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Boxwood Communion

Boxwood frames the days of childhood,
the tangy nostril prickings of the bushy plant deliver
security, evoking a world that's steadfast, secure.

Pungent boxwood certifies that
suns rise into mornings of yellow beams,
moons hang overhead in silver ribbons,
boxwood leaves deliver a predictable world:
the ritual of breakfast, whole wheat toast drooling yellow butter,
orangey sticky marmalade, cream sunning in silver pitchers,
pink grapefruit globes, fresh fuchsia raspberries fuzzy like old ladies' chins.

Grandmother in her vestments of cotton sundress,
pale pink and baby blue, toting her clippers,
a basket for cut flowers, gardening gloves,
kneeling, weeding, pruning, among boxwood.

Evidence of her devout labors consecrated our house,
roses of pinks and yellows drooping and dropping petals,
sailing resonant sweetness across our lives,
sanctifying life softer, richer, into more than merely living.

Now when I need a benediction,
when I want to bow my head and hear grace,
when I have a desire to find the holy in a lost day,
I think of the odor of boxwood,
and I am momentarily blessed.

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Houdini's Magic

I thought love would redeem me,

I could rise from the ashes,

a phoenix in ballerina shoes,

dancing across the River Styx;

who needs a flimsy wooden rowboat

when you have love? I asked.

Love would make me good.

Charitable to all, kissing babies,

holding the door for the elderly,

never wrapping my anger

around you, or anyone, love

would scatter Tinkerbell dust

throughout my days, love would remove

my chains like Houdini underwater,

free me with magic, I would float to the surface,

but, like Houdini's magic, it was all

illusion. If I am going to be saved, sanctified,

I will have to learn the trick of loving back

and lure the rabbit of love from my top hat.

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CROSSING THE BORDER

Hot, chalky light fills the windshield. Flat. It is before Columbus--
you *can* fall off the edge. Dust, *polvo*, fine like grandmother's talcum, not
so sweet smelling, creating an indefinable thirst. Creosote bellies up to mesquite,
oil field pumpjacks invade arid, flesh-pink, parched land like neolithic grasshoppers;
the highway snakes under heat-soft tires, sucking the car along, wavy lines of
hot writhe upward from the asphalt. The Mexican woman's splintery fruit stand
sags over a bar ditch, a mobile home turned stationary stands vigil from behind.
Pecos gold, tousled round on round--fecund, sweet cantaloupe. The car intrudes
the deserted desert and crickets scream into silence. Dust shrouds the car, thick motherly
legs, *café* brown, emerge from behind the wooden stand; a child's tiny mahogany limbs
follow, skirted by faded flowers on blue and white cotton, ruffled panties, stick-arms hold
her mother's hand. Eyes brown like a bottomless lake watch, uneasy. "How much?" I ask.
Mother wages, holds up three stout fingers into air arid as a lover's quarrel. "*No habla
inglés?*" I suggest. She replies, as if accused, "*S ólo un poco,*" ebony eyes cast downward,
addressing silty earth. The little girl, burnished thin as the wind, hair of black pearls
sweetly seduce me into touching the glossy strands, "*Qué bonita,*" I offer.
"*Cuántos años tiene?*"
I invite. Surprise, gentle like the unexpected turn in a river,
rides on the Mexican woman's words and enters the space between us, "*Tiene tres.*"
Her head comes up. "*Es muy simpática,*" I compliment. We smile, two strangers, mothers,
sharing shiny black curls and the same syllables. I enter the other world of my car and
hear
three timid finger taps on the window with seven glistening lime-green cucumbers,
stuffed into

a worn plastic sack. For you, she offers, smiling, "*Un regalo*," a gift. Reaching across the border of my car window, I cross the border and accept the offering.

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Crossing the Line in Coleman

Farm to Market road 2230 winds into
the night, a scar cutting pasture from
plowed field, slicing yesterday from today.

To the left, through wintry chill,
down the dirt road polka dotted with rocks,
presides your old home on the small hill,
dressed in green shingles, holding forth like
an old woman secure in the knowledge
she is worth more than past beauty.

Silvered barn hosts family of owls,
craggy oaks bending and sighing
in wind's rhythm, branches calypsoing
partnered with the porch swing.

The distance looking from FM 2230
down the dusty road to your old house is long.
I see old family reels of film, our faces bobbing in youth,
shining hair, possibilities on every syllable,
expectations sailed onto yellow summer days;
we had no plan that we would age.

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Prevailing Winds: Advent

I.

How can I not understand the seasons when I
garden with my husband? This strong, tall person
who makes things move easily, facile, long lean arms,
knowing with Adam's confidence things will respond to him,
envied by Eve, the power of the apple she thinks, a poor exchange.
We bow with rusty trowels, rakes with teeth missing, worn stiff gloves,
all day, blending and sowing against the adverse,
thirsty droughts, icy rain spikes, battering winds ,
a husband and wife making hallow gardens between them.

II.

Husband and wife consecrate, say grace over what they find,
especially pain. They howl at the moon together
when demons come, keep holy water in their hearts
for protection against days when sun doesn't rise.
On dark days candles are lit so shadows will recede,
the dinner table an altar draped with weary acceptance,
they pour a glass of wine, share a meal, and in the process,
the washing of the glasses, putting away the plates,
they are born again to go out and stand in the garden,
rejoicing that bulbs planted in fall's premonitions and winter's chill
are bursting tiny, pale green heads through the soil one more time.
Holy comes to us in different ways.

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Offerings

If I were god, I would look at earth and
throw a storm or two down, wreaking small havoc,
flail leaves about, swirling dust into already-blind eyes.
Hurling and flinging a bit of wrath might get some attention.
Then, when the air got still as the moment when love has died,
maybe more still, like a country road on a cold night,
or the motionless of terror, I, god, would whisper words of love,
a lover present in this thick dark.

Like a lover, I would enter, I make you whole.

Like a parent I create holy and you.

I would save you from unhopeful death,
from fatal, messy accidents on street corners,
from living always in a future that never comes,
from missing the sacred presence of the veins on leaves,
of dew suspended on green limbs, greedily lingering before falling.

I would save you. I would say to you,
raise your head up and sing day into noon, and then evening.

I would beg you to hold the sun in the palm of your hand
for those who come after you.

But I am not god, so I fumble about the day,
picking up things, trailing after myself,
always wishing to be more.