

The Man on the Steps

There he sat, smug, anointed, and oblivious to the cold
yet a coat of dampness clung to his ruddy skin while he
muttered and spit into the silent snow watching it sink
deep into the contours of whiteness as he tied his shoes
in double knots, preparing to continue his journey into the
wee hours of darkness.

Inside sat a woman, watching and waiting for the shadows
to depart, frozen in her silence knowing one kick, just one
tough kick with shoes tied tightly would break down the door
and leave her trembling in her worn cotton robe.

Anyone who had a heart held tight to its rapid, steady beating
as he steadied himself, made no introduction and turned to leave.
She watched him take slow, steady steps with the streetlight now
At his back.

Supreme Untouchables (wrote this after Ruth Bader Ginsberg's death)

We've had this reality since Thomas was wrongfully nominated
and confirmed to the highest court in America. My divorce was
mid-stream, a container filled with relentless arbitration. I watched then
like I watch decades later a similar scenario brewing. Kavanaugh
cries before the electorate, his tears swallowed whole by his
nominators. I stand as firm today as I did back in 1991;
I believe Anita Hill in honor of **truth**.

Before I Knew the Word Hymen. (another look at our supreme court)

I see her as I come around the corner to the lunchroom. She's
swooned a crowd talking with her hands, her arms, the soles
of her feet. It's 1973, she's a senior next to my junior, my
next door neighbor since I was six, but I barely recognize
her stance. I see her mouth move her narrative, but I
only make out bits and pieces
new york—a vacuum—numbed tugs—hymen
my eyebrows stand at attention; my mouth twitches
raw nerves as I notice the dark shadow along the side of
her face, a recurring mark left after her father stumbled home drunk
and mean; so mean her face turned a purple plum for weeks at a time.

On the bus ride home she sits next to me and tells me they tugged and tugged
until the room went quiet, her mother sitting silent next to her while her father
drinks himself to stuperville. What she tells me next I will bring to my grave so don't
ask me to break her confidence. I will just tell you this, she has big plans for the rest of her life.

Poems for Oct. 11 reading:

A Man Died Today

George Floyd would be 50 today, a half century of life abruptly ended when the knee of a Minneapolis police officer cut off his air, an officer paid by the community for 20 years despite 18 complaints on his work record; all this recorded on a phone camera.

The recording of Floyd's voice echoes throughout the community, and, indeed the world; "I can't breathe." Everyone holds their breath; graced in the background stands a 17-year-old videotaping the horror on her phone, including Floyd's cry for his mother.

I'm a mother sinking into despair; I can't think; I can't tame the roar climbing up my throat. I am 500 miles away, yet I live seven miles from 38th and Chicago. Due to the web Darnella Frazier feeds me instantly. I can't swallow what I'm seeing. Every mother watching the video feels the dysphoric let-down. Nothing stops the nine minutes 29 seconds it takes to have no pulse.

As I write this I look out my window onto East Seventh Street. A police officer has pulled over a female driver, mouths move rapidly; no knees involved, yet I am left holding my breath until the car signals and leaves unscathed. I feel my phone in my back pocket now out of habit, hoping I'm as brave as Ms. Frazier when needed.

Today I Became Little

My 26-year old dog, Yogi, has shrunk to seven inches, the height of five toothpicks in a row, or two credit cards placed lengthwise so I became little. So little toothpicks resembled Joshua tree forests, so little that a visa card is the size of the Mojave Desert and I am the size of nothingness.