

Birthmark

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

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CONTENTS

Auguries of Migration /	11
Lunchbox /	12
Prozaic Skies /	13
Toy for a Rebel Girl /	14
Lilith /	15
Weeding /	16
Self-Portrait of a Mother, 1863 /	17
Map, in Parts /	18
Party Politics /	21
Solitary/Riverbed /	22
The Garden That Never Belonged to Us /	23
At the Dinner Table, Across from Depression /	24
Stoner, or: My Father's Shrinking /	25
Sankt Bernhard /	26
Gretel Without Hänsel /	27
Parent-Flood /	28
Mutter/Kuchen /	29
Diary Notes from a Young Self /	33
Affirmations for a Social Climber /	34
Sadhbh, /	35
Britney's Bargain /	36
Bonding /	37
Self-Portrait of a Daughter, 1963 /	38
Hades Gothic /	39
Seductive Blonde Gone Savage /	40
Rebel bi Orgasm /	41
Tale of Love Spells and Other Monsters /	42
Nesting Doll: Venus von Willendorf /	43
Canine /	44
Tidal /	45
The Pole Dancer Sees Cupid in the Mirror /	46
Cleopatra's Flashlight /	48
November Bed /	49

Sunrise over Mussenden Temple / 50

Orion the Hunter / 51

Poetry Submission / 52

The Grim Reaper and the Empress / 55

Hay Fever / 56

Cooking Class / 57

Composition X: Vasily Kandinsky, 1939 / 58

Instructions for Matting the Shine of Your Hair / 59

The dream in which I cut my comfort blanket into leaves / 60

The Bathtub / 61

Apus / 62

Rupture, Patch / 64

Tomatoes / 65

Observations from a Restaurant / 66

Pink Tram Line to Margaretenstraße / 68

Scrabbling / 69

Dublin Elegy / 70

When he brushed my hair I knew I loved him / 71

The Killing Kind / 72

On Enniscrone Beach with my Mother / 74

Acknowledgements / 76

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Maybe I am a maned wolf
lanky, tremulous legs
as if I stepped in something
knee deep and dark it makes me
look as though I can dance or
keep it all close to my torso
this is why I skitter when alarmed

— Nidhi Zak/Aria Eipe,
'Self-portrait, with shyness',
Auguries of a Minor God

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Auguries of Migration

It was summer, before the scent of rain.
And the swallows fled the farmhouse
quicker than you, spoon-feeding milk.
You sang, bent over my crib, that lies live
shorter in the small mouth of a girl,
while the toads outside kept croaking,
prophesying the fatal snow of night
until dawn rose over the rippled pond.

The day after you were gone.
I couldn't find you, would have gone
insane behind the curtains, had you not left
your fingerprint on the smudged window,
pointing at our sighing plum tree, bee-stung
and purple with July's kiss. No trace
of Hungarian Jews moaning under snow,
cones heavy with sleet and ache—

only a garden, & bathing in light.

Lunchbox

You sliced the mealy apples from Aldi
into eight pieces, five days a week.
I didn't like the taste, but I loved

their half-moon shape. You braided
my hair, tugged on my thick strands
so they'd stay in place, my scalp burning

with your worries. The girls in school
had sesame toasties, cookies, pitted
cherries fitting the tips of their tongues,

their hair shiny like a golden coin. I wanted
toasties, too, but you bought rye bread, ten
cents per sole, you put your foot down.

Please buy Nutella instead of Nussetti, just one time.
You wouldn't believe I'd taste the difference,
your hazel eyes a shade lighter

when I passed the blind rest at my aunt's.
One more time, you laughed, incredulous.
But still, you'd spread Nussetti on those soles,

counting your copper coins on the kitchen table
as my tongue grew sour to you, only my strict
plait dragging me down from my high horse.

Prozaic Skies

Pink hearts in a window sparkling frantically; rain cold in February's riptide. I will look every day for dog poo waiting on the sidewalk and its cunning ploy to stain my steps: sharp yells and your pushing will follow me as I grow up, afraid to put my foot in it, no longer seeing the sky above. Your sky is grey, weighted with acid rain, and worms lurking to creep up from the earth. Stray cats pacing behind bins. You don't believe in Valentine's, but love is all around you, just stop forcing it into a heart. At home, my mother knows. She knows I'm here. She knows I'm eight years old and picking out a gift for her. For you. With clean soles and unspeckled legs despite the poo and the puddles. You request red wrapping paper with white hearts and your fingers around my wrist are cold and damp. Just like the weather, the clouds pushing further and blocking the sun, streets covered in muck and then snow, falling softly as tiny crystals, latching on to our coats, glistening for a moment before they melt.

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Toy for a Rebel Girl

He was not my favourite toy.
Ugly, wrapped in his grey fur coat,
glass eyes mirroring my sulks.
Two teeth waved like white flags,
hiding lips: if he spoke he'd surely lisp.
His body was stiff, tough muscles
ready to beat and punch and run,
a bow drawn to the maximum point
of tension before the arrow shoots out.
His leather-snout crumpled and faded
in the salty drops from my nose.
He didn't have a name as he had no
parents, so I christened him with the power
of my flesh and skin and sour fervour:
Stone-Grater, that should be his name
strong enough to bite through rock,
until he found a way to the sun-bound
meadow where even antiheroes play.

Lilith

versus the Code of Hammurabi (written ca. 1750 BC)

I left Eden when the grass turned envy-yellow and snakes
crawled on open wounds around the apple tree, flesh dripping red

like forbidden fruit. On leaving, I was thrust into space.
Now I'm the lunar apogee farthest from Earth, a void space

you named Black Moon. I'm the death of space and stars, darkness
in the pit of your stomach and hole in your heart. I'm not

a planet, not even a place, I'm merely the idea of a God too weak to love.
From eons away, I'm hovering over Adam's throne like a ghost,

and I'm telling you this: no demon has ever drowned. Because I dry
their rivers by drinking. I can hold more water than God's flooded earth.

In the book, ink on paper, I shall own Adam and call his walls my home.

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Weeding

My father was obsessed with weeding:
patio weeder in hand, no morsel of moss
 in the cracks between paving stones
 escaped his picking and plucking.
And the lawn, *oh!* What uproar at the sight
of a dandelion leaf, budding, screaming
 the arrival of a sunny blot on the green—
 Ha! Fierce cut with the trowel, uprooted soil,
his hands could rest then for a while,
steadied when all was in order: *pure*,
 overlooking the blood-brown wounds, until
 he spotted the blooming red between my lips,
 growing louder and wild, stubborn roots
hiding cunningly in cerebral crevices.
 He cut, pulled, dug deep unrelentingly to contain
 the plague, but the weeds always won the fight.
I never asked him why he did it, his answer
 was planted within me
 from the beginning.
 Life is chaos, and the tormented exorcism
of fear.