

TABLE SETTING

Mother, your only daughter has prepared
All your favorites-- wild rice and duck,
Rose wine, centerpiece of mauve asters
For our small silences to orbit.

Fermentation bubbles spot the linen,
Condensation creeps down glass.
I pinch my words for doneness.
It takes time to make a meal.

How long do mother/daughter banquets last?
It's been years since I left, a lone moth
Escaping the cakes in your closet.
And still we feed at these movable feasts.

Why do you keep saving the torn giftwrap?
Slipping it under my eyelids at bedtime,
Crumpling it under my tires on the tollway,
Fanning the mustiness of it as I shower.

Please. Just eat the good things I've made.
I've sheathed my razor edges, vowed
Not to attack your hands.
My voice will not rise tonight.

You sit staring, oily opalescence skimming
The entree, the trail of our sentences.
I smile and touch the flowers: "You once
Made me a velveteen dress that color."

You say you don't remember that at all,
And purple only reminds you of pain.
You ignore a second helping
Of my dated tidbits, then sniff

The current kettle, declining the ladle
Designed for your grip.
After the table is cleared, leftovers
Saved for another venue, you finger

The fastener on your purse, pick
At the foil-wrapped roll under tissues
And offer me a broken lozenge
Coated with the lint of love.

--Glenna Holloway