

**Mary Halvorson's
C O D E G I R L**

**A R T L E S S L Y
F A L L I N G**

The Lemon Trees

Smell of grease and mint.
Glissando female laughter.
Thirsty one spinning
tops. Gold outline of her neck,
crimped at its deepest plastic.

As cartoon backdrop:
lemon trees darkening, wish-
bones bit from a life.
Private crisis of the now.
These indolent visions, parched.

for Lawrence Osborne

double tanka

Last-Minute Smears

Your words
have meaning.
Blow me up.
Take me down.
Reap the whirlwind.
Last-minute smears:

Crazy stuff. Gangs.
Never a hint
unleashed.
Reported
breathlessly

at the highest levels.
This is a circus.
A joke.
A farce.

Grotesque.
The day is coming...
people will die.

No ill
will.

I have been a good judge.

Brett Kavanaugh Congressional Testimony, September 27, 2018
found poem

Walls And Roses

You arrive with daggered hands.
Anonymous spongy fields.
A headless bull in transit,
with a pregnant nest of dimes.

Anonymous spongy fields.
To the front, walls and roses
with a pregnant nest of dimes.
Behind you, a shrinking man.

To the front, walls and roses.
Wary of the hiccapped copse.
Behind you, a shrinking man
subletting a swarm of lives.

Wary of the hiccapped copse,
a headless bull in transit.
Subletting a swarm of lives,
you arrive with daggered hands.

Muzzling Unwashed

Trace amounts of dynamo smolder offbeat eyes.
Well-pressed behind proper dress, shoes and wedded hand.
Muzzling unwashed thoughts not meant to vocalize.

Floozy legs, stockings caught inside a dropped sunrise.
Camouflaged by warblers' wings trilling reprimand.
Trace amounts of dynamo smolder offbeat eyes.

Fruitless attempts to salvage all the butterflies.
Copycat polkadots branding spurious land.
Muzzling unwashed thoughts not meant to vocalize.

Lavender grasses flatten as they mime disguise,
while shepherds' purses inhale lives that fast expand.
Trace amounts of dynamo smolder offbeat eyes.

False decorum wells up and boxes out the skies.
Filtered smiles posturing for excess on demand.
Muzzling unwashed thoughts not meant to vocalize.

Out go the insides, hoping to legitimize
a monumental moonlight rigged with contraband.
Trace amounts of dynamo smolder offbeat eyes,
muzzling unwashed thoughts not meant to vocalize.

Bigger Flames

Orange head secretes a lie above you.
Sentencing the lacquered sky above you.

Reflected in your stretched out hand in hand,
trees-to-logs cartwheel and die above you.

Fluster of sailboats chop half-speed upon
rose leather ocean, fake dry, above you.

A coy curtsying earthquake kneels the ground.
Yo-yo-ing trees liquefy above you.

Well now it's your house, set neatly on fire,
its blistering heart bloats high above you.

Atrophied crucibles, charred Russian dolls—
a necklace of flames comply above you.

Politely uproot the moon-trampled sea.
A starlit sigh, sewn awry, above you.

ghazal

Mexican War Streets (Pittsburgh)

The nostalgia: instant. Across this cracking tiled hill, from every angle I'm sprouting weeds. Cobblestones climb the slope, cut by narrow alleys slicing open a hundred years. Proudly abandoned houses sit tucked and peeling painted, bent by their own breeze. New ones drip glossy windows and plastic realty signs. At the top, amid tumbled back-country sprawl, ropy trees wreath the city view. And there, the rusted remains of a netless hoop: echoes of shots, made and missed, clocking safe the darkness. The occasional person greets me like I'm not

A blank intruder
of concealed spots, pretending
I don't fall in love.

A Nearing

This morning archives sanity,
bringing a dimming love.
Heaves us partway out,
punishing the plan.

This evening rules a nearing,
might be stars on loop.
Fills us warm and churchlike,
speakable only to dogs.

Aspirin swallows our excuses
while flights take seesaw drops.
Leisurely forage emboldens.
Lazy pictures loom sincere.

When will we recover?
How long will the burning stink?
And wash those sharpened knots
lodged between surrenders.

Any time, I can stop it.
My brazen will to try.
Starkly focused silhouettes
within half-hearts, a tearing.

Drop those dresses.
Reveal unspeakable lines:
studied calculation
of discarded open thighs.

free verse

Artlessly Falling

Artlessly falling through overstretched arms
delivers the night underground, a hole.
I spool splintered smiles around your gray
eyes, sparklers devouring The Southern Cross.
Old patterns crystallize, form double salt
I feign to dissolve. Eighty-eight stars wild.

Cards leak our future, decidedly wild.
The Fool: unnumbered, white roses in arms,
feathers in hair and his heart sieving salt.
I grip my reveal, an ace in the hole.
The Hierophant hoisting a triple cross,
two fingers skyward in homage to gray.

Pull my hair, dulling from neon to gray,
totaling childish fancies gone wild.
Rescind these faint lines drawn too late across
my odd face. Keep the bubbling ghosts at arm's
length. Find a last-ditch way to swallow whole
the tastings of a life below the salt.

Trucks blanket Brooklyn with sheets of street salt.
Shoes secrete outlines of mountainous gray.
Snowdrops not yielding this winterized whole-
sale storm. A feasting of wool to breed wild
sweat, wetting regrettable prints on arms.
Denial soaps gentle lies on the cross

we bear. Sweating plastic whiskey, eyes cross.
Cloudy rim pulsing and happy with salt.
Dizzy circles blur into two tonearms.
Medicinal clicks squeeze sleep out of gray
mourning windows. My clarity blows wild
reasons, ever-forming, down that black hole.

You wouldn't call it that, but it's a hole—
smothering lackluster limits we cross.
The prognosis clings to my mouth: a wild
hurling of bottleneck wounds rubbed with salt.
The chill of your love (love fading to gray)
unfolds as a serpentine race of arms.

A hole-in-one warns me: not worth his salt.
Crosscut that arctic orbit as a gray
whale: wild, breaching. To hell with your wrong arms.

sestina

Lyrics by Mary Halvorson © 2020

