

## PARABLE OF THE BLEEDING WOMAN

A woman menstruates for twelve years.

No one will touch her, unclean, unable to conceive—

she is prevented from the Mikvah. Her tributary flows

out into the Red Sea, her abandonment a boat adrift.

Being an outcast made me interested in parable or ritual

Especially when the moon chased me, under starry nights.

The moon writes laws in the firmament, a kind of scripture—

but what the moon tells a woman, we cannot write.

The laws of Leviticus meant no one could touch

the Bleeding Woman. She had been to every doctor.

As a girl I stained my long white skirts red. I thought

I had sat on a tack or a bench's rusty nail.

Imagine not being touched for that long, wandering in the desert.

The moon still implores, though I have nothing

to feed it anymore: I still dream of its long fingers of winter light

touching my edges, like her fingers on the fringe

of his garment, her touch as desperate as a tourniquet for the blood to stop,

a new world where the blood turns imagination

into the moon.

## ODE TO INCUBATOR

The dream casket  
where babies prepare for take off  
and landing.

Its vials & syringes filled  
with the dark matter of oceans.

The third eye always watches.  
Shiva's trunk a tube in nose and mouth.

I was a surprise: like a sunrise  
after a hurricane. *Everyone who is  
a mistake is a potential mystic.*

Sometimes creation is a lack  
of prudence, my parents leaving the New Year  
party, for the host's guest bedroom,  
on top of fur stoles, boiled wool coats.

2.

I came late and then stayed  
in my Lucite heated coffin,

metal leg braces up to my hips,  
having absorbed my ghost

twin, where she'd continue  
settling in the hothouse  
of my bones and blood, deep into  
the collagen and calcium  
hydroxyapatite, we'd grow

as one, transforming all  
mistakes into mystical birth  
traumas.

3.

In the NICU,  
years later I rock motherless

babies for penance.

There is no such thing as  
a free will, only nature.

The velvet lining in my brain, spun  
and silkwormed by fire thoughts. My ovaries  
now ornamental lilies dying after Easter, rotting bulbs  
in the topsoil of narratives  
to come.

## DAUGHTER, BORN AT LAST

1.

You are my mystic, reading my palm as it becomes yours.

I am practicing a sermon on how you came to be.

I am also the only parishioner. I meet up with my self in the confessional.

2.

Someone threw red paint on me.

Reagan era housefraus were protesting, screaming in my face, their ponytails too tight with gingham grosgrain ribbon.

I was high all day because, death. Because

in a Wisconsin air-conditioned bar

singing wrong words to jukebox,

throwing darts. Bull's eye.

Pregnant, *again*.

We rode to the clinic with the top down,

a blinker didn't work.

Someone threw red paint on me.

3.

Once you are pregnant with someone's baby, all babies after have some of that previous baby's DNA.

A chimera of that zygote's fetal cells

pressed inside the cells of you the next year,

when I found your father.

Sometimes a mistake will make sure to bless you the most.

It's not that I need to tell you about my reproductive trauma.

It is just that secrets get in our DNA like hornets.

We become one and other in love. We all know the truth we can't speak.

Every mistake is mystical, most true. You will never know

this old boyfriend. But he lives in us nonetheless,

through being that never came to manifest.

You liked to spoon as a little child  
on thundery nights, how easy, then, I hugged you into me.

The two of us enacting our human question mark,  
I was the shell around you.

Now, you bloom.