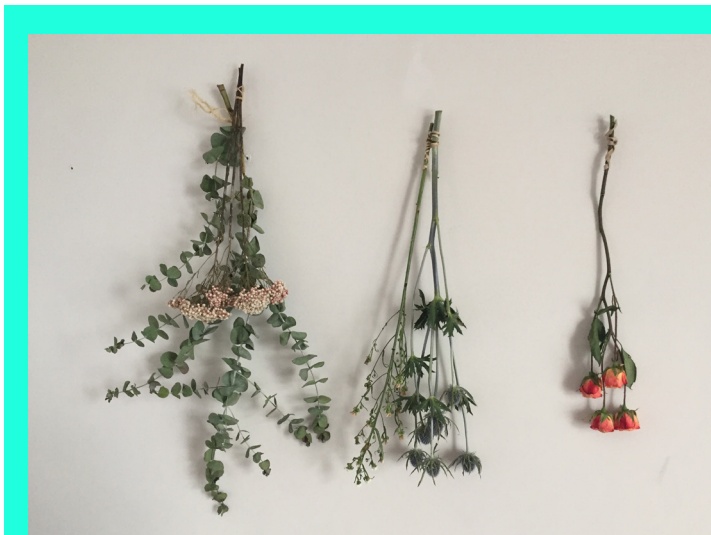


Bouquet

poems



Andrea Grassi

BOUQUET

poems
by Andrea Grassi

DONNA BOOKS
Toronto, Canada/ Brooklyn, NY
September 2020

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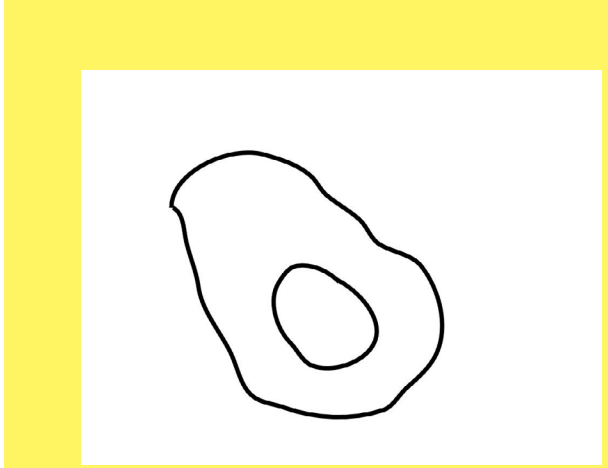
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minni

Sun/ Moon descend; slowly stab at once. One sad about it, looking away, the blade deep; the other enjoying the moment, fingering a strand of my hair in one hand and twisting broken glass in the other. Blood trickles down the front of my body, a river winds around my thigh. I wish they would wear my blood because it would be the most romantic. Don't put my tampons in a brown bag, CVS woman. You aren't helping. I will waive them from their strings. My hips are a basket of sand. And endless time. Nothing leaping out. Nothing rotting.

I think of Chicago. Seeing Saint Agatha with her breasts on a platter, oil and gold on wood panel. The painting is 5'7, my height. Her expression is serene. Italians bite into her namesake "St. Agatha minnis" in bakeries -a round ball of dough, iced with a cherry. There should be cherry sauce concealed inside the bun, for blood. Bite a breast and expect milk, you say. I imagine sicilian children running around the stradone with blood all over their faces. The boys not yet punishing. I wonder if their mothers get the minni to go in paper bags. Conceal.

Chicago. The moon arrived there a week after I had left (the moment I realized we truly lived separate lives). Perhaps I bled in anticipation. When I got out of the shower, it rushed down my legs. Don't look.



shapes

Her name was Blossom but it should have been
Chrysanthemum or Venus,
something with more bite.
But she didn't name herself. She never does.
The name is flung.
Flower girl says, "wait." Flower girl says, "hold my rope,
love," but you never declared allegiance, to keep still and
spot her. Still you think you should, in the world of shapes.

The sun melts to orange, and I want these colors to be the only
thing to stuff me. The name you called me becomes a dot.
Hours later, the moon slides open. An empty dish. "I can't
feed you," I scream. It shatters itself. We correct each other.

To tune the wheel you first have to spin it, to hear the
imperfection, then comes the oil, that is the congratula-
tions. Sit down in the forest with your clean towel. You
are a good shot, I think, as you wipe the come out of my
b e l l y b u t t o n .

Magella

The most beautiful girl I saw in Brooklyn
(Though tonight, when she talks, she has bad breath.)
How she can make her name,
that sounds like a chewy thing you can't swallow,
seem soft and delicate?
I won't ever get to understand her power.
The bundled up terror,
the knife of wit.
She first entered with two tacos.
Her body so tiny the meat seemed to balance her as she
walked towards.
I waited on the couch.
She leaned over the coffee table,
ate them with hot sauce,
told me about a 36-hour Tinder date.

I had only just met her, and I was a little afraid of her,
but that is what made me want to listen.
I liked how open she was about her relationships,
even though she wasn't at all my friend.
She made me feel less alone in my head.
I think so much about what I want to say back to her,
and my memory is so poor,
I remember it as already being said.
She says a relationship with me is the frustration of call-
ing the cable company,
talking to an unknown. No trust there,
I see.
But in some ways,
her knives, I bleed a little.
Maybe she would have put them away,

No trust there,
I see.
But in some ways,
her knives, I bleed a little.
Maybe she would have put them away,
the guns and knives and snakes she keeps at her pointed
fingertips,
but I wouldn't want her spirit to flicker away.
To be with me is to weaken.
A glow deeply radiates out of her chest, despite these
defenses.
A dish, the sun, her face.
She has angels.
I turn.
If only for a few years,
Magella.

tall bird

Happy birthday is the first thing you said to me. A sprite sailing down the block on your bike. And your shirt flapping like a pair of small wings. A tomato seed, last kill, dries in the corner of your mouth as you ask me to stand up so you can fix my seat. You lay on my stomach, but you are not heavy. You speak about delicacy, but you are not a flower. You are more like a creature - showing me your ways - pecking at potatoes the size of eyeballs, that roll all over my kitchen counter. Next you roll me on that counter. I lean towards you because I can't understand the way you eat that salty chicken wing in your bed at midnight - all teeth and snarl. Devouring something, but without disrespect. It's ritual. I want us to understand each other so we must teach our languages. Speak a new language, like a wand. This is what I've always wanted this kitchen to be like at this hour.

Is there anything as satisfying as a perfectly wrapped gift? Use your pinky to disarm the bow. Only silence when you bite down, only silence when I read you. I know your face so well, and that is huge because lovers are often looked at like the sun. Somehow this counter and you, creature, are a contract. A penny at the bottom of my bag when my claws were too dull to dig again. Play with my hair. Circle my palm.

But then it comes: words are dry and rewinding. You tell me I scare you. Here comes. ((Sun.)) Sometimes we knock teeth, but that is the price of trying to get inside the seals that hold our strangeness.

<MOM>

I did not listen to my mother. And now as I bite down on a green candy-coated maltball, my tooth cracks and so does the sound of my mother's laugh. When she texts me, I see MOM light up on my phone. It is always alarming. I think something is wrong. Then I see she asks me about my teeth and I lie to her about making appointments. When she asks me if I am getting a crown, she types "you have my teeth". When she asks me if I am getting a bridge, she types "a bridge, at your age". My teeth are soft, she says it runs in our family: they are yellowing and sometimes I think it might be easier to remove all of them and get permanent dentures. Apparently you only have to go every 8 years to get them glued. Or cemented.

When you pull a tooth you pull a root,
that looks like a road splitting
two ways.
Or a wishbone.

When the dentist needs to pull a tooth, they say: this tooth cannot be saved. As if I've failed it.

I used to like to watch my mother put on makeup: her lips always red in the morning. By the time she got home from work, the red outline only remained. Art. Sometimes her toothbrush would have a little lipstick on the head of it, because she had forgotten.

As my mother gets smaller with age, I want to protect her. When I didn't have a dentist, because I couldn't pay for an appointment or any work, she told me to go anyways and put it on my credit card. She knows something I don't yet. That I will need them. To bite down and spill blood. To tell someone to fuck off (the F sound really needs that exaggerated lip flicking on the front teeth). She never used teeth. She used scissors and her nails and her voice. She tells me: take care. I say: ok.



dinosaur son

My dinosaur son is always asking me for chickens.
I tell him to eat his veggies,
And he says “meteor” under his breath
Like death.
Like it’s a threat.
Listen, my son.
I look up into his jaw like an SUV
:You have small hands, my son.
In fact, I gave you none.
Mama can take you.

You aren’t even born yet.
You’ve already died.
My hands like my hips are empty.
But I already know how it goes:
You expect this to move

New fantasy:

I open the pantry and there sits sugar, milk, butter, flour
in fat jugs. Pour mommies, for all of us; with the magic
words we made during that free 7-day trial. But things
have to last now. Reality is rations. Small packets. This
is a suspension in time. It is not my old life, but isn’t my
new one either. There are only the new ways. And which
way proves we were happier: A bouquet drying upside
down on a hook, or one vibrantly sucking water in a
pretty vase to wilt? So sit with yourself—If you have that
privilege. No climate change porn. No hospital porn. No
economy porn. Your home is now a hall of mirrors. If
you are lucky enough to be gaining weight now, what will
you offer to everyone on the other side?

New fantasy:

Everyone gets what they need.

New fantasy:

One president is assassinated.

New fantasy:

Because he fucked us in the cleaning-supply aisle.

New fantasy:

That aisle is fully stocked with bleach and paper towels.

New fantasy:

He drinks the bleach, and we wrap him up so he can’t
breathe.

New fantasy:

We watch in the new time; poisoned, bloated.

New fantasy:

We come for the rest.

dDaddy

A daddy comes again. From birth, already a divine king.
Even as your nursemaid cradles you in her arms,
your sexual potency is evident in your diapers.
It is wrong but she dreams of you as a man.
(Incredible infant!)

In your first act, you suckle the rage lashing from her tits
(Savior!) so she can sweetly burn on a pyre in death.
As a new form of God,
you were brought to soil to wake
women from their marital beds.
To have them follow, expand,
open, and surround you with love.

But If you are so powerful,
Here is a test:
You should be able to suck the rage out of a dick too. ((x))
Not your dick,

the dick that you used a thousand times
to please the circle of dancing ladies
And the one you used to call forth your
great love, the woman of all women,
who forgot her betrothed for one fine night
of wildness
so tearing
the flowers bloomed and the subtle,
usually invisible, vibrations of earth swelled to orchestral
- !!!

Not your dick,

Those regular, every day, dicks
that can be entitled from infancy too.
and can be vile from infancy too.
Inherited, or taught through the darkness.

Have you been enlightened to suck the evil out of those?

Maybe you knew that women should be the first to rise,
being the mother/ the maker/ the beginning/
but I guess you didn't antici-
pate assholes swaying to your mantras
making no changes, just going deep-
er into the picture of a bliss to sell merch?

Do you see her power? Of course you do.
You told her not to tell anyone about it.

Where is your sweet pipe,
and flower held like a sceptre?



Sitting vows
(small tributes)

(I sit.)

I think you take some blood
before you fall apart,
from a connection not doing the work.

You and I mirror,
in endless flatlined reflections.

Pull east-west,
the gaze centuries deep,
until the shadows get too intense.

(I sit.)

You make a joint
to make an X.

The X you press into your skin
with your longest nail
through a bug bite
so it doesn't itch.

I can't search the lore for this itch.

All I discover is general:
left is bad, right is good.

My ribs feel like they are splayed.

(I sit.)

One memory loop,
your arms appearing from behind me,
wrapping around my waist and chest

The impulse,
and how you held,
even though you wanted to run.
Always when my back was turned,
you felt comfortable again
(because, well, the eyes).

(I sit.)
Now we are gathered here today,
at Super Foodtown,
/ really it is a bakery
and you see me at the other end of the cleaning supplies
aisle,
/ really at the cash
and we walk slow,
/ really we fumble
in one long line, to make sure
it is really us we see.
/ really we have to sit down
Then after the march,
reunion as we cry among the mops,
/ really we talk pleasantries
because we've missed praying together.
/really we say "take care"
Better than porn.
/ really I have to make my way home alone.

(I sit.)
I picture a green ribbon,
flowing out of my chest,
surrounding Lewis Ave.
Later on the train,
in the fuzz,
Letting go of the
the green ribbon, turning to smoke,
seeping down my legs,
disappearing into the rubber floor.

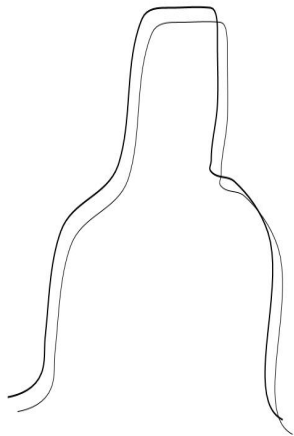
(I sit.)
Floral patterns and folding chairs, and teeth in jars, and
used books are small tributes.
You must listen, though.
You say: No one ever does anything for me.
The doubt creeps out of a message in the sky.
We are like a tree, or a strand.
Smoke, twist, milk, bone, de-bone, rot, repeat.
(I sit.)
The balloon floats up. The berry is too ripe for the belly.
The wooden train falls before small feet.
Somebody let the idea out, to wave around in the sun,
become a real place on land.
You lept, salmon from the sea.
(I sit.)
Old woman presses palms into the chair, fingers and
veins.
You say: Sit, because you will fall.
Something is forming behind her teeth.
After the nun slapped my sister, we went to public
school.
Something is forming at the tongue.
(I sit.)
My body remembers this place before I do.
Eternal scrolling in sent texts.
Call out in the wind, sharp:
She's got ten more teeth than anyone.
Sounds like a children's song.
(I sit.)
Everything to do with the way she bites down
when it is good and when it is bad.
If you haven't heard about how strong her teeth are,
you are in for a treat.
She's got the whole world in her jaw.

bouquet

Petals in the sink,
are an attractive mess
and the gift was made of flowers, each given to me
by other people's children.
It started to smell, so I threw it away.

I dreamed of a loaf of bread, that was shaped as a bouquet.
I asked everyone I saw to take a photo of me with my
bread bouquet,
but - as if no one could truly capture my utter joy -
I
had to take the photo myself.

The ocean saunters and a seal is dead.
Paws in winter.
Its body brushes up against my
leg. Iodine. Sausage coins frying in a
hot pan.
My husband must be dead.



*
the name of this book comes from Zio Giuseppe's
poetry book "Mazzetto" (1968)

