

WHERE DO WE
FIND PRIVACY
NOW?



Dana Bell

fallen fruits began as a collection of poems for my mother, who lives in both California and my heart.

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The Bee Word

I have an addiction to slipping words into
conversations they don't belong
It's most fun to do when talking about politics with
men

My favorite is *apiculture*.

*“What do you think of the current negative
apiculture surrounding the president?”*

*“Do you think his nomination will affect his
apiculture with voters?”*

And *“What's with Elizabeth Warren's apiculture
lately?”*

They always respond well-intended,
That they think it's undeserved
That it most certainly will affect the polls
That she's literally the worst

And I never have the heart to tell them
That Apiculture
is the technical term for beekeeping

It's even better when they use it later in the
conversation,

Telling me that the current state of our nation's
beekeeping is going to drive us into the ground
That joe biden's ability to appeal to beekeeping will
definitely secure him the ticket

Without even trying,
They're experts in the keeping of bees

I'd feel bad for diminishing apiculture
But I'm no stranger to the plight of beekeepers

My words are out of my control
Constantly stung by the writers of the same
dictionary
The readers of the same honey-fluid language
Our words have meaning
For as long as they want them to

It's only a matter of time before
beekeeping takes over western politics

Clouds

A desolate,
arctic
wasteland

Where only elephants roam,
eating golden grapes
like Roman kings
They see the sun
as the most powerful
being in existence,
regarded as a God

But
the sky,
unknown to kings
and beasts
is clouded.
It always has been.

Cooking Steaks

I come home to my mother making dinner.

I do not want to tell her that my boyfriend
yelled at me that night,
the same way my father yells when it's
understandable because he had a long
day

She's cooking steak
She leaves it to simmer
Until it's ready to be put at the dinner
table, warm
but not warm enough to
burn us

She always tests it to be sure
Sometimes she burns herself first

My mother's favorite part of steak is the
burnt edges.

I have the same taste in steak as my mother.

Safe

Our Glass House Shattered.

Where will we find privacy now?

my mother

has been losing her
mind,
she spends days
looking
through cabinets and
cardigans
delicately searching
pockets made of
porcelain
and I trail her
as she burns
together, we smudge
the house

my father

he's there, too.

Echo

I feel special when
my presence permits a declined call
unopened texts
it feels unique until
I'm the one unanswered and
left out in the open
I see her eyes in the reflection of yours sometimes
I call again and you answer but
someone's in the bathroom
and he wonders why
suddenly I am short on the phone
but I am only shocked by the echo,
I can hear myself in the background

awkward silences

There is awkward breathing

Awkward heartbeats

Awkward thinking

But no such thing as an awkward silence

True silence would imply

there is nothing left to be heard

fallen fruits

in quiet corners of raised corridors
there have been covenants carved into
my skin

but my tree is withering, sickened
my matriarchal neurology tells me
that my mind was never mine, my mother's
hers was her mother's before
fallen fruits have fertilized our roots for
generations

I will fall, too
forget the roots as I feed them
no point in burning bridges built to break,
so I ruminate in healthy sores and politely open
wounds
my love, I will forget you

I have been forgotten too, I've learned
while carving etchings as reminders
meant to weather
the body and the mind never agree to die
at the same time

Big

When I was twelve years old,
My mother told me I looked ugly
In an ugly dress
And I asked her why
Holding my beautiful hands in hers she said
I will only ever tell you the truth.

Now I think I'm ugly all the time

Pepper

beating bleeding hearts beaten bloody by
themselves
there are days you spend alone
and there are days you are alone
there are days that become nights
and then days again
a cycle between sloth and sinew
tissues turned to sewing patterns
there are still pins where he meant to fix you.
time doesn't mind your tired body
you are always moving,
so you bleed yourself out onto his bedsheets
praying he will bless you with a compliment
he asks you where the condom went
he does not love you and he never will.

COASTLINE

I feel your breath
on the back of my neck
when I breathe
Your teething has gotten out of control again.
My arm,
bent
Positioning a map of the California coastline
you trace my water lines and tally my dark spots,
I have never been so beautiful.

A Valley, scorched earth
birthed riverbeds of firsts
there is still dirt beneath the concrete leaf
roads to cities atop mountains over
men who do not look like you but feel like you
entombed in smoke plumes,
rising
tired eyes red and yes,
I am older now

Where you traced me I have
tattooed coverups of other hands
i am feeling felt up and my patchwork
works harder to breathe than you have ever let me,
cut myself from good enough gods
clothed in tattered cloth

and buried beneath my family tree,
leaves before the first birds sing

Bottles washed ashore on beaches
carry messages when they're empty,
too
There are libraries in my living room.

Stay.
Read them with me.

Morning Breath

i carry my mother every morning
I carry her to the bathroom from my bed,
brushing my teeth with her held within my arms
cradling her with each cleanly caress
the weight puts pressure on my gums.
At school,
she directs my feet
raises my hand
but the pressure from the morning keeps me quiet
with men, she crawls into my ear and tells me
what to say
to make them happy
Make them stay
speaking for me and through me,
I carry my mother.

spaces

My mother and I are different sizes but we have
been squeezed into the same small spaces since
our creation,
we have spliced segments and loosened our
ligaments
to fit in our holes better
it is dark inside,
but light isn't something we were ever taught to
want,
we close our eyes, she says
this was our plan.
we are fine.

A love letter to Kierkegaard

can't disregard Kierkegaard
when he says
prayers can't change God
they change the man who prays them.

I've been appraised as prey before,
by men with two more legs than heart
Either they have none /
Or they're some Work of HP Love
crafted out of their mother's blood
smothered under covers of magazines
in waiting rooms for reading lessons
to one day read our Diaries,
Seduce us with words we've written ourselves
the Crowd-full of tired wives written for
one man behind many faces, some yours
the Repetition of a lie behind the Concept of an
Anxious door

tunnels

bell bottom bets kept a congregation of steps
back three feet behind a yellow line
i take the subway into the city sometimes
i pray for tunnels to keep out the virtue signals from
pop-up shops and mom-and-pop cops
humming murmurs and mumbling murders
I am less afraid than my parents, but
rent was less than half an hour and half our
time is spent making sure we can spend time
in time, i will have spent days in subway tunnels,
funneling myself into papers to smoke
on the street
(as both a statement and a defense)
and i'll have spent myself dry,
bankrupt my pickpocketed
reserves of empathy,
and i will pay for a ticket home
with my soul

Sweet

i have started breathing recently,
looking in the mirror and seeing
myself move sweetly.

i am delicate in my decisions,
and i think softly.
i smile back,

and i realize
i finally have someone
to take care of myself for.

russian roulette

i have melted through membranes
of men's brains in ways i dont think about
i don't care to.
why grovel at a loaded gun for kissing me?
I'll smile, still.
if there's confusion as to why I wouldn't just
scream, tell me,
would you?

i hate liars

he told me
as he caressed my lying thighs

shrines

he likes the way i decorate the
walls of my room with
pictures of people I love
he doesn't realize
I sleep in a shrine

eyes

i was born with guilt in my eyes,
a codified reprise of the being that created me,
i am so sorry to my daughter.
i have become her,
i hear her in my anger sometimes
i hear her when I yell and
i don't disagree.
i am finally listening to my mother.

dirty hands

The reverend at my church tells me
Mary was the purest woman
No correction
Mary was the only pure woman
She carried heaven in her womb
Give birth to the same being that birthed her
Amen

The preacher of their choir tells me
Mary was the purest woman
No correction
Mary was purer than me
She spoke to angels
Manifesting everything from nothing at all
Amen

The man in the pew behind me says,
To no one in particular,
Mary was the purest woman
No, correction:
Mary wasn't a slut
And I think he was talking to me
resurrecting in my mind
the time I lost my shot at the title of immaculate
mother
When I broke my holy hymen

But didn't give birth to the son of god
Proving myself not only a whore
But a useless one

The best way to be a woman is being a pure one.
Don't become impure.
Don't let yourself be touched.
But who has hands so dirty they corrupt your
eternity?

to my own

Many people have fallen down the stairs you climb
now.

The blood on the first step is not yours;
do not be afraid of it,
just aware.

They will become cleaner as you climb.

The clothes you wear have been given to you.
The holes and stains occurred before you knew
them.

You would be naked if there was no danger in
living.

Your consciousness can not see itself,
so build mirrors in your mind and mind the
reflection.

What is guiding you?

Does a hand know it's a hand?

Do you know you are God?

Correspondence

Call me contradictory but considering
your claws in my calves
I keep comparatively calm, contained.

composure can be compromising.

your consonants are consistently in consonance,
constant and coarse
you carry conversation while carefully cradling my
curves and my consciousness catapults
from the silence of cerebral celibacy,
my cortex concocting a cacophony of carnality:

consecrate my curvature with the clutch of your
hands,
champion my cheek on your chest,
casually cut the cloth from my clavicle,
consolidate yourself in my collarbones,
constellate under cotton covers,
i will call you a caravan of cabs home.

there will be congregations and communities
that claim our collective consanguinity
coexisting in the course of our contiguity

i crave your creation's continuity.

dream

he said i saw you in a dream

i said what does that mean

he said it means i saw you in a dream

i said what do you mean

he said i said it means i saw you in a dream

i said what does that mean

he said it means i said it means i saw you in a dream

i said what do you mean

he said i said it means i said it means i saw you in a
dream

i said you said you said it means you said it means
you saw me in a dream?

he said that's exactly what i mean.

Frog Men

I have been called a freak by
men who have said they would eat me
alive if they could,
I got a text from a man who interviewed me once
telling me he thought i was hot when I came for the
job
I didn't get the job
He told me he came and then asked for a hand job
it's funny how women employ men like that
because I heard most CEOs are male
but I created 12 new positions just last weekend
i am stimulating the sexual economy
working my way up wall street by going down
on men whose pockets carry pressed pills and
paper bills with the faces of their grandfathers
when I look at them I see the reason I am alive and
the reason I will die
many men make money my mother's maker could
not conceive,
trillions make me grieve
but i will kiss you,
your frog skin has poisons that make me more like
you than you like me
i was told that princes can be slimy and green
but fairytales were made
before the times of billionaires and million-heirs, so

if frogs can come from a witch's curse,
what of men makes greed?

shark watching

i
went
shark watching with my lover yesterday
he cut out my heart and threw it into the waves
as plum-colored plumes of my blood beat in the
bay,
i turn to him and say:
what the fuck?

The Virgin Mary Shelley

in my youth, i watched fathers
speak for god
who was mute, apparently
carried crosses and crossed carelessly through our
center,
we, in aisles of pews, their ribs
served the blood of the father
but the first blood Jesus ever touched was His
mother's
the 5th governor,
45th pontius pilot of this pussy
the limit of love you have for women you wear
around your neck like a cross of a religion in a
language I am not allowed to learn
Worshipping a God I am not allowed to love
speaking to a christ who did not die for me
the only constant in our books is that mary did not
have a choice
playing god includes when you add a life,
we learned that in the bible before Frankenstein
or did you not read?

caves

and so the prehistoric artist, refusing to paint with berries, was left with naught but his own blood to draw from

a thought

we're all getting replaced
with nuts
and bolts
and chips
and bots
and it's gonna keep happening
until there's no flesh left
on our
tiny
metal
planet

books

I've got books on my bookshelf that I've never read
I figure I'll read them all right before I'm dead,
but I know how I procrastinate,
and I do things right before it's too late.
So I'm afraid if I read a book,
I'll die the next day.

dig

You're so deep
There's dirt in your lungs

Morning

Coarse packets of sugar
Sprinkle in my morning coffee
Stains on my papers
Course packets like districts
Redlined and past deadlines
The clock rings, sentencing one
To cease and desist the day,
Seize, resist the way
The eggs on the stove top have spilled over,
Igniting the ants on the floor,
Setting aflame the pictures on my doorframe
My shoes are untied and I am late
I press the wood and wait for warmth,
Turn the handle and greet my neighbor,
The boils, glistening,
As I wave my burning hand

And-

Yes, the smoke gathers, like fog
In the valley of the bedsheets