

ADAM'S RIB

*When a man I love hit a woman I love,
what I wish I'd said, but didn't:*

Inside Adam's rib is a kitchen. A yellow
kitchen. Inside Adam's rib is a container
of bees. Of scars. Of chases.

Inside Adam's rib is a wish. A woman
is a wish. For something more than salt
on your tongue. A woman is a wish
for something to puncture lonely.

A woman is a balm. Inside Adam's rib
is a remedy. A resurrection.
A spontaneous eruption

of wings. All of our possibilities
peeking skull-out from between the legs
of God. A rib is not a sword, Adam.

Do not use her as such. A rib
is not a mold. Do not expect her
to keep your form. A rib is but a strip

of marrow, a strip of life
upon which other life grows.
She is greenhouse. She is home

to paintbrush. Do not twist
it out of her hand. Do not ask her to take
back her glow. She is not in charge

of the moon, though the moon doth
forget himself. He thinks woman pulls
on him. It's why he reveals and

retracts his story one month at a time.
Yes, she will pull on your bones
bring their dust to your mouth, say

breathe out,

scatter yourself. You are larger

than you behave, Adam.

Woman is not something to worry
in your pocket like a coin. She is

her own set of ribs, something to encase
a tide. Close your eyes, listen
to the waves. They speak

of your mother who, yes, did bend
at the hand of your father but came up
no less flower. A woman is not wilt,

she is a stalk. If she has to, she will root
in spoiled water. So, why would you feed her
anything less than wingbeat?

She doesn't want to hear I'm sorry.

She wants to hear the bees in your chest
making love. She knows of what
you are made. It is not fist or thrust.

It is woman. You are made of woman,
as much as she is made of Adam.

Adam, give her your knee,

the one on loan from God. Fill it
like a teacup with honey, offer it to
your resurrection in the kitchen.

CIGARETTE LIGHTER

This is for the woman who makes your blood
run siren cold. Wrapped in flashing lights
her ear-shattering call causing your husband

to back out of the driveway. This is for her
pelvis, unnaturally flared. Early. Like a runway
for bees. She was never a calla lily, always

a moonflower. This is for being able to see
the reach of her reflection across the still
water of his night breath. The way his shoulder,

when he's near you, tucks in on itself like a lapel
with her name written underneath. Even when
he's not wearing a shirt. Especially when he's naked

does all his mammalian fuzz, the invisible hairs
on his chest, belly, the ones you've run your chin down
too many times to count, those tiny translucent arms

wave like underwater fronds to the rhythm of
her swish. Across town her forked tail shimmering
under her nightgown. When she sleeps, her breath

tastes of salted caramel, whole fruit syrups, and
his cum. This is for her. The one whose fingernails
you wake up with in your back as you swim in her

eye, the searchlight she's fixed on your house. Go
ahead, step out from behind your apron. Try to
get your breasts to dance like anything but prunes.

Entice him with a shave or grow out
in the place where he so greedily used to bathe
his face. But don't count the streetlights

under which she waits, or the number of times he
checks his email behind public restroom stalls.
Go ahead, put a candle under your mattress,

but don't expect the mine of your worth to cough
up anything but coal. Hell, go ahead and burn
down the house. Set the edges of your life

to the color of the cigarette lighter
you threatened to hold to your face the last time
he backed out of the driveway.

OCTAVE

Mama, I did not see him
untie you in the night,
your hem the pulling
of a string at the top
of a full feed sack. I did not
see the thick stem
of his index finger break
your seal, or the way
his hair, slick, stuck
to his forehead. I did
not see him put me
in your eye before
he put me in the middle
of the road called your
future. I could not
possibly have seen
his gold molar reflect
the lantern light.
But I did feel
the wheel of your wagon
break against my infant
spine. I heard the mama
cow mourn. Her
low moan land-whale grief
match octave with what
you should have shrieked.