shattered shell

he knelt and prayed.
he offered up all that he was
all that he would ever be.
day after day he smoothed the rough cheeks,
shaped the lips,
brightened the almond eyes with desire,
gave beauty to the damp clay of the earth.
and his lonely heart beat so loudly in his chest
that he could not turn from those eyes -
those haunted, soul-empty eyes -
pouring all his waking and dreaming hours
into his masterpiece.
so when he turned
turned to his sweetly-still love
and saw how it became she
a heart-breakingly lovely form of flesh
from the soil and the dirt and the dust...
well, he wept.

she looked to the heavens.
“O rapturous blue! O flighted thing
That wheels upon the sun’s own wing!
What I would give to dive and soar.
My love, I see there’s so much more
Than chains of soil, than bonds of clay
Than stillness in both night and day.
To sing and cry and dance and scream...
For even souls of silence dream.
You see, the last thing I could aspire to be
Is your slave of living pottery.”

she pushed his arms away.
all he breathed for was the taste of her lips.
all he needed was her smooth hands
her long legs
her silken silhouette,
the crookedness of her mouth
learning to smile.
but now that she had a self,
buried inside her was a flame of freedom
and the smell of sweet grass
rippling in the wind, green as the
ocean hit by rays of sun.
she struggled.
seeing red
he knew not a net in the world could catch her.
hammer met sculptor halfway
and it worked its careless witchcraft
on clay, on skin, on bone.
in the moments between breathing and broken
the very soul was smashed
and broom in bitter hand
with the despair of a creator who has lost
something time-consuming,
a divine work of art,
he began to sweep up the red-splattered pieces of pottery.
Beyond Traditional Boundaries!!

the surprise of the sun at seven in the morning
blindingly crisp snow crunches white.
sneaking into the theater and finding yourself
holding your breath
on a dark, empty stage. the echoes of performance.
the weight of one hundred thousand people screaming
the bloodlust of the game, the fame.
multitudes of stairwells
every closet an un-space.
fluorescent lighting illuminates your every smudge.
Friday nights driven by a bassline.
wet floors of the bus, slick stops, stomping off snow.
facing slipping into the crowd.
the sheer panic of the first all-nighter, your name becomes a blur.
duct tape, always.
falling asleep to the ghost glow
of your first roommate’s flat screen tv.
approximately ten minutes of spring
roll down a hill into endless sloth of summer.
with the Pythagorean Theorem already.
a moment of clarity when you find
for the first time
you are finally alone
drowning in your own “now what?”
the ever-present smell of someone else’s coffee.
electricity runs rampant
in your spinal fluid
when catching the eyes of a stranger across a room
where it’s too loud to hear.
never, ever remembering your stapler.
every basement a labyrinth.
grasping a bucket, she throws up into it seven times
and each time it’s orange.
treadmills humming beneath the thump of footsteps at the gym, 1 am.
acronyms for a thousand things you’ve never heard of.
learning to plan things out very carefully
and ten percent of the time, giving up entirely.
the train, insistent, at 3 am, screaming and cursing at the tracks.
there is no peer pressure, no
“come on, just try it once, it’s so fun...!”
merely shrugs. if you don’t step up
the parade will pass you by without hesitation.
the curtain drops.
to the Boy i met at that party

it was laughably easy.
my prey, i smelled your blood in the water.
you lined up the shot for me -
for the last few hours, it was nearly as if i’d been waiting
for someone like you.
you opened with drunken criticism of my beer pong game,
eyeing every inch of me (slowly), made it clear you didn’t think i could keep up with the Boys.
(here i was supposed to show flirtatious indignation
blush a little
try to prove myself
give you my phone number)
instead, i snapped.
over and over, you were rude.
you actually called me a little Girl and made the unforgivable mistake
of assumption.
don’t be fooled - see that beneath my
mascara, jewelry, and little green dress
i am a pitbull.
the Rosie-the-Riveter in me was likely to blacken your eye at some point
but the razor edge of my tongue got to you first.

for what it’s worth,
i’m sorry that i ripped you to shreds.
for what it’s worth,
i’m not sorry at all.
your particular brand of sexist condescension
and not-so-subtle eye-rolling
doesn’t work on a Girl who won’t drink a drop
and isn’t afraid to try and attract the opposite sex
by acting intelligent.
mind-blowing, isn’t it
that i could attend that party
and not be flattered and astounded
that such a desirable individual like you
would deign to speak to helpless little me.
plath knew what she was talking about
when she penned the words “i eat Men like air.”
i got a sick thrill
from the deer-in-the-headlights expression
that wiped that smug smile off of your face.

you were at a disadvantage from the first:
i was raised with one older Brother
who showed no mercy in snowball fights,
not arguments, nor monopoly.
my major is more than 90% Male,
my current athletic hobby and my first real job were exactly the same.
they told me not to be a little Bitch when i burnt my hands at work.
they told me to try and keep up and for god’s sake, be a Man.
i am sick of this patriarchy
where i must be attractive to have value,
of the system that encourages you to place me beneath you.
i am sick of Boys like you
who think i will be easy to toy with.
i’m sickened by the crude, arrogant behavior
that so often makes Girls afraid to walk home alone at night.
they will call me a Man-eater
for verbally flaying you within an inch of your life.
and they will be right.
hell, i enjoyed it.
**engine**

we are dynamic, we are electric.
as one
pistons pumping
the sweet steam
the smell of coal.
grinding gears, forging
paths,
metals,
the human cosmos.
we are cogs, forcing motion.
it is a race, the flames of our
conquering
licking our blackened feet.
our ashes? our ashes are CERTAINTY
because we are the Blessed children
the fighting force
the strength of conviction.
we were born to shape the world in OUR image.

and then I fear, I awake
from these nightmares where the faceless cry
“you are not *enough* of anything.”
oh, but
Icarus child,
you don’t just throw yourself
off the crow’s nest.
you don’t just swan dive
off the hood of a tank.
you will be crushed to death, trampled -
splinters of white eggshells
your fragile little bones could be.
the young and alive and immortal -
we forget that we are trapped in temporary little shells.
the world turns a little faster every day
and the safest place to be
is in the silent, terrifyingly calm eye
of the hurricane.
you may never leave the machine.

you may NEVER leave the machine.
“*but,*” my lips whisper
my heart pounding defiantly away
like it doesn’t give a damn who hears it in the dead of night.
*but,* when I fall from great heights
I don’t burn myself alive to fuel the great fires.
I simply
unfurl
and my words are the feathers that lift me toward the sun.
there is a possibility that there is something
glorious under my skin,
and it is not heat, but sky, gentle and cool
- the gazing pool that douses any spark that turns to flame.
there is a possibility that I am art,
that I have yet to become.
there is a miraculous possibility
that I was created to be miraculous.

yet we are the explosion, we are the flint and steel.
we have destroyed everything that would get in our path
because our smoke is divine, our fate written.
we are the trigger, the catalyst.
the collision.
we are powerful, the Blessed creators. we dare.
we are not afraid to watch it all burn.