

## SATAN SAYS

I am locked in a little cedar box  
with a picture of shepherds pasted onto  
the central panel between carvings.  
The box stands on curved legs.  
It has a gold, heart-shaped lock  
and no key. I am trying to write my  
way out of the closed box  
redolent of cedar. Satan  
comes to me in the locked box  
and says, *I'll get you out. Say*  
*My father is a shit.* I say  
my father is a shit and Satan  
laughs and says, *It's opening.*  
*Say your mother is a pimp.*  
My mother is a pimp. Something  
opens and breaks when I say that.  
My spine uncurls in the cedar box  
like the pink back of the ballerina pin  
with a ruby eye, resting beside me on  
satin in the cedar box.  
*Say shit, say death, say fuck the father,*  
Satan says, down my ear.  
The pain of the locked past buzzes  
in the child's box on her bureau, under  
the terrible round pond eye  
etched around with roses, where  
self-loathing gazed at sorrow.  
Shit. Death. Fuck the father.

Something opens. Satan says  
*Don't you feel a lot better?*  
Light seems to break on the delicate  
edelweiss pin, carved in two  
colors of wood. I love him too,  
you know, I say to Satan dark  
in the locked box. I love them but  
I'm trying to say what happened to us  
in the lost past. *Of course*, he says  
and smiles, *of course*. *Now say: torture.*  
I see, through blackness soaked in cedar,  
the edge of a large hinge open.  
*Say: the father's cock, the mother's*  
*cunt*, says Satan, *I'll get you out.*  
The angle of the hinge widens  
until I see the outlines of  
the time before I was, when they were  
locked in the bed. When I say  
the magic words, Cock, Cunt,  
Satan softly says, *Come out.*  
But the air around the opening  
is heavy and thick as hot smoke.  
*Come in*, he says, and I feel his voice  
breathing from the opening.  
The exit is through Satan's mouth.  
*Come in my mouth*, he says, *you're there*  
*already*, and the huge hinge  
begins to close. Oh no, I loved

them, too, I brace  
my body tight  
in the cedar house.  
Satan sucks himself out the keyhole.  
I'm left locked in the box, he seals  
the heart-shaped lock with the wax of his tongue.  
*It's your coffin now*, Satan says.  
I hardly hear;  
I am warming my cold  
hands at the dancer's  
ruby eye—  
the fire, the suddenly discovered knowledge of love.

## LOVE FOSSIL

My da on his elegant vegetarian ankles  
drank his supper. Like the other dinosaurs  
massive, meaty, made of raw steak,  
he nibbled and guzzled, his jaw dripping weeds and bourbon,  
super sleazy extinct beast my heart dug for.  
His eye dark as massy coal deposits,  
his stare like lava stopped—he was a stopped man.

He browsed on remains, ambled on his giant bone structure,  
could not find his niche and smelled the tarpits like his  
father in the bathroom all day.  
I did not understand his doom or my taste for the big  
dangerous body.  
I flashed my animal sides, and he was  
vegetarian to the end.

He was dark as a reptile and splashed with mud like an old Chevy,  
he was souped-up and stunned and cruel. He taught me to love  
what was stuck, what couldn't help itself,  
what went down mute into time like tar, like anger.  
He was in up to the soft waist,  
wrapped in his brontosaurus suit like an old bathrobe.  
Love rose in me, a storm of mosquitoes  
hovering over La Brea.

Carnivore that I was, I watched him  
flounder and sink slowly as if he intended it.  
Carnivore that I was I watched his  
bare white shoulder and I went hungry.

## THAT YEAR

The year of the mask of blood, my father  
hammering on the glass door to get in

was the year they found her body in the hills,  
in a shallow grave, naked, white as  
mushroom, partially decomposed,  
raped, murdered, the girl from my class.

That was the year my mother took us  
and hid us so we would not be there  
when she told him to leave; so there wasn't another  
tying by the wrist to the chair,  
or denial of food, not another  
forcing of food, the head held back,  
down the throat at the restaurant,  
the shame of vomited buttermilk  
down the sweater with its shame of new breasts.

That was the year  
I started to bleed,  
crossing over that border in the night,

and in Social Studies, we came at last  
to Auschwitz, in my ignorance  
I felt as if I recognized it  
like my father's face, the face of a guard  
turning away—or worse yet  
turning toward me.

The symmetrical piles of white bodies,  
the round, white breast-shapes of the heaps,  
the smell of the smoke, the dogs the wires the  
rope the hunger. This had happened to people,  
just a few years ago,  
in Germany, the guards were Protestants  
like my father and me, but in my dreams,  
every night, I was one of those  
about to be killed. It had happened to six million  
Jews, to Jesus's family  
I was not in—and not everyone  
had died, and there was a word for them  
I wanted, in my ignorance,  
to share some part of, the word *survivor*.