

## MANIFESTO FOR THE GIRL

You are not a spoon.  
You do not have to curve  
in service, carry a man's insecurities, fill  
with small portions, turn yourself to spill.  
You are knife, a cutting machine through the strings  
history sticks to your fingers, plays you,  
splays you, makes you puppet.

Cut, saw, use the serration of stories, those  
the outlaws tell, the stuttering words of the bullied,  
whose face streams with tears. Find your edge. Wreck  
the story erected around you. Wreck yourself  
with sawing, wreck the image of your mother she tries  
to bend in you, that she wants you to swallow,  
"Soup should be spooned away, like so."  
Go ahead and lick, little girl. Steam  
the spoon, and stick it on your nose. Kick the pot  
of your parents' emptiness, knock it off the stove.  
You are good. Listen to me.  
You are so good.  
You are good like the smell in a newborn's palm  
when her fist is unfurled.  
You have always been good,  
like a fiddlehead fern, like a Rough-legged Hawk riding a thermal.  
Look up. Let the sun ride your cheekbones, slide  
along your jaw, and fill your mouth.  
You are not edible.  
You do not grow subject to sun or water or  
soil. You are neither muscle nor bone for broth  
nor brisket on Easter platters. You are not grist  
or gristle or gut. You are not vegetable, diced,  
delivered, reduced to stew or stock.

You are star,  
beyond time, beyond touching. You are more than  
your father's puncturing, your sister's punching. You shine a spotlight  
on violence, call it violence, a bruise by any other name  
would hurt so deep. The way you break  
night, you hold the first wish I wish tonight. What you hold,  
what you let go, what you offer is hope.

You are light.  
You light up the hickory trees, their leaves like bear paws, the tips  
touched in the morning, the perch of Cardinals and Pileated.  
You guide travelers who've lost their stars, whom  
others want to harm, who cannot walk.

You are vessel, wave, spectrum, umbilicus.

You are good. Hear me.

Take this in like water dropped to a nomad, like a breath  
to a cigarette quitter, like rain.

You are good.

~Kate Grey