

bury, decay, exhume

bury

what an avalanche or mudslide does; involving dirt or debris, ash or silt; to cover with melted chocolate and whipped cream; the fate of Pompeii; a child playing in the sand with shovel and pail; keeping a secret too well; to place in the ground for rest; sleeping beneath too many blankets; to hide the flesh, the flesh itself.

decay

falling apart from negligence; to knock blocks over; to forget to eat; eggs past expiration; a child crying in his room; his father emptying a fourth bottle; to donate into time's hands; when the moon wanes to nothing; when the mind wanes to madness; during the epilogue, after the end, after the climax; to make age matter most.

exhume

to remove from its surroundings; to exile from the ground; to discover ruins; finding old clay pots from Babylon; unearthing; banishing from a kingdom; to peel off shell after shell; to uproot fresh poinsettias before Christmas; to unwrap the brain from the skull, the heart from the ribcage, the child from the home.

As Reluctant as Isadora was that Day

to wear the blue scarf,
she knew the yellow one was too short.

A magician stood on the flat roof
panicking, while his lovely assistant slipped
the trick noose on him.

An assembly worker pleaded
with his wife to forget
the striped tie altogether that hot day.

A debutante fidgeted with her
mother's fine pearls around her young,
fragile neck.

White pearls have been caught in robber's hands.
Silk ties have been pulled into belts and gears.
Magic nooses have tightened like real ones.

And sheer scarves have tangled in spokes of wheels.

The Funeral of Pierrot

How could I have known I was imitating
Matisse's *The Funeral of Pierrot* at five years old?

At that age, I was intimate only with eight colors,
and paint was lost to me because of the mess
on the white walls, traces of my face
stamped three-feet high above the ground.
Here a blue bridge of the nose.
There a purple press of the cheek.

So I was handed scissors and paper
to construct my masterful art. I cut
out a horse I wanted to ride. I
had no sense of proportion or precision
but neither did Matisse
nearly seventy, dying
of cancer. So he returned
to his trusty scissors and asked
for a fresh sheet of white paper
to fashion a carriage. Taking some blue,
he crafted reins for a horse.
He cast aside oil paints,
turning back to the inner
circle of colors, the basics
known by his two hands, ten fingers
that cut teardrops and wheels,
pasted a horse drawing a carriage,
arranged red circles on orange skies,
green squares beside yellow waves.

How could I have known Matisse was imitating
my *Paper Horse and Carriage* before
I even knew color?

The Days

It happens when you're not
ready and you've just about
called time. You're stretching
your sunburned face as you pull
in your empty line
from the shore. You call to the men
and they pull in the nets.

These are slow days. The days
when it happens. The days
even when the lines break
and the bait is lost. The days
even when your weary crew is restless,
and you shiver from the swiveling
waves below.

These are the days you catch
that colossal squid,
that coelacanth,
turned up in your salty net,
biting at your hook.

That distant fossil fish
mistaken for serpent,
mistaken for stone, a creature older
than human knowledge. You discover
something so big,
too big to fry and eat, whose numerous
appendages pull and part the spaces.
That creature is the key, one day wrapping
the entire world together,
unlocking it the next.