

Marble

The dunce cap that keeps me from recess is good today.
Its one-size-fits-all elastic string digs into the spot where my neck meets my chin.
Its grip colors it, with no thought of staying inside the lines, red.
Indian red, *now chestnut*. Torch red, *now scarlet*. I wonder what the pitchforks are now called...
Red as the voluptuous balloons that fly *or lay?* along the edge of my sheet of cream marble cake.
Like me. Light outside but mixed underneath. Mom and Dad. Who do I choose?
I bubble in “other” on the black and white tests with just one answer.
With my yellow *goldenrod? canary? macaroni and cheese?* number 2 pencil.
I look for Oreo. Or for Domino. The kids call me those. Neither is there. In the bakery, or on the paper.
I like marble. It is a sweet way to say “other.”
The part where the vanilla and the chocolate steep like leaves in a little fine cup is where I hide.

Surprise!

Red is my favorite color. Like cardinals. And fire trucks.
Not stop signs. You see them all the time. Too common.
I tug the string to ease the squeeze, but the brief release does nothing. *Snap!* back it goes.
May the Good Lord Bless You. *Achoo.*
I wish He would. But, do we really need to say He is good? Is that not a given?
Cut the cake! I do. Right through my name in swirly gel writing. Slice myself in two.
Put each on a tiny plate with an equally small plastic fork. Wait to see which half gets picked first.
Everyone wants a corner piece.
Is it because they are the sweetest? Or because there are only four?
People always seem to like best what is the toughest to get.
Someone will not win.
The pin game. Why does the donkey have so many tails? Or are they tales?
That would make more sense.
I bet that ass has a lot of stories to tell. If you let it.
How sad we hold those tales in our hands and give them back without listening. Or even caring.
One. Two. Three.
The string keeps the fold over my eyes. So I cannot see. But I can feel. The wooden stick in my hand.

So am I *really* blind?

The slurry carcass is stuffed with 57-year-old dreams. It hangs. From a string. We laugh.

When we beat it down. When we rip its insides out. When we take what we like for ourselves. Yay!

The pile of curl-edged leaves raked into the corner waits. To be opened.

How odd they fell from outstretched, nail-tipped limbs to sit at the feet of this long dead tree.

The one that stands under the gay crucified flag with its bib pinned on. As if it should run.

Bang! It drops.

No, it droops. In the center. From the weight of counting every year up.

Or does it actually tick the direction of a frown?

Like the ball we all watch. At the end *or at the beginning?* of each turn of the calendar.

Never tossed. Never shot. Just dropped.

How many candles are left to just be blown out?

The bags of favors hang by the door, not done. Twisty tied tight, like Nobody's bag of wind.

Open them up. *Not here! At home.* To remember...

When the remains are bagged and they decorate the curb.

The same paved bump that takes the lives of men who look like my dad under caps bent on Sundays.

Make a wish! I close my eyes. And I see Henry in his brown box.

Sharp cornered. Like the ones everyone brought. For me.

The ones that sat all day in the shade of the no longer alive tree.

Covered in ribbon and colored paper.

To hide the *sepia, umber, tan, beaver* underneath.

The same *shadow* that runs through me.

I take my *pinch to grow an inch* from my mom's mother.

And I cannot help but wonder if getting bigger will make me worth more.

Like a *Navarre*...

Maybe I will find out this time next year.

Say Cheese!