

HORRIFIC CONFECTION

Juliet Cook



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by Juliet Cook

BlazeVOX [books]

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HORRIFIC CONFECTION

Morning Fragment

Marmalade glistens thickly on the blade,
waiting. Residue of nightmares oozes through
hairline cracks, unspoons me, smears my eye-whites.
The eggs are bloodshot. The bread is dark red and seedy.
Pastries burst from steel slots. Empty hot wire ribs glow
like electrified corset boning. Tiny carapaces crawl out
of my throat and pose as sweetly glazed crumb cake.

Fever

The life-sized Raggedy Ann doll
had blurry hands, no fingers.
White oven mitts had been grafted onto her wrists.
Her knotty red mouth
held me transfixed. Her dirty yarn
began to twitch until she spilled out
of the rocking chair, sagged to the floor,
then straightened up and leapt
toward my bed. Slow motion ticking
clogged my head and my voice
was a hiss, the rustle of a finger-stained dress.
The dark space from the bottom of my dust ruffle
to the floor grew wider until I couldn't see
what was creeping up. Muffled
by a heaving pillow, cotton
pressed into my ears and when I turned
toward the rocking chair again—
it was me with my mouth sewn shut, my eyes glued
to bleeding digits, stiff-moving
new fingers on a rag doll dangling over the edge
of her tussled bed.

Adornment

Knives stuck out of everything,
ready to be used.

Small bowls of pale icing.
Edible glitter.
Delicate candy stars.
Tiny silver balls
like the earrings my sisters wore.

At first, I tried to ignore
those knives; kept my eyes
on the tines as they imprinted
yielding dough.

Mine was another abstract series
some might label botched results.
I might call small mutants. A different kind
of before & after. Squirmy tentacles somewhere
in the midst of dry ingredients.
A new definition of zest.

When I finally seized the knife,
I didn't spread my pale icing neatly.
My grip was so jerky and quirky
and I was just warming up.
Exorcising my wrists;
twitching bitter bits
of lemon rind. Sour sparks
twinkling under the tongue.

The oven light was on; kept my eyes
keened upon the silver tray.
I watched sweet spheres flatten
into crisp circles. In the glass pane,
I saw my face out of focus,
hanging sallow as an overshadowed moon;
a crude juxtaposition to the smooth
golden cookies lined up like simulacrums of
simultaneous, semi-identical transformation.

Sour sparks became flames thrashing out of my mouth.
Nipples hardened into spiked lemon drops.
Lemon-glazed clavicles burst from my skin.

Seemly

Enter the room with a shiny lap dog
trotting behind well-lotioned heels.
With a ruffled floral print nightgown.
We serve freshly-squeezed juice and fluffy pancakes.
No dried-up fruit. No poppy seeds stuck between teeth.
We hope you perused the list of appropriate topics.
We serve freshly-squeezed juice and floral print
pancakes to shiny lap dogs. Enter the room fluffy.
Perfectly poised in the middle,
a round pat of butter appears
as if from a dollhouse-sized scoop.
We hope you perused the well-lotioned fruit.
We hope you exude politesse
when you enter the room, trotting behind
a shiny scoop, smelling sweet, serving a round
of appropriate topics. Please appropriately pat
fresh, ruffled lap dogs. Please don't leave
a crumb, a stain, a snippet of unapproved
fluffy. No stray dogs. No dried-up heels.
We hope you exude shiny poise, perfect teeth.
We hope you squeezed juicy poppies,
served fresh from a dollhouse-sized gown.
Smelling sweet from appropriate topics,
we serve floral print stuck between teeth.
We serve please no please no please no
butter-stained snippet of unapproved print.
Poppy seeds exude politesse when you appear
in the middle of a fluffy pancake.

when flesh equaled rotten peach

The meat bones inside, the scratched linoleum, the surgical implements lined up neatly on silver trays. Those ambulance lights when you spilled bright orange nail polish into your wide open eyes. You were dangled like a stained rubber doll over the sinkhole. The pulp inside your slits. You were ankle-gripped by powdered latex gloves.

A beautiful refrigerated woman in white uniform taught you beautiful equals mean; sickly equals unclean. Beautiful equals tell you what to do. Order you. You'll be painting this plaster of Paris sunflower. You'll be using this laminated color chart. You'll be eating out this Styrofoam bowl. Macaroni held together with glue.

Wipe the bacterium-breeding fingers. Sanitize equals sanity. Wipe the messy smile off your gauze strip seepage reek. See her dead serious face as she squeezed the bulb of a nasal aspirator and ordered you to tilt back your head. An orderly taught you catheter, enema, ostomy.

Medical rubber bands, medicinal wet wipes, underside of lined up seamy wrist. You'll be dragging this IV cart beside you; a sick girl's pet. If you resist, the needle might pull out leaking your trail of bloody medicine. Tongue depressor, specimen cup, the shunt, the runt of the litter. 'Your private area', a hairless little girl whispers in your ear. 'For some operations, they have to shave it'.

What if you don't have hair? Where would they put the IV if you had two fake arms? What if you had an uncorrectable curvature pustule-caked hunchback? Would you rather have prosthetics or hooks connected to stumps? Beautiful equals cold metal stirrups, sharp implements, rubber hose, nozzles, pinch clamp.

Quivering Jell-o squares, cottage cheese, a Fun Pad with only three sickly colors of crayons—yellow orange, yellow green, waxy sky blue under fingernails. Even if you clawed and hacked through the zippered-shut croup tent, you'd still have this plague of failing fluorescents bearing down on bald domes, crusty stitches, shameful glints, the dirty little secret of your bed pan.

Heart Urchin

My mother flung living sand dollars
into a bucket filled with bleach
so we could take sterilized pieces of landscape
home with us. I thought vacation meant escape,
but this wildlife was seized and made to meet her
expectations. Brittle doves like broken teeth.
Cilia burned dry. The reek of dying.

My hair dead handfuls on display.
I didn't want to be the same color as her.
I didn't want to be the same molded shape.
I separated myself, snorted chemicals, made my own
poison. Coked out of my mind and ready to be mounted.
She poked fun at my outfits, labeled my pierced nose
perverse. But I remember when she pierced my ears;
pricked fake cherries into my holes.

I remember the baby shark jaws
pried out of their skulls and ready to be mounted.
I remember the delicate seahorses frozen into place
with shellac. Glossy, bulging eyes. Flattened
representations of life converted into tchotchkes.
Shelves stocked with polished and priced remains.
Painted acrylic claws clutching shopping baskets.
Muzak. Mutilation. Mucilage. Cheap coconut deodorizer.

I remember a time when I kept my shells inside
a Strawberry Shortcake lunchbox;
when I ate cupcakes with marshmallow frosting
so sticky it could pull out my teeth
even if I had rows and rows of them.

Even if I was nobody's prey, I was my mother's object
of scorn. She said just pluck the beastie away
if I wanted a nice specimen. But the beastie was a body
inside a seashell. She used tongs to rip the growth
from its home. Another display-worthy carapace.
The inside of my nose stung.

It was the Shark Tooth Capital of the World.
With a little persistence, we could have dug up
plenty of fossilized teeth on the beach.
But she was already spouting the bleach.
Yellow jug, plastic bucket, a different kind of burning.
They didn't have visible mouths, but I heard them
turning white. For years, I dyed my hair black;
sometimes burned the scalp. Pretended to be tough
and uncaring and maybe I am like my mother.

She said just pluck the beastie away.
She said this is how everyone does it.
She said just don't think about it that way.

But sometimes I think of my heart as a sea urchin.

She Warns Me

The carpet is dusty rose, shadowed corners.
Thorns twist up pink walls.
My side of the bed. A black line. My little sister's side.
Her head overripe with nightmares like rotten pumpkin guts;
slime-sheathed fingers, off-color
and lurking beneath the cream
dust ruffle. Paralyzed to sodden sheets
by conjured up milk snake teeth, she soils heart-patterned panties;
can't uncoil her mummified thighs.

Mother rubs my fingers, curling
towards uneasy sleep. Then she starts spinning
her cautionary yarn. Madder-blue and sticky, she warns me
not to talk as the strands batten purplish and hot.
Saturated gauze. Viscous clots. Thorns on the bedspread
flicking open like knivey licks. Prickly hives.
I can't hide. She kneads my wrist;
shifts my pulse into transfixed rhythm.

Dark red words prick out her throat.
Gloss-slicked nails drill in as her voice slithers up
spiked creeping vines. A black line blurs
into bristling trellis. Throbbing. Little sister ensanguined,
straining twisted limbs. Furry bodies wriggle in sockets. Honey
bees burst out her eyes. Leave behind
tiny stingers pumping venom into trespassed flesh.

Mother's burgeoning tongue. Cyanosis-blue and serrated
abduction. I can't hide. I surrender to the toxic spill,
the swarm. Excruciating swell and thrall.
Words sprawl disembodied. A husky hum
from the filthy darkness underneath a rusty engine.
Tendons slashed. Ripped open dress. Knivey licks
and public restroom reek of chloroform.

From the filthy darkness underneath a dusty rose bed,
Mother hisses. Lurking beneath the cream,
a sinister stranger caresses an industrial-size syringe.
Beady eyes swoop towards shrouded sister.
As soon as he gets out of that hole, he'll load it
with acid from a live car battery. He'll slam it
deep into her carotid and watch her brain fry;
green slime frothing out mouth and ears.

Lollipops

The heads of Farrah Fawcett and Cher
grin beatifically in your garage. With smeared mouths
and unruly tresses, they look like beauty school models
for hairstylists or makeup artists to practice on.
You used the rubber canvas of their rapt faces
to paint—grape eyelids, root beer lips, rouged cheeks

like huge pink lollipops. You adored that acquiescent head
until her makeup was gone. Then you got bored and left her
hanging from her hair above the tackle box
with its fishing lures—artificial feathers, fake worms, hooks.
And the boom box plays so many songs about blow pops.
And the boom box plays so many songs about blow jobs.

You used to save the wrappers from decapitated Dum Dum suckers.
You used to save the eyes from hollow white chocolate bunnies—
plastic baggie zipped around flat discs of sugar with painted-on pupils.
You used to freeze frame horror movie cleavage. Oh heaving necklace
of blood. Oh jagged hacksaw. Oh brilliant brainchild.
You used to play with headless Barbie dolls. Then you realized

gaping she's lost her potential to give or resist.
You became disillusioned with that cold neck hole.
Candy ring, scented nail polish, Lip Smacker, edible panties,
cherry Kissing Potion dripping off quivering lips.
Charm Pops and girl-shaped piñatas—
the special treat won't come out until you bite it or beat it

unless you're graced with the patience to lick & lick & lick...
but they taunt you. Imagine you're purchasing another lollipop
and the clueless cashier flashes you
her fruit-flavored lips/ her soda pop-flavored lips/
her bubble gum-flavored lips/ (her horror movie cleavage).
You know how a kiss would taste better than hard candy,

so you cut off her head.

Dollophile

With a rubbery fuse-fingered hand,
she strokes him. He hears the music box
song of loose pins in a thimble-sized gullet.
A tiny tight sheath twirling, twirling.

He wants a doll who swallows her own
loose teeth; her voided mouth
a self-lubricating pink, perfect
for spooning red hot applesauce.

He wants a doll with bent headgear,
ruined headdress. With shiny hair extensions
that cut themselves. With missing fingers,
hook arm, deflated falsies, orthopedic shoes.

He wants to smooth pancake makeup
onto already poreless "flesh".
He wants her preprogrammed "voicebox"
to "acquiesce", "deliquesce", "luminesce",
and release a steaming shitload

of dirty words. He wants made-to-order, interchangeable
crotch panels, blinking lights, a bottomless spit valve.
He wants a barely legal doll who can fit a small octopus
inside like some kind of mutant nesting doll rape.

He wants it just a little bit smaller
than life-size. What is "life-size" anyway?
One man's "life-size" is unresponsive
to another man's finely-tuned anatomy

of fixation, fetishization, forced breathing
cessation. He wants her with royal jelly
oozing out her panties, a buzz
of queen bees instead of nipples,

pulsing stingers beneath the pasties, pump
of breast-venom until his tongue goes numb,
until he spits in her face, until he bites it off.
He wants her throat to be a pastry bag,

with a decorative tip with an almost invisible slit.
Like red jam, he wants her pleasure to spread
from crevice to crevasse to sticky morass to
one man's "life-like" annihilated "tits & ass".

The Male Gaze

The chandelier won't stop glittering,
drawing my eyes to the way
hooks dangle from the archway.

Your sugar hurts my teeth,
gets inside my eyes, scratches the lenses.
Your sugar hurts my ears.

Sometimes sounds like:
-soft thump, rabbit ears in a wet cave
-bristling hypnosis, the sway of sea cucumbers

suddenly turns hot pink, throbs
on & off like sputtering neon a tubular passageway
infested with worms rotten teeth.

Your sugar is molded into a won't stop glittering
piñata I can't stop biting into in my (or is it your?) dreams.
What pours out isn't candy isn't candy at all.

Looks like you hooked another one. Thought she was so deep,
but her eyes are all fucked up
or is she eyeless? Or was she hurt in the sugary sea?

What pours out is wormy and rotten
(or is it your sweet?) teeth. Penises dangle
from the archway. Rabbits drown in caves.

Relativity

He pushes me too high to jump;
plays tricks with my equilibrium.
A sleight of hands behind the back
conjures me into a rubbery flux.
Rusty chains stain my skin with imprints
the hue of metallic plums. Dark, shiny bruises
that hint of past plummet; ominous impacts
I desired to leave. A mysterious trail
--damaged fruit and peculiar loot.

I wanted to be some kind of freaky meteorite
shooting shards of sharpened debris. Like gleaming spikes
and bolts I unearthed beside the railroad tracks;
added to my beveled candy dish. A shrine
to inedibility, inaccessibility, inscrutability. Instead,

I just get smaller as my velocity increases. I'm the incorrect
kind of anomaly. Misfit. Bad seed. My wrists could be slit
with a child-sized scissor blade and I would quickly ebb
into the faintest pulse, the tiniest glimmer,
dead star, elapsed arc, insignificant
handful of ellipses...

A relapse of unease re:
inanimate objects can be sinister. Sometimes,
I hear them hissing. With cold metal logic,
he explained to me his reality
in which the tire swing didn't even know
my head was entwined with its coarse rope.

It just kept spinning; reeling out reams
of my long, soft hair like it was a wig.
I was an oblivious princess, a dense doll,
an inanimate object in thrall of burning black rubber
and then I was bald. They could see the seam
atop my skull. Crack me open like a plastic egg

and extract the dark scarves. Another flimsy trick
any playground magician could master. Hacked
hair may grow back. Star anise may distract from the reeking
wreaked havoc of melted rubber and rotten fruit
trajectories, but my split ends are hissing again;
hinting at severed connections. Tattered tapestry, warped grip,
intertwined links he could hoodwink into a choke chain.

Purple

Slumped on a stack of black
cardigans that have slipped from your
sinking shoulders, you don't have time to sip.

You gulp. You semi-circle
a kiss-shape on the rim.
You stain white sheets
with florid curlicues, excessive flourishes, eccentric queries
about the color of your blood.

You want to flow purple.
You want to drown in dark-mouthed flowers' ruinous juices.
You want me to pour faster.

I collect your fragile teacups;
scan the handles for the whorls
of your fingertips. Your tenuous grip. Your
jutting blades. You don't have time to sip.

Steaming syllables float from your sultry throat,
but you want to drown. You want me to
pour faster. You want me. You don't
have time. How dare you tempt me

with your dark lips, your wilted violets.
How dare you taunt me with your bloody wrists;
bruise me with your self-consumptive fingertips.

Purple resonates until it deteriorates
into a smear of melodramatic lipstick.

Vicissitude

1.

Like you warned you would, you left.
After your opaque fake fur words dyed
my hair gothic dark. Blue-black postiche
like a leech reflected in a spoon.
Stylized swoon & sucking down

maraschino cherries from the vessel.
Lick red syrup from lips. Act as if
I'm not contrived as I puncture
an inflamed globule, sweetly suspended
by glazed stem. Dazed gaze down--
a pin-prick-shaped stain of pink sugar water
sticks to my shift. Such a dilettante tincture.

We lie beneath a spangle-shiny, sickle-tooth moon.
Your fingernails scar my back.
Your hissed whispers arch me.
Before my tongue bleeds, your mouth slithers down
my neck. Succulent stem. Kinky dilation
of eyes. A scene so glossily nebulous

until you end it, I transcend it, you pretend
it never happened. We morph.

2.

You could be affixed to a pedestal
in a museum of defiled relics, waxy
like artificial flowers. Rubber Calla Lily
purple as the swollen throat of an exotic monster.

I could claim I have never been the same,
since you. Say my hair grew translucent roots,
so frail. Say I skulked so pale and draggy
in bedraggled housecoat. A series of narrowed eyes,
errant sighs, inverted arches. Craggy hunchback of ill repute .

The truth is you recalibrate
from fake vampire to corporate drone.
An updated version of the walking corpse in which
seduction is overthrown by the methodical whirring blades
of paper shredders and facsimile machines.
A secret photocopy from your past life is folded
into the silk lining of your sharper image suit.

The truth is I am mutable before & after you.
Luminous with aspirations to woo my own
numen. A black cherry beats like a heart
through the tiny bone-cage nestled in an owl pellet.
The pulse of my song so bittersweet, creepy, toothsome...

Written in a Black Bag

My sharpened implements don't hurt you.
You act like I'm tinkering with plasticene instruments
from a child's doctor kit. Like I'm siphoning hours
into a stage prop intravenous drip. Extracting
pilfered vials from my seedy black bag,
I calligraph cryptic labels. You presume
I'm fabricating my malaise and its placebo panaceas.
Doesn't this glass vessel of succulent leeches look real?
Just because they're not medicinal
doesn't mean I won't prescribe them. I'll slip you one
right now if you try to kiss me. It's under my tongue.

I'm not a nurse; not even the made-up kind in your peepshow
mind of sheer thigh-highs, scarlet XXX across voluptuous chest.
I'm curvy in other ways. I can gauge a subject's temperature
with or without colored alcohol. With or without red dye
and corn syrup potions. Black cherry powder sprinkled
upon wan wrists as sordid décor before I shake it—
my mercury thermometer will shatter in your mouth.

How bittersweetly I remember the molded contents
of that child's doctor kit. Yes, the doll-sized forceps
and seamy stethoscope were constructed from plastic, but
I could still hear a heartbeat through the black foam.
You would have held it like a microphone.
I hovered it over my muffin tin;
listened to the germination of each slot's peculiar concoction.

Your Pain Sculpture

The bone shards and clumps of hair are wrapped
in bright foil like the relics of saints. Tiny remnants
of bodies encapsulated in shiny red & gold
paper scraps, after being crushed by your mortar & pestle.
After being crushed and crushed and crushed and
still the sharp parts. Spiky wings crossed with knives.
Woeful female eyes blink behind wire mesh.

The whole torturous structure hulks and quivers
inside your chest like an extra ribcage. A mutant
conglomerate of piercing fragments & crooked screws. Riffraff
dangles darkly like slimy spider silk; like clotted black confetti.
Small hooks wink perilously close to the tired pink party balloons.
Wet muzzles with whiskers so rough, so punishing. Suffocating
selkie kisses. They are whispering. They are trying to swim.
Pleading female eyes seep and brim and cry

within your throat. You're choked up.
The defiled mermaids want out, but how
to disentangle their sodden hair from around your heart
while the tragic eyes stare and dart. Lost marbles. Designs trapped inside.
Verdigris rings and their missing fingers. Extracting these things
would require some kind of surgery sans anesthesia.
Exposure of vulnerable cavities. Gaping gasp at the jagged
dripping mass of your pain sculpture. You built it yourself
out of discarded jewelry and rejected words. Out of repression
& accumulation. The pigment and pills of past loves. The bones

of the sculpture have fused with your own;
burrowed spongy homes into your marrow.
The parasitic kelpies want out, but how
to break them free without bleeding you dry.
Like an unborn Siamese twin retrofitted with siphons and nozzles,
it sips from you and spits out nodules. It grows the fur and teeth
of abandoned pets. Your frankensteined freakshow of stray pieces.
Is there a redress for this burden you've assembled yourself?
Is there some kind of autopsy twisted enough to deliver
all this throbbing wreckage you have swallowed?

Grotesque Intimacy

My fake eyelashes are centipede legs.
Your fake moustache is a wooly slug.

Feel them flutter, feel them slither, feel them writhe
to get away from such intimate grotesqueries.
As for me, I will dance with it. I will closely embrace
the taste of carrion or at least make believe;
costume myself as the reaper's quaggy consort.
Fling me like chaff, brittle bracts, black burrs.
I'm flexuous enough to purr and pretend I revel in it.

Glammed-up, I'm scarecrow-esque.
The crows eat off my tapered fingers
and I cradle the stubs. Wrap them up
in white gauze. Bloody baptismal dress. Wormy bassinet.
A small handful of fresh mummies.

Glammed-up, you're hustler-esque.
A smooth skullcap hides the burls that protrude from
your misshapen head. Suspicious spongy mass.
Coiled colony of parasites. Question mark shaped
dread and razor sharp suckers.

Leeches can feel our vibrations
and sometimes enter through an orifice
and then become engorged
and then become immune to extraction
until they've had their fill of our strange fluids.

In the crow beaks, the violet pastilles of my fingertips.
In the parasite tails, the slime trail from your bleeding
crepe paper sash. We're being drained, smeared,
dragged into the lush desire for even darker disguises.

Beady-eyed sweetie. Zombie lips.
Feel the baby earwigs tickle your spine.
They know how you want to be a book
about decay, disgust, the juxtaposition
of brutal bite-marks and white sheets.
Dirty toe cleavage and polished nails.
I know what you need.

I will send you a tiny envelope
of toenail clippings, spit-stained
tatter of black gown where a black dog slobbered
before he bit and he must have been rabid
for all the frothing at the mouth I've done lately.

I will spoil you, lavish you
with parcels of detritus, with the crude rejectamenta
from between my teeth. Infinitesimal oddments,
fossilized squirrel fur, creamy nougat hardened
into dangerous pellets, pellicle scraped from creepy tongue.

I will show you my wrists. Little slits, little slits
for you to fish, for you to kiss, for you to fill
with your own venom and ephemera.

The Voice of the Snow

Dull black velvet slabs unrolled,
the stiff color of dead crows;
a straight razor. Into this dark expanse,
I have tried to slice out wings.
My design is less wing-like than spiked.
My arms will not float into snow angels.
I am weighted down and dragged
into heavy rhythms. Grim ticks
like a grandfather clock pendulum.
I hear the snow against glass, ticking
the minutes until it strikes.

The voice of the snow is a messy lace-maker.
It sews shifts with goopy seams, uneven fretting.
Strange stalactites dangle
like butchered birds. Songs blurred
until a sudden surge of dripping feathers.
A dirge of ripping doilies as mutant beaks peck;
tear ornate edges to shreds. An irregular flurry
of sodden white confetti. A loopy clanging in my head.
Then the snow globe residue sinks to the bottom again.

The voice of the snow is a glazed unveiling
of rotten limbs. Snowball the shape of a bad apple.
White cake gone stale, molding, growing spores.
The color at the core of me
I've begun to abhor as a wormy gray-green
like used gauze bandages. Rancid yet repackaged
in a waxy wrapper. The gelid mouth bites through
white turrets and spangles them with crystalline red.
Choke or hypnotize the arrhythmic swaying head
of the diamondback dread. Heavy pendulum.

Used gauze wrapped around the bad apple
ticking betwixt my lips. The impy kiss;
the sudden drifts of chilblained devilkins.
Maggots in snow angel positions, hissing
gimpy gimpy gimpy. Pimping powdered sugar
upon tainted silver trays. Gingerbread babies scuttle away
like cockroaches shedding burnt skins. Fruit rinds
flinch as they are rimed with hoarfrost trim.
I am weighted down and dragged outside.
Hog-tied gingerbread bride to a morgue-cold slab.

My eyes will freeze into black currants
as I stare out from my gyring dome.
My small rondure of scant residue;
snow ticking against the glass. Waiting
for the enclosure to crack. Waiting
for my crow voice to thaw and seep its rusty glissade
onto the silver platter of snow angels with blades
for wings. Unglciate this thing. Unfreeze the eyelash lace.
Expose the inclement face of this dark expanse.

Horrific Confection

Lemon pound cake is so heavy.
She is a petrified slab. A thinly-iced temptation
toward consumption. Hacking up albuminous clots until
knotty strands entangle the glottis. A mangled lullaby—
the skein of baby blue yarn unspools from under her tongue.
Dreamy depressor abrasive with granules.
Feverish gleam of needles unblurs
into sticky tines, hollow basins. Slow motion stirring.
Gelatinous egg whites stiffen. Gold-tipped lacy peaks
that always collapse beneath her hands. Swathes of mucus always ooze
from slugs nestled inside her pastel cupcake papers.

Red Velvet cake is so messy.
Will she ever be done testing the pale underside
of her wrist? Crimson wisps strain to escape
as she struggles to grip slippery gobs of buttercream, silver flecks,
raw eggs' exposed yolks tinged red. She cannot
whisk it away. The chilling metallic implements.
The stained plastic measuring spoons hanging limply
from sodden string. A rusty sieve damp with congealed rubies
and tiny marmoreal shards. A steely cold mixing bowl distorts
her powdered face. She is a wan and waning moon,
marooned. She wields a misshapen pastry tube;
squeezes out pasty roses onto her sunken cheeks.
A shiny knife winks at her. It wants her—
a frosted slice. Gaping and glazed with coagulum.

Self Portrait as Gingerbread Girl

How I long for a dress that flaps open;
don't care if the clasps are mismatched.
If only I could escape this edible mess
of shams. Flimflam frosting that offers an illusion
of frilly frock. Who wouldn't want to nibble my hem off,

eventually behead me. Obliterate my squiggle
mouth with its creepy insinuation that I shall transform
black currants into electric currents. In spite of
my seemingly permanent bedragglements.
In spite of my peculiar unbuttonability.

If it was up to him I'd be preserved this way,
under plastic. Me in my speechless phase. A still life
of each stage of the strip tease leading up to his grand finale—
gleeful slice to the neck. No blood, but disconnection; but
I didn't ask to be cut in the shape of a girl.

How I long to be abstract; imbued
with enough pepper to render me
ruined as a ginger snap; unable to be construed.
Oh the spicy misdeeds I'd devise
and implement if only these buttons were real.

Her Voice Shoots Out of a Rusty Espresso Machine

She is pressurized and bitter, but in close proximity
to assembly-line macaroons who have had their powdered sugar
artfully applied. My café noir doppelganger. Glitter-eyed
ghost of a glass case. She haunts sweet puff pastries.
Flaunts scissor blades unattached from the pink
plastic handles and buried up to the hilt in muffins,
drizzled with bloody trim. Her voice shoots out
of a rusty espresso machine. Her laugh is the not-quite-creamy
sound of reddish-brown froth floating atop a dark heart.
She injects spider silk into skim milk. Infests cherry tartlets
with fleas. Denatures my demitasse into an errant vehicle.
It creeps across the tabletop. Rattles at the edge. Waits to spin its web.
When it casts its 8-legged shadows, steamy ball bearings grow inside
flaky scones. Like steely spider eggs. Like colossal pearls.
Like a bullet in the pit of my throat, then a mouthful of hot crema.

Footage

1.

Still life with split skin, ruby streaks,
jeweled nail bed in sharp relief.

Rewinding in slow motion.
Freezing her molten toes.
That slick pose.

That florid inkling
to expose her
secret white gauze
fastened beneath pink satin
pointe shoes. Sodden bondage
of serpentine feet.

2.

Unwinding the bandage.
Revealing the seamy striations.
Denuded flesh the hue of white chocolate mottled
with raspberry jam. Suppurating
internodes like tiny mummies on display
after a sticky exhumed burial.

Polishing the stark artifacts.
Another gilded layer. Another scarlet stain contained.
Still life with shiny glaze, artificed baubles;
red-spattered rags soon to be trashed.

3.

Her audience is treated
to a carefully prepared spectacle,
lacquered and lavishly trussed.
I have attended the gruesome peepshow,
post-performance. The unreeling of ravaged appendages
that seep like an exotic disease, a forbidden dessert.
I fancy myself a special kind of voyeur.
I know where she sleeps
with imposter extremities.

I have stroked that nail bed, clasping
swollen arches. Fingertips flitting on spasming pulse,
distended tendons. Grasping her ruse as she contracts
out of my grip. Sordid grappling
of strained underpinnings. Flimsy fabric
cast away. Sensationalistic penetralia
of shifty specimen. Quivering. Wavering.

Torn between
so many contorting desires.
To soothe her, sedate her, preserve her
toes like curios. Maroon them.
Consume them. Deconsecrate her
fakery with a betrayal. With a taste
of metallic teeth.

4.

The alluring point of her toes.
The lurid gleam of my blade.
Crusty binding ripped away.
The crackle-glazed facade
and its sickly sweet cloying reek,
luring me closer to the putridity underneath.
I want to dance on her feet.

Glass Cake Plate

My mother beats borgs trying to fit in at the robot factory.
Magenta vegetable blood trickles down metal panes.
My mother beats me in the egg case gulag.
She has to teach me a lesson about
how a part of us is sasquatch—
hairy, scary, unintelligible.
Even though I try to hide it from her. Like juggling raw eggs,

my mother beats me into the white cake batter.
My hideous clot of yellow yolk
sneaks its way in. I'm ruined again.
She scrapes the cracked shells down the sinkhole.

Those fake moustaches don't help the robots
look any more human-like. Their rusty metal fingers stir
the red velvet, the wrong cake mix.
Even though those Styrofoam cartons peep, 'Mama, mama, mama',
she extracts the double yolks before they can grow
into two-faced conjoined twins. Another unacceptable brood
to hard boil, to drown in beet juice, to separate
from the glass cake plate's crystalline face.

Egg Whites

You think you've got it all stitched together
until the red threads unravel in your wrists.
You tear out another tiny black x;
another crewel stitch gets snipped
by shiny little sewing scissors, but
your pincushion can't handle any more pricks.
It's getting lumpy.

You whisk the egg whites so vigorously,
but won't let the meringue melt on your tongue.
You serve the pie; extra-carefully spread
a celery stick with peanut butter for yourself
while zooming in on the word svelte svelte svelte
while the latticework crumbles between their teeth
while they moan around a mouthful of your filling...

svelte your floppy wrists svelte your sloppy wrists
did you let a svelte did you let a little yellow creep
into the svelte white did you let it infiltrate the svelte
golden brown you slut? You bite down
and it snaps like hamster bones, crudités, foie gras,
sanitized baby shit and your wrists are flailing around in it
as if you're someone's dumpy marionette. Someone's misshapen stray

pins & needles puncture all the yolks you've been preserving
in protective sacs and there's so much unruly blood,
you tell yourself it's all just Fancy Ketchup, but
your wrists are catching on the serrated edges
of the small plastic packets and you can't contain it.
You can't tell yourself where the sugared red spill ends
and you begin to stitch to stir to bake the crust.

The Party Cheese Ball Mocks You

Glinting with tiny razor blades instead of almond slivers.

Squinting with burnt lima bean eyes from dust bunny heads.
Another cracked baking dish, another mushy brown apple
splat against the wall. Unpainted Still Life of Stagnant Mop
and Bent Broom Bristles, you think as you scrape your crummy casserole
down the garbage disposal. He's snoring, probably dreaming of someone
more gourmet and less frumpy. You wonder when

you turned into one of those interchangeable matrons
in a cleaning product commercial. Shapeless hair, dowdy underwear,
a plugged-in plastic air freshener discharging its automated spurts
of generic perfume. Maybe your scent is Stale Circus Peanuts
on a Bed of Wilted Bok Choy. Or Sweet & Sour
Apple Dumpling Gone Rotten, Gone Wormy.

The only reason you're not putrefying on a bland backdrop
of beige linoleum is because this batch of maggots was cooked to death
like a tired mound of pasty spaghetti with no sauce. Pallid leftovers.
From the top shelf, the party cheese ball mocks you. Perfectly-shaped
and about the size of a silicone implant, you think. Bedecked with those
tiny razor blades. It would spread so sweetly...

You want to melt it down, pour it on top the glutinous noodles.
You want to force feed it into the trash compactor, but that metallic clamor
might wake him and he doesn't see you that way. As a mutineer.
As a woman who could star in a commercial for tight jeans. He doesn't see
your eyes sting as you sweep away debris like soggy Lucky Charms
and dull elbow macaroni. When it is lodged deep in your throat,

he has no idea just how sharp a party cheese ball can be.

(a small sponge cake with a synthetic cream filling)

Rolling around in the champagne tower broken glass,
all sticky and bloody rifts and princess slipper like
splinters. That ladyfinger tray crashed down, too.
The creamy grainy. My earlobes wrongfully pierced;
canals discharging their stiffened sugar mixture.

I can't mutiny, I have no sailor uniform.
What happened is that waitress dress slithered off her, onto me
& it had hooks. It fit like a second skin, a shame
to say. It hugged me in inappropriate ways.
I've always had this weakness
for perverted pastry chefs.
I've always had this cleft
begging for a dressed-up twinkie.

Those esters of sulfurous acid seeped into my head.
When I tried to serve the suckling pig, it turned out
more like a skinned kitten with its bloody mouth
all stretched around the apple gag. Eyes milky slits.
Part of me expected horror. Part of me.

Abscess

This charm school is a crumb cake
held together with rubber cement
and bitchy fragments of soap.

Black stitches fasten her rotten
eyeteeth in place. Chocolate lava
seeps in between. Arm in a sling
of the decorative bent. Drooping.

What used to be foxy modus operandi
is now another dirty wolf girl
with a wolfhound for a father.
Should she hunt herself to gain his approval?

Instead she pops out bon bons,
watches the tube, watches the blood crust
after the gum graft procedure. Frankengums.
But she doesn't want her fangs back.

She doesn't want to know what she does want.
She only wants to know why her bon bons won't behave.
No matter how dutifully she plucks them,
they try to grow hairy paws and run away.

With no real consistency, they harden and soften
from candied cherry to diseased cow udder;
milk ducts dried up or uncontrollably leaky.
They shift to the bottom of the bowl like melting witches.

This couch is an empty black dress
stinking of wet dog and coarse sugar.
The rotgut. The episodic whatnots.

Hissy

Little baby straitjacket, doll finger jelly
in the laces. The cold mush, a radiator hiss
in her phalanges. She is convinced a pea green
snake lives inside. Forked tongue flicks through
paint-flecked grating. Dripping poison, splotching
stocking feet. Holy, holy even her earlobes.
Even her threadbare delicates. Fleshy lures,
her tonsils sway. Discolored taffeta rips itself
off cast iron rods, insinuates itself
between gritty milk teeth and bites.

Sucky

She introduces the leech into her vagina
during a skit about old-timey cures
for unspecified 'female troubles'.

Then she has to buy a shiny new speculum & forceps set.

She makes slides out of the different blood-tinged stages
of a corset-induced slime trail; gives them names like
'Ecstatic Nosebleed', 'Cloak Room Mishap', 'Succulent
Under Plastic'. A spattered wrap. A tattered shrug.

An expanding sucker poking its head out her hole.

Like some exotic varietal of toy soldier,
a candy-dipped Nazi marches out of her pussy.

She wears a blood-caked apron during this scene.

Clings to a bouquet of 'Plastinated Foxglove'.

Sticky

Plump her up on sticky buns. Sticky bun her middle finger.
Sticky bun her middle name. Sticky bun her whole
name doused in whole milk from straining udders,
from steamy larders. Name a morbidly obese font. Warm butter
will slather out the teats. The dimples in fat thighs
will wink and weep and rub hotly against each other, chafing
cinnamon stains, spreading themselves like overheated cream
cheese and raw honey. Snouts licking the ooze out of holes,
clotted whiskers ingrown. Drown the witch in the butter urn.
Churn her generous curves in the honey stomach. The buzz.
The bee fur stuck in white lard frosting. Spitting raisins
a soft hailstorm that litters the pantry with edible bug husks.

Costume Party Afterbirth

You have cursed yourself, you have cursived yourself until you can't even read your own scratch. Your blowfish in the butter dish is fast becoming cliché. Going the way of the pink larvae

in your compact. Just because their pulsing is mirrored in cracked glass does not make it a disco ball or a star. Just because you indirectly reflect this pulsing in fragments

does not make you a pulsar. You're more like a pin-striped service provider, holding down the tongue depressor gag. You experiment with cup sizes, but have nothing real

to fill them. Sample 1. Fake Secretary Sample 2. Fake Pig Suspended in Silicon Sample 3. Besmirched Cryptozoology. You have anthropomorphized yourself, you have felt yourself up

for suspicious lumps. You have frisked your hollow panda bear head until at least one piece of candy fell out your eye socket. Your gaping piebald maw.

You have unwrapped yourself, stretched yourself out, tested the limits of taffy. How many sticky shapes can you make before you snap, your little sugar strings retract?

Nori, Shiny Side Down

I can't consume myself today.
I'm so tainted. Day old
sashimi on a bed
of gray rice. Rice alcohol slugging
through mercurial veins
and I don't feel like it. I don't feel
like the artfully assembled
spicy tuna roll w/ avocado nestled,
a perfect creamy puzzle piece.
I've come un-cylindrical. Small seeds scattershot across...

Flat sheets of nori. Reams & reams &
reams of unwritten surfaces, words,
exotic sauces to be stirred
and I waste myself. I serve myself
as palatable display. Bright as a candy-stripe
shrimp to be de-veined, to be peeled & eaten, to be skewered
in a row with the little-mouthed others and the matching carapace.
Cherry tomato—me—pearl onion—me
with a saturating stab through the core;
with a gaping, drooling maw where my mouth should be.

Lips a sluice box, pinned up at the corners.
Pearl sac ripped open; blisters burst under the tongue.
A blastospheric spill of fermented wine.
Nacre slivered, spread, rolled into
spiked roe. Eschew the garnish; strew with shrapnel.
Wet-knifed cucumber strips striped
across shut eyes. Eat off the lids.
The sockets brim w/ baroque pearls nestled
in pickled pink ginger petals. From the fishy depths,
rhizomes thrust up to impale unsuspecting voyeurs.

From the raw and juicy depths, a tuberosity projects
to explode the spider roll, the dynamite roll;
to garishly slick the stiff seaweed.

Maybe My Muse Is a Devilfish

In a choppily modulated reel,
she pries open the waterlogged jewelry box.
She lifts out the skull, gleaming with garnet
slime. Strokes the trepanned follicles;
inserts the beehive springs. Coiled metal hair stings.

Another uneasy expanse I can't run my fingers through.

She dolls it up, dollies it into
my dreams. She releases a ravening circus
of fleas. They traverse me. Invade.
Prosthetic limbs are whittled away
and tentacles slither wetly out of sleeves.

Another unsettling mutation without reprieve.

She prowls the perimeter of my bed, gloms my head
as if I am an overripe fruiting body and she wants
to pluck off the cap. Spill black octopus ink;
carve electric meat. I hear her heaving,
breathing through spore-glittered gills. Spawning.

Another rapacious cephalopod embraces me.

Lusty little suckers all over me. They discharge
a fervent electroshock therapy. She hovers
hydra-like. Her prehensile grappling fine-tunes
into a hooked hustle. She is sniggling. She suddenly seizes
an eel and chops it into modular pieces as I reel.

Another jolt. Another chop. Another disjointed tentacle flops
out of my mouth and I struggle to put it in its place.

Octopus Doll

little octopus doll
pinkish brown carnivorous squiggle
tooth ribbon

sometimes I hold you in my mouth
tiny suction cups stick to my throat
succulent confetti

sometimes I keep you in my makeup bag
with dark lipsticks and suspicious cold creams
shiny tubes flecked with blue blood

sometimes I stuff you in my girlie box
suckered arms dangle between thighs
black ink flows down my legs

it's not pornography it's poetry
because you're so small and juicy
three hearts and poison saliva

Medusoid Phase

Mary Janes with red velvet insides
unbuckle, buckle, crawl in slow motion
up the wall. Such glam mutant arachnids.
Sometimes I christen my feet
piglets, pinned and wriggling.
Sometimes I am buckled into a brocade chair,
being spoon fed the heavy cream. If they whip me,
they might find out if my dress is lemon meringue
or lemon chiffon. A hint: I tore into the crinoline.
I gave it a good tongue lashing until the whole room was floating
in a pinkish foam. Jelly filter. Jellyfish killer.
Flower hat bloom shimmering with nematocysts.

In my polypoid phase I slumped and slumped
until I was yelled at to sit straight up
and then I slumped so low I fell out of the chair
and then I floated up. Such a ghostly soufflé.
Such defiant levitation. But their wrist restraints were such shiny bait
I succumbed. I opened the frothy little nimbus
of my mouth just a rift and they swiftly inserted
their silver implements. My lips are mere inches
from my hair. I have the messy dark kind
in which snarls lurk unknown. Their teeth are growing.
My feet are tapping, toes itching to kiss that red velvet.
Shiny or not, their tethers will never eclipse this mounting sting.

Before They Gaped, They Were Roses on Fake Cake

1.

Stop courting the plastic domain of coyly
contained parakeets. Nervous squeaks are not love bites
when what you really crave is shrieks. Something unconstrained
only fleetingly tamed. Beautiful predation. Shifting feathers
of albino barn owl as it eats out of your open hand,
then flies away.

2.

But actually more unnatural.
Maybe with an owl's eyes,
but also with a pink pod pried open.
A whole row of pink pods pried open.
Maybe they were planted. Maybe installed.
Maybe prey that fell in that formation.

3.

Not the kind of unnatural like a tiny captive beak
dinging a tinny toy bell. That thing couldn't control its clipped wings.
More the kind of unnatural like a gaping maw
of red-orange horror-cake.
A whole row of silver silos filled
to the brim with baby teeth
and you falling (and you balanced on the brink,
then deliberately plunging like a wingless raptor)
in love with the blood-sticky chafe.

4.

You wanted to compliment the albino girl's red eyes,
then decided she might be too self-conscious,
so instead you just talked about whatever
was appropriate to talk about. Fake cake.
You're sick of your gimmicky chatter.
You'd rather wrench out your tongue,
briefly display on trendy soap dish,
then lather it up.
You'd rather red foam.
You'd rather papillae froth.
You'd rather lure that albino to the brink
and make her look in. Those aren't sugar cubes, little girl.
You're not a pet bird.

girls

girls holding their dresses down
zipping their lips around
small mouthfuls of oxidized silver

girls with rice pudding
in medicine droppers
a baby bunny's throat wired open

a straining pink sheath
girls dispensing fixative
to unnatural striations in their hair

deflated pink skin
girls frosting the corpses
of broken water balloons

that burnt popcorn and marshmallow frosting taste
tingling inside girls' cheeks
a pink sheath bursting with fangs

velvety little corpses of flibbertigibbets
beheaded, truncated, leaving trails—
stale breadcrumbs and ruby sweetbreads

girls with rice pudding
in their hair, oxidized fixative,
swollen under-eye circles

girls zipping their dresses down
holding their lips around
unnatural striations wired open

small mouthfuls of marshmallow frosting
swollen throats straining
spiderlets bursting out under-eye circles

girls with velvety medicine droppers
girls with burnt rubies
girls with baby bunny sweetbread taste

girls with deflated water balloons and stale popcorn
girls with tingling spiderlet cheeks
girls leaving trails with their under-eye fangs

Blood Pudding

The little dogs seem to ooze
syrup, not grease, when cut.
Us? Our blood sizzles neon green
like snake pit ectoplasm.
Like misfit pussy poets spewing
lemon curd, gluten, bug guts,
purple Kool-Aid in a drastic spit take.
We've clambered out of the dunk tank
with some serious damage sopped into our brains.

Like a throbbing tick in a private place,
fully engorged. Like the thick kind of sticky
cupcake frosting that totally fucks up
the hole that leads down our esophagus
is forced to gag and remember those slumber parties,
fake séances, misguided sex tips, missing limbs.
We'll pretend this is another sorority initiation
gone terribly awry when we poke out the eyes
with a compass for calling us flat-chested.

We're curvy in other ways. We're scurvy in other ways.
We've devised so many other games for protractors and sharpies.
We've visualized so many dance steps with grisly glitches
like high kick, crotch shot, bloody pom poms,
razzle dazzle bang. (After that slumber party past life regression,
we came to with a mouthful of knocked-out baby teeth
and a cotillion queen looking down on us, giggling.
We were forced to swallow our own fragments.)
Now we've mistressed the art of how to spit.

We are the other Juliets, oblique and yet extreme.
We won't eat vanilla. We suckle blood pudding.
Our maw drools clotted cream into vicious skeins.
We pluck rotten cabbages from old story books,
subjoin them to the heads of glossy pony girls,
pretty princess girls. Doll injection mold girls
mate with poison and we sniff our glue sticks like cocaine.
We gloat over paper cuts, catgut, perverse lexicons, ambushades.
Don't giggle at us. Don't tell us to shut our traps.

Don't dare label us rabid or try to muzzle us.
We will bite with our spiked milk teeth (glued back
into our mouths so we would have another layer). We are a creep
y scene of enjambment. A googly-eyed, gooey-haired monster-nymph
wriggling out of clammy wells and through foetid walls.
A dress so sodden, tattered, tainted with horrid porridge stains.
Beware our urges to snuff out lap dogs with cervical pillows.
Beware our urges to lick silk linings, leave mercury vapor slime trails.
Inside us a mucilaginous mass of unborn twin hands is metastasizing.

twin

kissy-faced twin, pouty-mouthed twin, open-headed twin,
twisty-fingered twin, potty-mouthed twin, twin of ill repute,
twin after my own heart, twin with wet red lips, twin chewing
gristle into misshapen pearls, twin who grates flesh
in with the lemon zest, twin of burnt apple brown betty,
twin of caramelized yellowjacket, twin of baker's twine straitjacket,

twin of linked hands chopped apart, twin who leaves loose strings
dangling from buttonholes, loopholes, cherry pieholes, smelt
butter sculpture twin, melting, melting, fingers so soft
will soon sizzle, twin of tiny hot geysers, unstoppered,
unholy holy twin, draining, draining into porcelain basins,
into Cool Whip containers into which pink baby mice are curled,

frozen for snake food, twin of pointed teeth and ornate teething ring,
twin of vintage lace holding bones in place, twin who glazed the wishbone
with bronze paint before she removed the meat, twin of Rorschach-shaped
grease splotches, twin of lopsided levitation, listing to the wrong side
of imaginary tracks, twin furiously filling out index cards, filing, filing,
iron filings & filthy little nail clippings & musty loverat shavings

of the dreambeast who rumbles and blurts and barbs in her belly,
twin of kitten rag doll with only the back declawed,
twin of mordants & portents & fondue party mishaps,
misplaced skewers and musical chairs, twin destroying angel,
twin of amanita disguised as champignons, twin of insecticide
garbling the voicebox, twin with hot meteor searing a hole in her tongue

Self Portrait as Semi-Amorphous Entity

Silly muffin-like thing
floating in a fizzy fissure.

Oddly fluffy little pink anomaly
sometimes has no ears, but still hears
through some manner of clandestine absorption.
A listening device a tiny warped sponge
implanted in the bottom of a silver foil
Baking and Party Cup w/ ruffled edges.
Impregnation by tainted sugar.

Inside a misshapen speech bubble,
toothsome words are birthed.
Incubate, overheat, burst. A spatter of
bloody latex, enamel, nougat, & nerves.

Through some style of self-referential abortion,
she evacuates doomish candy shapes. Inklings.

That's not a piñata she's beating
her own head against a doll house
door. A small demolition crew scuttles out
of a miniature bed; starts pulling her hair so hard,
her head flies off & lands in the cake pan.

That's not a piranha it's one of her
stanzas with gills glued on & heaving.

The spiky bite of a hellgrammite on its back
in heavy cream, swerving
like a possessed planchette.

The crescendo of sickly sweet stench
rising up from a pale blue fetal pig
it is time to dissect right now.

Black Taffy

Black Taffy unexpectedly swirls in the cups
of a pink foam egg carton. Small pearlescent basins
stained. Her sticky fingertips stretch it out.

She pops sugar skulls like they're breath mints.
Her piebald cat laps up mercury spills.
It looks like an albino until

the black core is revealed. A bullseye. Glistening beads
on the pussy's tongue. An oily seep beneath yellow wallpaper
in her boudoir perfumed with licorice. Silver goblet

of shiraz. Ramekin of white cake with a melanoid heart.
The deviative grimalkin looks askance at the cream.
Vamooses, then vanishes while slinking around

the miscreated spiral staircase. Suddenly plunges
into Black Taffy. Purling, puling, purring.
Somewhere underneath warping floorboards, the clink

as another thermometer shatters upon contact
with the claw-dragged strings of Black Taffy.
She peers into the chasm, emits an exploratory miaou,

inserts a finger into the abysmal gloppiness
and shimmies it around. Something hisses. Something heaves up
a Black Taffy blob, creeping towards her wrist...

Oh Those Mercurial Wrists

The way she froths at the mouth then explodes
into sexy blasphemy.

The way her lips sizzle then ignite—
Bananas Flambé.

Painted flames drizzle down to
scintillating nipple ring gleams.

Extraneous jolts of metallic highlights.

The way she displays her dead flowers in glass bottles
with broken necks.

The way she applies luxurious lashes.

Her delivery is measured & then doled out.

Metal spoons strung together; a stylized clink.
A mode of self-medication more exotic
than the flask. Guzzle is more erotic than muzzle;
but her intermittent sips trump the others.

Sometimes she wears the sequent spoons around her wrist, sequined.

Sometimes the potion drips down her long throat like black tears
from an ugly duckling's eyes.

Sometimes she melodramatically sighs. A pale hand flutters up
to her face as if she might Victorian-style faint. She feigns
queasiness, rolls her eyes, then pours a dram
from the skull & crossbones bottle
hidden somewhere deep inside
her soiled lace petticoats.

The way she makes up her own eyes with a languorous,
over-the-top glamour
she calls 'Tarred & Feathered'.

The way today's look is named 'Little Bo Peep the Whore'
as she wields a tiny riding crop, exclaiming, "Faster Lambchop!
We must escape the damned rapsCALLIONS!"

The way she languishes in the background during barroom brawls;

waiting, simmering, forehead beading
like a shattered mercury thermometer.

Sometimes she needs a cold compress.

Sometimes she needs smelling salts.

The way she wrings her wan hands and laments
and then suddenly goes limp;
attenuated fingers dangling.

The way she poses as a mannikin,
then attacks. Tears out her hair
& it was a wig & a small swarm
of silverfish scurry.

Sometimes she unclasps her spoony bracelets to display
the stale stage blood congealing on her wrists.

Oh those mercurial wrists.

Oh those swoony hissyfits.

Oh that hysterical uterus
must be sedated.

The way if you licked her inner thighs,
you would taste the seams
of vintage wallpaper, yellow
& ornate & feverish.

Rotting glue
dissolving on the tongue
like a foetid kiss.

The way she doles out another luxuriant spoonful
of her mesmerizing nostrum.

Spilled Milk

My socks smell of spoiled milk.
My socks smell of burnt chocolate.
Of camphor. Of calumny. Of busted-open lockbox.

I am littered with prepositions.
With vague premonitions. With dead kittens
muffled in silk pillowcase. Mottled clumps.

These legs used to be so malleable,
but now I can't stop tensing. I can't stop scratching,
spitting fingernail clippings in the butter dish.

I used to hold and be held, but now black holes
explode out empty sockets,
suck in such fearsome debris.

Why do they have to keep dripping?
Why won't they just curdle into heavy cream,
then clot, dry up, scab, fall off?

I am kneaded thin as a crusty tart with adulterated filling.
I am a dirge of aborted purrs, dragging fur out
from under a serriform tongue.

Flinging filthy burrs and milky eyes
wet my bed. The chandelier is a shimmering suspension
of spiked copper and dangerous glass just waiting to fall.

What happened to my nice dry socks leading up
to a bonfire of crinoline? Now I'm some kind of bedraggled,
dispirited flapper who would pose in a dead kitten stole,

get stuck in the wrong position. With my wet slit showing.
With ballet flats sodden. With dazzling crystal dangling
high above these soon-to-be-emptied-out eyes.

Something lapped me up until my buttercream was buttermilk,
until my buttermilk was skim milk,
until my skim milk was cracked glass milk

bottles spilling caterwauls and no lids, no way to contain.
I try to muffle it in silk. I try to sleep with it every night
except I can't sleep. I lie underneath it and wait.

little death scenes

once again her eyeglass lens disappears into a snow angel.
this happens at night. when she gets on her knees, she feels
pinched nipples, little rosebuds, a garland around her neck
pulling her breath taut. against her chest, the cold fur.
then the small clutch of albino marmoset, the shudder,

the glistening muff. she releases a plume of steam,
flares nostrils like a petite sleigh ride steed.
this happens at night. when she dreams the pink insides, she hears
pearlescent canals, lobes that rose when nibbled into lace.
how the frothiness stiffens and peaks like meringue,

adorned by exotic fruit. the chokecherry is the darkest one,
he whispers in her ear and she is almost ready to levitate.
the pinkies she thought were numb begin to tingle, invisible piano wire
pulling her fingers taut. as she rises up, the nerve endings singe
then flutter, then freeze. her split ends breed icicles.

this happens at night. when she dreams she is a whooping cough, wrapped up
in a pretty little handkerchief, fine teeth lurking underneath.
he unbinds her mouth, wet petals pour out, eyelash lace drips and she faints
into the ache of consumption. sweet monkey, sweet angel face,
sweet egg whites and caster sugar whipped into featherweight.

she floats just above her own imprint, her tiny glittering cave.
her head a panoramic sugar egg with byzantine tunnels,
pink figurines, a secret room devoted to pavlova,
adorned by doll's eyes. so stiff she could be zipped into a garment bag
for the buttons on an empty party dress to flirt with blue fingers.

Fete

White wafers shimmy in this heat.
Blue snow cone stain between the legs
of my first communion dress. I saved
these spiders in a chalice. I saved
this writhing handful of maggots in a baby food jar.
I didn't save the fizz from my soda pop.

It's a shimmer of dark red residuum in a glass bottle.
It's a sticky syrup between these fingers.
My hands are webbed. If I pull
up my dress, the pale skin is crawling
with a new breed of hirsute tattoos.
Beneath that, the flesh is not flesh.

It's rubber on bone bound to wild
chicken wire. It's raw funnel cake.
I pilfered my latest husband from the wax museum.
I brushed his stiff handlebar moustache.
I posed him for our holy card tete a tete.
I pried out his tongue and placed a spider

like it was a host. We kissed in the burnt out ferris wheel.
His hands were all over me. Dry ice plumed out my mouth.
First his lips were froze, then he melted between my thighs.
We made a baby, paddling sweetly in its formaldehyde jar.
Its little flippers will burst into flame flickers the first time
it burbles my name. My burning spawn. My changeling.

Pink Bird

It's hard for me to clip the creepy/yummy spin—
poisonous frosting seeping out from under fingernails.
I trim the crusts then wish to shellack them blue-black;
hone them into shiny daggers, spiked nonpareils

because I don't want my hands to look like the hands

of a child. I don't want to show them my disheveled cuticle,
scratched knee caps, the woeful way I really look
like a wide-eyed paint-by-number girl, trying to pose
as an adult. I'm wearing strappy, unsensible shoes.

I'm thinking, "They're Saying Mean Things About You".

Shame sublimates into inappropriate giggles;
guilt sublimates into twisted approximations of insouciance.
I curve my own lips. I'd rather look coy
than cry while I whelp another misfit litter.

This litter would consist of three patchy gray kittens
with tongues like desolate pink tendrils,
mewling from beneath a dilapidated back porch,
thinking, "Nobody Likes You Here".

I would gather the raggedy strays. Wield a misplaced bray
to crush the whimpers. Paint blue-black shellack over my shame
until I collapse into a messy muculent mass of something
that looks like red algae. Red algae doesn't purr.

Red algae doesn't scabble up my arms, towards
my lips. Red algae just sits there cold and limp.
Decapitated. Red algae doesn't make a good paper weight.
"I'm Sorry I Killed You".

Because I don't want my hands to look like the hands

of a perverted pastry chef, I'm sorry I used the gray fur
to line my black cherry tart. Maybe if they took a bigger bite,
they'd find out how soft it is inside. As my pages fly
loose, flaky, scattered haphazardly in a magpie's nest.

Underneath the sharp, shiny things,
adjacent to a tiny broken compass.
Underneath the mask of a dark, glossy corvine,
my words have their mouths gaping open
like pink baby birds.

Sometimes I'm lonely. Sometimes I have an invisible friend.
Sometimes my invisible friend embodies herself into poetry
with fine teeth, with small feathers between.
With a hiss that sounds like a slick pink tendril whip.

That kitten looked pathetic until it pounced.

Flesh-Tone Nylons

What if when I call to tell her
she didn't get the job, she asks why
and I accidentally spill the truth—
I had a vendetta against her flesh-tone nylons
and matching suit (a corporate blue skirt & blazer number)
because a few years ago, a different woman wearing the same outfit
had a vendetta against my lip ring and I didn't get the job.
Truth be told, that happened a few times and I guess I started suspecting
those who wear blazers and pumps must be somehow interchangeable.
Of course, that's more or less ridiculous. I'm not interchangeable with
everyone else adorned by body jewelry. Like those taut-torso girls
who get their bellybuttons pierced might as well be sorority chicks.
How about those tricky dicks with barbells all the way up the shaft?
I'd love to see them whip it out in front of all the Christian moms
who look down on me for mutilating my temple.
They really shouldn't talk since they're morbidly obese
cows who can hardly even make their calves fit
into the queen-sized sheaths of those cheap
flesh-tone nylons from mass-produced plastic eggs.
Maybe God's special plan involves them
buying Thighmasters. Maybe my low-rider attire
isn't half as undesirable as their plodding
cluck cluck moo moo delivery. Besotted
by one of my more violent fantasies, I watch
their numchucked muumuued udders burst
like water balloons finally freed from dusty barn rafters.
She pronounced condescendingly, 'You can make holes in your body,
but only Jesus can fill the hole in your heart.'
He was wearing his sweaty purple gym shorts in public
when he fixed that teenage girl with his derisive glare and declared,
'The nail that stands out should be hammered back into place.'
She had a DIY goth/punk aesthetic, a little clichéd, but a creative attempt
to separate herself from the suburban doll injection mold of her reality.
Maybe he should have painted his nails bright purple
if he was so intent on matching. Maybe if she wanted the job,
she should have Googled me and discovered that I prefer knee socks.
She handed me her resume, but all I could see were those legs;
their die cast sheen an insidious symbol of her fake golden brown proclivities;
her mute conformity. His casual cruelty as if teenage eyeliner was such a threat.
Of course, she wasn't really mute. Her gingerbread girl lips were moving,
but all I could hear was that uniformed bus driver who gestured crudely
towards my lip and asked, 'What is that, your hook?'
All I could think was too bad those flesh-tone nylons
don't breed the flesh-eating disease.

The Angel of Death

Some of us are intimately acquainted with matching knee socks.
Some of us are intimately acquainted with each crease on our pleated skirts.
Some of us are intimately acquainted with words
like hosanna and host like curettage and desecration.
I was catholic, I know what lurks beneath the frilly shrouds.
An amorphous squiggle under the girls' Eucharistic veils—
bleeding, bleating, beseeching
'Oh my God, I am heartily sorry
for having offended thee.'
This tin of lamb tongues
is my sacrificial offering.
Do you want me to confess?

I remember the red fetal fingers wiggling through lace
like baby snakes in the wrong place.
They said snap shut your white pocketbook
or else sins might slither out—
coiled innards, stubs, nubs, tiny tails.
They might plop, glop, slop, stain the holy cards
of your bare knees. Pull up your socks, young lady!
Smooth down your skirt, smurfette!

I remember taking my socks off to play in the yard.
The dark mud squished between my toes.
The snake squiggled under my naked foot,
but it didn't bite me. Instead of running away,
I decided to try something new.
I made friends with the snake.
I made imitations of the snake
out of blue play dough. They taught me
in Sunday school the smurfs were satanic
with that vicious pussy named Azrael.
I named MY pussy Azrael and it began to purr...

It started off so soft and small,
but my hell-mouth meow grew
into a spiky, slimy caterwaul
that was downright cthulhu-esque.
Blasphemous as pissing on my First Communion dress
when they taught me dead baby parts
were used as fertilizer, in shampoo, severed infant limbs in dumpsters...
On the make-believe private property
of a perverted doctor's lawn, spread slick
with placenta, I wantonly flexed my thighs.
I revved up for my monster confession.

Before I spit it out, why don't you
stick one finger into the other side
of the grating that separates us in this booth?
Vroom vroom, my pussy sounds like such a chopper.
I'd better snap it shut.

My womb is a real troublemaker,
but aren't they all? Some might even call me a
filthy little reprobate when I listen to those evil voices
in the heavy metal music. Some might even call me a
doom cake, a urinal cake, one of those girls
who deserves to be raped
because she was wearing her catholic schoolgirl skirt the wrong way.

My womb is a real muckraker
and half the congregation's dirty fingers are stuck inside.
Some of them are trying to get me off;
some of them are trying to turn me off,
but my motorized blades are still whirring furiously.
You see, in MY visceral guide to uterine occupation,
the vagina dentata myth is true.
I've cued the seizure-inducing lights
and the spew of slashed babymakers.
Bang your head to the strains of this heretic cunt.

My aborted baby has been salted away
inside an old cigar box
with a handful of blue crayons—
(the bad seed blues, the misfit blues,
the irregular blues, the unborn blues with demon pigments leaking through)
waxing, pointing, waiting to color...

Your wings are made of tithes and invective.
My wings are made of torn lace and metal stirrups
and the rough little tongue of a death angel cat
who laps my cold toes.

Peculiarity

1.

It should be black, but it is mottled.
Queer clumps of sullied fur. Misfit
with six little legs. The illusion of dragging
stunted stumps. The impression of creeping
from carnival freak show formaldehyde jar.

It mewls. It writhes its tail. I wonder
if this *Lusus naturae* was displayed
towards meandering fingers, would they embrace
or break its neck. Recoil from
oddball sockets in susurrating face.

It moves my way. It uses all six legs
in a spiderish skitter. Screwy scramble on spindly limbs.
I sense a liltng shift. I wish to preserve this
tatterdemalion oddity. Murmur sweetly into raggedy ears.

2.

Sometimes we hiss from inside
stultifying containers. Sometimes old glass shatters
like hard candy upon rough tongue
and blood is sweet. It whets the glottis.

Sometimes we feel the unsettled onus
of dark fur clotting in throat.
Anomalous appendage until we revise
pule into purl. Devise our own way to sashay.

Behold this six-legged cat—
its roguish shimmy shimmy shimmy,
its charming gambol.
Its monstrously gorgeous miaou.

Frankenstein Crowned Miss South Dakota

Bruises galore, my crown is implanted into place.
My smile fakes itself amidst the grotesque putty
of crusty contusions and misshapen lumps.
A fiendish prank mutated into a gory game;
a multi-tiered charade of ruined cakery,
rancid frosting, mottled pigmentation.

Wobbly high heels jammed onto skewed digits
like jellied pigs' feet seeping from hacked decapitation.
Busting out of my evening gown, I'm the barnyard star
of this maggoty parade. I'm the tainted creamsicle unfrozen;
oozing all over your plate. Poisoning your meat & potatoes
with my scintillating slimy pate.

FREAKY BITCH stamped on my sash,
on my slit, on my slash-worthy flesh.
I am sent down the stage with a clusterfuck--
dead dahlias, belladonnas, spider mums.
I am dragged down the dirty alley with a chain
attached to the back of a pick-up truck.

I'm wearing my bathing suit and gelatinous feet.
I'm bleeding through the crotch as zirconium flies off
my tiara and then you want me to compete
in the talent display. You want to gawk and squirm
your hoggish trouser worm as I blend
my piecemeal heart into a gruesome shimmy shake.

acknowledgments

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'The Angel of Death' and 'girls' first appeared in [**GROWLING SOFTLY**], a special project published by the poet's own small press, **Blood Pudding Press**.

'Medusoid Phase' first appeared in **ECTOPLASMIC NECROPOLIS**, a special project published by the poet's own small press, **Blood Pudding Press**.

'Vicissitude', 'Blood Pudding', 'Spilled Milk' and 'little death scenes' first appeared in **COMBATIVES**, a single-author zine series that is a companion to **H_NGM_N**.

'Adornment', 'Seemly', 'She Warns Me', 'Purple', 'Self Portrait as Gingerbread Girl', 'Horrific Confection', 'Her Voice Shoots Out of a Rusty Espresso Machine', 'Nori, Shiny Side Down', 'Octopus Doll', 'Pink Bird', 'Flesh Tone Nylons', 'The Angel of Death', and 'Peculiarity' are part of a chapbook called **Gingerbread Girl**, which was published by **Trainwreck Press**.

"Dollophile" and "The Male Gaze" are part of a chapbook called **Projectile Vomit**, to be published by **Scantly Clad Press**.

Most of these poems have appeared in one form or another upon the poet's personal blog, **CandyDishDoom**.

inspirations

The poem 'Dollophile' was catalyzed by a conversation with poet W.B. Keckler. We were discussing the chapbook 'The Secret Lives of Blow-Up Dolls' by Robyn Art and the documentary 'Guys & Dolls' about men obsessed with Real Dolls. Keckler used the word 'dollophile' in the conversation and I pilfered it for a poem title.

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