

Portfolio of Poems from *Here Is a Woman*

Just as the great bell voluminous inside itself distant,
returning inside the blue night,
the bell more than one,
then one alone again, again.
Just as the owl calls back
and back to us.

Here is a woman.

She is:

On an island surrounded by mountains, her arms behind her
to cut resistance.

Guilt is her underbelly until mortality slaps her—overnight,
two inches of invisible wing sounds.

Rain from the left.

The apricot unprecedented, snow from all sides, flashes of light stick
to her face. All yellow eyes and fragile sex pop.

Dunes of snow on the lane speak headlands, dikes, hulls of boats,
coral white as bone.

Herds pray.

The old lane disguises as a line and DNA molecules free straight
reckoning.

Wings stoke the crystal mirror for singing out loud.

When she started the paper hundreds of readers called in their prescriptions.

Her desk was an abandoned cattle chute adorned with devil horns, coyote cacophony.

A bull's eye shot off a fence post, geese shot back paperweights;

a petrified pancreas

a potato stamped with the lost white hawk.

She chased stories like a mouser when the hay bale is lifted, reporting the truth

to a time-warped world on the edge of civilization.

She sold advertising.

With hairdressers, it was imperative they understand isthmus, she coaxed them away from the nape of the neck.

With car dealers, she was a bigger beast.

Pitched the negative space of the moon to the veterinarian.

Sometimes a client's name would say itself out of the tall grass or a blackbird.

With Indian tribes it was about the non-competition of grasshoppers.

If a prospect was rude she told them to race a rainbow, while
imagining the eye lashes of their horse, pale against the dark.

Again and again her head voice said;
“I am a good person. I am a good person.”

If \$20 was too much for a month of exposure to the shimmer of May
she said,

If you don't have the money, I'll give you the words.

Her side-kick was the best a journalist could ever have.

More editor than writer, he'd pick a moment and voice his opinion
with the sound a person makes when they don't have a word to
express their feelings. She often felt she didn't measure up to his
standards.

He was almost arrested once, flashed his credentials
and talked his way out of a ticket.

He died.
She closed the paper down.

The foot caught in the stirrup turned a deadly hinge,
the grave was dug.

Owl, hawk, quail, magpie feathers wrapped in black plastic
lined the coffin.
She buried him in a solitary owing.

The breaking stories isolate,
transport to the blue/black place between reality and imagination.

The shovel sucked words like juice from an orange.

Her foot caught in the stirrup turned a hinge
into the fourth nightmare.

Now she's the anxious observer,
dry-eyed from time in the sun, determination of the buckets,
the foundered stile accuses the sky.

Soften, soften. Let her tell you. But first notice the field's curve,
its glassy eye, the shivering snipes.

Ten telephone poles say get off the cross and walk.

When a woman is lost sometimes all she asks for is a toothpick.

Her bland zone has no walls or roof, the floor caves
from underneath her, the kids yell,
grandma, grandma, her face is a Degas blur

as she goes around, around she thinks of young Ed, stiff from
walking, the livestock so weak, his clothes in a small bundle.
crossing channels outside the parameter of—

if she can't say something good—testing, testing,
Ed pushed up against his comfort zone when he fired flags
on the ice and fell through, one foot frozen.

Orange lichen on her face in the afternoon sun,

the future black as a blink—

There is no then—

—when there is no time of swans.

She lives in those swans, they expand her frame where there is no
frame after the hub bub of grief,
the rock face,

swans under the wire,

She combs her hair with a toothbrush,

says coconut for almond.

*The dying pain starts in the back, says the surgeon,
works its way around the rib.*

I have that pain, she says.

No you don't, he says.