

## **Poison Oak Poetry**

### **Lurking**

Hidden under the pear tree  
That early spring  
Lurking  
A reckoning of mind and body.  
Nature always wins.  
Know your place in the world.

### **Tending the Garden**

One way to root out hidden danger  
Is to smother it.  
Remove the oxygen that fuels it.  
Feed it nutrients of a different sort.  
Tend the garden  
With an eye on any reemergence  
Leap into action to pluck it out  
Then return to your reclining chair  
To savor the day.

### **Innocence**

I didn't know I could still be  
Innocent.  
After decades of getting and giving  
The excesses and sorrows  
After more than twenty years of marriage  
And raising three boys.  
Can anything surprise me?  
Yes.  
The shock of vulnerability and aging.  
There are always lessons to be learned.  
I have been an attentive student.  
And I am weary from the journey.  
Must carry on.

## **Vessel**

No one tells you what it's like  
Aging  
Menopause  
My body served as the vessel and bedrock  
For my sons and husband  
And then, duties fulfilled, cracks appeared  
Like veins beneath translucent skin  
Giving the veneer a mottled appearance  
While keeping the form intact.  
Light shines through the cracks  
How can you be whole  
When your heart has been blown wide open?

## **The Meadow**

Where do you go when you die?  
What is that other place?  
A wide meadow with sunlight and a soft breeze.  
That's where I am.  
Do you see me?  
I am waiting for you.

## **Things My Older Sisters Didn't Teach Me**

How to wash my delicates  
The importance of good skin care  
To keep a secret  
To be gentle with myself and others  
How to be kind to my husband  
The buoy of art and faith  
Skill at building a solid foundation  
Of self  
Because in the end, isn't that all there is?

## **Marriage**

We move through the day  
In a well-crafted choreography  
Bringing in the supplies  
Packing them away  
Feeding the children  
And taking out the trash  
With an eye on making it pretty  
And a passion for making it taste good  
Our worlds barely connect  
After twenty-eight years of marriage  
If I close my eyes, I know right where you are.  
In the orchard.  
Standing at the sink.  
In your chair sitting so quietly drinking your tea.

## **Boys**

There is nothing like a 15-year-old boy  
All scaffolding and girding  
For manhood to come  
Innocent and aware.  
Playful and serious.  
Alone in the wilderness  
With few tools to navigate the crossing.  
My voice muffled but here, always here  
Like a lighthouse.  
Warning about the rocks off the shore  
And reminding you of home.

*Lisa Orkisz Scardina  
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