

RETABLO FOR A DOOR

SAMPLE

SAMPLER

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RETABLO FOR A DOOR

SAMPLEX

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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.

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1

Our fingers afford the fragility

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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.

you will thrust pins through your ears, frame a strange beauty
sloppy stick figure in someone else's art.

you will become wet paint

a precarious colour, a reluctant stain.

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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.

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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 girl

its chime, aluminium loop

trailing a strip of paper to catch
the tip of the wind, strike finger 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.

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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 cement

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

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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 constantly prostrate
faces to the dirt before they raise
us up

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.