

## Deborah Saltman

### Handbags

My girlfriend is a mum  
She carries that heavy kinda handbag  
My mother never went anywhere without hers  
A clutch close to her hip  
Like little hands when we were little

You know  
You can see them in the streets  
The ones that replace the stylish bags  
Designed to carry laptops not  
Healthy snacks in small containers

Her kids are grown up now  
And she is a widow  
I opened her one day  
And saw them all  
The little plastics still there

Now she carries me in her handbag  
Along with that heavy heartache  
For I am the womanother  
The hidden naughty snack

I don't carry a handbag  
I'm a kinda backpack girl

## **It's a wrap**

It's Shabbat  
Shul for you  
The end of the beginning  
The beginning of the wandering  
Palestinian wrap day  
For me  
He makes the best falafels  
This side of Jaffa  
(Which was his home in a previous Exodus)  
Now this Londontown is both ours  
Jew and Palestinian in exile

Three flights of stairs  
By the bookshop with its devouring window  
Across the yummy mummy cul de sac  
Avoiding dogs and children of equal height

His wife is wrapped up tighter than my future wrap  
Only her plastic hands showing  
She is laying out the impending contents of my stomach

No aubergine  
Never could understand the distinction  
Eggplant Aubergine  
Courgette Zucchini  
Crepitations Rales  
Adrenaline Epinephrine  
Died Passed

Yes tomato/tomato  
A fruit that sighs differently for you and me  
A plaster of humus  
A piece of lipstick coloured turnip  
If I smile and make small talk I may get two  
Four falafels sizzling in the jungle of lettuce  
Tahini chilli  
And it's a wrap

Half for you  
If you were here

## On Penn's Landing

Ezekiel

(I thought he said he was David)  
Yesterday perching on the parapet  
About to fly to the pavement below  
Following the winter warmth like Icarus

*I passed by you and saw you downtrodden, and I said to you, "Live"*

Solomon

(I think she thought it was me)  
Last night visited to give a judgement  
On who gets the mother  
For Christmas and Pesach

*Oh give me the kisses of your mouth for your love is more delightful than wine*

In the minus four today  
(You say it is high twenties  
But then you are always my Pollyanna)  
Between kisses  
I showed you where it happened  
As we crossed the icy Landing  
To your bus stop

Back alone  
From David's perch  
I watch a tiny car struggle by  
With too large a  
Christmas tree strapped to its back  
And wonder whether I prevented a death  
Or just gave something away

## **Wissahickon Creek**

It's almost light in London and a thumb of morning presses heavily through the smog streaked window round my neck as you did in yesterdays but now in my doze we are in the mist of the forest by the Wissahickon, enjoying little fingers of sunlight between puddles of colourless brown. My Mimi hands reach for you, briefly brushing the marathoner's glutes. WE dug deep that day into the exposed crypts between the mud and the gravel only to surface around my vulnerability.

You called. I'm awake. And now my mind audiobooks through our past running chapters along the Asmara, Regent, Schuylkill, Delaware and finally up the stairs to the bedroom. I've named them Honey Locust, Black Locust and Water Locust. For they are like the places I have kissed your shoulder at night while you sleep. First the honey sweet pod of Olivia. Slowly healing and revealing your desire. Then the toxic pod of the Rat. Now to be mine always when the Water Locust bears its solitary fruit.

Anon, another morning apart in a winter sunlight flecked with bruised trees. Your nocturnal mistral propels you elsewhere again leaving me to run alone. Embracing our new volume, I trace and retrace each Pegasus to Heathrow through the smog streaked window. Until we meet again and our questions are answered.