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Pulling the Moon Card

Gabrielle Lea Kindell
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Gabrielle Lea Kindell entitled "Pulling the Moon Card." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Marilyn Kallet, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Mary Jo Reiff, Art Smith

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

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Pulling the Moon Card

A thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Gabrielle Lea Kindell
Aug. 2008

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I would like to thank the creative writing faculty in the English Department of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and the visiting creative writing faculty for encouraging me in my silly pursuit of becoming a poet. I would especially like to thank Dr. Marilyn Kallet for pushing me struggle with poetry, and with myself, in order to create poems that are enduring and meaningful, instead of just mediocre. I would also like to thank visiting poet Dennis Sammons for helping me to think about writing outside of myself, although I still find myself writing in the same “vein” of “vain” poetry again and again.

I would like to thank the many wonderful, intelligent, compassionate, world-changing and inspiring people that I have met in Knoxville, especially my friends in the Progressive Student Alliance. Poetry can change the world, it is true, but the poetry they most love from me has been in the form of press releases and protest chants. They have made me feel, more than any other people I’ve known, that my writing can be a powerful force of change, that my writing can be tangibly important to changing peoples’ lives for the better.

Finally, I will thank Yaqub Darboe, my temporary husband, who came into my life when I needed to pull out of a very dark place, and who has saved me in allowing me to save him. He has taught me only three words of Mandinka, his native language, and one of them inspired one of the best poems I have ever written. I thank him for loving me, and for valuing my freedom almost as much as I do.

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to creatively explore emotionally intense and transformative moments in the author's life through the use of poetry. The intention was to create poetry that served as a means for creative expression. The poetry here functions both to document the author's life, to express the author's feelings and thoughts of her life, and as art that should provide readers with the feeling that they have suddenly entered the mind, heart and experience of another person.

While much of the poetry is specific to the author's life, some of the poems, especially those in the "Justice Card" section, bridge the gap between the author's experience and her understanding of the injustices she perceives in the world around her.

The final intention was to create a manuscript of poetry that was somehow cohesive, meaning that although the poems should function on their own as complete works of art, they should at the same time support and be supported by the other poems in the collection, so that each poem informs the meaning of others. The overall theme of the collection was to be one of transformative thought or experience, and this was the theme intended to unite the poems.

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Introduction to Pulling the Moon Card: Poems of Transformation

In Susan Levitt's *Introduction to Tarot*, she describes the typical imagery of the moon card as well as the experience of a moon phase itself. "Tarot decks depict a portal through which the initiate must pass in order to be transformed. [...] One experiences evolution into a whole new being, just as the dog evolved from the wolf [both of which are depicted on the moon cards of most decks]. A crayfish emerges from the waters; half in water and half on land. These feral animals signify the primality of lunar energy."¹ "Harvest Moon" is my rendering of the archetypal and symbolic imagery of this moon phase experience just as "Red Bicycle" is my interpretation of the sun card.

Though the moon card can indicate an experience like the one Levitt describes, more often than not it merely indicates strong or turbulent emotions. I have titled my manuscript *Pulling the Moon Card* both to honor the transformative power of a "moon card experience" specifically and to highlight the Tarot as one of my poetic influences. In the poem "Harvest Moon," for instance, which begins the section called "The Moon Card," I employ the tarot imagery described above:

The crayfish emerge on the bank
to praise the Moon—
and the coyote grieves her distance.

In this poem I attempt to emphasize the significance of emotionally intense and difficult phases in our lives and how these experiences are necessary to our personal evolutions. Many artists (of all genres) have used their art to explore the themes of the Tarot, among

¹ Levitt, Susan. *Introduction to Tarot*. (U. S. Games Systems, 2003), p. 67.

them Salvador Dali. I feel privileged to be among these artists for whom the Tarot has been so artistically significant, and I am proud that I have written poems that not only draw on Tarot imagery and themes, but that integrate those images and themes into my own experience as a means to expand upon the existing archetypes. In “Harvest Moon,” I use the typical Tarot imagery, but make my own argument about the message of the card. The moon experience, as some will describe it, is not only (or necessarily) a time of pain, confusion, or depression, but a necessary cathartic experience:

And we know that when she leaves us,
it will be like the letting loose
of a thousand strong, warm rivers.

Although not all (and indeed not most) of the poems in this collection are directly influenced by the Tarot, I do feel that the essence of the moon card, as explored in “Harvest Moon,” is indicative of the prevalent themes of the poems here. These are poems that explore the pain, joy, and inevitability of transformative experiences.

The collection begins with a section of poems devoted to my mother, many of these centering on her death and my process of grieving. Poetry is one way I make sense of her loss, like the way a painter might stand a few feet back from her own finished painting and say, “Okay, now I can see it, now I understand.” One theme explored in several of these poems is the idea of flowers as they relate to death and grieving, specifically the act of placing flowers on someone’s grave as an indication of mourning. This process of flowering a grave has always been one that has troubled me. As many times as I’ve done it, it has never felt real to me. It doesn’t make me feel connected to my mother, neither does it help me understand her death. There is no closure or

catharsis inherent in this act.. In “Poem to My Mother,” I ask for a more substantial experience:

All that remains of you are bones—
some stoic, skeletal reminder
and yet,
some secret part of you I’ve never known.

I wonder, would you let me have those, too?
Could we just forego the flowers,
and let my finger trace the jaw that held your cheek?

Following “The Death Card” are sections called “The Lovers Card,” “The Justice Card,” “The Moon Card,” and “The Sun Card.” I chose to begin with the poems about my mother because I felt they were the most emotionally upsetting and wanted the reader to experience somewhat of a “moon experience” of their own as they read the collection, ending with the feeling of having made the journey from darkness into the optimism of “Red Bicycle,” in which I urge the reader to:

Hold to me, the sun is turning and I am turning towards it.
Hold to me, I will pull you after like a blue balloon waiting to be the sky.

I have attempted to create not just an assemblage of unconnected poems, but a collection of poems that have a sense of wholeness. I would like to credit Dennis Sampson’s instruction for helping me realize the need, or at least the beauty, of a book of poetry that seems to have some order, some sense of integration. Jane Mead figured importantly here as well, as her book *The Lord and the General Din of the World* served as a model for me as to how one might go about creating a book of poetry that really felt unified. In her collection, the poems center on her relationship with her father, and even

the poems that do not refer to him specifically seem both to draw on and give insight to the poems that do. I hope that is true for my poems as well, that they can all be read in light of each other.

Harold Bloom has written notoriously about what he calls the “anxiety of influence,” or the anxiety the poet feels about the fact that she is inevitably influenced by her pre-cursors and the fact that this influence inhibits her ability to be innovative. Well, he’s right, but I would say for me the anxiety comes more in attempting to determine *who* my influences are. I don’t mind so much that I am influenced, but I do think the influence comes at such a subconscious level that it is difficult to pinpoint exactly who is doing the influencing unless I am purposefully drawing upon these poets.

I do have some insights here, however. I can say, for instance, that I draw strength from the honesty of Mead’s poems of her father, an honesty I have also found in the poems of Charlotte Pence, Marilyn Kallet and Beth Bachman. It is in the honesty of other poets that I find the courage to be honest myself, to allow the reader to see the parts of me that have been, and are perhaps still, raw and wounded.

I know that the feminism of Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, and Anne Sexton surface in my poems, as in “Wedding Reception,” in which I question the inane ceremony and patriarchy of both marriage and social graces and in “Brothel Assertion,” and “Music of the Spheres,” which question the assumption that women selling their sexuality are necessarily victims separated from their power. In “Wedding Reception,” I can also see e.e. cummings’ influence in the way I “mess around” with grammar, showing that those constraints can be just as limiting as the social constraints I am ridiculing.

The political poems in “The Justice Card” section find their inspiration in people like Amiri Baraka and Sonia Sanchez, whose strong voices acknowledge the injustices in our world and seek to address and eradicate them. I was able to see Baraka and Sanchez in person one night when they came to the coffee shop where I worked following a reading they had done. I remember being amazed at how physically small they are, because their words are so big, partly, I think, because they are the words of many people. They are writing not just for themselves, but for great numbers of oppressed people. I want my poems to serve the same purpose, to be the place where the chants of protesters coalesce with the stifled voices of many who cannot speak out.

More than anything, though, I want my poems to be honest—about myself, about the world. This is the most noble thing a poet can do, and in these poems, I think I have done it.

The Death Card:

The Death card symbolizes
not only physical death,
but the letting go of all that
is no longer good for us—
it is not a card of ending,
but of rebirth.

Baptism

My mother had the gall
to give a sermon at her own baptism—
and this at a little country church that
frowned on women preaching.

The congregation clenched their jaws
as my mother, likely manic,
prepared herself for death and resurrection.

The Flowers

In her saner crazy days
she wore a silk fuchsia rose
in her short,
Nancy-curled hair.

The perfume
(Taboo perfume and sweaty neck
laced through with stale Marlboro smoke)
came from her,
not from the flower.
I breathed her smell in, hugged it,
leaned into it as we sat
on the sofa watching TV—
her body allowing mine,
nothing more.

And now I weave
mustard-yellow and cranberry-pink
Dollar Store silks into the
green florist's foam of last year's
tombstone saddle—

more flowers for her head.

Canned Corn

From my place in the audience
I heard him read his poem about
Canned Corn—

How, with lid rusted closed
that sturdy corn fed his family,
kept them safe, and more.

I thought of our own canned corn,
likewise rusting in the basement—

How it had lacked the magic to hold us down,
and we went flying through the roof, grasping rafters as we went
on Thursdays.

Poem to My Mother

I wonder if this might be, in fact,
irrelevant—
Crowning you with fabric flowers
every birthday since your death.

After all,
the best of you is not down there,
and even the worst of you has left.

The slippery kisses have ended,
the bawdy humor has gone.

Even that sickly brain that would hold you down, down, down for weeks
to then grotesquely throw you up—even it has left.

All that remains of you are bones—
some stoic, skeletal reminder
and yet,
some secret part of you I've never known.

I wonder, would you let me have those, too?
Could we just forego the flowers,
and let my finger trace the jaw that held your cheek?

Let me hold the hips, your hips, that held the weight of me
for months?

But no... your bones will stay a secret.

We won't cross the boundaries, dirt or flesh,
that keep us separate.

Poem to My Mother II

I.

I remember sliding along sheets—worlds—of navy blue
polyester toward your vulva

to catch the red walnut smell of you. You let me linger
as long as decency did,

allowed my childhood curiosity. How close you let me get.
How you almost let me in.

II.

blue.

electric. like the TV turned up between moments of dialogue in an old movie.

you are just home from the hospital, at the edge of your bed, ghost-white gown,
midnight, my own white gown all there is of me
as I try to answer, “Who are you? I don’t have a daughter, who are you?”

I had wanted to sleep with my mother, had woken you for the comfort of a mother,
so what did I say? Who *was* I?

I said, “Mommy?” I said Mommy, Mommy, Mommy...

until your recognition.
until you hugged me and apologized ‘til morning.

III.

I make us into Russian nesting dolls,
one picturesque grief inside another.

each of our lovely sorrows
chewing the nipple of the next.

The Lovers Card:

The Lovers Card
symbolizes not only love
and romantic relationships,
but also choice and trial.

Impatience

It takes 26 minutes exactly for one load of laundry to wash.
Thirty-five to 45 minutes to dry.
It takes me 10 minutes to shower,
five if I'm in a hurry.

Two minutes to microwave some lunch,
another 3-5 to eat it.

How many minutes does it take to get to love the right way?
Why do I carry love like a ticking bomb,
impatient for explosion?

Ian Comes to Me

Ian comes to me like a horse coming for an apple,
sends his muzzle across the fence for a fruit
he likes so much he bites into my palm for more.

Chaucer would have called him a gelding or a mare,
but which of those he is doesn't really matter,
nor the complexity of what those metaphors might mean.

All I know is that we are different animals—
and my palm is burning against his bite.

Looking for a Mother

I had made some joke, some playful ribbing,
and he thought the meanness real.
I pulled him close, consoled him with a hug.

When I let him go he fell against me to the floor.

I wondered later if he'd wanted to test my nipples
but couldn't latch on—if he was looking for a mother.

Zenith

I'm giving it one last shot,
but he thinks it's his turn
to make me jealous
and to shock me. He hates

that I know he loves boys
before he's ready
to know it for himself.

He shows me a tiny hole
in the back of his jeans
where red flowered panties
show through just a little,

tells me he was at his girlfriend's
all night, woke up to go to work,
asked for her underwear
so that nobody would see his naked flesh.

I look away when he unbuttons
the top button,
pulls down his pants
to give a better view of the fabric.

He's testing me,
seeing if I'll take advantage
the way a certain woman has before.

I want to tell him I love him,
want to say, "Ian,
I love you so much I don't even care
if you say it back,
but we can't love each other this way."

Someday he'll open his arms
wide to the sky,
and the mountain he's kept hidden
will spill upward from his chest
toward some zenith,
some high place, some heaven.

A Low, Blue Song

I can't love a man—
can't let one in my soul.
My heart is stone.
I saw Medusa's head
through Cupid's wi-n-dow.

And your reflection was in the glass.
Tell me, why was that?
Tell me, why, oh why was that.

You didn't have to love me,
and you didn't have to kill my spirit.
I didn't ask for e-i-ther.

You didn't have to love me,
but you didn't have to kill me, either.
I didn't ask for that, oh-no, I didn't ask for that.

fields hall 2 a.m.

I walk out of fields hall at 2 a.m.
towards a more familiar bed.

the sprinklers are misting an offer
of music and water in the yard.
I smile at them
and kiss them softly for the invite,
“Thank you, but no, I’ve already had my evening.”

Knight of Pentacles

Will you never be indifferent?
The way you lean against your hoe, your Virgo wrinkled
forehead, worrying those plants into growth—
I would like you to fret for me like that.

Will you never be indifferent?
I will always concern myself with you,
even as long as the universe isn't holding us
together. One morning with my eyes still

closed, I thought I felt you come, I swear—
buildings down the road from me, I felt
you—and you've never touched me yet.

Sleepy Prince

Yes. I see you, sleepy prince across the room,
catching stares.

I see you, too bored to care,
but stopping rooms—

“look there,” they’ll say, “look there...”
and “Have you ever seen such sadness?”
“Have you ever seen such delicate disdain?”

you—bitter broken leaf,
manipulating air for spite—

Don’t you know that
we don’t mind
if your fingers touch your lips
at the thought of men?

Of if we did, we’d hide it for such beauty,
and all of us would sin.

Wedding Reception

The messy white salt shaker spilling, spilt around herself
must always return to the serious black pepper,
for the world of civility depends on this
 (and messy napkins hidden on russet knees
 (and russet knees opened on messy sheets behind closed doors

Learning Netemanko: the Mandinka Word for Yellow

Yaqub teaches me the Mandinka words
for red, yellow, and blue—
the syllables extending like colors themselves
into the dark room.

We kiss between words—I touch my tongue
to his, let it find the foreign sounds it cannot make.
Netemanko, he tells me, also names an African tree
whose black-skinned fruit peels down to bright yellow flesh.

Our own flesh is spent—
slick and sweet as the best fruit,

but sleep is a ripening.
Come morning, we will tear each other open
to yet another yellow,

to some fat red or purring blue.

Moments of Perfection

the moments of perfection are what keep me here
with him
when I could very well be elsewhere.

the moments of *imperfection* are longer,
require a patience I'm willing to give
only for the love of what waits at the end of them.

I remember reading somewhere
that most couples have 10 irresolvable issues
to which they will always return.
it does not matter what these ten things are.
what matters,
is whether you're ready to make them yours.

Black Deer

we are two deer
drinking either end
of a reflection.

our little mouths,
how they work the water.

black deer, calm deer,
sing into me.

Love Poem to Gambia

I poke Yaqub, find a soft spot in his skinny arm.
He tells me that when he was a boy,
the government of some European country came
to “save” them: told them an epidemic was coming
and they wanted to immunize the children.

It was years later when the truth came out
that they had been testing vaccinations.
His arm is imperfect now for carelessness,
for a love of some above the love of others.

Mean Love

“So how many pounds are you?” Yaqub asks.

Two of my male friends are within earshot
and so he’s jealous.
He stakes his claim with meanness.

I have given him so many allowances.
He has been so many people.
Maybe I have too.

Doors

and he said, “my world is yours,
open up my red door,
look at my broad sky,

and I will open your strong door,
move my hands against your heavens.”

Thinking of Yaqub

Gambia stares back at me in bright pink
from the map printed on the shower curtain.

It is a tiny country that pushes like a phallus into Senegal,
and like a yoni, receives the River Gambia completely.

On Our First Date

On our first date we had sex:
you pushed me back onto the bed
and I sat up.

You pushed me back again,
spread my legs,
and I closed them.

Eventually you got there,
and I kept thinking of that movie,
9 ½ Weeks—

I'd always wondered why they
portrayed rape as love,
as sexy.

I'm not saying that you raped me.
I wanted it too,
that's why I'd come over in the first place.

But sex on your terms only
isn't love,
and I wonder if passion
isn't quite love either.

The Justice Card:

The Justice Card appears when there is a need for balance and adjustment; the card also warns that justice may not come easily or painlessly.

Fast Food

Your car idles in the drive-thru lane as you listen to NPR. It's been five minutes now and you're starting to get impatient. You do not see or feel the greasy struggle of the people on the inside, or hear the manager yelling, "Keep that drive-thru time down!" so that the workers hustle like rats bumping their heads against a wall of maze for some inconsequential prize: no benefits, bad pay.

It's been six minutes now,

and somewhere a child's bulging belly has waited days when the flies pull up to place their orders.

Apathy

I am a tower built of milk moustache ads,
of the question, “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?”
I am the Babel of celebrity babble that bleeds from the TV screen.

They don’t show us the bodies.
The headlines don’t read, “War!”
and our only geography is to keep wondering who will win
the Golden Globe.

I curl up with my cats, nurse the ignorant scratches they inflict,
eat popcorn like a Ketchup American.

My blood is all I know right now,
the tampon limp as a body.

I am concerned about my hair and plan to color out its gray,
camouflage it for the early-twenties crowd I hang with.
I will whiten my teeth and lose ten pounds by Valentines,

eat chocolates with a new boyfriend,
mark our relationship by the number of periods I’ve had
since we’ve been together.

I’ll compose a poem about a war that bleeds outside myself—

force myself to remember how mad I was
when it all started,
the way my face shot red.

Little Poem Who's Forgotten Her Rose-Colored Glasses

Every day an ulcer bleeds
in some
forgotten country.

But the day Manhattan
breaks its knees,
Everybody sheds a tear.

FAT

At the protest, when an old man is shoved from the door
of the UC-Oakland Administrative Building,

I'll be the one leveraging my fat into the guard yelling,
"You can't push us! You cannot push us!"

I'll lodge myself like an angry doorstep, determined
that this door won't close, even if only our voices will get in.

Then, looking past the guard to the Suit inside—
the authoritative ass on the phone with security or police,

I'll reach into my pocket and clutch a roll of fat like a loaded gun,
stare the motherfucker down with my hot eyes

until his own can't hold the gaze, lose their power, look away.

Music of the Spheres

I remember her nipples trailing slowly up my own clothed breasts,
close to my lips, my eyes. Her nipples became the universe,
the atmosphere her smell...

but just until the music ended
and she walked away with my sad cash.

I am not surprised,
watching a documentary about strippers
who formed a labor union,
am not surprised at the strength of women

who won't work it for nuthin'
won't be somebody's Helen,
without a little War.

In Chinese Factories

In Chinese factories, where countless cheap goods are made for American companies, workers are told to lie about working conditions when inspectors come. *Do they mistreat you?* Oh no, oh no. They give us candy. Pump pump sugar. Pump pump pump sewing machine. *Do they give you breaks?* OH yes, oh yes. Pump pump break. Our breaks are long. Pump pump pump. But not too long. *So this is indeed not a sweatshop?* OH no, we never sweat here. Pump pump. Or shop. They don't pay us to shop. But I do like it here, yes, better than prostitution. Pump pump pump. Better than being a pumping whore.

Ventriloquism

The big dummy smile, corners of the mouth extending
and the big dummy nod, “Yes, yes. Yes, yes.”

I want to say, “fuck no,”
but it’s not easy with this authoritative hand up my ass
flapping my wooden head.

Brothel Assertion

Look here, I'll be your pretty horse.
I'll let you check my teeth,
my butt, my skirt.

I'll smile while you decide
which horse you'd like to ride...

and if you pick me,
I'll take your hand and lead you back.

I'll be your glossy magazine,
your movie queen,
or some June Cleaver selling cleaning pads
(whichever paper woman you like best).

I'll be all that, but let me ask you
if you really think you dominate?

I'll let you think whatever you need to think—
give you your silly patriarchal seat—

but what it comes down to is this:
you only paid for pussy.
you didn't pay for me.

The Moon Card:

The Moon Card is a card symbolizing intuitiveness, spiritual cycles, and may indicate strong emotions and/or depression.

Harvest Moon

The crayfish emerge on the bank
to praise the Moon—
and the coyote grieves her distance.

Like the crayfish, I am humble on the creek bank.
Like the coyote, I open my throat in a long, low moan.

We know that when she comes to us—
pulls into us in a low, cold orbit—
that she will teach us a lesson in the fullness of sorrow.

And we know that when she leaves us,
it will be like the letting loose
of a thousand strong, warm rivers.

Petal-Plucked

She's a petal-plucked childflower,
somehow bloomed too fast to twenty-three.

She naps in sleepy childhood,
 preview to a television.
I laugh to think she watches
 cartoons in her sleep.

I think she thinks.

Awake, her eyes look down at cereal,
 away to milk, away from me,
afraid I'll shove her some pill?
 some black and yellow-colored one,
some... bumblebee?

But I won't.
 Not now.
It's only noon, I don't give medicine 'til three.
 (Oh, I must be a nasty hag).

But she says,
 from that sweet but freckled brain,
she says... "I like you."

I push her hair back from her face, and...
 she *looks* at me.

What Went with that Child of Me?

The younger child of me
took her picnic
in the backyard afternoons
of Mamaw and Papaw's place.

I ate with the clover blooms
and watched the garden
growing cabbage and rabbits,

then Papaw driving crazy down through it all,
past me to the river where he thought
he'd find a magical black walnut
he could plug his metal detector into—
"It'll light up the property lines," he said,

nobody would steal his land, he said.
He drove on through to the river,
and I was too late to grab the keys.

Unsexing Archilochus: a Poetic Exercise

fragment 41—

*Up and down she bounced
like a kingfisher flapping on a jutting rock.*

...a dying pigeon on the sidewalk
convulsing toward the hope of brightness.

fragment 40—

...wet mound of Venus...

...tangle of hair...
sticky with menstrual blood from when the tampon
was pulled out, thick and limp as a stillborn.

from fragment 196a—

*I shot my not energy off,
just brushing golden hairs.*

The shrapnel flew from the missile's impact,
just slicing a tender ear to reveal the bright cartilage.

Butchering the Blue Guitar

*The man bent over his guitar,
A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.
--Wallace Stevens*

I want to play with you in mind,
your sullen elbow holding this string,
your languid thigh holding that.

But the absence of you fails to weight this song,
and what I've done to compensate:

I've cut a hole in the center of this guitar,
pulled out its guts to leave it gaping, hollow—
so that it vibrates sadly, resonating an artificial beauty,
making a plea that the missing parts won't answer back.

Jonah

Tommy thinks he's Jonah.
When his computer freezes and the movie stops,
he lifts his hands to the ceiling,
faking frustration, calling on God.

As he pours coffee from his own carafe
into an old Starbucks cup,
then the cold milk slowly, the Sweet-n-Low,

he seems more like Job.
He quietly takes the plagues:
the Cranky Computer, the Poverty, the Depression—
and now, I'm sure, Myself.

Jungle Prairie

you said something about

prairies—

how we could fuck in them
in the moonlight?

sunlight?

both?

you had me strung up like a kite
caught in the color

RED.

and you said...

and you said...

The Sun Card:

The Sun Card follows the darkness and uncertainty of the Moon Card, epitomizing enlightenment and enjoyment, innocence, passion, and positive action.

Chiron in Taurus—A Poem for My Sister

We don't ever get enough to fill this hole.
We've been piling it in for years now, and I still haven't heard
one donut hit the bottom.

Sister, they didn't give us love,
and so we snuck it from the cupboard,
took seconds of it at the table,

even if the last one finished
had to wash the dishes, clean the counters,
mop the floors.

We are each other's Chiron, we're wounded healers
trying to fill each other's pain with kind bags of chips
and sandwiches.

Well, we both know it ain't workin', but we still do it,
and I promise never, never ever, to make a cheesecake
without you, Sis.

Plums on the Windowsill

One Monday, she pulled a plum from the tree and sat it on the windowsill.
The next Monday, she pulled a plum from the tree and sat it next to the first.
Each week, she pulled a plum, and so made a line of them on the windowsill—
until there were seven, the first wrinkled and let of its juice,
the others softening in six degrees of pursuit.

Patience

At the international festival, a young woman writes
the word patience for me in Japanese calligraphy.

She works deliberately, the paper thin enough to tear
if she rushes. Each stroke is long and slow,
as careful and beautiful as the universe expanding.

Long-Suffering

My Medieval Literature classmates and I
are about to learn that to the Medievals,
the word patience meant long-suffering.

We've just read a long narrative poem,
a retelling of the Jonah myth,
and a woman in the class asks,
“Why is it called *Patience*, when Jonah
was in such a hurry to get away from God?”

Mecca

Yaqub has not yet made his trip to Mecca,
but he knows it's there, that it will be there
when he finds his way to it.

Every morning he crouches on a rug in its direction,
faithful and focused, head down in prayer.

yes, maybe

try eating a banana stoned.

first, you'll be fascinated by the way the peeling rips just a little,
like lightning,
not actually following the folds of the banana,
as you always thought they did (

because

)
you never really paid attention.

then you'll eat the banana, imagining yourself as an aborigine
eating a banana,
the banana being the main dietary staple of the aborigine,

and at first you'll think, like someone who's eaten half a billion bananas:
"this tastes like
half-boiled potato, just a little smoother and a little sweet."

or maybe...

aboriginal bananas have the taste of honey and heated butter,
warm butterscotch,
or southern pecan pie with whipped cream.

aboriginal bananas aren't bland, just a bit boring,
yes, maybe
since their only number
is to taste
like bits
of heaven.

Figuring it Out

I imagine myself in a fleshy red room,
the belly of a big, big fish,
hanging paintings on the wall,
placing doilies, making tea.

When we make mistakes in life,
or when we make enough of them,
someone, something, sends us back
to start again.

Red Bicycle

Today I have turned over the Sun Card from my tarot deck,
and my legs are turning quickly the pedals of this red bicycle.

Today I am riding towards the end of concrete where the sun
pulls from the branches of shadow trees and turns my face to golden.

Hold to me, the sun is turning and I am turning towards it.
Hold to me, I will pull you after like a blue balloon waiting to be the sky.

Vita

Gabrielle Lea Kindell was born to Jonathan and Brenda Kindell in West Liberty, Kentucky on December 10, 1980. She was raised in the rural community of Lacy Creek, Kentucky and graduated from Morgan County High School in May 1999.

Gabrielle pursued her undergraduate college education at Morehead State University in Morehead, Kentucky and received a B. A. in English with minors in theatre and creative writing in May 2004. In 2005, she began the Masters in English program at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville where she concentrated in creative writing with a specific interest in the writing of poetry. Gabrielle received her M. A. in English in Summer 2008. She plans to become an international citizen by teaching English abroad.