

Peonies in Utero

I follow a strange bloom with slender limbs:
the signature pink & plush neck of a peony. Stalk

her into sweet smells of confession, spring,
morning moon, a white budding tree near the lake.

I begin by washing my feet, drinking an indigo elixir.
At first timid, she tells me about hard, cracked dirt,

the ho-hum life among swans & the reasons we
prune the dead. Somehow her femaleness offends me

in a Kate Moss, small-breasted, dark-rooted sort of way.
I think she feels my discomfort or guilt. She tells me

vile truths: I cannot keep a fiddle-leaf alive.
I threw my baby dolls in the dumpster.

I am used-up, scraped-out. I feel myself growing
colder, cumbersome, thunderstruck with grunge

about to crack into a whole garden of bolts:
Bring me the closed heads of peonies on a platter.

She folds like a parasol & collapses to a sprout
back into wet dirt. I do not know who or what

I am made from—if my body can ever be home
to a wheatfield. I begin pinning thoughts upon

the clothesline: being one woman is never good
enough. We were the same, clipped from the same

deep pink root. I could feel her, rogue peony,
settling down, flowering from my mouth.

Lolita's Dissection

In the deli parking lot, we were those bestial babes—
gutting a White Owl, blowing its insides out
onto an undercover cop car.

Without the moon's help, we were girls becoming
holographic jailbait. *Hey, mister, be a dear & buy us
some beer.* Our mothers still postpartum.

Don't be short with me! we screamed at the night.
Girls like euphemisms waiting to happen. A vague
rain. We were transactional sex. *Cha-ching!*

We were kiss-him-because-he's-so-goddamn-boring,
a mouth breather. Remember how we watched lava
lamps through needle holes, became feline,

nectarine fizz in our jewel-like heads? Remember
being stripped lollipop pink & spread on a strange
bed? Love was always like this, jagged & hooked

to a different mouth. In morning's eggshell,
we were those girls who slept late
with valedictorians. Promising girls, going

places. Intended to keep our animals secret,
but we were those amphibious nymphs: green
& splayed pinned down on a nerd's dissection tray.

Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

Somewhere between Eden & Hell, Virgin & Venus, I am
the pearl-plink girl being carried away in a mussel shell,
away from sweet-smelling cherry pits, serpents mingling

with tendrils, away from the soft porn that goes on inside
giant strawberries—pricks of leg hair, pulsating seeds—
away from carouseling anti-vaxxers, doomsday preppers

& constitutionalists, the genetically modified Antichrist
germinating within a broken eggshell. A greedy little man
gouging the flicker & spark & *eureka!* of underground

magical black stuff. O triptych of thick-tongued chaotic,
where do you hinge? Father taught me to tend the tilth,
to deadhead paradise on anything unzipped, unfurling,

on fleshy figures frolicking, mewling cutely in their amniotic
bubble world. I've dipped a toe into that wasteland spacescape,
so groovy & pyro-dream: charred black from consuming

boreal forests, Sumatra, LA traffic, the blueprints of trust
fund babes. "April is the cruellest month" I chant; I hyperventilate
into the carpet as the outside gets greener, meaner, even the birds

are distancing as I throw white bread to the ground like
Hello, Clarice. This garden, its blues, greens, browns, goes on
delighting—the sparrow keeps giving her all, stirring song

with paint, but paradise has gone tasteless as a stick of Juicy Fruit.
Whatever happened to the dodo, the great auk, Flint?

Shitshow Barbie

Mattel, bless her with resting bitch face, nippleless breasts, lady parts bare as those of the little girls who play with her. Bless her with an accessory kit of Xanax smoothies, anal bleach, a Limited Edition Jade Egg™ & booklet called

How-To Clear Bad Juju from Your Yoni. Bless her with pointed feet on yellow subway nubs. Shitshow Barbie does Kegels on the 1 Train! Give her nights full of gasoline & glitter, parties at the Collapsible Rooftop.

Grant her the ability to keg stand longer than Hipster Ken, to vomit—wash it down with gin & tonic. A little voice that when closing her bar tab says *Math is hard!* Nights that pull at her fishnets. Bless her with deep

purple mouth-mashing on fire escapes, the strength of paralysis when Ken's plastic fingers touch her too hard 'til she's swollen & bleeds all over the bathtub. Girls, remember the red is love! Mattel, name her

the Patron Saint of Getting into Bad Situations with Questionable Boys. Bless her with disheveled mysticism. Shitshow Barbie can get on bruised knees, pray away a brushfire of sin. Girls, press her battery-operated voice box

& all night she'll question: *O Cool Pope, is there still time for my sainthood?*
O Father of Sticking Pins, why did you manufacture me this way?

Girl in Bathtub, Flicking Dried Rose Petal

Notice the unlocked door. Edward Hopper voyeur,
peer through the keyhole:
regal, a vision—O buoyant breastbone, the hillside of knees
in honeysuckle & milkweed! O foreplay, forefinger
tracing through foam & steam.

So much of a girl's time
is spent

pruning, waiting for someone to come eat her. So much of a girl's time is spent being
a catalyst
for sin in silk & fringe.

Watch as she marks territory with bobby pins: backseat, nightstand, sink basin.
Watch as she swells under the hot spell.

Boudoir, from the French, meaning a woman's room
for sulking in to pout prettydaysaway.

Notice how all she wants is to get clean together, how all she wants is someone
to be hyphenated to.

Ignore that time is measured by a lighter's fluid.

Notice how she's both demure & stink eye.

Listen as she sighs at mildew & grime, waiting for
her body to materialize.