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Desired Things

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We'll disappear within forsythias-
our waxwings spread for flight,
 but will we land
amongst the crumpled leaves, wasting
hours in the night?

I hope we never oversleep. This welcome
from the universe reclaims the child
 so never weep. Come
here and find me in the meadow. I'll heed your
raucous screams.

A plummet through the undergrowth-
our giving up desired things.
 Evenings hold us hostage
to the memory of happy tunes,

a life we spent half-blinded, beneath
a cavalcade of Moons. The night becomes
 unending placed inside
our cemetery shelf. The Desiderata

was my bible. Harmony is beyond the self.

San Francisco to September

Come September, when I reach
my zenith, the atmosphere a petal
pink of blur, when seaplanes
bathe their bellies near the shores

of Tiburon, when your heat bleeds
gold across my garden's floor in search
of fuchsias with their pendulum bell
that creep about the jardinières-

come September, when botanical
lovers unite beneath my San Francisco
air, my Indian summer awaits you
where, if only once a year you'll

find thirty days of splendor. Come
September! Bring your finger fog
where the weather holds its tears,
my Golden Gate suspended over

upswells spraying legs of travelers
seeking sights beyond their windowpane
umbrellas left behind in disrepair -
a spray of flowers in their hair.

Handbag

Naughty girl, with heartache
veiled like a petticoat beneath
your party dress, your irritated
girlie-skin ignored for the sake

of prettiness- oh, the pain of beauty!
Knees together, ankles crossed,
white gloves buttoned, one tiny
pearl fastened at the joint where hand

meets wrist. What you must have
missed to look so pink and polished?
You were your mother's daughter,
or some façade that came too close

at masking all the sadness wrapped
in bows. There was that time you
snuck one lipstick, unrolled it from
its plastic tube, drew a heart inside

her alligator purse. You rule breaker
you! How dare you violate the policy
of handbags, love and affection. No
punishment was suitable for such a wicked

display. A scofflaw dressed in Mary-janes
who's learned the way of false veneers.
You are your mother's daughter
where hand meets wrist as you carry

your pristine curse throughout the worthless day.

Ode to You

Were I to see you now I'd speak
of Convent days when we were
young, when you would tease
thin fingers through my hair
and sweep my neck with gardenia
leaves so I could sense the touch
of wings upon my skin. I want
to begin again, having you here

to see me all grown up after
a womb blessed with children,
and the marriage of two husbands,
to smell your vanilla scented skin
and touch your feathered hair,
the burn of candles in the air-
Dan Fogelberg echoing through
our walls, it was nineteen-seventy-five

and you were still alive with hope
as sweet as April rain. Remember
when the first storm came? Your mother
called you home that year. I heard
that you went mad, your light
eclipsed before I ever had a chance
to say how beautiful you were.
Were I to see you now I'd speak

of schooldays in the garden
where the nuns would hear us sing
beneath the Willow, with our pockets
full of twigs and catkins from our tree.
We were the same as one when
we were young. I knew your every
thought and you knew mine except
the time you said you loved me

when I turned my face away
because I saw you blush-
as if I never heard the words
that left you with a faithless hush.

Pith

Once she swam
bare in the river

where cattails
grew thick over

wetlands that merged
land and stream.

Her body traveled
the watercourse

above rocks nestled
in a bed of mud

below. Bulrush
was all she saw

until the wind blew
a downy blossom

above her naked soul.
Now she feels

the flowering stalk
where small birds nest

and insects thrive.
She slips the stem

between her teeth
and says the word, papyrus.