1973

A Christmas Photograph: Christmas Dinner; The Photograph

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A CHRISTMAS PHOTOGRAPH

Christmas Dinner

O one eye, father
wearing your camera like a black patch.
From the doorway you lunge at me—
a mouthful of ocher, saying;
“Cheese, cheese. Smile please.”
Salmon cheeks, scotch man, pirate.

Tyrant of the Christmas dinner—
I rise to the order: A young girl rises
from the table
with silver bones
and your dark, wet history
cramped in her knees.
I smile: She smiles.
You flicker your broken eye,
shutter trap, death box, our pall bearer.
You’ve done, it father, twenty one times.
Like a scientist
you’ve trapped me on your lens,
mounted me and soaked me
in years of blue fluid.
I’ve squirmed to destroy every image.

Cheese, cheese, my Daddy
Smile for me.
Ice me one more year
with your Winter kiss.
Freeze me, frame me.
I’m big enough now.
Gin slivered, I’m yours, I’m yours.
The Photograph

Nothing changes—
The door to your room stands slightly open:
Through the years I can hear you
coughing in your sleep.
The snow breaks its crystals in a field.
A glass child, your daughter, lives
framed on your bureau.
Her smile is forming its mouth
in the dark.
The moon lights her cheeks up;
two white coins, then gold.
You rise to collect them;
your change.