



poems by

Laurie Filipelli



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www.blacklawrence.com

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Cover Design: Mario Champion

Cover art: Mario Champion

Book Design: Amy Freels

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ISBN: 978-1-62557-998-0

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Published 2018 by Black Lawrence Press.s

Printed in the United States.

To Confess

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No, the process of transformation consists almost entirely of decay.

—Rebecca Solnit

Girl

There's the me I am and the me I invent whenever you ask for a story—preferably one with unsolved mischief or golden decisions. Apocryphal me has shenanigans, goofy siblings, backyard sing-alongs, parents placidly saving days. As history goes, we've won. You keep a rock collection like I never did right here near your window. We stare for hours. True, once I flew out onto the roof but never told anyone—just you.

The Road to Mora

Lead-colored drops, glittering sheets. A girl lives in a house of rain. Each day she pours herself from bed, looks at her face, grown heavier. By night circles a swollen floor, slick knobs never turn.



Outside: dry ground and passers lift umbrellas to the sun. She could take this as a hopeful sign instead of an uneven stitch. She gazes through the falling drops, listens to them tick.



To the sky she speaks, I've been so unhappy.
Water lifts her. On its woven current, walls
collapse. The sky replies: Tell another story
about bad decisions. Hair streaming, she sings
of slippery places. I am raining she thinks.
Thunder closes the bridge.



There's nothing but a coat she doesn't wear.
Either too hot or a talisman. Either her weight
or her freedom. When snow falls, she feels it.
And takes three deep breathes before hefting
her coat to the sky; the sky refuses. Tosses it
to the river; the coat returns. Two choices,
really one in the same: white mules gleaming
far ahead, or a coat right here like rain.



From a dark well she reaches. Another story:
two monks have arrived at a house of adobe
in sundrenched shirts, with wine.

Why I Can't Make Things Easy

It was spring and the lilacs were in bloom
near the front porch it was summer
my father's hand with its gold band
 and a missing finger
smacked my face years later
with my brothers I scraped and scraped
then we painted
and the stairs still crumbled

Enter Daughter

Trying to get the bunny ears right
a pea-sized rock in her pocket glittering
through a beard of bubbles
 trying to wink
steady as dust on a ceiling fan
on a jagged stone cracking open wings
endlessly taping the tiniest hammock
 but the sky is
too blue she means gray she means blue
green and the hail of her tears
bigger than sky her covered ears
words if they existed who over
this racket of grackles could hear

Another girl cries outside the café

I'm perched

on a landing

seventeen eighteen

hairnet askew

a cowbird

carelessly pecking at fries

twenty-one

twenty-

two

my father counts

a flutter of wings

behind her eyes

what I can't

see

my daughter hides

Nineteen

twenty

a man made taller

before he dies

by cowboy boots

a bird in hat
worth two small eggs

catches

in another's nest

small woman

saying please don't

help

my arms

unfreeze

the light

Me, and the Me You Draw

I am only some soup at the side of the road
chilled and thumb-swollen myself a daughter
below the bridge writing *For a good time call God*

But I have no number near home just goats
without much pattern: in rain resting
on the neighbor's porch in sun
the yard to the side of the house
in cold right here near the hedges
but today I see them any old place and not at all

First there's summer then I think to scrawl—

(my knees are round I can feel
my arms
coming out of my torso sprouting from
my neck small dots on
my face
meant to be freckles meant to be bites

my heart
a balloon with a snowflake
attached behind me trees block
the actual trees)

I visit my father on another floor
every day a new face mask a cascade
of crumbs from passing nurses
Whitman dear Whitman tell me it's luck:
a foldout table with rolled out coins
the thermometer's beep through a quilt-block of darkness

(to the cemetery hill my toe-stops cling
my monkey arms
make motion lines

unstuffed from gloves
my hands
let go)