

## MOTHER/DAUGHTER BANQUETS

For tonight's main course  
let her remember the days I clung to her  
while she shielded me from dragons:  
My father's temper, nightmares when I was nine,  
a nasty neighbor who thought I stole  
his crab apples, a snarling Doberman  
chasing me till she ran between us  
with a stick. Many dragons, all vanquished.

She knows they're still out there, multiplying  
by dark, roaming offices and freeways.  
More kinds than she imagines. Sometimes  
the fiercest of all is the one inside me  
uncoiling to attack her reaching hands.

What makes daughters so razorish? Why must  
mothers rearrange the cabinets each visit?  
Rattling dishes as you juggle your budget,  
blowing dust off lampshades as you dress  
for a party, reinfecting that ancient cut.

Last year she gave up running in marathons  
and riding fast horses, but still rummages  
my shadows, stalks my shores looking for dragons.

I mention her magnificence  
with the long-ago Doberman. She says  
she doesn't remember that at all. She sniffs  
at each serving designed for her plate. We dab  
at silences with monogrammed napkins, clear  
the dining room, cram leftovers in odd places,  
punish each other with after-dinner love.

In mysterious ways  
these movable feasts have made us strong.  
The long table is scratched and dented but sturdy.  
And without her I would be hungry.