

TRANSFIGURATION:
A COLLECTION OF
ARTIST BOOKS

by

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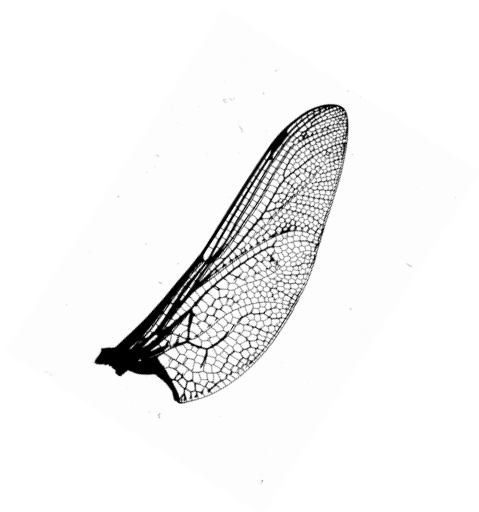
and by _____, Chair of
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and by Charles A. Wight, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

The collection consists of thirteen artist books in text form. The artist books explore the transfiguring power of loss, grief, love, forgiveness—all a kind of knowledge. Each textual piece in this collection represents a three-dimensional artist book. These books study how space, fold, and physical structure or architecture affect meaning. To see these forms, please contact the author.

For anyone delighted by the earth—it's grief, it's gorgeousness.



“Non v’acorgete voi!”

Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*,
Purgatorio, Canto X

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And to God, for everything.

SUGAR NINE

I am standing in the kitchen when he walks out through the screen door.

The afternoon he left, I was in the corner of the yard planting sunflower seeds. The dirt was dry and not dark enough, but they'd grow anyways. I scratched into the dirt half my finger deep, let the seed drop, and covered it up with the sandy soil. I had three holes left when I heard the screen door open. I turned just my head, so I saw him leave over my right shoulder. He didn't take a suitcase, but I knew he was leaving. Momma didn't know. She didn't ever know it.

He got in his car just like going to the store, but he wasn't coming back. I knew because it was my birthday, and he should've said, "Hey Sugar Nine!" before opening his car door.

Before driving away.

I'm holding a cup of flour.

He didn't say anything. He looked at me going down the porch steps. He saw me sitting in the dirty garden. But he turned and got into his car. He drove away.

It's 1:08 in the afternoon.

I only planted nine sunflowers. I was going to plant ten, but by the time my mom came out of the house, I was finished. I liked nine—nine years. I liked math. I liked three squared.

He didn't say anything to me.

I could tell my mom thought he'd gone to the store. Maybe the hardware store. Maybe to pick up some parts for the leaking sink. He was going to fix it. She came over in her bare feet to look at my seed mounds. "A circle?" she asked.

I looked at the half-moons of pink on her white toes in the dirt. "I like circles," I said.

"You'll have to water them. It won't rain much this summer."

"I know."

She went back into the house.

*I'm frosting the cake now, in yellow
with cream-colored dots.
thinking about her first day of school,
the days she came home with caterpillars in jars
and moths in paper envelopes.*

The flowers would grow so tall, they would make a fort. I saw a picture of it once in a magazine. The magazine had glasses of lemonade and frosted cookies on the front cover, and inside, the photograph of the sunflower shelter spread over two pages. In the photograph, the walls of sunflowers were crowded with other kinds of bright flowers. There were kids having a tea party inside.

*All the days she walked into the kitchen in her barefeet,
wondering if she could have some orange juice.*

I wanted a place where no one could see me.

I'm sprinkling pink-colored sugar over the top of the cake.

My mom came back out with a watering can. I sat there in the middle of the circle while she let the water pour out in thin streams. The water flattened the mounds and ran in dirty, syruping veins out into the dry dirt.

I'm putting nine candles in a circle on the top of the cake.

Dusty and muddy, I sat on a half-buried railroad tie while she weeded the tomato garden. There weren't any clouds in the sky, just bright blue. I watched her rake around the peach tree. I watched her cut roses. Only the pinks and oranges. She never cut the lavender or white. She said they smell better outside. We never grew red roses. *That way*, she told me once, *your dad will have something to bring me.*

I watched her take the roses inside. She came out and mowed the grass lawn in front. She mowed the grass in back. She was barefoot with her hair hanging down around her head and just above her shoulders. Her hair was smooth and blond and never got in her eyes.

I'm lighting them just to see what it looks like.

She used to be a dancer. When she moved—nothing got in her way. When she mowed the lawn it looked like she was doing something beautiful.

I wondered if I could ever look like her.

I'm looking at her in the backyard.

She always said I looked like my dad.

Wondering when James will get back.

I had dark eyes like him, but I could never tell.

I'm blowing out the candles. I'm forgetting

he didn't say anything to me.

He didn't say anything to me.

After the lawn, she watered the vegetable garden and the roses. She watered the purple flowers down by the road. By the time she went back inside, everything smelled like wet rocks and sun.

When he comes home, we'll all make wishes.

I looked down the road.

I wanted my dad to come back with roses and parts to fix the leaking sink in the bathroom.

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The sunflowers grew tall but they didn't make a fort.

I could still see through their thick stems: the house, the road, the tomatoes, the roses.

I don't know why he stopped touching my hair.

He used to braid it before I went to sleep.

He never came back.

Sometimes one braid. Sometimes two—they draped over my shoulders.

All that summer my mom let her hair grow long. She said he always loved her hair long. He said it looked like the sun. She said, *I shouldn't have cut it*. She said he would come back when it got long again.

*One night he came home from work,
and he didn't want dinner.*

But his car didn't come back when I started the fifth grade, or Christmas, or Valentine's day, when her hair grew past her shoulder blades.

*Said he wasn't hungry—
—put his keys on the table.
He didn't say anything.*

In the mornings, when I walked past her door on my way to school, it spilled itself over her pillows like ribbons of water.

He didn't touch my hair.

After school one day, I walked to the restaurant where my mom worked after my dad left. I went around to the back door because she worked in the kitchen. There was a man standing

in the doorway smoking. He was enormous and his apron was splotted red and brown from the sauces. The smoke mixed with the smell of tomatoes and made me sneeze.

“Is Clairra working?” Her name sounded strange in my mouth.

“You’re her girl, right?” he said.

I looked up at him.

“Got all her face didn’t you?”

I didn’t know what to say.

“Even prettier,” he said and stepped outside.

I could see her when he moved. Her hair was tied up in a bun even though she never tied her hair back at home. Her face looked different—like she was naked.

She couldn’t see me.

“Mom,” I called out, but she couldn’t hear me over the roar of the fans and the dishwasher.

I turned around and looked up at the man. “I’ll come back later.”

“My name’s Hess.”

I knew I was supposed to say something but I couldn’t think of it.

He used to say, Gold—like lines of sun.

I sat on a bench in the park down the street and waited. But when I saw her walking across the street in her blue jacket and black pants, hugging her purse, I didn’t think she was my mom. I followed her down the street. She walked slow and never looked behind her.

He'd say, like shining water.

When we got to our street, she stopped for a moment before turning. She was still hugging her purse.

*After a few weeks, I cut it short—
—just wanted him to say he missed it.*

At the peach tree, she stopped again.

*He never said anything.
He doesn't say anything.
You do—don'—esn't say anything
You don't say anything.*

She pulled her hair out of the bun, then she walked across the front yard and up the steps into the house.

*It's been 3 days.
Some nights we are eating cake for dinner.
We are making wishes.*

I'm watching from the window, I'll meet you at the door.

After a couple of years, she started sitting on the front steps after work.

I sit on the front porch now.

We built it together.

After we nailed it and sanded and painted it, we drank lemonade.

I squeezed it from real lemons.

Added sugar.

I'd sit with her sometimes. I told her stories about school. Sometimes, she asked me to measure her hair. She asked me what I thought it looked like. I'd say the color of tinsel, the color of uncooked spaghetti, the color of marigolds. I told her it looked like lemonade, honey, canary wings, chiffon icing. I never said it looked like the sun—I didn't want her to think he was coming back. But she started waiting on the front porch anyways. She'd let her hair down by the peach tree and take her shoes off in the kitchen. I'd make her a ham sandwich for dinner and take it out to her.

I wait, here—

*—look down the road,
my hair as long as a river.*

If I sat by her, sometimes she'd eat it.

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One day, she walked out and sat on the lawn. She said she could see better from there. She sat in her bare feet and looked down the road. I brought a sandwich out with a blanket, but she said she liked the grass, so I sat on the blanket. I lay down and looked up at the sky until it turned purple.

The night you are kissing me

for the first time—

—you say, you're beautiful

and you're beautiful

and there is darkness

& sweet & lifting my hair

& lightning heat on neck

and lips and in my eyes.

Darkness and silence

and open mouths and

you love me you

love me you love me.

Before you are leaving,

*before you are getting in your dad's car
and driving away—you are saying:
I had a good time.*

“Come to my house tonight,” Susette said one day while we were walking home from school.

“Sure,” I said. I thought about how my mom had gone to the grocery store a couple days earlier. There would be enough pasta for spaghetti and we’d have lots of sauce.

“Did you see Steve and Sharon at lunch today?” Susette asked.

“Yeah,” I said. I thought about the pile of clothes in my closet—I’d need to do some wash.

“She’s so lucky.”

“Yeah,” I said as we turned the corner to our street. I remembered the hot water and wondered what was wrong with it. “How late can I come over tonight?”

“Just whenever you want,” Susette said. “I really want to make some cookies. Do you have any chocolate chips?”

“No.”

“I’ll tell my mom to get some for us.”

We were almost to my house. I could already see my mom sitting cross-legged in the grass. Her hair was hanging down her back—the ends folding over themselves onto the lawn. Her bangs also too long and in her face.

*You’ll see me now—
I’m sitting on the front lawn.*

We had a picnic out here one time.

You took a nap.

Fell asleep right in the front yard.

I put the food away and cleaned

the kitchen and sat next to you.

Hayley and I played beside you

until you woke up.

“Hi, Mrs. Stuart,” Susette said.

My mom didn’t answer and she didn’t turn her head or her eyes from the road. I thought about where the scissors were inside the house.

“See you tonight Hayley,” Susette said.

I turned and walked up the front porch steps. I liked walking home with Susette because she never asked why my mom was always sitting on the lawn.

You are sleeping somewhere.

I will sit here until you wake up.

I was sitting at the kitchen table eating spaghetti the afternoon I realized my mom wasn’t getting better. I saw her walking up the street in her work clothes. I saw her stop at the peach tree, take down her hair, take off her shoes and sit in the dirt.

I walked outside to her. The tree was full with peaches. Some of them had already fallen to the ground. The air around the tree stung sweet, and the fruit flies clouded around the smell.

“Mom, what are you doing?” I asked.

“Just sitting, it’s so nice out today,” she said without looking at me.

“Why don’t you sit over on the grass?”

“Its fine right here. I can see better.” She leaned forward so she could see around my legs.

“What can you see better Mom?”

“The road.”

“Why the road, Momma?” I didn’t want the neighbors to see her out there in the dirt and rotting peaches. “Momma please, let’s go over to the grass, I’ll get the blanket.”

She didn’t answer me or look at me. She looked down the road.

You will see me.

I’m sitting under the peach tree we planted.

The peaches are already ripe.

Take your time.

I’m waiting.

I went around the back of the house to get the rake. I raked around my mom—the leaves, the over-ripe peaches. I pulled the stragglng weeds. I was thirteen. Sugar Thirteen.

*The dirt is delicious with sugar and
sap.*

The peaches dropping from the tree.

I can wait in this sweetness for you.

The first time someone said my mom was crazy I was in my 9th grade PE class. Susette and I were walking around the curve of the track as slow as possible. We had to run the straight parts but Mr. Riley let us walk the curves. We were walking together when Sharon and her friend Natalie came up behind us. Sharon and Natalie were tall and wore make-up. They looked cute even in their PE uniforms.

“Hey girls!” they said together. Their voices sounded like a party. I wanted to go to that party. So did Susette. We both laughed. “Hi Sharon, hey Natalie,” we said together.

“You all had class with Ms. Devinham, this morning didn’t you?” Sharon asked.

“Yeah,” Susette and I said together again.

“I think she had a hangover. She looked so bad. I don’t think she even brushed her hair.” Sharon said.

“She kept having to leave the classroom,” Natalie said.

Sharon laughed. “She’s so gross.”

“No one should ever leave the house looking that bad,” Natalie said.

“The sad thing is she doesn’t have to be hungover to be ugly,” Sharon said. Susette laughed. I didn’t say anything. I couldn’t laugh. I liked Ms. Devinham. Even when she came to school sick.

Sharon looked over at me. “I saw your mom yesterday.”

The other girls were quiet.

“Where?”

“In her usual spot,” Sharon said. “Your mom is crazy.”

Natalie didn’t even try to contain her laugh.

My stomach dropped. But Natalie asked, “What’s it like having a crazy mom?”

I calculated how much time I had before we had to start running again. I wondered if I could get away with saying nothing.

Susette wasn’t laughing, but when I said, “At least she’s not as ugly as Ms. Devinham,” Susette laughed and said, “Just crazier.”

Everyone laughed.

Somewhere you are saying I am beautiful,

like the first night on my front porch.

You are meaning it.

I laughed too, even though it made my stomach feel like a block of wood.

When Sharon said, “Hey do you want to come to Steve’s party with us?”

I let Susette say yes for me.

I wait for you in the sweet dirt.

The sugar is everywhere.

I am so sweet.

I don't know why my dad left. I always imagined he went somewhere very different from where we lived, but I thought I saw him one time. He was standing downtown at a street light with a tall woman with sleek dark hair. She was wearing high heels and he had a tie on. I could almost smell her perfume from the across the street. It probably smelled like exotic flowers from places I couldn't imagine—Australia, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Morocco. They weren't really standing at the street light. He was holding her at the streetlight. He had his hand all in the back of her short dark hair and one arm around her waist. He kissed her cheek and her forehead and whispered something in her ear. When the light turned green he led her across the street with his hand on her back. I watched them walk into a fancy restaurant—the kind with cloth napkins, heavy silverware and lighted candles. Susette and I were going to the movies. She didn't remember him anymore. She watched them as they crossed the street. We watched together as he opened the door for the woman and followed her into the restaurant. She could only see his back, so she couldn't see he looked like me. Susette said, "Someday I'm going to marry a man who can take me to expensive restaurants."

Green grows from my fingernails now.

My hands have been too much in the dirt.

*Translucent slithers ache for the sun,
make my hands more beautiful than ever.*

You will love them.

We went to lots of parties with Sharon and Natalie, and we went to lots of parties even after they got tired of being our friends. Susette went for the boys. I went to get out of my house.

I am becoming more beautiful than ever

and you are in the sky

and I watch you with my blue eyes.

My beautiful blue eyes.

I plucked my lashes

so I can see between the bright

and the blue and the glare.

My lids close in your face,

but in bright slits—

—I wait for you to see me.

To see how beautiful I am becoming.

Darkness filled with loud music. Bonfire-lit cigarettes. Someone always playing a guitar.

Susette spent hours planning what she would wear. I didn't have anything but my jeans and a few t-shirts. I watched boys over other girls' shoulders. I never expected any attention.

You will remember me.

—here in the open.

I leave my head uncovered—

—see the bright in my hair.

—skin violets with light.

Green in the roots of my hair—

—light—growing green.

You will come for me—

I was surprised the night Steve found me sitting in the back of the ring of kids around the fire pit. He held my hand, and I let him pull me into the woods away from the group. He didn't say anything. He stopped as soon as we couldn't see the campfire any more. He was standing so close, I guessed I should feel something.

—has—it been nine days—

I felt nothing. A nothing that made me feel sick. I took a step back. I almost turned around. I should have walked away, but then he said, "Hayley, you're so pretty."

—car drives—past.

The gravel rips and wind rushes—

but my chin stretches up—into the open sky.

—If he sees—me he will remember.

He said, "I can't ever get you out my head."

He said, "Hayley, I like you."

He said, “You’re beautiful.”

He said, “Hayley.”

He said, “Come here.”

It sounded like Sugar Nine.

I am stretching my arms into the sky to relieve the ache in my fingertips—

HELIOTROPIUM

Once—

There was a woman who fell in love with the sun.

She left her house, that river of rooms and doorways,

because she couldn't resist his wide blue robe,

radiant light.

She left the watery shade of her kitchen, and he loved her—for a while until one day

he saw *spice and perfume and a girl so far away* walking on a road. He forgot about the

woman. But she didn't forget.

She waited in dirt under bare sky. For nine days. *Just love me.* She did not eat, she did not

drink. *Just love me.* Let her hair blow around her neck. *Just look at me.* At night, she leaned

her face into the dust. Her hair tangled into the ground.

Then

her toes grew roots

face turned dark

petals—

Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me. Just love me

Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me.

Just love me Just look at me Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me.

Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me Just love me Just look me Just look at me.

Just love me

Just love me.

Just look me.

Just look at me.

CATALOGUE

PALOMINO

Produces one large bloom. Stems and leaves follow the sun from sunrise through zenith to setting.

BUTTERCREAM

Petals the color of cake mix (baked for ninth birthday parties) surround handsome, dark brown disks. Will grow as tall as five feet with side shoots which will bloom for weeks without anyone paying attention.

CUCUMBERLEAF

Multi-branched.

Flowers have dark purple centers,
yellow petals, three-inch hearts.

SILVERLEAF

Stems covered with silver plant

filament like the grey silk made for gowns intended for a party or a dance with lanterns and a woman you've never met before.

Leaves suited for fresh or dried floral arrangements: she will never forget you.

IKARUS

Flowers are 5-6 inches across, fragile yellow with a dark center. Performs well when abandoned or cut and left in a vase.

VELVET QUEEN

Six inches of velvet crimson color rayed like fireworks or the hair of a thirteen year-old girl. Excellent stamina: blooms will last up to 5 weeks.

THE JOKER

Double, bicolor: Dark red centers fade to yellow tips. Very attractive. For best results, plant before you leave without saying anything.

YELLOW EMPRESS

Produces one large flower head—up to 25cm across. Does well in long, hot summers when the radio station only plays songs about boys in the city & parties on the beach. Sow after last frost in your back yard by the chain link fence.

SUNBIRD

Produces one, yellow bloom & confectionery, grey-striped grief.

May need staking after flowering . Seed heads will attract parrots & other wild birds.

PRAIRIE

Glorious plumes of yellow,

studded with 3-inch blooms in very neat rows along stems that will reach 6 to 8 feet tall.

Trouble-free & excellent as massed color in the back of the side yard, flower bed, or against an outdoor structure such as a shed or fence.

SORAYA

Tough, self-supporting stalks stand five to six feet tall and will not tip over even when lied to in full bloom.

ITALIAN WHITE

An elegant look for the garden or the glass vase you knocked off the piano one day when she asked you where you'd gone. Blooms are 4 inches across, with a deep chocolate eye.

RUSSIAN GIANT

Yellow sunflower grown mainly for seeds.

Harvest when mature stalk can no longer support flower weight: cut the head, hang in a dry, dark area.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

The first week, I made mom eat grilled fish for dinner. (If every night were a holiday, maybe you'd come back). Now, I'm noticing bottle caps in the grass. I'm paying the man down the street to fix the sink. I'm raking the leaves by myself. I make spaghetti for dinner. Or macaroni and cheese.

I know how to change the oil. Sometimes I meet Danny in the backyard. We stand in the dirt by the fence. I believe him every time he touches my hair.

I'm dying for you.

MISTAKE

Only twenty-four stairs to the second floor—all those smooth wooden floor boards, Cinderella dressed in yellow in the upstairs bathroom, you washed your fragile hair, let it dry while standing on the balcony—there were no knots in your laces, no downtown, no diamond, no ring; you never kissed the snake, you washed your hair in the sink—let it dry while pacing the balcony railing. You didn't need any doctor. Just scraped your mouth against the sky.

OSMOSIS

He leaned over the counter. She was sixteen years old. Standing behind the cash register. Barefoot. Freckled. Sunburned—a whistle around her neck. He said: *Erotic*. She didn't know what the word meant. She remembered putting the egg in the vinegar. Inside the cup, it bloated. After two days, the shell was gone. Eggs shrunk when she put them in cups of syrup. Hard and tight. Golden black. *You have erotic eyes*. The word cut a perfect circle in her left tympanic membrane. She looked down at the white painted counter. Tiffany + Juan. A heart was scratched around their names. Someone else had written *forever*. Osmosis: The process by which molecules of water or another solvent tend to pass through a semipermeable membrane into a region of greater solute concentration, so as to make the concentrations on the two sides of the membrane more nearly equal. Afterwards, she only wanted words like diamonds in her ear. Hot & spiral-melting into her cochlear nerve. Afterwards, her eyes felt heavy as silver dollars dropped in water. Afterwards, her eyes burned like fuse-lit magnesium. Afterwards, she jumped into the pool. The water as warm as the air. 100 percent humidity. She knew it meant sex. Like *sexy*. And raw (like the inside parts of bones). Like *shimmy shimmy coco pop shimmy shimmy pop sweet sweet baby down by the roller coaster sweet sweet baby I'll never let you go*. She waited: in the deep end, under the diving board. Afterward, 5 stars for each iris. A star for her shoulder. 2 for her lips. Afterwards, glossed—pinned to the sky. She knew it meant sex. Stripped—an exposed electrical wire. Closed eyes. Centerfold. Open knees. Open thighs. An open mouth.

She fit a size 26 swimsuit. Made for a 12 year old's body, it would last all summer. It wouldn't stretch out.

SEVEN MINUTES IN HEAVEN

49 cards.

Lay cards face down.

Seven by seven. Square.

Flip cards open one by one.

Like eyelids.

Shuffle. Repeat. Shuffle Repeat Shuffle. Repeat

[Card] She was born with orange eyes.

[Card] Gamboge. Usually, she had no pupils. Or her pupils were orange. When she was tired, her pupils were dark brown. When she woke up, they were blue. When she cried, they turned green.

[Card] Gamboge: *a mustard-colored pigment most often extracted by tapping resin from various species of evergreen trees. The trees must be ten years old before they are tapped. The resin is extracted by making spiral incisions in the bark, by breaking off leaves and shoots, and letting the milky yellow resinous gum drip out.*

[Card] She never charged money, but when her lids opened, she was a carnival sideshow.

Circus freak. *Come and see.*

[Card] She was alone.

[Card] Her loneliness filled her lower back like water.

[Card] Where she lived, Orion rose into the sky dripping wet.

She kept his shield on her left side (or in the corner of her right
eye).

[Card] She could hear the ocean from miles away.

The sky a shell to her ear.

[Card] It was always hot in the valley.

[Card] If it rained, the clouds burned water. And if it snowed, the flakes blistered. South
Texas scorched.

[Card] On these sweltered-still days she imagined walking into the waves. Past the cactus,
sliding her fingers along their translucent spines, through the orange groves, along the path

with the brown weeds and purple paper flowers. She walked into the water just to feel the salt on her skin.

[Card] She had four kinds of cone cells in her eyes. Green Yellow Violet Orange.
Tetrachromat. 100 times the colors.

[Card] She dreamed in shades no one else had ever seen before. Except birds, Zebrafish and spiders.

When she was awake she never wanted to blink.

[Card] As she got older the stroma glowed more and more.

[Card] It was difficult to see her face because her irises were so bright.

[Card] Many people found themselves squinting the first time they looked at her.

[Card] She was so tired of looking at people. Every time she opened her eyes, cells fell out onto the sidewalk where any one could pick them up. They bounced away like orange luminescent balls.

She could never catch them in her hands.

[Card] Some days, the orange groves melted into the sky. The cactus deflated in spiked folds. She floated amid violent palm trees.

[Card] Everywhere the smell of lard sugared with citrus blossom. She osmosed the opulence through her skin and the cells of her eyes. It dripped out the dead tips of her hair.

[Card] Time softened like butter— dissolved from the outside in. The clocks sweat beaded condensation on their yellow faces.

[Card] Osmosis: *The process by which molecules of water or another solvent tend to pass through a semipermeable membrane into a region of greater solute concentration, so as to make the concentrations on the two sides of the membrane more nearly equal.*

[Card] She remembers putting the egg in the vinegar. Inside the cup it bloated. After two days the shell was gone.

[Card] Eggs shrunk when she put them in cups of syrup. Hard and tight. Golden black.

[Card] Once, an older boy made a mistake. He thought her eyes were the east—he thought her body was the sun.

[Card] He said, *You have erotic eyes.*

[Card] She didn't know what the word meant.

[Card] She lit candles and stared into the flames until they burned down to the wax. She stared at the stars until she couldn't see anymore.

[Card] She peeled oranges, she ate them one slice at a time, and she thought about strings and membranes vibrating in space.

[Card] She dreamed of cutting herself up into small pieces. A thousand pulses of persimmon supernova pasted on the wall.

[Card] She knew it meant sex. Like *sexy*. And raw (like the inside parts of bones). Like *shimmy shimmy coco pop shimmy shimmy pop sweet sweet baby down by the roller coaster sweet sweet baby I'll never let you go*.

[Card] Afterwards, she only wanted words like diamonds in her ear. Hot & spiral-melting into her cochlear nerve.

[Card] Afterwards, her eyes were an aviary. Birds escaped every time she blinked. Altamira Oriole. Roseate Spoon bill. Red Egret. Painted Bunting. Vermillion Fly Catcher. Cormorant. With talons thin as eyelashes, they flew east.

[Card] Afterwards, her eyes were an apiary. Gold bees escaped every time she blinked. With talons thin as eyelashes, they flew east.

[Card] Afterwards, her eyes were black holes. Crushing consciousness like human spines into tight spiraled circles.

[Card] Desire: Legs, lips, fingers, hair, as semi-permeable membranes.

[Card] But the first time: He was full like the moon. she didn't have arms wide enough to hold him.

[Card] But the first time: His back was skinny and tight and perilous. She felt like she was holding the crescent moon.

[Card] The first time: he opened apricots with his fingers, pressing on the cleft and pulling until the apricots halved in his hands. He swallowed the pits, and left the fruit on the counter.

[Card] The first time: he walked past an orchard of pomegranate trees without knowing it.

[Card] What other men said. Later:

[Card] So pretty.

[Card] Mesmerizing. Gorgeous.

[Card] Nice ass. You're perfect.

[Card] Like a mermaid.

[Card] She had a red birth mark the shape of an eraser tip or a small heart. She wasn't born with it. The mark appeared one day after her first summer working in the sun.

[Card] Afterwards, she went to the zoo only to watch the tigers. She wanted to lay next to them on the black rocks by the green pool of water. She'd watch the koi and sunbathe until every part of her body was sunburned. Until everyone got bored. Until people ate the cotton candy.

[Card] Until her skin peeled open like a ruptured pomegranate and elephants walked by on spindled legs.

Then tigers could come out of her mouth with bayonets in their jaws.

[Card] Afterwards, they built her a box. With a window. She looked out from it like a deep sea diver. Her skin looked green like the dark women in Persian poetry. But all anyone could see were here eyes like pieces of gold fish. Swimming in deep water.

X

This line to the place where your father taught you to swim with the current.

[Fold]

Follow this line to find that shell with the perfect spiral. *{In the mornings, along the shore, the light is always gray and white and in your eyes.}*

[Fold]

This line to the white pelican.

[Fold]

To here where you were standing when you saw the red tide for the first time. *{Twelve years old, your dad parked the car while you ran down to the water. He met you down there barefoot. Showed you how running made the wet sand glow green. Made you swim in the cold water—green flashing all around your moving body. You swam away from him in a curling streaks—bright phosphorescence. It was the first time you went swimming at night.}*

[fold]

Where you were sitting the day you saw the whales' breath. A skyline full of exhalations.

Hundreds of them—seconds, sometimes minutes apart. So far out, you could barely see them.

[fold]

The cold grapes, the gold fish crackers, the peanut butter & jelly sandwiches stored in the cooler you left by your towel and your flip-flops.

[fold]

The trains always behind you. *{You can't remember what the cute guy in the orange shorts asked, but your best friend said, I'll go with him. You watched them walk behind the bluff, but you can't remember if you stared at the bluff until she came back, until she reappeared looking shuffled and smiling—the guy in the orange shorts walking towards the volleyball courts—or if you looked away. You can't remember what she said when she walked back towards you. You think she said, Let's go to the snack shop. But, maybe she said nothing. Maybe you just stared at each other before looking at the water.}*

{You remember going home and sitting by your father. He was watching television. He was eating his toast. You never ate toast at night, but you went to the kitchen, put some bread in the toaster. You waited for it to pop up, you buttered it, put it on a plate, and sat down next to him. He was watching a mystery show. He didn't say anything to you—just acknowledged your toast. Later, when it was a commercial, he touched the back of your head. He said, "Did you have fun?"}

[fold]

You understood how the water moved.

[fold]

How it surged backwards before a wave. You understood that pull. How you could lay down in that motion, let it pull you into the curve where you would rise into the sky, where you would crest with the wave.

[fold]

You understood the pull. *{The crash into the inside of the sea.}*

[fold]

You understood how to float in the ocean: Measured in seconds. Watching the shore.

[fold]

Watching the horizon. *{You don't remember the day when you were too old to sit in your dad's lap. Just: now, you must sit by yourself—at church, at home when visitors stop by to talk on the front porch. Were you five? Were you six? When you were 13, and your friend's baby sister died, you knew you were too old when he hugged you after the funeral service was over. When everyone had left the chapel. When you were alone. You cried so hard, he held you in his lap. He said, do you know I love you?}*

[Fold]

Here is where you understand the surfers. Where you let them surf south of the red checkered flag. You check the shore every few minutes to make sure you are swimming to the north of the yellow checkered flag.

{All the lines you swam out to meet your dad in the waves. You were a strong swimmer. You knew you were. You could hold your breath for a long time underwater. You could swim down and touch the bottom of any of your friends' backyard swimming pools. Swimming out to your dad was nothing. You'd look at him every so often, just to make sure he was still there. You were measuring how far you had drifted in the current. Because he is your father, he turned his head after every wave to see where you were. He waited until you surfaced. If you took too long, he trusted you—and waited. He was never worried.}

[Fold]

This line to the anemones you do not understand. You could never resist poking their yellow-striped centers.

[Fold]

Feeling their lines bloom into themselves. *{You didn't understand the gigantic orange mass you saw one morning on the shore. The orange so vibrant—you could not look away. The form so familiar—you didn't understand why you couldn't remember, the hugeness of it, the gorgeous orangeness. Until your dad said, Two seals.}*

{You didn't understand the terrible smell of their carcasses. The sweetness of it. You thought, at first, it smelled like a strange sugar.}

[Fold]

You never understood the saltiness in the back of your throat when you swam in the water.

[Fold]

The burn like seaweed against the sides of your arms. *{You didn't understand the way your father's hand shook as he was eating his potatoes at night at the dinner table.}*

[Fold]

This line to the water dripping in drops from the tips of your hair down your back.

[Fold]

Your bathing suit tied behind your neck—a yellow string. Your towel in your arms. You were nodding—

[Fold]

"Yes." You understood.

[Fold]

He'd be back at 5pm.

{He wouldn't come down and stand with you by the tide. Wouldn't go swimming. He said, he'd just watch. He'd watch you. He'd watch for you. When you were ready, he'd take you home. You didn't understand finding him asleep on the bench.}

[Fold]

Follow this line to the small pin hole

[Fold]

the size of the ocean. All the oceans in the world. Anywhere.

CLASSIFICATION

THINGS HE TOLD THE GIRL WHO MOVED INTO THE BROWN HOUSE UP THE ROAD:

When his mom died, she left the front window open.

He was seven years old.

There had been lightning. The kind that cracked the sky in half. For a long time before he fell asleep, his room lit up and flashed. He hadn't been scared. He looked out the window. The big tree in the backyard flashing black against a kind of blue he didn't know how to say. *Electric, but not like the TV.* Lightning blue. Electron blue. Proton black. Neutron light.

There were rules for storms: *Don't answer the phone. Don't take a shower. Don't touch the faucets. Don't get near the water.*

When he woke up in the morning, the house was quiet.

His dad would be home that night.

He was wearing a white t-shirt over his underwear.

His feet were bare.

His mom had polished the floors the day before. The blue plastic bucket filled with soapy water, she'd said, "Owen go play outside." So he'd been on the back porch throwing rocks at the shed in the yard. When he crossed the porch to find more stones in the flower bed, he looked through the screen door. His mom was sitting on her knees, the afternoon sun shining from the window in the front room through the hallway, bright and dark at the same time—he had to squint to see at her. She was humming a song his grandpa used to sing. Something about trees and walking a long ways. She leaned forward for the bottle of polish, and he'd already passed by the doorway. When he turned, the afternoon light was still shining out from the screen door into the shaded porch. He picked up five rocks before running to the side of the house.

Walking through the hallway from his room, he could see through the open window by the front door. The sky was so light, it looked gray. The apple trees were shimmering white with the hail nets.

The couch was soaked from the open window.

Everything smelled like wet leaves and mud.

He opened the front door and sat on the steps. The yard was mud—all mud down to the orchard. So shiny and smooth, he walked out into it, watching how his toes and heels made prints. That's why there was mud on the floors when the paramedics arrived. He'd walked a few circles. Written his name with one big toe. Mud on his mom's clean floors. Always so clean. He never wiped his feet.

He opened the fridge because he didn't think anything was wrong. There was only one set of barefoot prints outside, but maybe she had walked down to the mailbox at the end of the drive. Maybe she had walked down to the orchard. Maybe she had gone into town for milk. There was milk in the fridge, he saw it, but maybe she'd gone to town for orange juice, he saw that there too, but maybe she needed to see someone in town. Sometimes she went to town.

He pulled out the apple sauce. He shivered because it was so cold in his hands. He found the cinnamon, and when he poured it into the bowl, it came out in a pile. The smell stung his nose before he could stir it in. He sat down at the kitchen table. He ate the apple sauce with his left hand on the table. He remembers this because there was lipstick on his hand from when his mom had kissed him goodnight. Just a smudge. But he hadn't been awake.

She didn't wake him up.

He didn't wake up.

When he finished eating breakfast, he sat looking at the empty bowl for minute.

Since it was Saturday, he thought he should go outside again. But, *Stay inside.*

He walked down the hallway to his parents' room. His mom never stayed there. Or she slept there. Most days. But he had no memories of her there. The bed next to the wall. Wood floors. Shiny and slippery. Her shoes were under the chair by the door.

Her black heels. They said, *Don't look here.*

And so, he looked through her window; the apple trees shimmered under the weight of the hail nets in July. All 31 days.

He walked into the bathroom. *See how nice the tiles feel under your feet.* Clean and white. *She scrubbed them herself.* The counter was clean. Five bottles of perfume, a bar of soap, her necklaces tangled in a pile. He always liked the gold chain with the glass bead because it looked like a marble. Cat's eye. Blue stripe, green stripe, yellow swirl.

He could hear the water running.

Don't look at the bathtub. So he looked in the mirror. His toes were tight and curled on the white tiles. He looked at his face. His brown eyes and the mole on the side of his cheek. "It's not a birth mark," his mom used to say, "It's your blessing mark."

Through the mirror he could see the shower curtain closed. *That's it.* Just a closed shower curtain in this white white bathroom. She always kept the shower curtain closed. Or open. He couldn't remember. He didn't know why he couldn't remember.

What he couldn't remember scared him the most.

"Mom, it's me," he said to the mirror. "Do you want me to leave?"

Turn around. But he couldn't.

Open the shower curtain. But he couldn't.

Instead, he picked up the gold chain necklace, held the glass bead to his eye—distorting the bathroom into shades of yellow and stripes of blue.

A candle had burned out on the floor. One of his mom's big glass jar candles. The one he had to carry across the room with two hands when she asked. It had burned down to the metal wick disk. The glass had cracked from the heat. He noticed how the glass had cracked in spiral line, and wondered what would happen if he picked it up.

He told her, *By now my heart was pounding hard.* He said, *The kind where every beat makes you feel more and more sick.* Something was burning. Had burned out. And something was telling him he should slide his hand inside the shower curtain.

He didn't want to move. He wanted to go outside and stand in the mud.

Instead, he slid his hand, the one she had kissed last night, inside the slit in the shower curtain. He could see the smudge of the lipstick, on top of his skin, on top of his veins, at the base of his thumb. He could see the creases on the inside of his hand. He could hear the water. Dripping so loud. Dripping so fast. He thought, *My name is Owen. It's Saturday. It's July 31.* If he was breathing loudly, he didn't notice. He only noticed his hand shaking. Everything was so quiet. Everything was so white. He shut his eyes. He pulled the shower curtain out just one inch.

It's Saturday. It's Saturday. Dad will be home tonight.

THINGS HE WILL NEVER REMEMBER:

He turned to run, but he stepped in the candle. Put his bare foot on the rim which collapsed.

He fell into two inches of water on the bathroom floor.

His foot hurt because the glass cut him from his ankle bone across the front to the side—a deep semi-circle slice.

He tracked blood across the tile and all over the wood, and outside all over the front porch.

He stood in the mud—yelling for help.

No one heard him.

He had to track more blood and more mud in the house, again, to call 911.

It took him two minutes and 14 seconds to dial the 3 numbers. He couldn't remember the buttons his mom had told him to press. All he could think was the number 1.

The words: *My mom is in the bathtub*. The emergency operator: *Is she hurt?* The response: *My name is Owen. My dad will be home tonight. It's Saturday.*

How the paramedics found the hallway a bloody muddy mess, how there were footprints everywhere, how they found him on his birthday sitting at the table with an empty bowl, while his mom floated in her white porcelain claw foot bathtub. How the county coroner took her body while Owen stepped up into the ambulance.

How there was a light pink smudge on his left temple where his mom had kissed him goodnight. How the doctor wiped it off with sterile gauze.

How he got the scar on his ankle, the seventeen stitches.

THINGS HE REMEMBERS:

Lightning hit the house. He woke up. Eyes wide open—the end of the flash—burst of thunder so loud, the windows shook.. Glass stinging against metal frames.

{OR}

The lightning hit the cottonwood outside the kitchen window. The electricity bloomed through the roots, intertwined with the metal pipes below the house, sprang into the bathtub where she was still running the water. She couldn't hear the storm. She was looking at the ceiling. She was thinking about recipes, or a bicycle hidden behind an old mattress in the garage, or the dog with puppies down the street. The charge

flipped her body. Killed instantly. She didn't suffocate. Water didn't enter her lungs. They were sealed. Only a flash of pain. Brilliant. So quick—steam didn't rise from the water.

But the faucet was never turned off.

{OR}

She heard the lightning, but maybe she was too tired to get out. She couldn't imagine the lightning hitting the Rio Grande cottonwood outside the kitchen window. She could never have guessed how the electricity would split the tree in half. How it would whine into the roots, how it would exhale into the pipes—hush into the bathtub where only her knees jerked out of the water before she rolled onto her side unconscious.

When she rolled onto her stomach, she couldn't help herself. Couldn't turn off the water.

{OR}

She wasn't in the downstairs bathtub. She was in the upstairs bathroom. The one by the baby's room. The one where she'd washed the baby just last Easter. The bathroom where she had put on his little cotton shirt, wrapped him in a blanket, before taking him to church. Except she had bathed the baby in the sink. The baby was so small he could fit in the sink. So small he could get so lost so easy.

So she rolled over on her stomach, and after she squinted her eyes shut so hard she couldn't breathe, and after the burn of water in her nostrils, and the burn of water in her sinuses, the water kept overflowing. At first like a leaking garden fountain. Then like clear folds of petals unfurling over the crest of the tub. And then it was flooding the floor. Drowning the tile. Owen woke to warm water falling down the walls of his room. Sun shining outside. Over the mud. Over the apple trees.

{OR}

She wasn't clean. She flung her hand outside the tub. She should have kept it inside. *Please keep your arms and legs inside the vehicle at all times.* No one knows what she was thinking. No one knows.

{OR}

Because she flung her arm over the tub, it took longer.

Maybe she tried to stand up. Maybe she tried to get out of the tub. But she couldn't move. The water was so warm. And she couldn't feel her head. Her stomach felt sick. Like she'd eaten too much bread dough.

{OR}

Maybe she was trying to grab a towel. But she couldn't reach.

{OR}

The red in the water looked so beautiful to her. Billowing out in fractal clouds. So beautiful it made her feel a little sick. What was blood to her? A thousand million

pieces, one hundred thousand parts, her own body's nectar, honey, wine, heavy ichor.
I don't want to burn. She tried reaching for the towel.

{OR}

The candle was burned out on the floor. He didn't have to open the shower curtain. He could see her fingers. The tile curved below the refracted light on the liquid. He didn't want to touch anything. He didn't wake up in time. He went to the phone in the hallway and called 911. He went out and waited on the front step.

THINGS HE KNOWS:

She was floating in 41 gallons, lying face down in a porcelain-covered cast-iron tub.

By the time he found her, the water was cold.

Her heels were pushed out of one end. Like a dancer, but her toes were not pointed.

Her hair was tangled and wet floating in places it shouldn't have been because no woman could breathe with her hair so everywhere.

She shouldn't have been in the bathroom at all.

She shouldn't have been bathing in a storm. There was a rule.

No bathing in a storm. Don't even turn on the water.

The pipes are metal.

Lightning rods inside the house.

{AND}

God doesn't like people who drown themselves.

He doesn't like their kind of strength.

So insistent. Holding themselves down so long.

He made bodies so they'd come up for air.

God doesn't like being ignored.

SOME THINGS HE THINKS WHEN HE FALLS ASLEEP:

He didn't pull her out.

He didn't try CPR.

He didn't pull her out.

He didn't pull her out.

He didn't even pull her out.

SOMETHING HE NEVER TOLD HER:

The first time he saw a woman naked he was 7 years old.

JULY 1

He told me he'd drive me to Tooele if I had time. Past the city past the lake and its deserted train car its old broken down salt palace its jilted black rock past the marshes past the strip malls past the drive-in movies—West on I-80 off of Interstate 15 *if—I had time—*

We sat and talked in a small town parking lot. On the way back we stopped at a gas station for sodas and candy. Ten minutes later, he pulled off the highway and turned out towards the lake.

Everything was hot & white framed in blue—The sky the sea the salted sand.

[Insert] (*Adapted from anonymous contributors in response to the question: List 3 things you miss about someone.*)

Whenever we stood by a piano, you played Debussy with one hand. Threw chestnuts at me every time I walked past your house. Went running in the snow at 5am. You're the only one I ever told about the cheerleaders and the bathroom and the cherry Slurpee making me sick. You read me comics from the newspaper in the middle of the night when I couldn't sleep. You could never stay in one language—Spanish English French Arabic. Every morning, you listened to Pink Floyd's "Shine on Me Crazy Diamond." I always had to drive at night because you were afraid of hitting a deer. You loved northern hemisphere constellations and

sugar cookies from the gas station. you made me feel like a feather. We had the same exact fight, word for word, every day for a year. You had a small bonsai tree. You pruned it religiously. Every Saturday morning, you made me croques madame. You always smelled like soap. Ate watermelon, not by the slice, but halved and with a spoon. You swam every summer day. You could find anything I'd misplaced.

HOW TO WRITE A CRAZY LOVE LETTER

[www.howtowriteacrazyloveletter.wordpress.com]

HEIRLOOM

HEIRLOOM

God kindly asked Adam and Eve to bring the Garden of Eden into proper order. To prepare it. To array it. To make it ready.

He also asked them to keep it.

ABERRATION (I)

When I was six, I didn't understand how the plants could disappear.

My sister and I had planted the black seeds in paper cups. The seeds were going to grow into long curly plants with big-lobed leaves like fancy fans, like impractical umbrellas. We were going to watch. Sometime that summer, we were going to eat the red melon fruit.

But one morning, the seedlings had been sliced off. Nothing but dirt left in the cup.

When we asked our mom, she said—*Well, the snails or the rabbits.*

THE GREEN ZEBRA TOMATO

Heirloom variety.

Light green with dark green stripes.

3 ounces.

Flavor: Limony-zip (5 degrees Brix).

Slice in the kitchen, by the window, preferably in the late afternoon light. Eat slices raw.

VARIETY

Julie Radar grew the tomato seedlings in 3-inch cartons. Hundreds of them. Italian Pear, Black Zebra, Green Zebra, Momataro, Sweet Baby Girl, Hawaiian Pineapple, Isis Candy, Zapotec, Japanese Oridoko, Snow White. She sold them lined up in her driveway on a culdesac in Encinitas, CA.

ANYTHING INHERITED FROM A LINE OF ANCESTORS, OR HANDED DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

The Green Zebra is not an heirloom tomato. Not really. What eventually became the Green Zebra, Tom Wagner crossed back in the 50's. When he was a kid. He started crossing tomatoes when he was 8 years old. He wanted a green tomato that wouldn't crack when it was ripe.

He thought having a real green zebra in his backyard would have been cool. But all he had were tomatoes. *I gave them funny names*, he said. *It's just my imagination.*

THE SEEDS YOU SAVE

Tom says true heirlooms are the varieties you get from your neighbors. The seeds you save. *The fact that you save your own seeds.*

He also says:

It's a living breathing piece of art that's going to continue to keep living and breathing no matter where it's planted.

F-17 MEANS FILIAL GENERATIONS FROM THE HYBRID

Tom says his records are so good he can trace back the generations to the field where the hybrid bloomed. He says, *People don't talk about the magic of where a plant goes and grows.*

A TREE TO BE DESIRED TO MAKE ONE WISE

I never believed it was the apple.

WHAT MY FATHER THINKS

A pear.

IN BARBADOS

The grapefruit.

IN THE ISLAMIC RELIGION

The fig and/or the olive.

IN HEBREW

פרות

PERHAPS IN ANCIENT EGYPT AND EASTERN CHINA

The very rare and medicinal mushrooms that grew in trees.

MOST UNLIKELY

Wheat.

MOST SUSPECT

The Pomegranate.

MOST SUSPECT II

The quince.

ACCORDING TO ANCIENT SLAVONIC WRITINGS

The grape.

ACCORDING TO SOME EASTERN CHRISTIANS

The fig.

ACCORDING TO TOM WAGNER (ARTIST, FARMER, PLANT BREEDER)

The potato berry.¹

¹ Tom says, *The plant produces a tuber, but the fruit is 300 times more toxic than the leaf. I can't eat it but I'm going to save the seed of it to make some new plants. The potato and the tomato are related. They are both in the Nightshade family.*

ACCORDING TO RUMOR

The tomato.

I NEVER BELIEVED IT WAS THE APPLE

You can't smell it from far away.

JULIE RADAR SOLD 295 PLANTS TO AT LEAST 75 DIFFERENT YARDS.

The tomatoes grew all over the town and in at least one city 800 miles away. The seedlings came from cuttings—this means the strain was pure. No mutations. Nothing in error.

ABERRATION (II)

I bought the raspberry bushes during a warm week. But the next week, everything outside was frozen again. The cuttings stayed in their white plastic bags on my kitchen counter for two months. Finally, I gave one to my friend. In her yard—down in the valley—it grew like a weed. But one day, she went out to water it, and the growing vine was gone like someone had snipped it with scissors.

A BRIEF NOTE TO SKEPTICS OF THE TOMATO

Maybe you have never eaten a tomato hot from the sun. Never twisted the fruit from the vine, smelled the leaves on your hands hours later. Maybe you have never eaten a tomato and imagined the membranes of heaven.

THE ZAPOTEC

12 ounces. They call it *Enrollado*. *The Large Pink Ruffled*. *The Pink Accordion*, *the Large Red Zapotec*, *the Zapotec Ribbed*. *The Mexican Ribbed*.

The *Heirloom Tomato* book *From Garden to Table* says that its shape is *eccentric*. It is heavily ribbed, deep pleated, long ruffled. In the picture, the bottom of the fruit is facing up with a ruffled, pleated claw. I don't know how it tastes. I've only seen a picture.

AN APOLOGY

J.L. Hudson, a seedsman, got the Zapotec seeds from the People of the Clouds. They lived in Oaxaca, Mexico in the Sierra Madre Del Sur. A place so high and steep sometimes the people fell out of their corn fields. A place with only two seasons: *the time of water*, *the time of wind*. He apologized to his catalogue readers: the seeds were being collected by the last herbal healer in the area, crops were uncertain, the seeds were difficult to dry due to the clouds and mists, the seeds were being carried by hand down the mountain. *I hope you will bear with us if supplies are irregular*.

ABERRATION (III)

A friend of a friend died last week giving birth to a healthy baby girl. *Toxemia*.

SACKCLOTH AND ASHES

I used to watch the sunflowers my dad planted along the road to our house. They looked so healthy and huge and green. Their leaves thin sponges soaking up the sun. Even the stems glowed with photosynthesis.

They got full sun: from the minute the sun rose over a small hill far away across a shallow valley, to the minute it set behind my house and the eucalyptus trees and the long hill leading to the ocean.

They are plants that worship, and the flowers my father planted tilted their leaves to the sky cupping solar radiation with two hands. The weight of their heads sometimes so heavy they could not move—so many seeds: the leaves raised their hands while the head bowed down.

And when they died they looked like witches.

Their black bodies too skinny. Their black leaves sagging. Their black heads heavy with hanging.

ABERRATION (IV)

A few weeks ago I was looking at my dad's cantaloupe plants. He was there with me inspecting the leaves. He said, *The rabbits eat the new growing leaves, those are their favorite parts.*

HOW MY MOM KEEPS *SOLANUM LYCOPERSICUM*

Hot-packed. Skinned by hand. Cored. Quartered. In quart jars. Sterilized (the lids boiled in water for ten minutes *at least*. With two tablespoons of lemon juice. One teaspoon salt. Poured hot. Pressurized. Sealed. Stored in a cold place. Dry and dark.

HOW TOM WAGNER CATALOGUES:

*I'm tasting it in the field. And I'm tasting it again over the sink.*²

SOMETIMES IT'S LIKE SERENDIPITY

Tom says he likes things that are pretty. Things that are memorable. *Sometimes it's like serendipity. An artist will paint that way. They know what they are doing, but they have a shadow that crosses their mind, and they want to re-create that shadow and the light. And that's how I am with my crosses.* He says, *The human imagination holds a lot. It holds more than you can write down.*

I have a calling so to speak, and I've got to get it done while the sun shines—dyin' waits for no man as my grandfather used to say.

IN THE BEGINNING

In southern California, long sections of the I-5 run parallel to the ocean.

South of Camp Pendleton, there is a tomato field.

² Tom says: *We have to pray that we have food to eat. And that we have food that is interesting. To me, a lot of my prayers have been answered.*

Roll down your window.

You can smell the tomatoes and the sea at the same time.

EXTRAVAGANT

Extravagant

Non v'accorgete voi!

Faith

You made a fire out of weeds & gold aspen leaves

Repentance

The sky is not so brittle and not always blue

Baptism

*Molten quartz silicate removed from the eye—what glass blowers call the glory
hole—then flocked in gold frits & bars and spun in a spiral.*

Confirmation

Receive

Hope

*As the stars & the stars & the galaxies & all the supernovas & comets & planetary
systems & binary stars & all the orbs of plasma & not the black holes & not just the*

meteorites, but the super giants & all the luminous red novae & the red dwarfs & every single white dwarf in the universe, still burning hot, still colling & all the stars & stars along every canyon rim & every desert highway & over every dark sea & as the sand in the sea & as the stars in the sky.

Sacrament

Return

Forgiveness

A different kind of snow

Sanctification

The Pomegranate: First the cutting open, half an inch from the crown—Red star! with delicate white ribs for so many sweet cells! Score the skin for the pulling apart—the reding in water, in a bowl, pith & membrane float: ruby seeds sink. Strain. Then, eat.

Love

The color of rushing waters

Transfiguration

The ocean: take off your shoes, the water is a burning bush

Heaven

Origami glass on a morning sea

SANCTIFICATION

First, the cutting open,

Half an inch from the crown—Red cloistered star! with delicate ribs for so many sweet cells.

You made a fire out of weeds and gold aspen leaves. Always said my name

In French. Recovered lost objects: arrowheads, bobby pins, dimes.

Helped me button my coat when it snowed.

Score the skin for the pulling apart—

The rending in equal shares

In water, in a bowl

Pith & membrane float.

You touched my waist whenever we said goodnight.

Ruby seeds sink.

Strain. Then, eat.