

What is Simple

Once I stood barefooted in great-grandmother's wool dress on the mulberry-stained sidewalk, and a boy I loved, in lime suede shoes, leaned in and kissed me, but only for a photograph for someone else's art.

A mink around my shoulders bit her tail above my breastbone.

Her mouth, a clip, as in life she would clip a fish and carry them shimmery back to a hole.

Silk-lined insides slid down my shoulders.

The boy climbed atop a generator and whooped the whoop that beauty allows.

Birds exploded from branches.

It was August beneath the animals.

Damp-hearted in my fur, my wool wrapped skin.

All of that desire still lives, but in another form.

House where I thought I'd live a long time. The bedroom's blue, extracted from tactility, a pang replacing color when I close my eyes.

I'm scrawling my name again on boxes, rolling down the metal door.

I'm preparing to forget three striped hawk feathers slid inside an envelope, the history of each discovery collapsed.

Someone, from an array of blues, chose that blue.

Someone believed a waking tone matters.

“Cornflower”

“Aviary”

“Little Egg”

“Winter”

Inner wrist.

To try and let go, I begin with a particular engraved fork and work my way toward my body.

I study quivery microcosms in *What is Life?* tall, black book.

The fork from when we loved I bury.

Before long, my mind digs it back up again.

To calm the quiver, I try reiki. When the healer, offering a lighter, asks me to light a candle, I withhold that the object feels crude, transports me to smoking herbal cigarettes in the backseat of a car, driven by hardly a friend going way too fast, gulp air, hair in eyes, each other's eyes, soft whips of youth—

Illusory promise allowed me to situate my body as something eternally about to crash.

I held my own hips to hold.

Now, asked to open to the soul, I can't get past the material. I want primitive matches. An organic cloth to cover my eyes.

Though there are times, I will allow, when the ugliest object makes me weep.

The shittiest, falling-apart shirt that blows by itself on the line, flips and flips in the storm, dries and is soaked, and dries again and falls, finally, into the dirt.

We had a love and then love left us, or we left love, or each other.

Previously, it had seemed like it was supposed to work.

I leave whatever it is in the dirt.

The healer's hands bring me back where I'd almost drowned.

Lake touches my lungs, cold beyond color; my shoes are tied. Sky is a floor I crawl across. I try to hook the sky with my eyes.

What I remembered, as I drank another wave, is once, I knelt before a cupboard, arranging. Expired makeup and dolls, toy umbrellas, stones.

Once, I opened and closed a small blue drawer to verify a constant: earring backs, horse's tooth. Communing, neither human nor animal, body nor their absence.

Decades later, a lover collected stray flowers in the cemetery, and crushed them in my hand on parting: poinsettia shred, full blown rose, orange, purple, pistil, gold. I composed them on the shelf.

All that grieving made me love my own life through love of the world, which is made of loss, endless loss.

To say what is simple: I miss the Earth, and I am on the Earth.

I miss my body and I'm in my body.

I miss my love and my love is gone.

“Can I touch you in high-def?” here's a stranger, and a bluish light.

What I ate emotionally as a child—marshmallows, pizza chips—I crave still, when I'm sad or
lofty, like, What should I do with my

What is life?

At Rite-Aid, in the candy aisle, I crave gummies. Worms, sharks and bears made of tendons and bones. As a child I devoured with a comfort that did not acknowledge any suffering but my own. To tear a garish label and eat until bright connective tissue stuck in gobs between my teeth.

At seventeen, a man put his camera down in the raw hotel light, held my face between his hands and said,

“It’s okay to feel good.”

So marred feeling good.

Horsehair’s dramatic snap.

I never practiced, loved only rosining the bow. All the gestures of care for my idle art. Pine and horse have come together! To save me! Not to save me. To say, “This isn’t good.”

Fingertips sapped.

But the sound was, anyway, all in my head.

It is hard not to be believed about your own body
and to want it to be fine, against all believing.

Countlessly, I have worn the slight gowns
of ill-fits and requested more crackers.

I have requested another upon
another heated blanket.

I've been helped to the toilet with the emergency string marked HELP,
traced the bold H, E, L and fallen asleep there.

I've been offered kindness by night nurses, straws
at my mouth, and also derision, and puzzlement,
delivered in varying guises,

whispered over like a child at recess, kneeling
before a cinder block with a pile of twigs
and one ear open to a more casual world.

A case of what to do—I have been
heavily drugged, handed the industrial plastic bag
containing my phone and dirty shoes, data
mapping my heart and respiration, a prescription
for something I didn't need, and told to go home.

Exit the hospital for somewhere else again.
Sky the gray of something erased.
Love won't pick me up at dawn.
Now it's a round thick window
faces the street. I track each dog.
Some dogs wear sweaters.
I boil the water.
My heart breaks.
I pretend they are mine.