

Anesce Dremen

Borrowed, Overdue, Leftovers

Indistinguishable from birth, my breasts ascertained arrogant attention by age ten, the pretentious playground and poppycock for a child desiring any body save her own. She collected insults and stored them as scars along protruding flesh. Angry mosquito bites swelling to accommodate arid apples.

“You should be ashamed of yourself,”

mother’s conviction for growing into a body I couldn’t escape. She never deduced shame -- degradation was all I cultivated.

Would never know that an elderly man at an unnamed market would reach over my friend to rub his elbow against my left breast. Discarded repetition, a bald masseuse at a forgotten parlor would guide me to download an app to receive a coupon to prolong the massage for half an hour. An extension, a decision, that cost me another encroachment over both loathsome breasts.

Germinated abomination, shoulders sinking forward

as if poor posture could limit the appetite of unwanted hands. Because he’s a good man, I promise. He’s a good man. A god-fearing man; it was the devil who possessed his dreadful body.

“Don’t hate the sinner; hate the sin.”

The replication two years later, a near stranger. How did he know, how did he know, to clench the left breast, the same breast, that other molester claimed? How did he know to preserve lacerations in that bruised playground?

I don’t know how to count the times.

Maybe 4, Maybe 9? Do I include the times I lay silent, stiffened beneath boyfriends, too systematic to speak? Too seared by the inability of my ‘no’? Too attentive of his ignorance of these singing scars, slightly paler than my hue – strategically accentuating my disappointment for having survived. They don’t belong to me anymore.

If I could reject these breasts, I'll release the left one;
but it's impossible to abort one fetus if you're pregnant with twins.

Our First Dance

I apologize for occupying this body.
You deserve to dance with someone refined.
Extend a hand to dance and I'll flinch,
terrified of being hit again.
I've fled from mouths wanted and unwanted,
beards bruising unwilling breasts.
I'll deny compliments of my appearance,
fabricating fiction of just more men gaining
forged permission to "insert Tab A into Slot B."
Extend a hand again, offering to dance,
and I'll accept, fearing violence and violation
if I say no. Unable to say no.
It's not rape if I say yes to everyone, right?
Whatever the choreography, still I stumble —
apologetic, unyielding, two cursed feet.
So, please, don't ask me to dance,
I'm unworthy of your tempo.
Kisses planted along my neck, so cherished,
at times render me lifeless, sobbing – slave to flashbacks.
Please don't whisper sweet nothings into my ears,
I'll only stumble and stutter in this swing.
Twirl me by hand, lead me nevertheless,
realize I withhold my breath, unknowing,
such a frail subject subject to fainting.
I apologize for the absence of
long, sexy legs. I've denied you a floor, a setting,
hacked my legs instead, sewn together by sighing scars.
My body is riddled, rippled with trauma:
twisted, collapsed knees, sobbing tease
condemned whore who never learned to walk properly.
So please, my dear,
don't request a dance from this crumb of a nightmare.

Longview Autumnal Flush

abandoning my initial plans to dive deeper into spoken
Commonalities, this is a companion I aspire to have a
conversation with throughout the day.

The rolls of our engagement l i n g e r s
on the tip of the tongue and inner fold of the bottom lip.
As cups are placed down, a returning sweetness
presents mellow, nutty remnants that gather like puckerings of
a pleasant, chalky biscuit.

It detracts from the delicate embrace of *hui'gan*,
as its crisp pronunciation is yet gentler than astringency.
These notes are the intentions of caramelized pecans
removed early.

My saccharine *humsafar* merges with an astringent path:
The shy, mellow orange of a blushing sunset observing that first kiss.
And as the second day rises,
The burnt marmalade overshadows an intimidated sunset.
This is the collection of freshly prepared grape juice, a watery vineyard.
And as this third day departs,
The hue of mahogany merges with a downcast departing:
The aching summer of cast, chewed pine needles
draping as cascades as an elaborate salutation for autumn's approach.

Letters from Within

“God was looking out for you.”

I couldn't save you, mommy. You
conceived me, but I aborted you.

“Why don't you just leave,”
Society scraped condemnation
as I fermented within the womb.

Amniotic fluid inserted, liquid cushion,
noise-cancelling headphones to mute
forced tongues, foreshadows of my
father's rage. "Shut your damn mouth."

What words, what silence awarded
Saturday's alarm clock, thrashed
kitchen cabinets, stagnant satisfaction:
"Did I ask for your opinion?" Family:
expired, charred health hazard warning.

Did you speak for our rights, threaten
his dominance as man, god's selected
head? "Strike me down with lightning
so I don't have to put up with you." I
never saw my mother willingly kiss my
father. "Do you want a beating?"

"I swear on my daddy's grave,
I wish God would kill me now."
Mommy, did you also pray to
Our Father asking him to deliver
the death of him to whom you
vowed to death do us part? Salvation
stripped for an unwanted conception.

When your first marriage procured three
miscarriages and a stillborn, surely forced
sex in the backseat of a Blazer couldn't
warrant a pink bastard shrouded in apologetic
acceptance, the silence of a shot-gun wedding.
Did you say yes only after your parents
threatened to disown you? Mommy, you
never answered if I was the byproduct of rape.

As your abusive husband, excuse me, my father
(you never claimed him your partner) shouted
"I wasn't speaking to you" over abandoned,
chilled mashed potatoes, did you know-- oh,
mommy, did you know as I formed remorsefully
in your scarred womb, as He shouted "I'm so sick
of hearing your mouth run," that one day I'd pack
two bags and run away? "It's your damn fault." I
entombed you within the silence you throttled me in.

Mommy, when you never considered abortion,
 the greatest sin a woman can commit, did you
 know that this ginger child would fail her first
 suicide attempt at age eleven? "I wish God would
 just take me. I can't take no more of your mouth."
 Because it is still legal for a man to beat his wife
 so long as the object is thinner than the width of his thumb.
 What font size were the words he choked us with?
 Inner child, scapegoat, you cannot eradicate 18
 years of abuse within the tomb of the womb.

Night Entries

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX the moment
 in which they capture me,
 XXXXXX within
 view of the yellow slide
 and three swings that were
 denied cheerful children as company.
 But I'm riding passenger in a seat
 With XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 Another man I've shared my body with. Somehow selective.

I snuck into the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX,
 Xxx the white closet where yellow highlighter marked
 I WANT TO DIE on the inside of the left door.
 That tan, cinched waist, with a long zipper. Dress.
 still hangs on the xxxxxx of the closet.

That's the dress I want.

His assault resting on the ridges of the zipper

Dreadful temptation, casual justification

I returned to take that dress --

uninvited invasion

Releasing jailbait from constriction

His Dreadful temptation, casual justification

I returned to take that dress --resting on

the ridges uninvited invasion --

Releasing jailbait from constriction of the zipper

assault

About the Poet

Anesce Dremen is a first generation college student who studied in four cities in China (Xi'an, Beijing, Chengdu, and Suzhou) with the support of the Critical Language Scholarship and the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship. She graduated from Carthage College with degrees in Chinese and English literature (creative writing concentration). Her bilingual work has been featured in the Midwest Journal of Undergraduate Research, Carthage Vanguard, the Xi'an Daily, and Shanghai Poetry Lab. While her academic work takes a critical lens to culture, death, and intersectional feminism, her creative writing ranges from fiction to nonfiction to poetry. While updating her travel blog, she can be found with a tea cup in hand, traveling between the U.S., China, and India.

Her journey can be followed at [@WritersDremen & NeverthelessAway.wordpress.com](https://www.writersdremen.com)