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Cover:

Detail of Daphne from
Bernini's 'Apollo and Daphne'

Origami Poems Project™

Deft Turning

Ira Schaeffer © 2013



Deft Turning



Ira Schaeffer

Upside-Down Cake

Then with quilted mitts
you managed a deft overturning—
my hunger and dread now rested
on a glass pedestal,
a dainty dish sweeter for its rarity—
Mother, you fed me lies;
you fed me love.

Mother Mayhem, Queen of Hearts
remember how you bound
your pal, your son
tighter than the Gordian knot
with welts and kisses—your embrace
a coil of vipers, a tickling hysteria.

When your cruelty was spent
you'd lure me back
with baking pans and pineapple slices,
framing your eyes like golden spectacles
then holding them up to mine—I saw
the one I loved return.

The Jolly Baker laughed, the eggs cracked,
sweet dust powdered your pretty hair—
I watched the mixing blades spin—
without your centrifugal loathing
our topsy-turvy world inverted
as the batter thickened.

Again the earth thaws

Primavera

Again the earth thaws and one bony knuckle
then the next unfurls
until your fingers fan out
caressed by the tender air.
Soon the green feels its way back,
fleshing out the beauty of you
shaking bits of soil free
from your strands of yellow,
thickening with each new breath.

All winter long my brittle bed
pierced me with loneliness;
my graying body starved in long neglect
ached for the color of you.
Even as the press of snow chilled my heart
I wanted to believe our love
could outlast death.

Daphne of the glittering green, now rooted
near the river house, your father's
gift and his sorrow, as he watched your lithe,
quick body twist and grow brittle,
the blue ribbons in your flowing hair
hang limp from your slender branches.
Tell me how you live without
the burning of your smooth limbs,
the fire in your hidden parts.
Are those evergreen leaves your bloodless
laurel, those chaste blooms the garland
that choked Apollo's desire?
I need to know how you live
without passion and tenderness.
Are the birds that perch and sing,
the wind that strums each part
enough, or do they mask your weeping?

Metamorphosis