

## Tribute

He tells me that he once loved Morholt's daughter, brutal and bloody like all beautiful women in little boy's bedtime stories. Their pupils wide in the dark – where he can still see her fangs, the white worm, wiggling, her curves slithering just beyond the black seas of unconsciousness. A vision, a night-light story, a cardboard cut-out of a red, red heart, a princess with scales – in a child's tattered book.

the thick paper edges,  
gnawed down  
to their paper bones.

“She whispers,” he whispers, turning off the light,  
the sheets pulled back revealing her wet, soft mouth.  
Her throat, a warm, throbbing tunnel of meat.

“She whispers, she whispers about tribute, about her boots of shiny, shiny leather, about crossing the ocean of Nod, where she hums a lullaby to her sea snakes and her giant squid and her monster tossing and turning in her bed, ‘Take the Ambien. take the Vicodin. Let your medicine cabinet sing you to me, where you can crawl inside my guts and sleep –’

Cozy with her thousands of newly-hatched maggots,  
her snakes, her snails, her puppy-dog tails, her soft tendrils –  
dark tidal waves of hair, threaten to tangle,  
choke, drown wayward dreamers in the current of their own rotting dreams –

of bleached mornings, coffee and eggs, love with milk and sugar. A face buried in a handful of bedded curls.  
Hands curling around a womb that was full of white marbles,  
but is now as empty as their promises  
never to part.

But she has parted the seas with her weeping —  
for the maggots, the men, clamoring in her organs.

A womb full of corpses, of the empty shells of souls —  
the white orbs, the lights in their eyes – flicker  
out.

The wet acids of her guts gurgle, corrode their armor,

melt off their firm flesh — licking them back, drowning them  
in her great terror,  
in her soft, sweet void.”

In our room, their screams sound like a song from a passing car.  
But nights in the city are frightfully still and I am too cold to care,  
my toes curling deeper into  
the bed.

He turns to me and growls something about all women being  
cold-blooded reptiles, grips his pillow, pretends to sleep.

I sit up and stare through the window. Over the alley-way,  
a charcoal cloud coils around a pregnant moon, like a fist gripping  
a white marble, until it is shrouded and the sky goes black.