

DATING PAST SIXTY

1

I am no lily pad
but I am no cactus;
a little water
regularly supplied suffices.
When the rain comes
my leaves curl neither
up nor down, but stand ready,
thirsty, not parched.

* * *

I have done spectacular things
and have flattering pictures for proof.
When I kneel photogenically,
wistfully
on one knee in the field
of wildflowers looking
at the horizon,
I clearly take root.

* * *

I am a mid-size luxury sedan
in need of front-end alignment only sometimes
because I turn corners too fast
and ignore the wear and tear on
my struts and shocks.
But please know, my transmission is reliable,
always smooth at any speed.
You never feel it when I shift gears.

* * *

I'm looking for a well-tuned violin,
a clay fire pit in the backyard
around which I can hold my freezing hands,
a medical clamp that can stop
a gushing vein, a pigment
on canvas where you feel free to paint
what you want no matter
what anyone may think.

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Together I am hoping
we will be a leaf blower
neglected in the corner of a garage
that doesn't get any light.
We will stand there a long time and do nothing,
content in knowing
the leaves are beautiful left on their own;
a crisp tide of yellow, orange, red,
ready to be covered by snow.

2

First date and we sit across from each other over dinner
sizing up one another like FBI profilers on *Criminal Minds*;
the way the napkin ring is removed,
placement of flatware, smoothing out
the linen napkin on the lap,
each movement's meaning –
leaning in, pulling back, a
crinkle in the corner of the mouth,
eye contact only at the start of sentences
then none at all through salad conversation,
listening to the crunching of the croutons
more than the inessential words,
tedious entree of a flavorless meal
until mercifully it's time to go,
neither of us a person of interest anymore.

3

My first year single
so many women had a dating profile picture
wearing a knitted, pink pussy hat
from the million women march
sometimes in a group shot, sometimes
solo, close up, topping
a bold, determined smile
that wasn't a smile exactly
but a fist raised
against brutality.

No one shows those pictures anymore.
Dogs are the thing now;
it's rare to go through a profile

without two or three smiling canines
with captions like “my love bug”
beneath cocked heads and goofy faces.

I have been on these sites
through the presidencies
of two old men, growing
closer to their ages when they
were elected than my age
when I divorced. I promise
I won't grab your pussy
but I won't be your dog, either,
no matter how sweetly
you scratch my belly.

4

I keep the hundred milligram tablet
of sildenafil wrapped in cellophane
in my wallet. If it feels right
I go to the bathroom before
we leave the restaurant, unwrap
it and swallow it while standing in
the stall. I am sixty-three. The
only feeling I have left from
being a teenager about to experience
the pleasures of the world is embarrassment.

5

It will be twenty years until the next total eclipse,
a Tuesday in August when I am eighty-three.

I scroll through a dating app
to see if there is someone to go with me.

I have been doing this for seven years since the divorce.

I want to say to all of them:
I am the one who sits in a parked car when it rains
listening as drops splatter on the windshield and roof in rhythmic percussion
accompanied by wind and thunder.

I want to say let us drive north in 2044

reminiscing about our life together.
We can stand in an open field in the middle of the day
when everything goes dark
and the confused birds, thinking it's the night,
commence their startling racket.