RETABLO FOR A DOOR





Michelle Penn



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EU authorised representative:

Lightning Source France

1 Av. Johannes Gutenberg, 78310 Maurepas, France

Email: compliance@lightningsource

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A retablo is a votive, created in thanks for protection or a miracle.

A woman is a gallery of retablos, every edge, every overcoming.





Our fingers afford the fragility



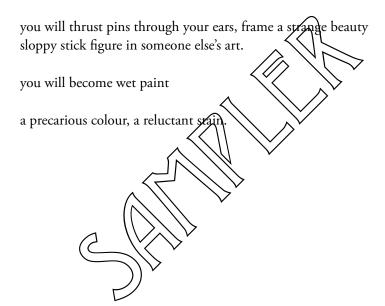


Retablo for wet paint

girl, green bead necklace loose between lips you do not yet know your face.

or that a body is a boundary, not a filament.

soon, you will drift on a raft of definitions, anxious to *become* correctly. you will step too gingerly, spend your days weightless and walking through mirrors. years will feel like a cold nap.



Retablo for the obscure

We wear crystals on our eyes & forgive the lands that birthed us. Our bodies are tiny, our feet lithe. They carry us across arrogant highways in a single step. We hide behind balloons, blackbirds, behind our hair & masks of our own faces. We long after paper airplanes in flight. In our dreams, we howl pain into mountains of scree, then button our collars high, never torture a new day with yesterday's nails. Sometimes, we forget our own names. We slink through headless crowds, fall in love with dust. Our words form pillars, cradling impossible houses. We bleed light, yet we're fleeting, rare, like comets.

retablo for a bell

bell

green, heavy

in the girl's hand, fleshy shapes swelling from its skin, mountains perhaps or flowers

iron, solid

dangling by its silk cord, connecting her to something vast and breathless and wanted

of course a girl should have a bell

weight

to carry with her

its sound ringing entrance <

what a bell might be, and a gi

its chime, aluminium loop

trailing a strip of paper to catel

the tip of the wind, strike ringer to bell

the sound

summoning her to its tight temple

and she follows, defiles herself to meet its ideal hungers to become ephemeral as wind

Retablo for the child extravagantly praised for writing The Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin

How I learned to grow larger by being smaller.



retablo for bird-girls

inside stairwells
girls flock
kicking off
their shoes

school uniforms morph
to plastic plumage
beak-masks elastic
bird-feet
discarded
in a heap
undressed triangles
of orange felt
muted)

skin strafes coment
words pass
(secret rules
piling up like
eggshells)
their calls
echo off-the steps
they take
each other's soundings

(strokes of kind fury)
learn to gauge threat the way they catch light slipping through dusty glass

inside stairwells

bird-girls

jab one another

with costume beaks

flutter their feathers sharpen their feet

and their voices

the bare weapons of their bidding



Retablo for the burnings

Bless us.

We are bulbs of air. Our pleas float as we stretch our spines, try to stand tall.

Bless this act, this recitation

the rain of words shielding and punishing, teasing with power stripping it away in ribbons like the skin we argue with and about, a hand cupping a shoulder, every brush of body

and why
do the gods (so good, so merciful)
want us donstantly prostrate
faces to the dirt before they raise

bless us

in our ambivalent gestures every candle, every dip of a finger into salt water

a grace foreign and unpronounceable and still we do not defer, we do not defer enough we hold ourselves in our own hands craving.

Our fingers afford the fragility.