

We Never Say Die

It will be said that he expired, like a long forgotten box of cereal behind a cupboard door.

Someone will whisper that he's departed, his soul a traveler sent through the exit gate of life's big airport.

He's been put out of his misery we say sometimes, pushed over the threshold of sickly to saved.

A crass person will mutter that he's bought the farm, turning over in the soil, food for the worms.

There will be talk about his transition, an entryway from living among us to resting in peace.

But he will have gone to meet his maker we tell each other, with the hope there is an opening for him in Heaven.

Someone may mix the idioms and say he's pushing up buckets or kicking daisies.

And we will say that he has crossed-over, passed away, perished, or even croaked.

But we never, and I mean never, say that he has died.

I Lost Her in the Spring

Her last breath blew steady
like a wish on a candle.
I watched her leave
herself and the only true thing left
behind is all the gold that will ever be.
Each spore in me felt her
unequivocal love weep out
and follow her away on an
auric asteroid beyond.

Careworn condolences
carry my cells now, a weight
so heavy in my throat my
epiglottis fails and I choke
on spit and tears that
wash away any sign of
seedtime.

She's no debris of stardust now,
but a transcendent collection.
Look up past The Plaides,
you'll find her there.

Dangerous Implements
after "Let's Split Up!" by Regina Rioux

Acrimony hangs between us
on a thread of Curio #10.
One hundred percent cotton
and spite suspend from an
ornament of bitterness,
started in the round and
ended a on single crochet
row of busted stitches.

It Starts as the Big Bang

of the body, cells forming
then folding, settling in a
sac of protection near the
center of the chest cavity.

The left side larger, stronger,
spontaneously beats with
its compact counterpart. Close
your fist to imagine the size

of your skeleton's motor, hear the
lub dub of valves contracting,
moving claret through chambers on
a one way run of animation.

Cells make the pace, a rhythmic
cadence of coronary circulation.
Always open, lights on in a 24
hour convenience store,

or a Denny's of the human being,
sounds of murmurs and servings of
giblets, junk food that leads to a
diseased end,

billions of beats from right now.

Morton, Mississippi

Grease pools in wells of curled pepperoni that coagulate on a slice of pizza in front of a girl, criss-crossed applesauce on a hard gym floor. She doesn't eat, she cries. She doesn't take a drink either as time ticks by and she's still without her parents,

immigrants taken from a food plant, sent only an hour away but she doesn't know that. She knows they're gone and imagines the raided factory now only full of half-processed chickens, feathers scattered and blowing in a cyclone of air from the big fans her father says keep them cool in

this hot southern summer. She tells her brain to think of the chickens and laugh at the way they must look, heads hanging off the table, arms askew like the plastic versions she banged into a pot with a mallet at the fair last year. But she thinks of her mother and how she often sweeps her hair away

from her face with a brown hand, the color of the mountains from where they came, a dangerous place they loved but escaped in the night, walked many days under an unforgiving sun for a chance at a safer life. No guarantee, just a prospect, worked for with strong backs, no complaints, ever obedient.

The chickens! Think of the whap, whap, whap sound of be-heading. Imagine the feeling of pulling feather after feather from flesh. Trade that horror for the real one, a girl with no security, no family, no knowledge of the next minute, just a slice of cold pizza on a paper napkin in another place she's never known.