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## **Girlhood Sonnets**

Let's make this clear: I am not the type of girl  
to transform on purpose. I am accidental shiftings  
and occasionally a bit of hair dye. Acquitting  
the typical explanations you and I are left burly  
with practiced burden; hi Atlas, fancy meeting you here.  
Forgiving trauma, and girlhood which is often  
the same thing just spelled different, we're forced to soften  
and curl up. Hiding ourselves in ourselves for another year.  
Alternate solution: hide yourself in me. Stowaway  
for a while, find a place for your hand-me-down rowboat  
somewhere between the arcs of my lower ribs. I felt so  
lonesome when an old friend of mine cleaned docks in May;  
Lake Austin, shallow water gone thick and yellowed. She fed oats  
to the catfish until they bit a man's hand up to the elbow.

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Until they bit a man's hand up to the elbow the catfish  
were sweet things, taking their bus routes through the muck  
and grooming their mustaches. It's natural that some schmuck  
wiggled his fingers in the water needlessly. Well, wish  
granted and fulfilled. Making oneself into worms  
is not advisable until after a certain date. Eating them,  
however, is fine for my next magic trick: the femme  
birds of nuisance, the pigeons. On their own damn terms  
they put glitter up their arms and were used in emergency  
communication—post-disasters—until recently. Races  
too, with betting. I bet you'd like to see that. The point  
is: purpose. The other night you requested a courtesy  
call to wake you up in time for work. Just in case  
the ringer would've scared you, I visited face-to-face.

\*

The ringer would've scared you. I visited face-to-face  
with my bus card clasped in one hand because this skirt  
neglected to grow pockets when it was young, but it's flirty,  
and well-adjusted I think. Woke you up by yelling Twelfth  
Night in the kitchen; poor Antonio and his affections baying  
and trailing like hounds. *Come what may, I do adore thee so,  
that danger (another scene: lead me on.) shall seem sport, and I will go.*  
You stumbled in and stuck a frozen pizza in the oven, staying  
longer than you should've, showing me around, getting red grease  
on all the paperbacks in your dad's home office and on the little  
birdie dipping his beak in a glass of fruit flies. I bet I could do  
that too, bet I could take sips of tea for hours while you ate Reese's  
Peanut Butter Cups and read aloud. Another acquittal:

please, quit blaming the clock for what it does to you.

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Please quit blaming the clock for what it does to you,  
it doesn't mean it. It gets winded up 'round the axel,  
rushes to catch up, and therefore must resort to faciles  
of the truth. Yes, you are late to the bus. Yes, the bus is too.  
No, your boss will not be late and neither will any professors  
of yours; you'd say *fuck you, that's life* and I'd say *c'est la vie*  
and unsurprisingly you, messy-haired, would say it sweeter than me.  
I'm pretty sure minutes are, in this situation, the aggressors  
at least in terms of sneak attacks. Or—oh, fuck—maybe  
memory is. Remembering I left the tap on. That I forgot  
to buy milk. That at one point in time I wasn't a harbor  
or a bird or an odd little desk toy but a girl, a young lady  
with skin and hair and breath, somehow my leg's caught  
in the trap of physical memory, fairy-wings, worn elastic—

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Physical memory of the fairy-wings, worn elastic  
wearing thinned threads to sheen and breaking, glitter  
going ballistic on sweaters, everything pink. The picture hit her  
funny later on in life; a little happy thing, too enthusiastic  
and forever overflowing with presence, all pigtailed and shiny,  
Zeus and Hades and all the rest just tales  
with more swill. Puffy purple jacket and filthy nails  
and: I think he was flirting with you, mommy.  
*No, honey. He was hitting on you.* Assume he didn't know  
you didn't really have breasts yet, assume he is younger  
than he looks, go home and eat Twizzlers in your outer space  
room, open up the book of Greek myths and draw snow  
spiked over Kore's springtime. Man blames mom, *fear-monger*,  
and the book remains apologetic, defaced.

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The remains of the book apologetic, defaced  
and still somewhere in a Wendy's-adjacent Goodwill  
collecting crickets near the pulp romance and thrillers.  
Somewhere she's learning how to cook; soup laced  
with lemon and a woman saying *Boys'll love you, Billys, Jakes,*  
*it's rarer these days that they come home to a homecooked meal.*  
A man saying *Boys'll love you, you hit the Achilles' heel:*  
*you're tall and you have breasts* so she quits cooking and takes  
up layering sports bras instead. After an incident on the train  
into Austin--someone petting over her nails, remarking  
how long, how pretty--she quits having hands altogether.  
Nix the neck, the spine, nix the lamb, nix the grain-  
pillowed pork and thyme. Out in the darkening  
night the roadside grasses burn despite Texas winter weather.

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Night; the roadside grasses burn despite Texas winter weather,  
mistaking ash for snow. She is mistaking salt for snow  
in the Costco parking lot. Some employee thought to borrow  
a bag of it in case the sidewalk iced. It didn't, he bought white heather  
for his wife, and left the salt piled and lonesome. Now she's got  
her mittens in it up to the thumbs and a cart collector is calling  
from across the way begging her not to eat it, fearing salt scalding  
tongues. Dad exits Costo triumphant with dried apricots  
and joins the begging, the good-natured chortling. Did Kore  
ever get to see ice? Maybe on mountaintops. Maybe in a dish

with honey and fruit. Salt's close enough, salt's crystalline too, and anyway the parking lot platter has plenty of gourmet seasonings in it by now, it looks plenty cute and kitsch. There are olive coats everywhere and more than enough brine.

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There are olives, coats, everywhere and more. Enough brine; sorry for crying on your kitchen floor. Thank you for bundling me up in your jacket and feeding me canned things and mumbling all your little assurances. I love you, you're late, untwine your hair from my hair for a moment. Let me coax you through knowing that I am, will be, fine. Otherwise grab my coat too, come sit awhile, accompanying the settled notes. What on God's once-green earth have you gotten yourself into? You'd argue with me in the kindest way if I said that aloud. As it stands, we sit. We push our hands together until they meld together with sweat just like Byron said. We quiz each other on the best dishes of all time. You look proud. If you say, *Let's both call in sick, let's get more food*, I'll say, *Let's*. Make this clear; I am. Any type of girl is