

# *No Texting at the Dinner Table*

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# The Miscarriage

*Thanksgiving 2007*

The card we composed looked like your handwriting—  
that was the point—two smiling stick figures  
holding blue balloons announcing your arrival—  
we drove two and a half hours south  
to tell your grandmother, who, when we arrived,  
sliced apples, splashed cinnamon.  
Your grandfather carved the bird, jumped up and up,  
cried *this is the world, this is the only world*,  
though soon after the football game we knew the bleeding  
and emergency room, the RN who couldn't find the vein in your mother's arm  
and the no no nono and me reading Entertainment Weekly  
in between trips to the bathroom to see if her spotting disappeared  
and a second nurse, Joanna I think, holding my hand,  
directing me to the cafeteria to remember the smell  
of something simmering, telling me to bring back bottled water  
for both of us.

But forget all that. For the moment, let's go back  
to the allspice and honeyed ham, the pyramid  
of twice baked potatoes, the onioned gravy  
and unexpected hugging, even the cranberry sauce  
still in the shape of the can which I usually can't stomach,  
the bread buttered and buttered, the family asking the personal questions,  
telling the private stories—all of us learning one another,  
removed from our shared divisiveness and disappointment  
and later, gathered around the television with our chamomile  
and pumpkin pie and our fists in the air and our tongues  
shouting homemade hallelujahs, betting on the game,  
howling for the Redskins, who we knew didn't stand a chance.  
We rooted for them. We rooted for them anyway.

## About Feet

I married a woman who has them.  
And though I mostly love this woman—  
she imbibes a kind of wonder  
that crawls constantly under my skin—  
god help me when, beneath  
our working class covers  
she rubs those icy pillars of certain death  
across my warming calves.  
It too is a kind of living I know—  
a kind with which I want nothing to do—  
for I can't help but leap under the red duvet  
to the outer edge of our full bed,  
crying and cursing—  
a kind of singing of the happily married—  
and because I also have these feet  
on wintry occasions, these polar piggies  
no one wants, she reminds me,  
sometimes several times in one day,  
that I, too, am someone  
to love.

## Witnessing the Success of Others

I wish it were different, this overwhelming momentary impulse to pour acid into the eyes of my dearest friends, people I've shared meals with over candlelight, whose husbands I've hugged, my friends, who have book deals before I do. Recently, a colleague appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, his name statuesque and limitless on the cover, and sure I emailed him admitting his deserved celebration, champagne, a DJed house party, he's one of the nicest men I know, but not before, I'm afraid, I secretly wished all those he loved buried alive, his house ransacked by angry neutered bulls. I'm not usually like this. My heart sings Gershwin, my soul organizes soup kitchens. I hate myself for it—the flippant prayer for these loved ones, loved ones whose children I've baptized, to inherit a gout-ridden grandmother, a venereal disease. Alice James just announced publication of a dear poet, someone whose work I admire, someone I came to know over summer and scrabble, someone I regret, I've already taken to a forest in my mind and covered with poisoned honey. I would never kill her. But I might leave her, disoriented with alcohol, to find her own way home some 20 degree evening through a path populated by starving Grizzlies. Sure I settle down, even grow happy, even joyous, even brilliant with satisfaction at the way my own life has turned out, my wife and I trying for children, our new condo opening like a prayer onto a magnificent lake. The ducks, the geese, the one stoic heron who has seen this man inside of me, who flies away every time he approaches.

## Peeing After the Movie

Even if the film was everything  
you wanted—the slow, awkward,  
man-child admitting to love,  
the three sisters realizing  
what they must accomplish  
before midnight—this is still  
the most satisfying scene, half-running  
to the john through the awakening dark,  
trying to hold yourself in, trying  
hard to be dignified, then, once  
the line in front of you has passed,  
dropping your pants, feeling  
the world wrap its forgiveness,  
once again, around you.  
What an ending—something only Hollywood  
could produce: surrounded  
by your fellow hedonists—  
a community of the happiest strangers  
you've ever had the privilege  
to relieve yourself next to. See the white tile  
shining, hear the echoing sounds  
of satisfaction, the knowledge that  
god is still possible, looking us in the eye,  
reminding us what a little Coca-Cola  
and brotherhood, once combined, can yield.