

The Heart Is Not a Synonym for the Chest

What you called a *cloud* was not a cloud. I am in hell here. Hell is a party where I don't sing and don't dance and someone turns to me and says, "You are a very pretty girl. Don't ever forget that."

I spend all night tramping up and down the staircase trying to figure out if you really love me.

Each stair a copy of the first and each of your words a copy of the one before it—*love, love, love*—above us an 18-wheeler on the highway bucks and shifts—*fishtailing*—and you think of me.

I would think of you, too, bucking and shifting, but that is not my heart.

That is my left breast.

There is a photocopier at the top of the staircase. I make a photocopy of my heart for you. It says: WTF?!

I am in hell and I have picked up some of the language.

If I was Eurydice I would not not be mad at Orpheus—
I'd be the register above.

The truck, our house, our life together—these things I do not miss. A reminder written out on every mirror, “You are a very attractive lady—don’t ever forget.”

This I do not miss.

The bathroom with its three mirrors—I am happy, humming to myself in the morning, when you enter. You appear behind me again and lay your hand over my left hip, like a shadow.

This I do not miss.

The bathroom beginning to look like a lobster trap with its yellow bars of reflected light and my skin turning pink with sex again—

This

I miss—the knowledge that there is blood and it is pounding, fishy rivers beneath the skin, sperming toward an inland island.

**“A long time ago, the Greeks poured out of their horse
and stormed the city—**

and there was nothing the Trojans could do.”

I wanted to have you and be rid of you, Dear Earnest. Like a postcard inside an envelope, I wanted it both ways, but I wasn't messing around.

All day long the children walked back and forth across the ice, the one we call Rachel and the one we call Pickle. I walked across the ice as well, and I didn't break it.

Rachel held a lead rope, and Pickle pulled her sled-like through the driveway. "I got snow down my pants," Rachel said. I wasn't messing around.

Back inside, Pickle shows me a piece of ice. "It is a scared piece of ice, Eleanor," she says. There is a crack the shape of a 6 or a tadpole, I can see through the ice to her palm.

There is no delicate way to put this, Pick—
What happened to your gloves?

What else can I tell you? What else is true?
The child I did not have belonged to you.

9:32 p.m. —

Our fists deep in the beef, we form lumps that, baked,
swell with juices.
We used the knife to slice—first, mushrooms, then peaches.
Enough tenderness for one day has been kneaded
and diced neatly. I remove
to wash the knife and lose my balance over the counter.
My hand flattens, fingers splayed against blade and basin.
I cut myself. “What are you doing?”
I turn and look surprised, “My hand is . . .,” I start to say,
flush with the sink.

One Thousand Words on Regret

Last night, I had sex for as long as it takes to drive to the gas station
(on Cambridge St.)
and all the silver sperm capsized in the jelly, like beached fish—
imagine their surprise.

Give me 1,000 words on regretfulness.

Sitting in the grass, I am trying to write out I hate you, “I have,
I gave, I gate—”
and it’s just too difficult to do. I gate you.

My jaw hurts and so I say it out loud, “My jaw hurts.” And that just
makes it hurt worse.

Swallow a candy in panic and it just sits in your stomach. Please,
there is room—

make use of the furniture.

The title on your bookshelf *Whores on the Hillside* and I say,
“Whales are mammals
and abortions don’t take place in your stomach.”

A trailing,
smoky breath primed for the coming extinction. *I know that
I’m not stupid.*

In their paddock the horses roar, like dinosaurs.

Bully for me! That’s the creative spirit! The sunlight
on the roof’s stone banisters—
a missive reads, “Missing: a pair of tan/gold fishnets”—tights. Help!

The whole world is turning into words and I don’t believe them.

The Plenum

For future generations I'll say this:
we were the first to speak with aliens.
We broadcast it. We said
the world is full and clean. The world is
full and clean.

I slide my sweated arm across the table, so my fist is between us,
my fist and a little piece of naked wrist, a sick, unburied bulb,
but slide a clump of fingers out and my hand becomes
a gnarled root, white chap-lines like wiry hairs stuck tightly: ginger
and gingerly you take it and push the fingers out, they open terribly
like a flower and your fingers stroke my palm. *How long has it been
since you wrote a poem?*

It is not snowing but something keeps falling, falling, falling
outside the window. Just try to make it through the sun-soaked pasture,
the light heavy
and lying on the pasture grass, so the grass is yellow-white with it and
seething slightly,
a frying pan full of melted butter.
It is a gorgeous day and you always had a weakness for beauty,
could never keep your dick out of it. I would come home
and find the vases violated.

The light is soft, though, and nice,
like the teapot and its neighbor right now, the cozy.
They are nice, but this is not a nice restaurant—and thank God
we don't live in a nice restaurant—so I can talk about sex
and talk about sex the way I want to talk about sex, for example,

me explaining to no one (special, that is) that being a stud
is not always being a STUD—
these days it is all done by artificial insemination, plus
the way they extract the semen from you is not that fun.
I move my elbows as I do it—
behind my ribs, in front of my ribs, behind my ribs, in front of my ribs,
my forearms perpendicular, palms facing the ceiling.
That former racehorse with his soft wet eye . . . you see as he
emerges from the light and grazes, pastoral, a foot from our French windows,
but how often do you think of him?
You turn and blow me a kiss

and I think you mean it. Still.

10:13 a.m. —

I can't stop, I can't
stop looking at my watch.

Historically, We Haven't Taken Any Prisoners

Carpet is like heaven, where the angels rest and play,
until it burns, but

already the voice in my head is saying,

Okay, now agree with whatever he says.

If I've been warned once,

then I've been warned. You see the toothy shadow of a fence.

I see the threat

of nightfall on the grass, and fence posts stuck

deep inside the ground. At night, your hands

like spiders crawl

back to their places. Quickly, love deteriorates to the empty insides
of my sneakers, *You're not going anywhere.*

How come, darling,

there isn't a police force?

That's because, baby, there aren't any rules.

Walnuts churn under car wheels and bruise their yellow hulls.

Marble without is

marble-colored. The bruising doesn't mean

my heart is made of stone. Fall slides

into winter like tires on the drive.

The ground we tread gets hard, then harder. From an evergreen,

birds seed the sky. Yesterday, you said to me,

Birds don't get pregnant.

That's true. Birds can also fly. Described

in pictures, described

in words—*achingly beautiful*—more tender than we
ever could have imagined.

5:07 p.m. —

Leaves curled like the crumpled fists of infants.
Snow crowns a bird's nest, a cupcake,
or a baked and slit sweet potato.

And you say I am sad,
that I have an icy sadness.
I frown. I'm not sad
to fixate on the light fixture.
I can see it through the curtainless window.