Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Alexandra Umlas: Three Poems

Alexandra Umlas · Wednesday, October 9th, 2019

Chicken

Unwrapping you from your reasonable
packaging, I always feel some remorse

and carry your body tenderly to the pot
to lay you on your bed of citrus and sliced

onions, and pepper your skin with salt.
One time, I reached inside you to find

a neck and two hearts, unsure if any
were yours. There are over nine billion

of you alive, and still, each time I hold
you almost whole like this, slumped

and singular, like a small, cold baby,
your body goose-pimpled and clean,

I imagine your short, sharp journey
to here, seven weeks to market weight,

the assembly-line suspension
by two feet and low lighting, the stun

of electricity or carbon-dioxide,
a rub-bar on your breast, a single cut

to the throat, evisceration, chilling,
giblets sorted, your body

bagged. I heat you past your original
temperature to 165 degrees Fahrenheit,

until joints loosen, and bones turn
velvet. And after I have swallowed you,

in the dish-filled evening kitchen, I find
I am alone.

*

Fillet

My mother makes dinner
almost every night:
white china plates, checked cloth napkins,
glasses of whole milk.

This night there is a steak centered
on each plate—
Porterhouse: half strip and half fillet.
I eat

the strip first, in small bites between
salad, pushing
the fillet to the side of the plate for last.
My father must

have still been in his suit.
I remember
the starched straight collar and how
I blinked

as he reached across the table's wood,
stabbing
my fillet with the four prongs of fork,
half-smiling,

placing the piece in his mouth, saying
Yum
between rows of white teeth. Telling me,
you should never

save the best for last—it might not be there
when you are ready for it.

*

Fangs

She looked not-quite-right
at nine, wearing fangs—
I can only describe it as baffling,
her mouth botched with them,
her hair in tangles. The shoppers

stared. It was almost October 31st
in America. She slept with them half
in that night, swore they would keep
her safe. When they fell on the pillow
next to her, they seemed to glint
in the sharp moon-light—
little plastic knives.

(Author photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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