

# Cast Off Thy Suffering

*by* Deborah Oster Pannell

What of the people who  
carry the burden of  
some imploded imbalance  
their bloated bodies so burdened  
by the overflow of hatred and disregard  
against which they stanch themselves  
with foody food, safety glue  
pudding pie buttercups  
golden rimmed pudding pops  
and claim  
their identity  
roughly,  
with the harshest of glances  
furtive, heavy lidded  
and not in that  
suggestive, trance inducing  
way but in a  
self-conscious  
hardened over  
the soft-winged, wounded bird  
that bore me  
into her own  
tattered  
reflection/projection  
way?

I don't know you.  
Are you my forgotten past  
or my future so distant  
that I am loathe to hope  
for any familiar detail?  
I am padding me,

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self, insert location and  
hope for the best.  
You don't know me.  
I am a trailblazer  
(you look on)  
smiling, you try to divine me.  
You want to know what's in my  
mind? No, maybe you just  
want to penetrate my veneer.  
You are arrogant. Should  
I be angry or just float along  
like the rest of the sailors?  
Somewhere along tomorrow, I  
will forget that I have the right  
to do this. I will subvert my  
joy and question my intentions.  
I wish I were not so foolish.

Parts of my body  
need concentrated attention now  
I do not always remember  
the relationship between  
thought and form  
and muscle and  
sinewy connective  
matter  
strung tight  
on willing frame  
I must  
stake a claim  
or so I thought,  
as I am proven  
wrong once again  
my narrative  
falsely shaped

in alternate realities  
looking ahead  
of my gaze  
I expect so much  
my heart is heavy  
with anticipation  
the weight of sadness  
subdivided  
and scattered  
and bearing down  
on muscle  
and fiber  
and molecule  
cellular distortion  
permeates these walls  
How many ways must  
I tell this story?  
Dare I replace  
the terms of  
the original contract?  
I keep losing my way  
but now I'm  
told that is the new  
standard of living,  
so I guess it's all OK.

Mothers, fill your notebooks  
make your children  
swear an oath of allegiance  
to share these books  
with future generations  
a choir of suffering there,  
false happiness over here,  
overbearing casualness there,  
if more people read it

does it make it more important?  
the external pressure to perform  
has so many of us  
falling by the wayside  
we can't bear the heartache,  
it fells us  
great  
sensitive beasts  
so fragile, after all.  
I won't tell you  
how to think  
or what to believe  
if you promise you  
will hold me gently  
in some way  
in your mind  
your gaze  
your arms  
it doesn't matter!  
the time, the distance,  
they contract  
a tesseract  
and I am skipping and tripping  
my way through  
generations  
patterned history  
blockading my  
memory  
until, strand by strand  
I pull out the  
jeweled moments  
and breathe them in for you

