Along this Haul
poems by
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The Confession

This is a dream I have,
a tantalizing strobelight
of picture postcards
flashed from the pages
of a mystery magazine:

An old woman’s wilted hand reaching
out to cup my breast, a stream of blood
from a rusted faucet, the razored
smile of a cat before the chase

A goat wearing a rosy crown of thorns
a whore with an angel’s tread,
a naked priest in vile communion
with a penitent

A quartz tear sliding across a face of dust,
a man wearing a prism of invisible light
for a pall, a darkened woman giving
birth to a broken cask of wine

This is a dream that I own;
a hidden, clutching, fibrous growth
of desire and pain, crouched
in the corner of my heart.
The dream never ends until
I wait by the deep water, where
a silver pool’s double reflection
reveals my own face peering up.
Poem for Meagumi

I.

I remember your arms, especially,
washing our laundry.
The river water splashed everything
up to your shoulders when you pounded
the week's dirt loose from our clothes.
From a distance, wet streaks of sunlight
would flash on your bare arms
like bright pistons,
quick white wings flapping
within your thin brown limbs.
The summer veils of heat
shimmered the glaze of your sweat
like a string of stars floating
in the reflection of a bottomless pond.

II.

In the evening air, your face became a moon
the smooth, full color of almonds.
Your hair, a frame woven
of ribbons from the night filled sky.
The spicy scent of pleasure
hung about us like another skin,
enclosing us, the halves of a seed,
resting in the hope of moist soil
to sprout fingers which could one day reach
to tickle the face of the sun.

Midnight Blue

I see your eyes
always open. Now,
even sleeping,
nothing covers them.
They are everything blue.
A blue that fills the mouth
like water. A blue bluer
than robins' eggs, blue-bells,
blueberry syrup at Sunday brunch.
An electric bright blue that pulls
like flame, teaches the sky a lesson.
In a cool glance, your eyes can swallow
more blue than two oceans can hold.
They can cut the light
like a thousand sapphires, big as stars,
and bathe our skins in a sweet blue cloud
which drenches this bed with our blue,
blue love.
The Luxury

of bathroom things
is my weakness.
I'm always buying
new herbal oils and soaps,
Sandalwood, Rosehip,
Jasmine essences, dried
Gardenia petals
by the bagful.
All-Natural Sea Sponges,
back brushes, pumice stones,
five all-purpose Loofahs
gracing the wicker bin
beside my bathtub.

The ritual is never simple:
the water must be hot enough
to slick quickly the walls
during which the oils and herbs
are generously added
and finally,
me: I slip in as a cloud would come
home, low over the horizon,
my head bound in a towel
like a gypsy come to read her own
fortune.

There is no object to all of this, save one:
transformation. I see
myself as a round,
round peach, sweet but
common throughout most
of the year. I would love
to be elegant and somewhat exotic;
I imagine asparagus,
long and thin and delicate,
most often outrageously expensive,
drizzled with golden butter
fit for a Queen.

Soon, like a bowl of too-hot soup,
the bathwaters cool and the oils float
like refracted light on the surface
of my milk white breasts. It is

the time for my return:
wrinkled raisins for toes and fingers,
skin just slightly too soft and chilled
to the touch

but a with a bathrobe to envelop me
like petals
and a book to absorb me
like a sponge
I survive the transformation
and sit in front of the fire
savoring the juice from
the delicacy that is a peach.
Upon Homecoming

I come home this night to find you have rearranged the living room again.

The floor lamp we bought for two dollars in Mackinac City which, time-before-last, stood sentry in front of the window (so people can see how beautiful simplicity can be, you said) and last time next to the front door (so people can’t see inside the house, you said) has been moved again who-knows-where.

I discover with my shin that the green sectional chair we found at Goodwill for five dollars which sat by the fireplace last time (so we can entwine in the dancing orange light and drink cinnamon tea, you said) is now against the wall where the bookcase used to be (so it won’t catch fire, you’ll say).

I bump and fumble around the inkblack room, each familiar step suddenly familiarly foreign.

And there, out of nowhere, like a hiccups, is the lamp: I turn it on to unveil your new design.

The oriental rug we picked up at our next-door-neighbor’s garage sale now lies perpendicular to the couch your mother gave us which sulks beside the stereo we bought from your sister over which hangs the paint-by-numbers Last Supper we got from a blind man on Main which is partially obscured by the rubber tree plant we rescued from the tyrant across the street.

And I realize, suddenly, that this is the way of you, your gift to me:

this rearranging of who we are, this beginning afresh; forcing me to bang my shin against what I know not to be there, leaving me eagerly groping for what surely is.
Deercreek

Every year the Dead blow in like stardust seeds and it’s hippies, gypsies and whatnot, a mellow crowd of pilgrims sprawled on the sweet, sweet grass. They sell guatemalan clothes and jewelry, psychedelic artwork and beer. They come as jugglers, dancers, carnival talents from a kaleidoscopic world of circuses and concerts that never end.

When the music starts, they spiral into action, a sea of tyed dyed angels, swirling hair and skirts, ankles with bells, they are ascending beyond their dreams in their grateful dance with one another.

It ends too soon for them. God waits in the next city, 80 miles away, for his children to blow in once more.

Notes on God’s Fleet

The classic image of Angel rests in the highest clouds of the mind guards pearly gates floats a halo over the blondest head cloaked in frilly, frothy, white gossamer gowns. Marshmallow chubby fingers pluck golden lyres and cheeks like cotton candy frame the red, red lips making a perfect O, angelic sound.

These angels are Victorian commercials: hollow images selling fabric softener, x-mas cards, toilet paper, nightlights. They are good for nothing but soothing children’s nightmares. Few who are older even attempt to believe because the hope of God’s white angels is too simple for this world.

There are real enough angels with us now, on this earth. Dark, and red as the soil, they grow with outstretched arms and razor fingers raking the skin and the sky and the innocents until halos melt like candles on fire.

They sing in waiting and blend their cacophonies into the thrum of daily living, subliminal, lips dripping red and making a perfect O, frantic sound.
Cycling

I am a ripple on the pale gray road.  
My wheels keep it all moving  
like a great snake wrapping  
itself around the cornfields.

When I ride with the wind,  
which secretly wishes for stillness,  
it smooths flat the grass beside my path,  
urges this ripple forward, and makes  
the snake a road again.

Driftwood

for the trees

We have found your remains preserved half in shallow water, half buried in the warm silt sand.

We float you back to land,  
scrape the mud, peel rotting skin,  
thrash you about in the water  
until you are stripped clean as a seed. Then,  
left in the sunlight  
your bones reflect the solid white of snow and mourning doves. You dream  
of leaves, of water surging strength through every branch, of unfurling green flags against an ever blue sky.