

In the Garden: A Tomb

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. —John 19:23

1.

It hasn't happened to me personally, but I've heard,
I've read about the ripping of shirts and shorts,
the narrow alley at the mall, the dark rooms in every house-

boat, city condo, white house. I don't know personally,
but it seems like there is no soul in the well anymore,
no little girl that can play alone on a private street.

Though I don't know that room personally, I am careful
opening the front door at noon when my kids are home—
whatever you are selling, others are trying too—

(Did you know that—to sell girls like her?) I don't know
personally, but I know it's not wise to go to the park alone
with my three young kids; there are not enough hands

to keep them all safe or the others that swing in low secret
waves, squinting up to the sun. I don't personally know anyone
who doesn't think about the ripping and the dark room. *If you don't*

see me, if you get lost, remember to press the button with the star,
find a crowd. Look first for a momma, then a *masi*, a *papa*,
but never just a man alone. I tell them, knowing this is personal,

knowing that God will at last remain silent for any man
who's decided to do publicly what he has been thinking privately.
I don't want you to be in that dark bruised-purple room.

2.

Your first words
are leaf pirouettes, a ring
on a glass counter, my best
and worst—an echo of my ways.

Your words are a silent lonely work, Isaac
down the road, pulled faster than he can walk.
And you sway, singing *no, no, no*.

3.

He is your only Son. She is my only daughter.

Am I to believe that this is the trouble
you meant—this disrobing, stripping
of before and after? That you would
be the Father of this kind of pruning
where there is a field of stones
to aim for every part of you?
That you would open and lay bare
your knees and shoulders and high thigh,
that you would be willing to allow dirtier nails
to dig up this earth that you created, this earth
you created by tearing a hole and speaking into it?

4.

Eve to her son:

I am not worried about my sin
but yours, your sin that sleeps
for three years after a faithful
fifteen—the full snail of you
that no one knows. Do you know
what I was doing fifteen years ago?
I was cradling a city as if it had tiny
fingers and toes. I was in love
with the work of my brown hands.
I loved the law and not the person
it was supposed to love. Now you,
without memory of being born, see
only the full fruit trees. Open your eyes,
boy: the apple is ripe and ready
for the shaken eye. You have a memory now,
so I pray you will know: everything wasn't ours
to have, to hold, and pursue.

5.

Cain to Abel:

I know I was young, but I was with God walking, talking with him
in the cool of the day, watching him draw lines, an august gesture, in the damp sand—
a design for tic-tac-toe or perhaps hangman?—I didn't know

how to play then, with words, with a winner and a loser, with the knowledge
of good and evil, but I saw a line drawn just for me, pointing me
toward the flavor of speech, protesting, what she took from the garden
and what I took for your grave.

6.

When they come, they take the front door first,
then your whole home—the broken chairs, the wide
table, your linens. They take the firewood,
the wedding jewelry, your hand lotion
and water glasses. But your clothes.
Your clothes are the last thing they take;
your clothes are your last earthly possession.

7.

Rebekah: *Why is this happening to me?*

Moses: *Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me?*

Naomi: *Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.*

Saul: *Why have you not answered your servant today?*

Job: *Why have you made me your target?*

Habakkuk: *Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?*

Jeremiah: *Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?*

Jesus: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

8.

The Living Water is thirsty? After all the sin, He was thirsty?

9.

Let me be clear: He was naked
before He died. All but one man
He called friends left, but the women—
four of them—stayed at the cross, hoping
to wrap Him in burial clothes. Did you honor them
as they honored you? Let me

be clear: you were naked but not alone—
the women, did they know

that they would die too? Should I trust
the linen you have made
for me to wear?

10.

Someone somewhere is teaching me
how to be vulnerable, to be a julienned
carrot turned stew, a meatloaf kneaded
in a blue kitchen. There are buffets, you know,
where you can find everything on display.
You can find pineapple and Italian dressing and everyone
loves it because everything is available in every aisle—
please say something. Are you hungry? Are you thirsty?
Say something about my furrowed brow, about my turning
to the side to sleep now, not on my stomach, not again. The stomach,
the curl, the turning inside, the disappearing belly, the turning into
pride the way a man says *I'm tired* or *That's right*.

11.

All day, she has been wailing over what's gone—a ball, a broccoli floret,
her yellow duck lost on a sidewalk. She's been drinking new cups of trembling.
Somehow we are getting up and walking and finding new clothes—
like He did—to wear. Sweet girl, *celebrate*: the old garment is gone,
but the tomb is empty. Sweet girl, *celebrate*: the linen is on the floor.
Celebrate. The curtain is torn. *Celebrate*. Somewhere

He went and found new clothes, new clothes
to show us that He is alive, to show how His faithfulness looks
like summer in Finland
where darkness doesn't know how long to stay—

12.
Should I trust this linen,
this new veil—

There is no other covering—
you say—Father,
forgive *me* for the places
I have sat and known:
there is no place for you
to lay your head.
Father forgive *me*.

I didn't notice
the splendid place,
the shelter under
your straw hat.