

**ELIZABETH J. COLEMAN**

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**Admission Against Interest**

Let the record reflect:  
ab initio,  
I chose; you demurred  
(no defamation intended).  
Sua sponte, duces tecum.

Let's expunge from the record  
failures of consideration; we've held one  
another harmless,  
the elements of enchantment elusive,  
an act of God.  
Sua sponte, duces tecum.

A plea: after my statute of limitations  
has run, rule against perpetuities  
played out, appeals lost,  
you'll be at counsel table, by my side.  
Sua sponte, duces tecum.

### **San Ignacio**

Maybe next time I will be born near sea  
in a turquoise shack by banana  
trees, frangipani, flamboyants,  
ocean's burlap weave against silk sky,  
and sand's tan linen where tousled waves cradle  
sergeant majors, hogfish, lemon sharks.  
Umbrellas are for sun as well as rain;  
an old school bus announces Jesus saves;  
four traffic lights, one at Hawksworth Bridge  
above boats that have capsized in the wind.

I wade in wistfulness for waves I will  
not see, my life two thirds complete.  
At least I've glimpsed the thatched roofs of Belize  
on wood piers that jut into the sea.

### **Illumination**

Only when I began to study art,  
did I see the way light falls on fruit,  
how much of an apple is blue, not red  
at all, in the sun, or that there are spots  
so luminous they're best represented  
by the blank page. I didn't understand  
that art is illumination, and to appreciate  
a Pissarro, you have to see the way  
the rays come through the trees into the brown  
wood. So too, really to see your child  
who cleverly plucked some features from you  
and some from your husband to create her own  
astonishing face, you must  
look at the way light falls on those wide green eyes.

## **Irrational Numbers**

It didn't add up:  
your white church, my Dutch colonial house;  
your father said tater, had never met a Jew.

I've always been more comfortable with sines,  
and easily distracted  
by tangents: your sharp angles, home-baked pies,  
fascination with fire.

Unbounded sets  
measure  
love's volume,  
a complex number.

### **Proof**

The best proof I've seen that God exists  
is found on the face of sand dollars, echinoid fish.  
Though it makes me wonder if He used paint by numbers,  
the design too charming, unencumbered.

Found on the face of sand dollars, echinoid fish,  
a reflection of tern, dune, sandpiper, sky;  
a design too charming, unencumbered,  
white caps from a Japanese print thunder out of the sea.

A reflection of tern, dune, sandpiper, sky,  
my children, young in this picture, skip behind laughing.  
White caps from a Japanese print thunder out of the sea.  
I want to warn my boy and girl: stay close to me.

My children, young, skip behind laughing,  
My daughter's hair flows, undulating sea creature.  
I want to warn them: stay close to me;  
but want them to break away, dash to the sea.

My daughter's hair flows, undulating sea creature;  
my son follows, gray sweat pants billowing.  
Want them to break away, dash to the sea.  
The best proof I've seen: my two children right behind me.

### **George Washington Bridge**

I watch the red umbrellas down below,  
merged in mist with people passing through.  
I cannot shake the sadness of the rain;  
a grayness has submerged the streets again.  
Not a downpour that prevails on you  
to run for shelter, laughing with a friend,  
dashing arm and arm down subway stairs.  
No, one that invites you to feel alone,  
dwell on acts for which you've not atoned.  
But I made amends, I tell myself.  
After all, I came back to this town  
to be close to where my mother lies,  
and to the small red lighthouse beneath the grand  
gray bridge she lovingly described  
each time that we passed by.

### **Evening Primrose**

In the cooling paynes-gray air, we sat  
barefoot at our city's beach, post-prom  
all night, and searched the sand for clues about  
our future paths, my first time out 'til dawn.

Back in those salad days, we felt so cool,  
watching the night unfold, black, vast and wise;  
a mellow mystery that made us fools  
for NoDoz, coffee, heedless lovers' eyes,

Now I'm an evening primrose on the hill,  
shivering in the cooling twilight breeze.  
Visitors arrive and will not go away:  
a sadness or a death that haunts me still.  
Inscrutable, sleep's turned into a tease,  
who coyly saunters in at break of day.