do, sue me? I guess I could always enact the "small penis strategy" so they'll never admit that it is them I am writing about but I'm sure it would get to the point in my writing where people would start to think that maybe I just really liked guys with small penises.

With the people that are still sticking around in my life and love me, the line gets a little bit fuzzier. Sometimes I feel I have this awful need to show the "not so pretty" sides of things. Okay, most of the time I feel I’m exposing the not so pretty sides of things. Sometimes life sucks. Sometimes life sucks a lot. Sometimes life is good but you keep wondering when it will start sucking again. Some people call that pessimism. I think of it as honesty. I try not to overwhelm myself with honesty/negativity. Too much negativity is never a good thing, especially when it comes to my children and my relationships.

My daughter and I had a long discussion about her jar of toenails that I referred to in "My Daughter's Mini-Mütter." She knows it pretty much freaked me out. She also knows about her projectile shitting that is remarked upon in "How to Bond with Baby" (her favorite bedtime story, actually), and both my kids know that I'm frustrated with all the things referred to in "Parental Advice." Outside of those poems, I haven't gained the
fortitude to write much about my children. I actually don't write seriously about my husband much either. We have a very healthy, happy relationship; yet, in my poetry it is portrayed as less than perfect. We are both okay with that (by now, he pretty much gets me) but I do wish that I had the ability to write honestly about how I feel about him and about the kids. I just can't make myself write that saccharine, overly sentimental poem that expresses the love, heart, soul, and other "workshop banned" words that I feel in my heart. I have aspirations to create that poem some day. I'll call it a goal.

So, back to the folks who have left my life, for better or worse (usually worse) that I wish to "angstily" write about in my poetry—should I? Well I have, certainly, but those poems currently are only read/heard by the small group of people in the Ohio University Creative Writing Program. No one knows any of my tiny penised exes there. There might come a day, though, where I may have a larger audience for a poem such as this and, the subject's feelings aside, would I feel comfortable with that? Of course, the persons written about would, if they recognized themselves in my poems, feel exposed and possibly violated. I can't say I care much about that. There have been many times when I have fantasized about horrors befalling certain people from my past and causing them to experience emotions of betrayal. I think the problem I have with making poems that are so expositional into something public is that I don't want to feel badly for doing something I know is wrong and since I have a mother who thinks every poem I write is about her, even ones that are obviously about animals or random hot dog vendors, I have experienced the fallout of a person having a bad emotional reaction to something I've written. It's no fun having to explain to my mother why rancid hot dogs are not a
metaphor for her failure as a human being, so I'm sure explaining to someone whom I actually did portray as horrible would be even worse. And, honestly, is super personal, semi-spiteful (or wholly spiteful) poetry something people would want to read?

Evidence of this issue can be seen in the work of Alan Shapiro. In his book *The Dead Alive and Busy*, especially with poems such as "Ghost" and "The Bath," there are graphic, unflattering descriptions of the naked bodies of his family members. His father's penis, "slack and floating beneath the belly fat" (14) and his referring to his sister, post mastectomy, as "one freakish remnant of a normal woman" (60) are two instances where a reader might cringe with discomfort. It's easy to appreciate his skill at description and the way he fearlessly takes on subjects and situations that are uncomfortable but is it really worth it? Shapiro's success is in crafting a powerful, disturbing poem that allows the reader to visualize the pain of a horrible situation. He is exposing death by focusing on the dying bodies of his loved ones and I, personally, sympathize with his subjects. If a reader sympathizes with a subject that the writer is portraying in an unflattering way, that reader might feel resentful towards the writer for putting these people on display in the way that he did. Perhaps with Shapiro it's a don't-shoot-the-messenger type situation but maybe some messages don't need to be conveyed? I'm fairly sure Shapiro didn't ask his sister, before her death, if he could write a poem about her giving head to her husband. I'm also confident his father would never want him to reference his penis in a poem, ever. Dads kind of frown on that.

Alan Shapiro is writing about people who have both died in these instances but I don't feel that gives him the right to discuss their bodies and their feelings as he imagines
them. I can't think of a situation where poems like these would be helpful, even to people who are dealing with similar situations. I'm pretty sure these poems would serve to make people feel worse about their lives. I have never lived through these situations as he has so I really have no authority to say who they would or wouldn't help and to be honest, it would be hypocritical to ignore the fact that I write about my experience working in a nursing facility in an unpleasant light quite a bit. The nursing home poems might be considered to be offensive just as easily as Shapiro's, I suppose. But these are poems that need to be written. Even the uncomfortable poems are examples of experience and not all experiences are good. Sometimes they even involve your dad's penis and your sister's boob. Life, in the end, is never pretty to look at.

Something to remember with these poems is that the subjects are dead and unable to object to the way they are being portrayed in the poem. This leads to the question of how can I even consider writing about someone unpleasantly while they are still alive? I really don't want to but sometimes the idea of "won't-this-be-a-funny-story-to-tell" overpowers the little voice of my conscience that is telling me, "Sugar, you best think again." I think the main issue is finding the perfect level of restraint with which to address these issues. Basically, anything having to do with my ex-husband cannot be presented with factual detail or narrative. I have written about him maybe once where it is moderately successful. I think "Our Love, Improved with Metaphor" is relatively harmless but hopefully gets the emotional impact across to the reader without being too blunt, or in your face.
My large concern with this is that my habitual bluntness (as I've been told) sometimes squashes all forms of subtlety in my poems. Coming from the school of "say what you mean" and "stop beating around the bush and get to the point" in many fiction writing workshops, I have a bad habit of leaving subtlety out of my poems and tending to be too blunt. I usually find this quality to be a virtue; however, I do wish that I had the ability to write a magical, multi-faceted poem that would be both blunt and subtle at the same time. And I also wish for a pony. And a million dollars (wait… can I change the pony to a goat? I'd rather have a goat…).

It took me a while to think of myself as a poet. I wrote poetry, I took creative writing classes that focused on poetry in high school, and my chat room name (when they first discovered chat rooms in an ancient Mayan temple in the Yucatán) was "Seussie," because I liked to "rhyme like Dr. Seuss." My first name, as I later discovered, means poet—either that or defender of Devonshire—so writing poetry seemed as likely a choice as any (that or defending Devonshire). Even so, I was a rebel—I decided to be a marine biologist. Then a college-drop out. Then a nursing assistant. Then a mother and wife. Then, in my second affair with college, I focused on fiction writing. It's as though I followed Lorrie Moore's advice in "How to Become a Writer" prescriptively: "First, try to be something, anything, else. A movie star/astronaut. A movie star/missionary. A movie star/kindergarten teacher. President of the World. Fail miserably."

With fiction, I find it's so much easier to make things up than to deal with The Real, make it significant, and keep a reader's attention at the same time. I devoted myself
to what Lee K. Abbott fondly called "The Liar's Art," because creating art out of the truth just seemed so hard.

The thing I took away from my fiction workshops was basically one concept: keep people reading; have a catchy intro and then basically say whatever you have to in order to keep people turning the pages. When you're dealing with things in your own life and your own experiences, there is this ethical line that you have to choose whether or not to cross when trying to get people to keep turning the pages. There are many things in my past for which I still harbor resentment, especially with my ex-husband and parts of my childhood, so it's a difficult thing to not simply over-load a poem about my failed marriage with all the reasons I think my ex-husband is an awful human being and how mommy and daddy failed me as parents. People might keep turning the pages but only because I'm showing them a train wreck. These things might be interesting in a very basic, Jerry Springer type of way, but that's not exactly what I am aiming for. To be more specific, I wrote a poem as an undergraduate about being cheated on which I titled, "Porn." I thought it was really innovative at the time, very in-your-face and impactful; however, one comment that came from the workshop was "I have read 'shock poetry' like this before. Disgusting and cliché." For a long time, I simply assumed the person who wrote that was a crampy, stifled witch who simply didn't like me. But then I wrote a poem titled "How I Know I Don't Love You Anymore" which detailed all the little gross hygiene things I remember my ex-husband doing while we were married. It was explicit to the point that it even embarrassed me. I gave "Porn" a second look and realized how isolating poems like these can be, causing the reader to be weirded out and causing me to
I feel like a ridiculous, spiteful woman who can't move on. I had gone and said too much and it was all said in the worst way. It was Chuck Palahniuk without the "transgressional" qualities, as he calls it.

There's some interesting advice regarding this in Kim Addonizio's book, *Ordinary Genius*. She writes that "coldness" and "restraint" are the keys to making the hard and emotional topics successful in poetry. She says, "If 'less is more'—if understatement and matter-of-factness are one way to counter melodrama—it's also true that more, used in the right way, can be very effective" (193). It's a challenge to know when you reach that perfect balance of just enough restraint and just enough information to make a poem successful. Even though Addonizio is instructing to avoid melodrama, I think this advice applies in other aspects of poetry as well. When you take bad feelings, loose lips, and add a heavy dose of insecurity into the mix, you've got yourself a mess.

I have a tendency to assume that the reader doesn't care about how I feel concerning a situation I'm writing about, so I try to leave myself out of it. It's the reader's feelings that are important. The reader wants to feel something and I'm aware that in some of the things I write, there's this "so what" feeling after reading it that, of course, isn't the intended result. In the "Bar Poems" I am attempting to capture a fond memory or a scary, annoyed feeling that I associate with growing up as a bar owner's daughter. Maybe since there are so few poems investigating this part of my life, they're not ready to stand on their own. I'm not ready to give up on them yet, so that's why I've included them in my thesis, but as they are, they have the tendency to be "so what" poems. I hope to
flesh them out more fully in the future, but even as they stand, they are too important to me to leave out of my collection of work.

I try, with each piece I write, to create something that is honest to experience, entertaining, and still, at least slightly, significant. If I remain honest to my own experience the poem may not appeal to anyone outside of that singular audience of "Devon." This internal voice tells me "No one cares about your stupid life. Better use some kind of gimmick to get their attention!" This is partly why I rely heavily upon humor, or my version of it, to make things I deem to be bitter or unpalatable into something people might want to ingest. The humor is a defense mechanism, but sometimes it works. I generally find myself less satisfied with poems I've written that don't make me laugh. If not laugh, at least say, "Yes! Now that, my friend, is WIT!" even if I scratch it out five minutes later because suddenly I realize I'm not the genius I thought I was. Sometimes there's no point in looking at the past and not laughing at it. Like I said, life sucks, but I couldn't have gotten through it this far if I only focused on the negative all the time. If you're not laughing, you're crying, and I didn't spend good money on all this mascara to have it running all over my face all the time. Yeah, yeah… waterproof mascara. I've heard of it. I just prefer to live dangerously.

So how does a person such as myself create something that has great significance? Well, the easy answer is that I don't. I don't set out writing a poem thinking I'm going to change the world. My successes are when I create a detailed, believable scene for the reader; when I capture an experience exactly how I remember it; and when I can make someone laugh. There are times when there is nothing to be learned from my
poetry because it is intended to be pure entertainment. I know the world may not be a
more enlightened place because of what I do. I'm aware that, in 100 years, my 1979 split
level house will not be deemed a historical home because the famous political poet,
Devon Ortega, lived in it. I don't have irrational fantasies like that. My tiny little dream is
to have people read something I wrote and the result is that they feel a little better. That
they laugh a little. That maybe one little phrase sticks with them and they can
occasionally flip it around in their mind like a little worry stone. That they might smile.
Maybe that is significant enough.

Yeah, that sounds a little hokey to me too. I would be lying to myself if I said the
reason I write is to make other people happy. Joan Didion, in the essay, "Why I Write"
says, "In many ways writing is the act of saying I, of imposing oneself upon other people,
of saying listen to me, see it my way, change your mind." While I may not be trying to
change anyone's mind about anything, I certainly am engaging in the egotistical activity
that is writing because, for some insane reason, I feel as if I might be worth listening to.
At the very least I have something to say. And at the very, very least, I know words and
want to show off, like a toddler stringing her first learned monosyllabics together. That
reminds me: Must write the poem "Da Da Go Bye Bye."

Even if writing is an egocentric activity, a writer can seldom pull off purely self-
oriented works indefinitely. So we involve others. We write about situation. Other people
get involved in our writing and sometimes they become topics we frequently revisit. It's
unavoidable but working towards creating poetry that deals with situations delicately and
still makes them relevant, intriguing, and worth reading is a fascinating process that I hope to continue.
Works Cited


Our love was something that tapered
down so small—a sliver,
a splinter that bent and stung—
impossible to remove
from beneath thick skin.

At times, our love was balanced,
but with every day, I would inch
closer and closer to the center,
preparing for the jarring moment
when you would step off the seesaw
and gravity would make me its bitch.

We were like abstaining rabbits
with nothing left but to burrow,
to start at every approaching
step and prepare to flee.

It was the quilt I made from scraps
of discarded fabric—lopsided,
well intended, sloppily stitched—
and you hated it.
But when I asked for it back
you wouldn't give it to me
and I suspected that you
threw that away, too.
I was an hour late for the wedding, dressed in what resembled a beaded satin sack. At least it was white; however, it may as well have been beige or taupe or burnt sienna or oxblood. And he told everyone that he looked great. "G.Q. great," he said. And I was there to be married to this great looking man (whose shoulders were much too small for his suit coat). But I was late. 7 and a half months late, to be exact. But he wasn't upset, like any great man. Of course I'd show, he reasoned. Where else would a girl like me have to go?
Bad Love Blues

I got a galley kitchen and an empty flower vase.
Got this galley kitchen and this empty flower vase.
And whiskey in the morning, Vicodin, and space.

There ain't nobody fit to take this heart off my hands.
No, I ain't got no body fit to take this heart off my hands.
Nothing loads a gun like a two-ton wedding band.

Not enough hours to get all my duties done.
Really, not enough hours to get all my duties done.
Don't see you feeling guilty for sleeping away the sun.

I got restless eyes, they can't find a place to land.
My restless eyes, they can't find a place to land.
Just a tired bird shooed off by every man.

My preacher says to hold on with all my might.
The old preacher says to hold on with all my might.
There's no one to hold me. I wanna pick up and take flight.

Like an hourglass, my legs are filling up with sand.
Just like an hourglass, my legs are filling up with sand.
When the day comes I'll have to walk out on my hands.
Rules for Dysmorphia

1. Wake up one day and realize you have gained 15 pounds. Overnight. Suddenly, none of your pants fit. Wear an elastic waist skirt to work. Spend the day re-tucking migrating fat rolls back into your panty hose.

2. Start a ridiculous diet that even an anorectic might have difficulty maintaining. Count lettuce leaves. Measure ounces of Diet Coke. Pinch tender parts of yourself to prove your hatred of this new body. Smoke, smoke, smoke.


5. Become suddenly empowered and convince yourself that your body is beautiful. Go out to buy new pants that actually fit instead of wearing ones that bite into your "muffin top." Decide sizes aren't anything but numbers and select a wide variety. Try not to cry when the dressing room mirrors seem to be needlessly cruel. Buy the only pair that you can button. Go home feeling like you are dealing with PTSD. Start smoking again.

6. Realize you must be pregnant. Pee on a stick. Hold it the whole two minutes so you don't get pee on anything. Stare at your negative pregnancy test in disbelief. While you can no longer deny that you are, in fact, a fat person, relief prevents you from being too sad about it.

7. Decide to only eat things that are truly delicious. Decide to start running tomorrow. Decide you are worth dedication. Celebrate this by eating all the fattening foods in your cupboard. Devour two sleeves of saltines while watching a marathon of daytime talk shows. A farewell to food, you think. Rub your belly like a lucky Buddha. Tomorrow, you say. Tomorrow.

8. Sleep past noon and decide it's too late/hot/embarrassing to run at this time of day. Do three squats while brushing your teeth. Steer clear of the scale. Lie on the couch and stretch your legs. Fall back to sleep. Wake up at 3:00pm. Reward yourself for not eating all day by getting fast food. Feel pleased with your progress.
I usually need to get myself drunk first.
I can’t approach your type sober,
or any type, for that matter.
Once the air is filled with my pheromones and confidence
only then can I tease you into attraction.
Maybe you fuck me.
Maybe you don’t.
You’re just some-guy, same as all the other some-guys.
You don’t matter until you love me.
By that time, maybe I’ll love you, too.
Maybe we will move in together and

**BAM:** Live.

All fast and fluttery,
marbles and slip knots and KY
And lovely-stupid sex-making.
Probably together.

And you’ll keep on loving me.
Or not.
Again, it doesn’t matter. I’ll make it work.
Maybe we’ll have a baby.
Everyone loves a baby.
If not, we will be relieved and move on.

Maybe one of us will experience regret,
but we must never speak of it.

All that’s un-said will make us bored, or mad, or tired—
This will sabotage the whole operation.
I will say it’s
All my fault
But
I
Won’t
Really
Believe it.

You might.
But by then you’ve become an asshole and I won’t care.
Then off to our separate ways:
Me, down the path of least resistance.
You, to wherever you came from;
Your mother’s, a condo, a church group, Cairo,
Our best man’s? your ex-wife? Iraq? A brothel?
I’ll make it work.

But usually I need to get myself drunk first.
Apology

How do you make something up to yourself?
Say I’m sorry for the way I grew myself up?
For doing so many things wrong
and yet learning so little,
for ignoring all that seasoned advice,
for gallivanting around town just like
my mother warned me not to.

I’m sorry for building walls?
I’m sorry for blowing up bridges?
I’m sorry for not loving you?

How do you forgive yourself for all those
Embarrassing memories? For all the things
You've had to learn to live with,
For answering "you'll miss me when I'm gone"
With "I should be so lucky."
For allowing yourself to be spoiled
And ungrateful.
For allowing the list of those you need
To thank balloon into a frightening mob
Of people you are now afraid of
Because you owe them all something.

Would I do it all again?
I'd be lying if I said yes.
If I Had a Hand-Basket, I'd Be in It

If I died today, heaven would look like
A yarn store and I would have a pocket
Full of crochet hooks and nothing but time
And time to hook hats. And scarves.
But nothing else because those are the only
Things I learned to make while alive. So I would.
Scarves and hats of all colors and the yarn
Supply would never deplete. At all. Just balls
Of spun wool in piles, like felted eyes.
Staring, saying, make us something nice.
And I'd keep dropping my hooks between
Parted clouds and I'd have to wait for the
Crochet-hook cat to bring me another one.
All the while his friends are purring and kneading
My finished hat pile into gnarled, tufted messes.
Things unraveling everywhere and I, afraid to
Leave my cloud (I saw what happened to the hooks)
Would simply watch the hats being frenzied
And destroyed around me. But, those hats were for Jesus!
I would begin to think maybe I was in heaven for cats,
These cats who watch me with suspicious eyes
And scratch with ankle-kneading claws. As I sneeze
On their dander, I realize that maybe I’m not in heaven at all—
So that's why I try, very hard, to stay alive.
New-Blood Wife

Your mother promised, standing in the yard
that she grooms with kitchen shears and hunched back,
to teach me how to make tamales. “It’s not hard,”
she says, scuffing a dandelion head with her sensible shoe.

The particular way she makes tortillas,
“It’s easy,” she instructs—a finger of shortening
and a hundred years of practice. But my anal attempts
at measurement never improve my skill, and she laughs
at my efforts. They aren’t even round.
I make pasta instead.

How do you measure a finger like hers? My dumb,
pale hands are as useless as smoke, while hers hold generations.
We coalesced, you and I; watered down the blood to make it last?
(If we coined a term for what we’ve birthed—Germexican—
I would be the invading Germ.)
I try to explain to you  
why zombies don't make good pets  
but you are having none of it;  
convinced that if you remove  
enough limbs and teeth, zombies  
are harmless. I call you a fool,  
but inside I think this just might work.

* 

You say you aren't disturbed  
by my ease of dismembering chicken.  
How easy it is for me  
to piece out a raw roaster;  
snapping the joints with my hands  
and carving out the oysters.  
You watch as I tuck the wings  
into triangles; unnatural.  
We don't speak, my hands  
sending you a message—look  
what happens to those who  
cross me.

* 

WNCI tells me men have three favorite positions:  
girl on top, missionary, and bestiality style.  
This hardly seems newsworthy. I don't bother telling  
you. No reason to get you excited.

* 

When you were deployed to Iraq and I was merely  
ployed in Ohio, I would sit in my humid back yard  
thinking that maybe it's true that we were looking  
at the very same stars; both wishing on "Al-Fakkah"  
or Orion's belt buckle. But we were on opposite  
sides of the world; me, drinking Bud Light on a damp,  
dark lawn; you, thirsty, roasting under a close sun  
in a very dry country.
Mrs. Devit gave me a D- in Elementary Home Ec for sewing the head off my stitching project—The Stuffed Cow Pillow. This doesn't stop me from agreeing to sew your chevrons onto your dress blues. Upon seeing my handiwork, you emit the familiar sigh of disappointment. I watch as you clip the threads and carefully separate the chevron from its sleeve. You use iron on tape to reapply them (crookedly, I might add).

I decided long ago that there were certain things a man would never hear me do: Never would I say "I love you" first nor would he discover I use the bathroom. You notice my hypocritical ways when I sit outside the restroom door and try to start conversations with you while you do your business. This is not ideal for either of us. Maybe you should spend less time in there? I hear you playing Angry Birds. You should just come out.

When you came home, you didn't belong. I knew me—knew my ways and habits—but you were this scary, new thing in my tiny apartment. I became content in your constant mental presence; it was your physicality I couldn't stand—messing up my fantasy of you. It was too strange to ask you who you were, so I became strange too. I couldn't even find us on Wikipedia—not a single cheat to help me discover who we were supposed to be.

You found my sunglasses. You got up
With the kids this morning. The dishes
Are put away and you are folding laundry.
I'm pretty sure things will happen for you tonight.

* You always put three teaspoons of sugar
in your coffee. I tell you that if you'd just
use a tablespoon, it would keep coffee drips
out of the sugar bowl. You stare, and without
saying I'm being antagonistic, get a second spoon
from the drawer and use it to stir your
already sweetened coffee. "I love you," you say.
Love you, too.
On Death and Lies

We take the children to the Bodies exhibit at the museum so they can see first-hand the beauty of the inner workings of humans. In looking at the sculptured, plastinated bodies, the girl becomes obsessed with who the corpses belonged to and tries to figure out how they died. "If I died today, would you donate my body to science?" she asks and looks to me with a face that necessitates at least a three day vigil beside an open casket. I say, "No way, baby. You're worm food."

Two weeks later, we are at BJ's funeral. "They didn't do well with him," I tell my husband after the viewing. "His right eye was peeking open and I could see the glue paste holding his mouth closed." I didn't like the thought that someone wasn't working hard enough to disguise death in a corpse, that reality and rigor mortis were working collaboratively together to ruin the fantasy of peace and that coins were more than fare for the boatman. "But he looked at peace," he says. "I kept thinking I saw him move." "Yes," I say. I lie. "He looked like he was positively breathing."
Pushpushpushpushpushpushpushpush.
Weep. Hold rounded little bundle.
Restrain from thinking ugly thoughts
About its scabby little face. Think
Miracle. Love. Wait for the doctor
To patchwork you back together
With bailing twine. Listen to the nurse
When she tells you about a sits bath
("It's where you sit in the bath to wash
Your lady parts!") Get a second opinion.
Get handed a squirt bottle. Sitz bath?
Yes. Use when you pitz. Prepare to feel
Unclean for the next month and then
For 18 years after that (in degrees
Varying from mother/street urchin to
Mother/landfill overseer). Return home
As a +1. The new addition relocates
You in the family hierarchy. Prepare
Food with your body. You are food
Now. After, the baby gums your
Breasts, draws blood from what
Remained unspoiled of your body,
And still behaves like a hungry,
Timber wolf with your eyes.
Don't cry over spilled milk
That took you two hours to pump.
Don't cry over projectile shitting.
Hold your baby. Let her seduce you
With a hand that clamps to your finger
And a gaze that is really trying
To see you. Hold her until
You remember why you made her.
Hold her until it hurts to let go.
Arachnophobia

I see you there— skulking, plotting,
Twitchy legs filigreeing nightmares
Under the baseboard.

Your dojo, a tiny, knotted funk
In the corner, thousands of diminutive
Yous rehearsing their katas.

I refuse to make the first move—maybe
You have forgotten I’m here? But then you emerge:
Fearless, alien, swift.

My screams will serve as your eulogy.
My shoe, smearing an angiogram of your
Viscera—again and again.
Briefs

I love you, he says.

How do you know?
I ask, simply
Because it's something
To ask.

Because I can't imagine
A day
Without you, he says.

But how would you
Know? I'm always here?
I say.

It's like saying
You can't imagine
A house without shingles,
I say,

Or a day without
Electricity;
Except I would be
Something more useless,
Like underwear, I say.

Underwear are useful,
He says. He kisses me.
He says no more

And I say no more,
But I feel sad
About being underwear.
Perennials

I bought a little Hyacinth to put
On the kitchen table to show
The growth the world is capable of.
It is growing big and its
Little asparagus head is now
Purpling with blossoms. I named
Her Cynthia so every time I pass
By her, I can say, "Hi-ya, Cynthia!"
I feel that this is a conversation
Worth having. I'm speaking with
Spring, hurrying its friendship.

As my mother calls and weeps
About a boy, or about her finances,
Or her Facebook friends, I want to put
That conversation in my jewelry
Box, with all the old wedding rings
And baby teeth and other symbols
Of life passing by, and never have
To deal with it again until the time
Comes to pass things on. Then I will
Say to my child, "Your grandmother
Was especially sensitive and you
Are warm hearted just like her."

When the kitchen table is no longer
A garden, but becomes the place
Where Cynthia's blossoms make
Their last stand, I will dig a hole
In the yard to bury her bulb and hope
And pray that all the good things
She brought to the table will bloom
Again in the seasons to come.
My Daughter’s Mini-Mütter

The fingernail clippings blackened quickly in their jar; waning moons detached from their finger skies. A broken jaw sits, unidentified; the four cancerous teeth clinging to the dusky bone of a long dead possum queen. She grooms and meticulously counts the four translucent baby teeth, the two derelict and abandoned shells of long dead hermits and the one, tiny, delicate crab, pincers entombed in a varnished resin dome, a felt blue ocean below its needled feet. King-crab of an eight year old girl’s bounty—as her mother, I must tolerate her collection of childhood whimsy and shitty, rotting parts; curiosity encapsulated in the warped shoe box. I must not dispose of the morbid trappings of her gothic, childhood joys for fear of unraveling the magic of her entire youth. I must never let her know if anything she does disgusts me.
You're amazingly agile for your weight—
That disproportionate, bottom-heavy-ness
Never snapping the trapeze. You pup your
Tent and stake out your claim on my porch.
This might be circus colonialism. In the morning
I hope you will have boarded your train and
Have taken all of your trapping trapeze
With you, but I fear, tomorrow, as I go out
With my coffee, I will hear those terrible
Calliopes playing as you consume. Then,
Retiring to the sanctuary of my sunning,
Potted plants, you will wait patiently
To be brought in for the winter.
How to Fall Asleep Without Narcotics

…It seemed urgent, but no reply, so maybe I'm over-reacting? Can I pull off responding to his email without using his name? Isn't it neat how, in forensics, you can remove the fingertips of a badly decomposed body and get a fingerprint from it by wearing the fingertip like a little glove? It's called "gloving," right? Right—why didn't I go into forensics? Sing CSI theme song in head. Remove imaginary sunglasses in head. I always wanted to be a chiropractor… why am I not a chiropractor? Crack every knuckle in your body. Bonus points if you can get your ankles without getting out of bed. If I held my breath, could I suffocate myself to sleep? How many things do I have to do tomorrow? Count tasks like sheep. Become surrounded by sheep. Drown in sheep. Roll over to your stomach. Will Jennifer Aniston ever find true love? What is wrong with her anyway? If she can't find love, is there any hope for the rest of us? What's a funny name smoosh for Jen? Smoosh Barry Manilow with Jennifer Aniston… get Barifer. Get Maniston. Try to think of other celebrities and fail. Sing "Mandy" in your head. Should I get a colon cleanse? Do doctors recommend them? Is Dr. Oz a real doctor? Coroners are doctors, right? I should have been a coroner. Dissect a body instead of dissecting my day, dissecting my life? I bet coroners sleep really well. When was the last time I really slept well? When was the last time I called Tara? Or grandma? Or mom? Am I a social outcast? Dear God, I forgot to learn Spanish! Try to sing "Mandy" in Spanish. Realize you don't know the Spanish word for "came." Repeat the words la isla bonita over and over instead. Finally, fall asleep. Dream of eating many, many sheep.
Things I Have Left

There were the letters. I never saw them but I heard of them from a mutual friend. I used to speculate over what they were about, but good or bad, they still made your wife hate me.

There was the bar and the job and the drinks that kept us from saying what we meant and allowed us to talk in circles; riddle each other sick and sidestep the issues of what the hell we were doing.

There were the children and the fear of more children and the sin of sex. There was the wife, the boyfriend, the husband, and all the exes to realize "I don't."

There was you, with your wide, flat tongue that kissed me the first time like a lazy dog and me, the dish of water.

There was me, with the unconscious need to forget things at your place and then forget your place all together. And you, who only texted "Happy Mother's day" two months after I fucked you.

Someday you will chart the movements of the nomad through discovered treasure: the Hemingway novel that kept falling behind the hutch, the drawing of the naked girl on an Arby's napkin, the folded beer caps, cigarette butts, and the diamond stud from my ex-husband.
Quality Time with Dad

Work nights of drinks with friends
and past closing lingerers kept my dinner
burning on the back of the grill until
the Styrofoam container was deformed
and the food no longer food-like.
Other nights of explosive fights,
fueled by alcohol and resentment,
left the hamburger helper cold
on the stove. Someone always
needed something and there were always
ballgames to umpire and drinks to pour.
I was never good at sports. You thought
I just wasn't trying. "I'm not a boy!" I'd say.
"Bullshit!" you'd say. You'd drink
your beer. You'd hug me a little
too hard.

*

Your complexion was never enviable—
ruddy, redder than tan, purple-er than
roast—from the pressure, hyper in your
veins. And if that big heart of yours,
so full of good will, keeps up the strain,
your head might burst, like a confetti cracker,
and all your love will sprinkle around me. I
will try to piece you back together but
I know the gulls will come, scavenge
your parts and I will be left with a ruddy
cheek, a cirrhotic liver, and a sliver of
the big heart, torn from the mouth of a
beggar who thought it was hungrier
for you than I was.

*

That was before the melanoma. Now
you sit away from the sun, watching
The Rifleman. I watch too because
that's what children do when they want
to bond. Even great-big grown children like me. And you tell me how the Rifleman could chew his way out of a wooden cage and stab his enemies with a pork chop bone. And even though I know he'll always escape, I still pretend I'm in great suspense. "He's not going to make it, Dad. There's only three more minutes left in the show!" You smile and say just watch. And he gets away, shoots the bad ones with his gun. "Just one more episode," you say, "and we've got a full day's work in." If this is work, I'd never go home either.
I look at magazines, trying to decide who I want to be. The solution, it seems, is to crawl out of myself and reside within inanimate things—to make love to the mottled grain of a picture frame; being the delicate chain skimming the décolletage of a posed mannequin girl; a four poster bed made entirely of stag horns—and me. I would be proud to own/be them all, showing my nice things to you, saying, "And here I am as a claw foot bath-tub. Authentic antique from 1876. I knew I had to be it when I first saw it. Come! Sit with me so you can get a true appreciation." And we would sit, and then lie in the stag-horn bed. I would allow you to fondle my graceful chain (with the wishbone pendant) and admire my rustic picture frames (made of real barn wood!) and then you would know my value. You would see who I am and, therefore, I would know also.
Secret voices reminded him
to collect things. He forgot
how it all got there in his pockets:
cloth napkins, buttons, tchotchkes
from places unknown-- All important
without knowing the what or why.
“It was quiet enough to hear a bird
fart”, he reminded me in his Thoreauvian
way. He never said more about German
shrapnel unless those magic little worm-holes
formed in his brain, allowing his memories
to leak through. “Do you know me?”
He was kindly and would tell me
with certainty he did. Me, a furball
lodged in his synapses, our identities
itching there, tickling on the tip of his
tongue.
The Tavern at Ten

Sleepy morning men  
melt into their long-necks,  
hand attached to bottle,  
eye glazed onto Price is Right  
on the 12 inch.  
My father, towel swinging like  
a fox tail from his back pocket,  
fills the three sinks;  
Hot with soap, middle rinse,  
and blue sanitation tab  
in the third.  
The drain tubes peer out,  
sipping the water, preventing  
a flood when I, a seven year old  
barmaid, scrub dirty glasses  
on the three pine trees; black  
conical bristles, securely suctioned  
to the sink bottom.  
My white dishrag tail hangs  
long and swings as I serve  
soapy water out of mostly  
clean glasses to the men  
who tolerate a persistent  
child simply because she  
is the daughter of the man  
who serves them their beer.
There’s a picture of my grandparents, naked, hanging above the dingy display of cigarettes; a hand-written note that says “7.50 per pack,” like a Dear John letter to your lungs.

And my two grandparents, eternally posed in the water of a Jacuzzi tub in Anyplace, Florida. Naked in that public business where three generations strong have been raised.

Grandma still comes, sits and drinks cranberry and vodka until the stools are too drunk to sit. She walks home wearing someone else’s coat because Norma Jean wears what she wants when she wants.

Even if it’s nothing at all.
She penguins in, all the grace
of a corndog on a stick, hawing
to the Bud boy, tramping in shoes
she keeps falling off of. A lit
menthol points out of her fingers,
smoke wafting prayers to honor
the carcinogen gods. She talks
about that hard knock factory life.
Denim seeming to hold her in the
cruelst of snares, punishing her
slink-leather belly; a hurdle of flesh
pooled atop her waistband. She smiles
upon seeing me, a familiar face—
familiar/familial. In this bar world
Everyone’s a cousin or a dear
friend and she remembers me
from when I was just the littlest
of things, no higher than the bar-top,
couldn’t see to order a drink. "But look
at you now," she says, assaults me with her
aggressive embraces and pin-pricks
me with her fingertips as she pulls
my ear close, regales me with
tales of the other, local patrons
in the bar—others that
know me, that love me, in a way
that only a lifetime of social drinking
can create. These people are my home.
Me and the Karma Kid

I was 17 and awkward and had the hugest crush. You asked me if I looked at the toilet paper after I wiped. When I waffled on my answer (since there was no right answer) you must have known I wasn't ready to handle a man such as yourself.

I remember going home and screaming into my pillow in embarrassment.

Sometimes I get these vague memories, like of us sneaking into your mom and dad's house while they were sleeping. You showed me all of your mom's religious paraphernalia and then cooked me eggs. They were snotty, more albumen than egg white, but I ate what I could without gagging.

So, you would say, still like your eggs overcooked? Which was such a dumb thing to ask, but I was flattered that you remembered something about me.

I remember dancing with you in the bar after closing time. It was like home, how close you were, how your beard smelled like beer and money, how you asked me to sing and when I wouldn't, you sang to me instead, and how I was on my tippy toes the whole time.

There was the time we were sleeping together on your couch (or pretending to sleep). You said, "Always have, always will" and I continued fake sleeping without asking what you meant by it.

I remember thinking that I knew what you meant.

We watched a sitcom I'd never seen before but you told me it was about karma. You laughed really hard at inappropriate times, pointed at the TV, saying, "SEE? Karma!"

I have thought about karma a lot since then.

I'm not sure how it's important, but I recall my first ride in your car (the little red convertible). I remember the way neither of us looked like we belonged in that car; you with all that hair everywhere; me, unable to see over the dash because the seat was broken into the forever-fully-reclined position. I recall there being so many empty cigarette packs on the passenger floorboard I sometimes think maybe I dreamed it.

There was the night when you and I stayed up all night talking on your front porch and how guilty I felt when, at 5am, you went inside to start up the coffee pot because you had to work at 6.

I sometimes can't believe I told people that we would never work as a couple. We could never agree on anything. I never really meant what I said but apparently it stuck with you.
because for years afterward you would call attention to our every agreement, trying to prove that statement wrong.

I try not to think about that morning I was in your house alone. How I took a shower and dried off with the towel you had used that morning to dry yourself. How there was so much time to be nosy but I left in a hurry, unnerved that your ex-girlfriend's clothes were still in your bathroom.

I didn't want to meet your daughter. You had no qualms about introducing us but in my head, I was screaming No! No! No! No! No! No! She had her mother's eyes.

You said you thought I had sexy hips and for weeks (months? years? still?) I would lie in bed, jutting my pelvis and feeling my hip-bones with my own fingers, pretending the touches were yours.

I seldom think about the last night we spent together. I knew, even at the time, that it was a mistake; my head all swimmy with desperation, and heavy-handed mixes, and karma scores.

I remember feeling like I had lost a huge bet, but that I deserved to lose it.

I remember leaving your house.
Your arm will get chopped off
by a passing car, or a stop sign,
if you keep hanging it out of
that car window.
I will still love you,
but your life will become
dramatically worse
from your choice
to not listen to me.

If you don't brush your teeth
they will rot out of your head.
People will think you are
a giant infant and they won't
give you candy anymore.
Don't ask me for any either
since I won't be able to afford it,
having to pay for either
expensive dental bills
or all those blenders
we are going to go through
pureeing your food
for the rest of your life.

And don't sit so close
to the television.
Your eyes will go bad
and then you will need
Coke bottle glasses as thick
and opaque as Uncle Ted's
and everyone will know
by looking at you
that you didn't listen
to your mother and sat
too close while watching
these pointless cartoons.
They can look at me and know
that I'm the type of mother
who would tell you this
since I don't have glasses
and I obviously know better.
You're going to have a hard enough time getting people to like you with only one arm and no teeth. Don't push your luck.
When He Wakes

A bumbled door and then
A squeak of metal resisting
The pressure of a human
Weight. And again. With each
Step, the metal protests.
When he reaches the linoleum,
The rubber stoppers vibrate
Their own grievances—
The cacophony of sounds
A single man can make
On his way to the coffee pot.
*We need to get you some
Tennis balls for that thing,*
I want to say, but I don’t.
He already is irritated by
The bicycle bell I attached
To the walker while he slept.
He hits it frequently by accident
And the tinny ring of childhood
Startles him. *This fucking thing,*
He says. The walker or the bell?
It was meant as a joke but really
It only turned his walker into
A giant, awkward cage of adolescence
Mixed with geriatric torture device—
It's like head-gear for the old or disabled.
Except this one has a fucking bell.
He one step, two steps to his chair.
I bring him his coffee.
We start our day.
I've never thought of myself as wise.
Perhaps, I have seen some things.
I'm really pretty indifferent as to
Whether or not others find value
In the things I find indigestible.
I swivel my head around like
A lazy suzan, looking at the world upside down,
I fancy myself a historian.

A neighbor of mine once said, "Mischief
Cures all ailments of the soul." I'm
Fond of the belief that sitting very still,
Very quietly and patiently, and the world
Will move at such a pace your troubles will
Seem insignificant—unless you realize
No one cares where you are.

My mischievous neighbor was killed
By a vehicle a month back—she
Did not look wise, splayed on the street
Like common road-kill instead of someone
With a name, a story—her one eye,
Refusing to blink and the other half drawn.
I wonder if she saw her reflection
In the windshield as it happened?

One day I will appear at your window—
Me, or someone like me—
Big eyed, silent, and you will either
Meet my gaze and feel fear, or you
Will rush out to find me gone, search
The porch for evidence of my visit—
A feather of meaning to frame
And cherish until the end—part of me.

I don't care what you do.
The important thing is that
You've been warned.
Something remarkable happens to coincidence in the early days of mourning. Every little thing becomes a potential sign from the one we love. The unexplained bursting of a perfectly functioning water pipe or the malfunction of a normally silent fire alarm become important messages from beyond. A sign that life doesn't end in darkness, but continues with mysteriously clinking glasses or incredibly relevant sad songs that come onto the radio. And we need this validation and hardly bother with debunking their mystery. We need to believe the dead speak through oddities. Tomorrow it can go back to being coincidence. Today it's love.
Residents

Going to work was like flushing a toilet.
The older you get, the more you fart.
You look at the shit
On light switches
Or unfortunate fingernails.
You clean up the shit
From embarrassed underpants.
You definitely smell it,
From bathroom to linen closet.
At times, it creeps into your mouth
As a smell you can taste and never escape.
In this corner of Paradise Oaks Nursing Facility,
Room 107, is Big Bear, weighing in at 415.
He once took me out with one gaseous emission.
He farted as he laughed.
One puff for each hyuck.
I gagged as I wiped.

You get away from it by becoming used to it.
Jamie flicked a turdball at Tara.
They both thought it was funny and decided to become nurses.
The schoolteacher with dementia said
She used to work at Ass Ass & Titties.
Probably a private school.
The silly brains of rot melted right in front of us
But the unfortunate ones were always lucid—
Those who ring their bathroom buzzers with all the questions
That Alex Trebeck never answers,
That sometimes no one ever answers.
Everyone sits and waits for whatever,
Life lingering sadly in the air.
Because it’s a tragedy when there’s one less fart to smell,
Especially if there’s no one there to smell it.

All they had was us. It wasn't much, but it was all they had.
Bon Harbor

It was called Bon Harbor
But there wasn't a body
Of water for 50 miles.
The building sat like a brick
Scab between two highways—
Home of necrotizing fasciitis
And second knuckle suppositories,
Prosthetics and wound vacs,
Gerry chairs and hoyer lifts—
No boats. But there was so much
Left adrift there, floating like
Flotsam wheelchairs, bumper
Boats in line to deliver their cargo
On home to the Lord.

When it was time for Mary
To go, they said, "We'll just ease
Her way" and they upped her
Morphine until her chest
Was so heavy with it her soul
Was squeezed right out of her
Body and off she floated
To some metaphysical shore.

But we would wash her
And over her body we
Would talk about things
As we cleaned her.
Of the things age
And death do to a person.
Sometimes we'd speak of Mary,
Or work, or our lives,
But never of the morphine.
There was no use for unnecessary
Pain. There was no need
For implication, and I'm sure
We were very keen to not
Be fully, crushingly aware
Of anything that could hurt us.
I was the only one who knew
how to fix her pillows properly.
She would call for me even when I
wasn’t there. The nurses hated that
and at times, even I hated that, with
irritation that even mothers have
of their children. Do you really
need my attention? Can't you do anything
yourself?

No one else knew how to position her
neck, bent and awkward as a
coil hanger, her head fixed stiffly atop it.
Her own body effectively immobilized her,
forced her to be completely dependent
upon the likes of me.

I would hide in her room, looking
at her photographs from when she
was young, before her curves
turned inside out. These photos were
like novelties since very few
people had photos of themselves
to display. Or maybe the reminder
hurt too much.

She cried once in front of me
telling me of how she outlived
all five of her children. I was grateful
her head was bent into her chest. It
was getting hard to hide my own distorted,
growing curves, the baby dancing under
my skin. I could no better tuck it away
behind my ribs than she could turn her
head to look at it. But she knew and
would place her hand on my stomach
to bless and coo over a child
who had not yet taken breath.
As I knelt down in the shower room in front of the naked man, preparing to dry his feet, he punched me on the top of my head with a surprisingly strong fist. I was previously under the impression that there was a sort of mutual trust between us—you won't punch me, I won't drop you on your ass in a clammy bathroom. "Why, sir, did you punch me?" is what I think I said; however, "What the shit, Jerry?" is probably more accurate. He was too weak to stand alone but his fist was firm and controlled.

His face looked fallen and sorry. He said, "Because I wanted a cigarette." His orders were—NO NICOTINE—written in red pen and this was why he was continually denied, as others, equally weak and old, smoked in the smokers lounge without him—denied something he was willing to punch for, willing to risk a broken hip for. After his shower, I made him a fake one from a slip of paper. I lit it with a stapler. He puffed a few times before he threw it at my face and said, "Fuck this shit!" Indeed, I agreed, but it's only as bad as we think it is.
On my first day of work
He stared at me through
The glass of the dementia
Ward—his face slack, jaw
Jiggling involuntarily,
And his tongue quivering
As it lolled in his open
Mouth. Peanut Butter!
He screamed at me, hands
Spasm-ing against the glass,
Like music-less dancers. I
Didn't know how to react—
I was peanut-butter-less
And feared what he might
Want from me in its stead.
Could I get him peanut butter?
It seemed so simple, but the
Nurse said, "If you give him
A sandwich now, he'll just
Want another in five minutes."
What kind of world would
We live in if a man could
Just eat his fill of peanut
Butter sandwiches every
Day? A crazy one, I suppose.
I turned and walked away.
His fist pounded the glass,
Seemingly only slightly
Louder than my pounding
Heart.
Presentation

When a resident died, we were responsible for making the body presentable for family. Loved ones not seen in years.

One of us would delicately wash the corpse, cleaning decades of life from between the fingers and toes.

I was terrified of the ritual. Not because of the body itself, a clay form beneath a sheet, but the mouth: always softly opened and black--

dark and bottomless as a wishing well.
I.
There was once a winter
So cold the land shivered,
And could trick your mind
With mirages. A young girl
Thought she saw a deer flit
In her peripheral vision
While admiring the trees,
Glassed with ice. She wanted
To chase the deer into the icy
Woods and capture it
To keep as a pet
To love and care for. She
Would lure it with the songs
She sang to herself when
She was alone.
She had many, many songs.
But then her mother said,
Through the closed bedroom door,
That the deer all died in their sleep
In the ice-rain and lie entombed,
Like Pompeii, in the field
Behind the Howard Johnson.
The chamber of commerce
Decorated them with twinkle lights
And charged people five dollars
To drive through the field
To see them. Disheartened,
The girl sang all her songs
To herself, hoping for things
To eventually thaw.

II.
The father used to raise cows.
The daughter wanted desperately
To love them but they were
Very shy, never looking a person
In they eye, and turning away
Whenever a young girl might try
To see into their big, pretty cow-faces.  
It was difficult to loop a lead  
Over a shy cow's head  
And walk her off to slaughter—  
Even when the cows were told  
They were to go to the park  
To eat the marigolds the girl scouts  
Planted. They must have known  
These were lies. Perhaps  
They were psychic cows;  
However, since she couldn't  
Catch their mysterious attention,  
She never could have them tell  
Her fortune before they decided  
To break through the electric fence  
One dark, stormy night, never  
To be seen again.

III.  
Long ago, but not so very long,  
A girl, a small girl, decided to fight  
Darkness. Clad in lucky fox furs  
And chain mail mittens, she set off  
To meet darkness where he lived.  
She looked absolutely adorable.  
She searched for darkness all across  
The land and never found him until,  
Suddenly, he found her and when he  
Did, he set upon her so stealthily,  
And came upon her so heavily, she  
Fell under his weight. Before she hit  
The ground, she lit a small candle and  
Hid it away, deep inside her chest where  
It still burns to this day, despite the  
Crushing darkness that sits upon her.  
Such a delicate light—it would be a  
Miracle if it still burns.

IV.  
For many years, a china doll sat
Patiently upon a shelf at an obscure Toy shop. She had a very particular Face, painted to look wide-eyed and Startled. She also had the particular Habit of loving everyone who looked In her direction. After sitting in that Spot on the shelf for so many years, She realized that no matter how hard Or how frequently she loved, she never Had received love in return. Her fragile Limbs were thick with dust and her Arms were suddenly very tired from Being so outstretched for so long. "Be mine," she said, as she pitched Herself forward towards a child Standing below her. She was not Caught, but shattered into many Interesting pieces that the store Owner used for a mosaic stepping Stone in his garden. Her eyes look Upon the tomato plants now and She has no thoughts about love.

V.
There once was a girl who Fell in love with an abandoned Limestone quarry. The water Was the loveliest blue, like Her mother's eyeshadow, And the sun sparkled on The water like little miracles. For weeks, the girl was content To sit near the gritty beach And gaze into the azure Waters. But soon she felt A strong desire to submerge Herself under the surface And become a part of the Little lake and love it from Within. So she filled her Pockets with small beer-stones Littering the shore and carefully
Removed her shoes and approached
The edge. And jumped. She saw
Under the water, tiny celebratory
Bubbles floating upward
In the water as she descended.
Just when she felt she was about
To reach the bottom of the quarry
And her toes felt as cold as they
Ever had, the lake propelled
Her out of itself, spitting her back
Onto the rocky shore. She did
Not drown, but she felt no joy.