

Domestic Bliss in Four Parts

Anna Lowe Weber

I.

The night was a Quaker's fantasyland,
an endless rush of sonnets and lapels.

Outside, the white tiger was stalking something pretty,
fighting with a shadow.

The lawn needed a good watering.

II.

On the tennis courts,

V the new historian was really giving it to B the chemist.

V the new historian was thinking about getting

Fermat's Last Theorem tattooed onto his back,

and as he came in for an overhead slam,

he screamed, "There are no positive integers x , y , and z

such that $x^n + y^n = z^n$ in which n is a natural number greater than 2."

III.

The sprinkler system wanted to be loved.

The arboretum stopped blaming others.

The gazebo learned to say no.

IV.

We sat in the house.

I offered to teach you how to knit.

You came at me with a butcher knife.

Kidding, you cried. Only kidding!

I peeled an apple with one hand.

You taught me Helvetian Code.

I threatened to attack your province.

You threatened to put me in a home for fallen women.

From my position on the loveseat,

I got the strangest sense

that the jar labeled "Pantaloan God"

was making its way up the basement stairs.

Concerns of the Home and Family

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You crack your mind open to find not lobes or fluids,
but lavender buds. Fragrant. Dry.

Potpourri! your mother exclaims. She insists
that you hang your head between your knees to shake out
the puffy spikes.

Once your mind is completely emptied,
the two of you get to work, diligently sealing
the buds in tiny mesh pouches.

Later that night, you steep the bag in a mug and
watch the release like a blush.

Upstairs, your mother is drawing a bath
or tossing clothes into a suitcase.
She is knitting or napping. Singing or in prayer.

For hours, everything has seemed off.
The doors are closing in on you at strange diagonals,
and outside, the pale orb staring back at you
is not one moon but three.

Giant snowflakes drift by like doilies.
Your mother puts a record on, some sort of jazz,
and the notes float downstairs, tangible.
Touchable.

The grace notes are the loveliest: vermillion,
with the quick darts and flits of a bird.
You hope to catch one, but no amount of coaxing
will bring them to your hands, upturned though they are
as in prayer.

These Among the Things You Gave Me

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Red tongue
of the somnambulist.

Sprouted tulips
under false light.

Rosehips.

Cherry highways.

Peach kernel.

Neon pilgrims.

Marbled neck fat.

Hog Maw.

Black capes.

Fat cakes.

Furoshiki.

Rusty pink
sweetheart pin.

Hair
of a dying magician.

Milky
fleur-de-lis.

Eyes like
black olives.

Hybrid
elephant.

De-
formities.

Sorghum.

Sweet lychee,
their lucent pulp.

Their heart-shaped
crust.

Gray braid.

Quail eggs.

Paper crane.

Fussy
yolks.

Rib
xylophone.

Pheasant heart.

Darkened thumb.

Figs asleep
in their sticky skin.

Lazy treacle

and molasses.
Yes.

Blood in the eggs
like a ribbon.

This Is No Parable

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In the coppice, we pocket cotton-white peonies.
We pocket white peonies in the coppice
and move swiftly. The hazel in the coppice
is long and hanging. It grows darker
with each passing day. We move swiftly
and the trees grow black and the hazel grows black
and the white peonies wither but still are white
and we are swift. In the coppice, the white lion waits.

He sits in the trees. Truly he is a lion of the coppice.
All creatures but the lion have been forsaken.
The trees are sinking away. We dance for them.
We dance for the maiden trees, and we dance
for the white lion of the coppice. We dance
until the moon falls down, and we pick her up,
dust her off and hold her to the sky.
Her cotton-white moonlegs unfold until
she is standing, then dancing, dancing with us.
We fling her back to her sky, black like the hazel
growing blacker still.

In the coppice, we curl into one another. We sleep
in the coppice and the coppice sleeps in us.
We sleep, and still the lion waits. Tangled
in branches, his mane will blacken. His mane
will blacken and go dead and we will take rest.
When we wake, the coppice will smell something
of dew and hunger. Coppice of forsaken creatures.
Your dew is a black yolk. A spoiled sweet under our toes.

Death Instructions for a Lover

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The mice will already have gotten to my left hand
if you find me behind the garden shed.

Draw the honey from my ears.
Wrap my feet in foil.

If you find me floating in the shoal,
preserve my naked toes,
but cut up my tongue for bait.

There will be salt cakes to scrape
from my sternum,
if you find me in the shoal.

If I sit slumped in the tractor,
sew yellow post-its into my hair.
Carve IOU into my right breast.

Find me a purple wig, dear.
Lace up my riding boots.

Set me up in a rocking chair
facing the east, that gray-eyed sky.

Read to me from the Vedas.

The cats will come out from under the porch
soon enough. Even in this time of grief,
they will bend their bodies over porcelain bowls.

Wonder what more you have to give.