

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &  
Professional Papers

Graduate School

---

2015

### Good Reasons

Rachel Mindell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>



Part of the Poetry Commons

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

#### Recommended Citation

Mindell, Rachel, "Good Reasons" (2015). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 4454.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/4454>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

GOOD REASONS

By

Rachel Claire Mindell

BA, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, 2000

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in Poetry  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT

May 2015

Approved by:

Sandy Ross, Dean of The Graduate School  
Graduate School

Kevin Canty  
English

Karen Volkman  
English

Joanna Klink  
English

Mary Ann Bonjorni  
Art

# Table of Contents

Good Reason	1
Bedtime	2
Down Dear	3
Newtown	4
Sluice	5
Real	6
Good Reason	7
Ziplock	8
Cards	9
Good Reason	10
Chile Piquin	11
Chile Ancho	12
Good Reason	13
Cash Register	14
Segal Trash Project	15
Lodestar	16
Doomsday Darling	17
Myth	18
Ossuary	19
Ossuary	20
Chile Aji Amarillo	21
Night Mirrors	22
Diamond City Ghost	23
Good Reason	24
Sermon on the Green of Capture	25
Naga King Chili	27
Fighting Season	28
Spruce Street	29
Landscape	30
Good Reason	31
Good Reason	32
My Best Shoes On	33
Cafe Poca	34
Tip	35
Devil	36
Half Bad	37
Listen to the dress	38
Palomas and Spruce	39
Yes, she pursued herself	40
Bottles in a Brewery	41
Years One Two	42
Attention span,	43
Pass	44

## Good Reason

And if he had slept the night before  
with his dogs in a kennel to keep

from falling off the earth, or they  
being unmentioned but implied

having broken down the door sometime  
later, then the younger pit bull

might not have bitten that cop's face  
and missed death row by an hour.

Imagine we had lingered  
together moments prior

on a thin blanket from that  
rez rest stop, a coyote and

his crescent moon or that  
we had a loaded gun

on the bed. We were  
lost and we were losing.

We were clang, bang  
and boogie. Blacking out

is indeed some sleep we  
managed to come back from.

Please come back now.

## Bedtime

The alarm is set, the kitten  
on her charger. Unable to sleep  
or be slept with I bed down light  
again waking up to that oh no  
in the night. Lady make me  
lady made me break  
all my systems  
in mere hours fresh  
thigh I was printed up  
like a plum, insides  
runny with love.  
Pull over, self. Put on  
the pads again prepare  
to get jumped. Pull over  
I told her I'm going to be sick.  
A lady did so feline in her mechanical  
toothbrush spendy and artful, articulating  
reasons for the wall. Well you see now the wall  
protects everybody. My claw marks  
straight up it, my nails  
in everywhere. A perfect gag  
in my lipstick mouth - blue with teeny  
white flowers. Forget what's coming she said  
and sink into my warm pit  
with that safety smell.  
Don't get your heart tied.  
I held the flag and signaled the cars  
to motion without enough time  
to choose. To listen deeply  
for the worms of future doom.  
They join me now in the opera box  
to survey the rubble. They crawl  
through my sheets and dangle from  
the fan. There's no gallery like home-  
coming. No crypt like warm chamomile.

## Down Dear

Down I dove this is a given. If I hear voices,  
at least they're all  
my voices. Sometimes  
I get kissed  
sometimes punched in my mouth.  
This is my heart. As is with high hoping.  
This is the world I play over loud. This  
I can see and wish to, high as a hundred dollar habit.  
Loving, stepped on a whole ant pile. Shall I hold forth,  
stick fingers  
in my ears,

surrounded by neither, better  
nor? I won't struggle. I don't remember,  
was I very ill? This is how  
I like to grow, I said  
to Jenny. We were in her car, full with junk.  
Some lousy journal:

Dear young  
me, get off the road. Dear me,  
you're not leaving  
this table until you finish  
that verbiage. But that's how I like  
to grow I told her, in dark tough soil.

## Newtown

Photo one at the art opening taupe rusted with me standing right.

A backless number by the cheeses.

Those rose practiced photographs their milk teeth spoiled by memento.

Thus my failing to make it out

beyond the open bar, prize gala or even two exhibits talk about trash.

Down on my fours later in an oath

for tile, I desire to flee outwards as in melt through, sometimes to imagine

the disaster not found somewhere else

and no less real. My coworker in newtown confides over smoking

*I could stand to loosen up* and so on.

In an apartment novel to these my things. The partly papered cabinet,

a light switch in the main room that

connects, in fact, to nothing. My only good shot at a second childhood

where neighbors say shit like *maybe*

*I AM going to kill people.* How much is my own private abnormal

and how much have others

brought over, a mixed palette, two boxes of assorted crackers

on the Goodwill table, shimmy.

Upstairs this man, his thin turnips in a baby pool the cats pee. I bang

my ceiling with a broom. Par course

the job too, a talldark clutter. Some one day I'm hip with an espresso

pull, Boss fills two overhead slippings right up

a fresh apron. So maybe he doesn't heart me. He does, however, hear

that I've called in. I look out the window and a stranger is

yelling. His bike waves three more American flags than his mouth has teeth.

## Sluice

Mouth of a samurai, a semaphore, sandwich.

Talks like trousers down ankles. Pants on their knees.

His dirty chatter: a lattice of teeth and palate

tonguing up a trundle bed of poppy cock, a pleach

of bruised pears. When you heed him go weird with it,

iterationing, all torque and verby mealworm, spitfuls

of nasty this and kitty coo that. Boy spouts hot gibberish

like preppers in the mayonnaise. Boy speaks flouncy

make you lie down. Your name reworked out his pie hole

goes spinning top a cardboard slat, on its head and tripping balls.

Boom box got no handle. His name: a rifle and sissy's panties,

skeet on toast. He is so awful velvety with that nonsense.

Behemoth of the slant-wise double rainbow phrase.

You invite him home for moonlight terrycloth Scrabble.

You nail your fixtures to the wall, jelly up.

## Real

The tight road's bare enough  
excuse for let me roam.

I wish this to untie.

I want my iron dress  
to fall in one piece  
off. Here, catch.

There: coop, canyon.

Wait or watch, we do  
in hope. The frame of door—  
its own made house. My god,  
you said, our lives are so  
much stuff. Scrawl,

I do and survey the curtains,  
your lights (that truck) fade off  
to speeding. I slit a hole  
inside my sleeve, sincere.

## Good Reason

I've chosen each person  
I will love from an artistic  
composite the dealer  
brings to my door how  
about the Kandinsky  
I've got money now  
to make you square off  
with this rigid boundless  
tool chest take  
a number it lasts  
longer I've got front row  
bleeders for sale  
all the things  
you thought might  
fill the hole how  
her hair billowed  
out from that dark  
in sessions I maintain  
my grip over this bled  
gold all I remember how  
it floated on everything how  
I ought to grip and press  
too soon for the moon too  
late to hold me I drag you  
from a bath by that lovely  
red mane groove and  
hitches, screw and bolt when  
to feel I'm never certain  
how to feed she said tombs  
make the town run  
she said I'm fucking  
with you don't let me I said  
you need to keep  
safe I said your secret  
to mine tether and teeth look  
how the marks wore off how they will

## Ziplock

He could shoot you for \$10 and you know this. It's not about sweatpants or a wifebeater just up from screwing your bottom bitch all day, it's about what you prey on. Pack, poke, pray, pork, play. Scales weigh you for nothing. Lives fit into smaller baggies at higher cost. Safford, Vail, Wilmot, Florence. The outer rings of it. All day pajama attitude with gats I get it. Me and mine. Close to the center. If you get lost stay put. It's easier that way. I'll find you. I'll put you. I'll pay the higher cost and brave the outer realms. Here's a hankie wave for mercy. Shot in a parking lot who even thinks about that anymore. Wouldn't know him if I saw him right now - old criminal with barely any heart left. Barely down for one last go on the panic slide. Barely anyone at all.

## Cards

They could never say you hadn't tried. Full houses burn faster. I have two decks, one for each kind of party. Is the suit what counts or is it the styling of our shared illusion. Perhaps the meaty heart with its monotonous visitation: no out, no out. Fire in the theatre. I didn't fold, my means were bent always. Apparition, you will not go. It has never been your turn. In Spanish, one's go is described as who is being touched. Does it touch me now or you? The flames began when the game was nearly heirloom. From a tent that summer in flood, I heard the river rising, leapt out, watched the cards flying as though dealt hard in high water off the edge of Mooni Falls. Count your callings, your luck your lucky. Here's a blanket. Your house is gone. Don't tell me to appreciate the fucking moon, blistered monument. Who says I need to hurry. I need to think. Two pair here but what are you holding? What are we waiting for?

## Good Reason

On Saturday morning, sage  
jumpsuits among families  
who wear jumpsuits  
on the inside. I bring  
but am restricted  
from taking.

Was it lucid wickedness.  
Downstairs back then  
was near insufferable  
but so what the firearms.  
I often wore no shoes  
in no car with no watch.

Now, Alcatraz sandwich.  
Away at college. Brake foot  
miles off the brake.  
Clinging and tearing  
in turn. This will hurt him,  
I say. My leaving.

And he will sign up  
to be hurt. He will enlist.  
Ma'am do you have a shirt  
with sleeves. Do you have a baby,  
a daddy. What can you steal.  
What rocks to bury over what  
cell phone you don't have in what yard.

## Chile Piquin

Staccato small

you create

your own means.

Tiny potent

sauce everywhere

and rather pleased.

Your rapid dissipation

of heat, it goes tick tick

tick, speaks vinegar, salt.

I palm a teardrop

full of sand.

Praises be,

chile of the lady

Cholula whose bush

boasts conspicuous

perennial nectars.

Bisexual flowers!

One stub barefoot

and cultishly stepping.

I believe it,

you bomb things.

At the markedly

diverse garden party,

Piquin surprisingly

behaved. Proud but small.

Without feeding on flares,

I cultivate greater industry

by giving everylive thing

its sporting chance.

Blood drops

at the tips of a shrub

and the birds enjoy them.

## Chile Ancho

Sweet domestic chile

4:30 p.m. Friday.

Discard skin

before serving. Smoky

humble with abrupt berry

undertones. Dusty heat

is a small machine

looking for something

you think does exist.

You think it's you.

## Good Reason

A lantern at the glass ledge  
leans for exploding.

I duped you once, spice bit  
with longing. That acidic

fiery heat all still-life  
music mid spin. Habanero

to evoke coconut, papaya,  
a deep throat burning.

Your tongue comes out.  
Go use this lifeneverfair

you sought—go paint some  
walls with it. Main ingredient

in jerks and other  
sauces: never mean it.

## Cash Register

Where has the money gone? Into what frayed attempt at hold on. I'm coming. Hooved keys tally, measure time its short contraption. Dust cannot cling to curve—resplendent ivory for resistance. The moss, dirt rusted semblance of shorn hair that might take off but instead coils meticulous, waiting for the sale. Two top row keys haunt, four diverging at angles, damaged to torque. I wanted numbers that could stand the metered footfalls of eternity's instrument. I wanted the straight narrow of simple math. Commerce will never conclude we simply calculate divinity faster and with less visible handiwork. Huddling together twisted drunk up off the bar stool key pad shooting from our slotted mouths. Certainly there was violence that night. I push down on you but your wandering eye, your shorter leg and smaller shoe. Nothing is even ever but thus the grand balancer, silent dirt charging interest, phantasm. Money clumps in ripped out tufts even scalps keep their fur. Your check, my pet. At your convenience.

## Segal Trash Project

To an interviewer, A.R. Ammons explained that *in passing a great mound of garbage off the highway* he had found *a single image that could sustain multiplicity*. In tossing my own bagged refuse I perceive the meshed intimacy of neighborhood discards. Baby shoes, vacuum parts, rinds of various color and thickness. That close touch in a far bin, enfolded

but plastic safe, like some intercourse. Certain volunteers have floated in drifts of their own one-week trash for art. Trader Joe's O's and paint swatches mark cash, as drunk blue drinks and coupons fly counter. Moolah measured by milk made without milk. Take-away boxes surround one brunette in a black cut up bathing suit, smoking, tiny and quite nearly drowned by bleach products in spray bottles. The junk of each life serving

doubly--strangers given dimension by unanticipated Frito's while affirming what we might have presumed sans rubbish (funded) by way of stance and a strong willingness to look back, look up. It is later revealed that certain participants edit their garbage. A curation of liquids and solids. How much and how many. How often.

Color, shape, arrangement, depth. Pizza Hut Meat Love, Hohos. Though no participant is naked or engaged in any lewdness, the photos provoke a debauched erotic. The high fructose womb. My own secret wrappers wouldn't spread so wide so long. The garbage gyres and the sewer traps and all the major zones of achievement we've gone swimming for fully dressed.

## Lodestar

You are not  
a runaway train  
so catch yourself.  
An author writes  
of the *descent*  
*into heaven*  
*onions praising*  
*their own skins.*  
Before it even begins  
it begins to hurt.  
First here then  
here too also.  
Say no I don't say  
donut. You are not  
a slow descent.  
Penny not her  
Christian name  
told us to pray  
before slicing  
onions when rinsing  
drew the same  
outcome. Hasta  
la byebye tears.  
Stews drawing  
more flavor from  
don't. A fine dice.  
Her husband  
sold things.  
Stopped a fan  
with his hand.  
Be decent.  
Was it guns?  
In volleyball does  
one yell got it  
or mine? If you  
reverse the tape  
the crying sucks itself  
up by the tail. A flight  
takes off ass backwards  
just then as passengers  
continue to applaud.

## Doomsday Darling

You might imagine near anything  
about how the jet planes fly low  
enough to read, the red enormous  
moon you saw before anyone else  
meaning it was over, finally, all of it.  
The stagnant hand on a windowsill  
and the pie all molded. The wind  
plucking flowers and toppling pots.  
What used to be Ohio making it  
snow as you wave your shirt for  
the drying, mercy. Nothing around  
here but hunger. I would say how  
I kind of liked it better when we  
had cities outside. I would search  
for some natural, harmless explanation  
while refusing to twitch an eyeball.  
This is conjure stuff, dummy.  
I would pull out the binder of unclean  
witchcraft and try for some company  
to smear the napkins and fill ashtrays  
or wait frozen and tall like roses, come  
to pluck me out. A black magic  
fiddle, bandages, the surest silence.  
It's still easier for me to remember  
the gentlemen's club where they sipped  
warm milk than the room in my boarding  
house when the lights cut. Where I'm much  
too tired for time travel. Mostly  
what's left are those noons we rushed  
the season for pleated coats, pocket watches  
wide open. Full with all the truth you might stick  
in a thimble. Tripping over our tootsies  
or giving each other the olde twisteroo,  
half an ear and nary a single teapot. Apple  
straight into the barrel. Till the skeletons  
proved dirt's main point the long way.  
Everyone but me took a lease on life  
to outlive their stay, drove the wagon  
till it just wouldn't run, bleached dry  
like so much desert flotsam. Just this morning  
is it, I'm alone here and not a single toot-a-loo.

## Myth

It's winter,

so and so says

grey. Says it should be

greyer and full with more lines.

The church with its white roof

against the turtle sky. A grey belief

and several more churches,

the smell of churches

incensed against the lines of trees,

the trees in convergence

with the church and its goers. A grey

tree-like coming and leaving from church

against a sky more tree than tone, more

line than full. The fullness

with more scent of church

than green of grey or going

or coming. In lines. A tithe.

## Ossuary

Kyrie: I was unafraid, foolish, I confessed  
from the zygomatic crevice to a breeze unnoticed: through worship, my cartilage  
bore up text in hot spews that spattered: in worship my patent powdered  
shoes: sleep was a wind chime: I plucked the flies from an orchid growing out  
the stairs: horses heart: I shattered pots and hands that held pots: I ate  
tourist pork dumplings and wild cabbage: coat of arms: visitors reprimanded against  
touching, flashing: fillet of fibula: *you alone are the most high*: spine,  
disarticulated: a hairshirt does no inalterable damage: I climbed  
a ladder to the altar, pressed my ear to each hollow: Baroque  
embodiment: in worship, I spanned the stones: I teased the elbow joint  
to extension: My sacrum of mutiny and a patella for frost: all at once, a coin  
to the pile: I counted over fifty bones in my slender claw, warm like toast:  
in worship, I stole the bonfire, burned a witch of long winter till her broomstick blistered:  
proximal, intermediate and distal: I rolled my neck in the circles of a timepiece: I signed  
my family name with rib and instep: honey warding off evil at the dinner table: cuboid,  
talus, I tucked my tender: coat of coat hook: I was an untimely guest:  
I recognized my own middle ear, knocking against the nave: I lit a flame  
in the Epistle garden to feel that hidden chronology: flashed about like seed.

## Ossuary

And so I was slicked to that ancient ribcage: a chapel made  
from more unpeopled bones than could girdle a football field:  
in worship I beheld the taut chandelier, ivory garland and cropped  
skulls, a femur spanning each gapped mouth: in worship I came  
to revere that colorless future: I sat without tensing my toes:  
I filled my mouth with accurate gags: I worked my stretch gloves  
to exceed every finger: my jaw clicked: in worship I disinterred  
a mass of fine feet and wrists leaving my own atlas and axis  
to the basin: I priced my half skeleton at \$2, 580: in worship I spoke  
Czech beneath all 206 human pieces multiplied into the wall or  
hung one from another: in worship I was high Gothic  
vaulted: I planned my mausoleum like an architect, a tree house more  
than likely given my long legs: in worship I no longer questioned  
the lucky score of building materials: I hit a right arm followed by a left and a left  
and a left again: nothing remained but duty: I jailed myself with plague: turned  
my flesh skinside out like a jacket: I pressed my silence into the vesting room:  
my eyes hung back in their pits as the ministry rose: that history may soften  
my knees for long sleep

## Chile Aji Amarillo

Gold common  
causing trouble pepper.

In exact time, both  
searing and slight.

The line drawn in a substance  
that moves. Potatoes, chicken.

We liven up the pool, filled  
with parties for two full days

shaped like Peru. Don't you  
prefer the Southern Cone,

a spot near the window?  
Citrus lets the getting

get better. In other words,  
tamp this. In a rebirth

until 1996, world's largest hot spit  
semi firm producer of coca leaf,

a body thing, done fast  
blew awake whole villages.

That antagonizing  
pungency, heat 4 to 5 inches.

Unknown but heading to revenge  
a killing. The sunset of hots,

dying maybe but waving sweetly.  
The bell for supper.

The traditional dipping sauce,  
and the cracker that can't

perfect our rampant directionals.  
Hands up, you yellow cocksucker.

## Night mirrors

The book says who are you when the guests go home. I go room by room blowing out light bulbs tamping the halogen with a fist. Thirty-five bobby pins to spill from my headpiece a sundae of clothes for the teal carpet with red lace en fin. A certain delicacy to the garbage disposal's teeth, iron bed skirts, windows blackout latched. The mace by my bedside nearly dry. And the knife? Again a friend couple departed from yet another home roast dinner—what do they squawk in their cars together coupled from my drive by foil leftovers and a wooden spoon? Stop counting to one I will not. Where is that steal swan to carry hence forth mine. The other with whom in a dark of bag I might ripen pit to pit. When did I grow these dumb ears for my very fancy face.

## Diamond City Ghost

After several booms and more bust, I left a key, texted  
what, froze to the wall outside. It snows, it is snowing.  
The dark broken in so many bent places. My fist  
through the gritty bricks. Need brought us  
this collapsing mine, rising dust and an aerial  
photograph of what never was thrive, who's to say  
faith we haven't and we won't. What keeps me  
getting gone I honor, what wounded  
finger blood-wet glued through chill  
to the knocker. We had spoken about teeth,  
how they signify in dreaming. How else to protect  
oneself when pinned or breaking down  
life to serve life. Two trailers  
would be enough even with no  
general store. What luxury to simply up and leave  
our specter. Please rise now. Give thanks  
get on kiss that road. When what we  
warranted: two banks, three saloons, jail  
and a whorehouse. Ruins imply this too shall, knees  
to chin: the new dark of 6pm.

## Good Reason

I'm poised just now on the end  
of an offering since it can't  
be right, to give up on oneself  
just like that. He will always too  
but without good reason.

How he shot rifles at cans, swung  
the bottle, stirred Nyquil into cocktails  
and lied my pants off. I couldn't get a day  
living off god knows what.

How he has no phone credit now  
and I write no letters. How I write  
him nothing because of Dick who died  
and Emily who rehabs and Michelle,  
deep ended. Noel, about to lose her bar.

How I'm cutting an escape key made  
from private paper, wobbling. Perhaps  
a loon perhaps the lake. Art and sleep  
and drinking. One-night stands and not  
the kind of deadness you come back for.

## Sermon on the Green of Capture

Out with rich,  
and in  
with promises,

promises, dedeed a one twig winter,  
kept plants

covered, he goes up some stairs and to take  
the roof.

---

On the carpet  
earlier, with its weave

in full sun,  
nature would close  
his eyes and let the plastic

cups swarm all red. Enjoy  
that big science beyond the window.

---

The whole meat  
of the pony ride. In time,  
no open rock.

You've been  
spotted soon

you'll be striped. Run:  
sand works soundless, most  
unlikely man for the capture.

---

He may part clouds  
a wee ways back,

who thinks of fault when  
chasing fat houses  
down the spill.

Discount. Small patience for  
magnificent breakdown,

---

small price for glass in  
the rubbish and tin  
on the fire.

Were the messages  
untimely, ultimately

the fault of the machine?  
If you wanted

---

all that dynamite  
delivered to one location,

why didn't you say it.  
He's chowed plenty of stone.  
He's buried plenty of ice.

A penguin  
under glass. Why so hungry.

## Naga King Chili

In a system which aims for conversion to metrics of the heat pain experience, one million Scoville means several hearty shocks. So said, extended exposure to drastic capsica relieves from given receptors any feeling for or since, as in the mouth free to ghost. I consider some anger and then swift absence, that mother calling us into the pit and a taste for lemon tip, grass, tin petals in lit down fields with what senses might hang on. If most heat is known to come from seeds in a chili's placenta, India stays far enough, where a contest winner ate fourteen Naga King chili's for six hundred dollars risking terrible body failure, the atlas broken seeming that I see with each red skin swallowed his action bellied forth. Between us, a boat to some breaker. In the blender, spices. On my tongue is a suggestion that stays shut. Brain fire hardly. To hold oneself steady and burning requires the balance of thousands



## Spruce Street

This morning  
our dog licked  
the drawers open.  
Already I'll shriek.  
Footprints, my love  
a giant with all  
the right hates.  
Nature for one ounce,  
nature that funnel.  
Outwardly dinged,  
he had a safe spot.  
The many-chested bed.  
If you could, cages.  
Cycling of riverbed  
his mother in and out  
of things. Our truck  
was failing am I so calm?  
Extensively snow as ash.  
Snow on mesquite  
largely falling mid-route  
Easter weekend with no  
sticking. Indifference oh,  
that dream? Javelinas trek  
it through touch loss  
of keys and trouble  
with doors advising  
our city in packs  
strange for desert.  
Friendly breeds  
that vary in color  
and down to  
their one speed.  
A slow piss  
taken behind me  
in the dark.

## Landscape

I suppose I prefer desire to bodhisattva and the cycles of my nothing animal. For example, I repeatedly choose longing over lunch. If you mapped lack onto nature, well you'd say it came out desert. But you're blind mad when green roars. Blue and green with their torrid monopoly, high horse emerald stare and hand descending for miles, so peaceably, to be kissed. To be fussed about like a near blaze. Leave me in among the strip mall cacti or at my corner up north albeit urban with this catcher and a coin. They say wherever you go. They say I'm going right now

## Good Reason

I-10 to Wilmot, dust storm  
on the road to penitentiary.  
His shoulder isn't well. Not quite  
enough for lifting rocks at sundown.  
The doctor in the next cell breaks  
scar tissue by hand while I pass  
through the detector, escaping  
with a confiscated Ed Hardy lighter  
to keep for months afterward  
and fire up everywhere. True Love.  
A light for the tunnels, the scales,  
and smuggling, wrapped tightly  
in the danger drug of himself,  
shooting it again and again.  
He asks me to send him  
a birthday cake with a file in it.

## Good Reason

The nieces know only pat phrases.  
He's away now. Off to college.

Joined the army. Working on uncle's farm.  
Watching birds from a stolen room on the freeway.

It was all worth it say yes sir, uncle willing.  
No, I'm not afraid, wasn't going anywhere anyhow.

He dreams of nothing. Nothing is a twin cot.  
He never here was, saw nothing and neither was I.

Neither was the brown rug by the rez blanket  
nor were we ever skull and peacock.

The new girlfriend went in for him though, first.  
Six months in Oracle, ten dollars for outbound calls.

Despite her daughter, 7, it was time,  
time was leaving. The car loading its road for me.

Yes, broken and what does that mean.  
I bring books but he is restricted

from taking them. We lived through  
the aftermath but slept away the war.

## My Best Shoes On

I let the gin infuse the ice cubes  
and bid the stylist, touch me.

Here is my hair a million ways.  
Here are the stockings I wear to your funeral.

Flipped all up out of my head  
vulnerable melon. All our buildings collapsed

with you. From your floppy mouth, from  
your industrial suffering all down.

With you gone, I want my comportment  
more perishable, capable of breaking

in more of the right hands, loose  
stance in the face of house fire.

I will fold my shirts and eventually I will die.  
Enough to say there will be new pronouns for

my objects as they are dispersed. And a copy  
of you that rolled away on a cot with suspension,

your frail echo how the wind moves round.  
To keep is to throw into the blaze.

I too will soon be the reach beyond my analysis,  
a stick. Rather than a tongue extended.

## Cafe Poca

For the first shift she told me wear black and that the sexier that sexier is better so my pleather and fishnets strapless sequins the ceiling flooding from the upstairs hotel stinking yellow cooler pads hanging low above the service station and vintage slippers over military boots with forest green eyepaint I carried that menu board like a censor bar like a strippers daytime audition monologue sassy at turns so high I might explain huitlacoche or quantum free-range organics memorize balance count cash light candles answer reservation phones fill waters horchata serve pitchers chips waters Bohemia waters salsa salt salad higher than higher than high ball snowball eight ball bowling ball my head at dawn still fit to rage coming around corner corner at turns so coked over I couldn't describe machaca de pescado

or pescado or a fork to a table of seven hungry boys who always tipped in excess out for Saturday and top shelf honey It's fish It's like fish It has teeth order up 2 mole three platos four with salt a frozen pitcher throwing up bile between greeting table 1 and serving table 12 smoke rings by the dumpster to the odor of monsoon Raquel get me a teener for tonight lovely wonderful awesome I'm so glad wonderful super anything else anything else I can offer enjoy enjoy your night enjoy your day enjoy your weekend enjoy Tucson have a great afternoon have a great time wads of cash falling out my pockets after the smell of garlic and beans in my buns or braids black nails clicking on every bar all night even still even now

## Tip

I rely on her story for the surgery.

The care corner from which I pluck a line  
about a woman on the phone  
to the police she'll soon  
lose her slim care and  
cartwheel out the door

for good. But now  
her good hand

grips a tan receiver  
that would bruise

a chin, fragile poor  
body to which we aspire.

Grown and proffered in some future  
she need not return to, not for this tale. For  
what will become of it atop a blade,

it need not tell the time's end  
in a dark tunnel.  
We know there's something we should seek  
but this dim looting

does pleasant enough for gazing  
nowhere. Phoning through the channel  
air concerned/faulty. The police all tied up

## Devil

Death doctrine  
at the peninsula  
is key-shaped,  
hand-drawn.

Equitable to  
squat diddly,  
ghetto level  
thread counts.

Here, you dropped  
your hankie. Between  
dealers, we put  
a pebble in the door.

Slamming fucks  
with the levels –  
we have them just so.

We stick with diddly,  
expect equivalent  
levels, equate and  
familiarize ourselves  
with TARE. My bone  
hand ruffles the curtains,  
my levels are high then  
higher. I've been perched  
here for decades. Text  
when you're outside.

## Half Bad

I have half-blood from my Finnish kin, their sledding dogs and gypsy tongue.  
I find myself fuming vodka out the sauna. I tickle ladies but don't indulge  
the strike of birch. From them also: fits and fish soup; degrees

of climate-inspired madness, including ambition, wandering—lustful  
ice swims at midnight rainbow—above all, Uncle Arnie, who drank himself  
out of a left eye. I boast a horror of herding, antler span, also rope

like Kai used in Duluth. The hand that loosens the noose is left to the falling.  
An age of payments on credit! Winter is a note that read: life is complicated,  
feed Sam. But who gave me so exhibitionist an art that it has pulled back

curtains on my maternal family's polar days in which two hours only  
evade blackness? I've followed my fickle gut across the country, living in phases:  
mole, mister. Nosing with ink my scarce view of world. I owe everything.

## Listen to the dress

The truth is a home haircut and a dead bulb  
the street seen through a gingham dress  
heavy damp, strung  
from the window frame.

A sink trap below and the window  
wishing to burble. Tell me  
about the realest things. Show me how  
you comb. Traipsed about,  
the dress held downing and sad  
it said to the can't cart of my mind, that  
let-go skull, it said real isn't this street,  
isn't rolls for supper or the biggest batch  
of mail, wad of dough. I went wet, I went  
heavy and isn't that home.

## Palomas and Spruce

Javelinas were stanking up the street. The dog banged her head with howling. Backing the house, a parched lizard praying at the kitty door. Horses in their adjacent pen circle walking. Soon there will be a nothing sound. The coyotes squealing mute with arched backs to the potential overdose slumping at the neighbor's wall. That evening he must still be alive. The leader for a javelina pack's thin line of two blocks looks both directions at the stop sign. Dog descending to its belly beneath the hanging ristra, garlic. Pans in the bone cracking of their boil. And the lizard dried akimbo with lightness now behind an armoire. Not a hoof from outside. All ceasing as the moon sought to slide from her skin, each shadow a fleeing stitch.

## Yes, she pursued herself

And here she was sliding a note under the door.  
I don't despise you, I've just determined  
you may have misunderstood everything  
the whole time. We seek the naught  
but perceive ought only. I believe in sideways.  
I put my mouth everywhere.  
I bruise my own. I ought to forgive you  
and forget my darkening skull.  
My song of besides and meanwhile  
off to the great blue serious. I didn't triumph  
but at least I was in attendance. Unravel  
the oracle to a single string and what.

## Bottles in a Brewery

The past is a tremendous bottle collection.  
Our barely remembered remnants of security, function  
exceeding function. Veiled quiet shuts you down  
with handiwork. Let me be left ethereal, alone  
or bygone, bottle striking. News says the brewery  
gone bust but the brewery will never go under.  
Spindling fingers to your merry blind throat. Hot neck  
linked and latched, hot neck. I love you human stay  
golden. The bottles churn such sweet mechanism.  
Dead nerve of the long past or guts still sparkling  
while the soul streaks outward. A spider's docile lace  
dressing vessels for commune. A dizzy glee. A doily  
in the dump pile. Nothing is free save disappearance.  
We pack in, hold hands, toss tips, grip manes.  
Spittle of foolery linking our mouths. Pass this.  
Out. Is what I sense sudden ease in the round sound  
of the choir's oh. Flat fall.

## Years One Two

A glow marks the doing or going. I live this  
before but much better. In that time  
having forgotten what noise for an ambulance.

Our house of newly square practice resoled by  
promise, skyward with minimal routine,  
Saturday leisure. Each door with at least two

uses and just one teensy hole, the fat wall  
of three-toned paint. New words arrive  
every day, yelping. Sudden ivy and up-dos.

Money in the mail. A newspaper's bang  
each morning, slippers and dinner party lala.  
The cushions refusing lollygag. The cushions

frightfully aligned. I mature  
overly sensitive, grow a touch screen.  
Very good Botox indeed. Night gels

and Creamy French potions, spendy,  
of exact proportion. Nothing going like habit,  
fall comes again, but we don't have to.

Sudden sighs that turn gasping.  
Long hours reading directions on  
the Comet can. A compulsion to replay

the scenario where vats of sudden acid burn  
up soap stars who come back alive another  
season played by a new actor. Here, my baloney

sandwich spiked with venom, a meditation.  
The distance between some far lovely  
slew and the weight of this room.

Attention span,

we were standing  
around the fire  
but you sat  
on the dirt  
and wouldn't  
stop texting.

I wonder,  
wander.

My head's  
liminality  
nets a loose  
cage and  
your binds  
are blinding.

C'mon then  
let's get down  
on real brass,  
pull time's belly  
back and grip  
for spine.

Let's sink  
down in this  
forever dirt,  
really dig in  
our dying  
heels. Here  
are my hands,  
here my hiding.

I hunker  
then shine  
high breams.

I douse you  
in all this  
nothing I've  
saved up. At  
some point  
the road starts  
to head only  
downhill and  
apparently  
some folks  
dig that.

## Pass

When I spell out my life. When I mash  
through the versions. When I'm in that region  
in plain reason in the morning or when I mourn  
full with it. When I spell out my strife  
so as to bow in persuasion. When for no reason  
it's dawn. When for no lack of vision  
I cramp in my middle. When the accounts  
change quickly. When faster  
than telling, and with no cause,  
this race with those torches.  
When I fell off my life. When  
I did it for the relay. When for no reason, when  
the light passed from hand to  
hand onward, could we say.