Tregenza Roach

WHAT TO TELL A CHILD
ABOUT THE SURRENDER

On the day
I forced you
from my womb,
precious daughter
I saw his face
your father,
and so believed
the loud chorus
of old women
who proclaimed
that with his features
you were born
for good fortune.

And in this way
I lived your life,
taking for granted
this blessing
which was yours,
while I gave
to the others
of my body
all I could spare
to mitigate
the suffering
which seemed
their part and parcel
to carry, to bear.
So it was not
the perfect choice
to leave you
behind me,
at the mercy
of the years,
while I played out
the conspiracy
with raging water
which in truth
was no culprit,
innocent, too,
just as the rain.

And it has been
my single prayer
that you forgive
any trespass
now that you know
what it requires
the title mother,
with no life
to call your own
neither space
nor solitude,
just so much
the weight
of hungry tears
which follow
the troth.

For what
to tell a child
about surrender
so as to make her
neither humble
nor weak.
What to say
in those times
when a soul
grows tired
of blackness
and the burden
it conveys,
when your dreams
are not safe
in the land
that did birth you
and night wind
sounds the call
that you must go.

I have made
my own peace
with the water
for each time
that I cursed it
to its core
for each wave
I disdained
which gave support
to that vessel
so it could dash forth
and carry me
from the only
world I knew.

I kept you
as I washed away
and though my eyes
grew old and weary,
until no single thing
no thing remained
to interrupt the sky.
Then to gaze
instead before me
so to discover
a world anew,
prepared to pay
the price of dreaming
in this raw life
so long as
breath sustains.

And know that
this old heart
did never once
forsake you
although beloved
you might recall best
the angry welts
which I crafted.
onto your back
that childhood day
when in play
you set fire
to a canfield
before the harvest,
and I poor woman
was bereft
at the thought
of owing them
all of our lives
for such damage.

It pleases me
that you are woman
with a flock
to call your own
that in your eyes
you see me still,
but not martyr
not the sainted,
just as warrior
riding high
atop these lands
until we are called
into the fire.

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