

Patricia Roth Schwartz

Moon Landing

You bake a black-bottom pie
from *Fannie Farmer* to impress
your young husband and his young friends.
You're young too but the moon's
old, so old, and yet now to bear upon
her breast the footprints of men.

You bear the pie in foil to the Yale
secret society stone tower one of your
friends has access to, rigged with a tiny
TV. Huddled in blankets like a litter
of puppies, all of you eat pie despite
a soggy crust and watch teeny ghost-
like doll-men moon-walk. It should've
been you, who'd gazed at the Sea of
Tranquility with your father through his
Army binoculars and yearned to feel
that ancient crust beneath your Keds-clad
feet and breathe (it would have been a
miracle, and you could have used one)
in that place without an atmosphere.

The wives of the intrepid moon-men waited
at home in big hair and pastel shirtwaists. Maybe
one of them too had made a black-bottom pie,
probably a better one than you--and maybe she too
longed for a way to breathe where there is no air.

The Friend of My Youth: a Tritina

The friend of my youth awaits a death.
that she might live, remade, undone.
A phone is ringing, bringing news.

A liver in trade for hers, undone, remade.
A phone is ringing, bringing news.
Her body. awaiting grace, holds still.

Another's grief her prayer,
anguished trade.
The friend of my youth awaits a death.
Somewhere a phone is ringing. bringing news

for lss

Grief a Fruiting Tree

Alone now in that house, Annie's half of a broken whole, where the four of you used to gather after plundering orchards for cherries or pears, scrambling over trails, cooking, playing Scrabble, John then forever talking, joking, slicing zucchini, chopping herbs he'd grown, adding wine to the dish.

At the brunch before the walk, today, Annie's told the women at the table, *I'm on my own now--* for the first time since that day not saying, *I'm a widow. My husband died.* Reluctantly you realize this is progress. Neither of you speak his name.

Both of you leave the warm room, then, the women sipping wine or tea, for the frozen trail. You and she talk and walk, speak of your book, her aging parents, how big Leo is now, her church... You don't reminisce as usual about the way John would always lay down all seven tiles (fifty points) at Scrabble, making applesauce with pear.

You remember what she'd said at the memorial service to the crowd so abruptly gathered: *When he was lying there broken on the rocks below the cliff trail waiting for Medivac I kept telling him, John, John, you need to live, for the garden, for Leo, he's so young, the trees we planted: apple, cherry, pear.*

You're quiet, remembering how much you and he disagreed: on women in politics, the existence of God, the Middle East, how angry he made you, but then he'd serve his chicken with pasta, apple cake, nurture his basil in pots, lovingly prune those trees, scratch Leo's ears till he purred.

Annie's cold now, small face cherry red with windburn. You stop walking, climb into her SUV, brand-new after finally letting go John's old green van you used to fill with baskets of apples. The heat's coming up. You're close together in the small warm space, grief a fruiting tree; friendship and its memory, the purr of the heater: present, comforting, necessary.

Shirley Temple's Left Us

tapping now up and down
a crystal stair with Bojangles
and maybe his dog. Growing up,
I was too young to ever
have watched her first run
but Annette! Annette!
whose T-shirt stretched ever
outward while mine stayed flat.
I'd cut my Girl Scout meetings,
rushing home, full of despair,
to watch her show.

In L.A. after we moved,
in front of me in 8th grade math,
sat Felicia Schwartz,
who'd tried out to be
a Mouseketeer but was not
chosen. You couldn't be
both a Mouseketeer and a Jew, it
turned out. Bojangles could've
told her that. I used to dance
too at Miss Elizabeth's back
in second grade in West Virginia, tap
and ballet, tumbling included.

That summer at Ocean View
in front of Mima and Granddaddy
and their company, I wore my recital
tutu, lime green with sequins,
and tapped and tapped on a piece
of wood Heck the hired man put down
for me. Everyone clapped and clapped,
even though I know now I was terrible.
Soon I quit lessons, tuned to art,
never trust applause.

In my family we never had funerals.
At Shirley's, I'll bet they served
Shirley Temples, heavy on the
grenadine. Look, now—make ready—
the good ship's coming.

Frog in My Yard

Like the crow I am a collector
of bright objects and gems.
I leave you be, though, bejeweled
brilliant frog, green glistening tones
of your skin so wondrously striped
with black, the yellow of warty spots
that clog its verdancy, jewels as well.

Our slimy fake pond birthed you,
teeming with squiggles as winter
slinks away, your infancy those black
commas. Fitting then, my crimson pottery
dish set on soil, planted full of store-bought
succulents, all green-yellow rosettes and
tree-like twigs of waxy flesh, becomes
your daytime home, day after day. Late
afternoon finds you gone to your secret
sleep, full morning you're back again.

I might pluck you up, force you into
a terrarium. I might make of your fantastical
skin a purse for the holding of further
treasures were I, as the world of men has tried
so valiantly to school me to be, full of
a cruel need to possess--yet that world
has failed and that is why I know
there are no further treasures.

Patricia Roth Schwartz's five books include the recently published *Charleston Girls: a Memoir of a West Virginia Childhood in Poems*. Notably, she facilitated a poetry workshop with inmates of maximum security Auburn Correctional Facility in Central New York.