

## her sleep, her dreams still in her speech

I had a hysterectomy at twenty-six. on april fools day. I had to go in the night before & I woke up the next morning with a little stuffed dog by my ice chip cup. the dog looked like a coyote & said something like, thought it was your birthday, eh? well, the weather's going to change & you'd better head for the hills before you lose count of your marbles.

it was a while before I realized I was dreaming or in & out of a drug-induced fog & when I did wake up, the little stuffed dog was gone but her eyes were still there, hovering next to the ice chips. I ignored them & got up to pee.

their yellow eyes  
like the yellow of their lives  
settling on the backs of the hills  
their voices magnified  
by their songs  
ancient & profound  
& always  
always  
far  
too short

try writing that kind of silence onto a page, said those eyes as I was rolled to the operating room that day.

before the hysterectomy, I'd gone through five months of constant illness after baby steven was born. d&c after three months – placenta left behind. staph

infection on top of the one I already had & my uterus got eaten from the inside out. my body formed myself around my bones & as the infection faded & the colour returned to my life, there I sat in a hospital room on april fools morning – coyote's eyes still on me – all drugged & waiting for a room full of masked strangers to make me into an old lady.

empty spaces between the words  
their longing for another time  
another moment alone  
inside blood & bones  
& odours of my own  
four moontimes  
hush little baby  
grandmother's  
wisdom's  
song

where will my sleepy moon be?  
under the covers or lost by a tree?  
how will I know?  
where will I go?

where will my weepy moon be?  
will she visit at dawn by the water?  
will she help wipe my tears in the spring?

& my angry moon?  
where will she be?  
will she orbit me now,  
her new moon side  
showing her face  
in the night of my days,  
chilling my bones  
& my light?

& what of my creative moon?  
where will she be?  
will she still wait for me  
under a tree?  
will she visit my dreams  
& my quiet at home?  
will she call me granddaughter  
me?

& I was reminded of a time long before. by twenty-six, lying on that hospital bed, I felt old – certainly older than twenty-one, when I was faced with the decision to end a pregnancy.

the funny thing was, everything started up on april fools day that time too. a woman I'd worked with was getting married – out of town & chinooking. warm. sunny. & a brother of hers who thought I looked like a dream come true. my dark hair. my blue eyes.

I don't remember what he looked like, but when he invited me into the back of his stationwagon, the sun shining in on us like honey & dew – after years of no sex, what could a young woman do?

a couple weeks later, this strange man showed up where I worked. stood at the counter & bellowed out my name between his blonde moustache & beard & before I reached the counter he said, we believe you have contracted gonorrhoea & we'll need the names of all your sexual partners for the past six months. right in front of everyone – in front of the old scottish ladys I worked with – ladys in their fifties!

no one spoke to me about it. not me or anyone else. I simply walked through the returning cold and snow – every lunch hour – the sixteen blocks, then back, to press a button twice for venereal disease & I waited my turn for a needle in the butt the size of a juice glass. days down the road I encountered my first penicillin-fertile yeast infection.

movement in my belly  
holding on to life  
with a touch so soft  
so tender

& creator's tiniest babes  
their sacrifices  
grandmothering manys a young woman  
into blossoms  
grieving their losses  
alone

as spring unfolded herself around my womb, I found out I was carrying another child, my fertile body's simple joy forming her features into my pores, my body's odour a flower waiting to open around herself in the middle of a tree.

but none of this was meant to be. there were complications. there were signs & a d&c was ordered & there I sat in a hospital room remembering april fools

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afternoon & a chinook arch that pulled the prairie to the depths of my me.

had grandma joan known she may have disowned me. but I didn't tell her. I couldn't, & grandma joan ended up nursing me. she knew I'd had a d&c, like the others I'd have down the road, but an abortion?

& coyote was right there on the bed  
her yellow eyes resting on the edge  
of my pillow  
licking the salt from my tears

a comic irony, she said  
as grandma joan brought tea biscuits & tea  
& changed the pillow case  
under my grief-stained & watery head