

**The  
Giving  
of  
Pears**

poems  
by  
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*for*

Rachel Ray:

Who initiated me into the mysteries  
& stayed till I understood the signs

Going to School

# Going to School

The robes are washed. The sandals are ready.  
I am finally going to that school within myself.  
The prophets say the principal is beautiful and  
Walks around naked. The teachers are drunks  
Who eat from the same bowls as antelopes and  
Invite old fish to tea. I am most excited about the  
Scientists who, if it is true, spend day and night  
In long dim corridors looking through telescopes  
Furiously taking notes. They've been in here  
Without food for years. Rumor has it days ago  
One of them, gaunt and ecstatic, ran out raving  
How he'd found happiness within the moon's  
Black spots and how he can mend the sun's sad  
Yellow by wiping the blisters on stones along a river  
And placing them gently within the sun's dull light.  
An old fish, thin and trembling, is here as guide.  
We sit on the mat, drink tea, share stories.  
Tomorrow, the first lessons begin.

# Temple of Edible Fruits

Just as it is possible to enter the temple  
Of the unutterable through the colors  
Of Cezanne, so it is with holding  
An unpeeled orange to the sun,  
Rotating it gently in the light,  
Until a window, dark and magnificent,  
Reveals itself on your purple wall:  
Inside, the apple with its green  
Mustache and red tie is giving  
A sermon and has just said: 'Sun  
Speak our prayer': In front, a young  
Altar peach is holding the cross  
Of a dead fish. The pear-usher walks  
Into the aisle and raises the collection-basket  
To the old pineapple wiping her son's nose.  
She reaches into her purse, slowly pulls out  
A coin, engraved with a man rotating  
An orange to the sun's light.

# Tomato

Before slicing  
And throwing it on a pan  
Pay attention,  
And if you have the eye  
You'll find, on its side,  
A wooden door with a brass handle.  
Push slowly, and enter  
A village with its own silent physics.  
Its own reddened curvature:  
Yellow is the face of the newborn.  
Green, the tired hat of the old.  
Here sand is red,  
And goats lead their shepherd  
Through a narrow yard's edge.  
Doves wash their breasts  
At the mouth of a black river.  
Children with white seeds on their heads  
Tie gray wet clouds on their waists,  
Leap around in a circle and sing of light.  
Of soil. Of their readiness to be plucked  
And wiped by a calloused hand.



# Kettle

Pour in some water.

Set it on a lit stove.

Listen:

Inside the contraption

Is a village where pregnant women

Gather round guava trees

To barter the shapes and colors

Of their unborn.

They have gathered round

Another guava tree.

*In your kitchen,*

*The kettle lurches.*

One woman, tall and round in the face begins:

“I want mine short. With yellow feet and rigid joints.

It matters little if it’s a girl or boy.”

The other women agree.

*The kettle lurches.*

She gives birth.

*In the kitchen,*

*We hear the first whistle.*

Another, lean with sinewy legs adds:

“I want both together. One part boy.  
One part girl. One side orange. The other side blue.”

The women agree. She gives birth.

*The kettle lurches,  
The whistling intensifies.*

The pace picks up.

One wants a full grown woman  
With the head of a hyena.

Another, an infant with full beard,  
Holding a knife.

The next, a tree with colorless branches  
And brown leaves.

The one after, a lizard with boys' legs  
Completely drunk on palm wine.

On and on, until...

*The kettle rages.  
Whistles maniacally,*

*And lets out the white breath  
Of the tired women birthing at the village square.*

# Antecedote of a Goat

There, is one with slackened tie.  
Beside him an old paper and a black umbrella.

He is dreaming of his lost love:

A goat with no horns, hooves, and hide.  
With the voice of a saddened woman  
Her head buried in the wet corners of her blouse.

She is dreaming of a man with horns, hooves, and hides.  
Beside him an old paper and an umbrella.

His neck-tie slackened, he too is lost in a dream.

One he'll soon forget: of a man dreaming himself  
Loving a goat desperate for a woman dreaming the man.

# Ballad of the Drunk

I fell in love with a tree once. Swaying she  
Giggled as I touched her,  
Pulled down her branches and  
Wiped sweat from her brow.

My! She was bleached white  
With purple ears and burgundy eyes.

A fantastic tree.  
Always naked. Unvined.  
Gloriously transparent  
In the wind's white arm.

Oh! To hear her laugh...

See how she stands:  
Robeless among the grass:

...Just to be naked beside her.  
To lay hold and dance beside her.

(No, I haven't had too much to drink.  
No man can ever have too much to drink.)

...Just to give her from this gourd  
And lead her past the shadows at my door.