

## **Fox and Camouflage**

It's an Attica gray afternoon, air like metal,  
bad food, child abuse and felonies.  
I'm a killer. I belong here. Abortion. OK.  
I had three. That's the conventional method  
women use to calculate their dead,  
their confirmed kills.  
Also still births and childhood moralities.

Men have actual head counts, medals.  
Encounters they wear the scars from.  
Women murder with more subtlety.  
It's about sets-ups, fallbacks, subterfuge.  
It's not bullets but the caliber of the lie.

It's the season for coats trimmed in fox.  
Such pelts encourage a woman's intelligence.  
Her opinions become elegant, refined,  
syllables repeated, extra points for style.

I prefer camouflage.  
Women kill in pewter. The grand finale  
is the chances callously missed.  
I didn't tell my mother I loved her  
before she died. I, on her deathbed  
with soldered shut lips.  
I know a crime is.

She wanted a bouquet.  
You sawed dried reeds, rusty sticks  
for a porcelain vase. A wire sculpture  
riverbanks would refuse, dismiss as orphans.

A man might keep a cabinet for rifles.  
I store a collection of lives for sale.

Today church bells feel like a lash.  
I don't believe in god. I don't trust anyone.  
Last week, a slow wind through maples  
felt like fingernails on a blackboard.  
It's migraine season and I have medicines.  
I carry them when I leave my house  
for balancing exhilaration and despair.

I have an accumulation of wounds.  
Want to see? Take the glass to my chest  
and push in, edge first and the answer is red  
like the check for wrong spelling in third grade  
I never forgot. My lesions are like babies  
and kitchen philodendron. I nourish them.

They're the silver service I polish and shine.  
Aunts have to die for this inheritance.  
Cancer. Insanity. A bad divorce or two.  
Then we call the dish festive, a holiday  
tray, carve the turkey, slice cake, pecan pie.  
That's why old women eat alone and die  
alone with their tarnished china tea cups,  
hand-painted roses in pink rows  
on the edge where your lip goes.

Sometimes I'm beyond the margin, can't find  
my way back. It's like falling off the rail  
of a bridge into a charcoal enormity.  
Drowned women from ferries and rafts float  
blue as monk's hood and larkspur with you.  
This residue, what leapt from barges, slid  
from riverbanks, the Ganges, Thames, Genesee.

They were cutting mangoes by moonlight,  
waiting for the lilac to bud. Then suddenly,  
the sliced wrist, blood like a spigot.