

Kristi Maxwell

Mate

A heart hawked into a napkin / whose heart—?
Your body wadded up
the only position in which you slept.
So queen- and king-pieces do look like blossomed pawns
and pawns send me reminiscing of your knees
held near your body like folded clothes—
have you moved yet?
My anesthesia's no good without your blade.
Let's say I won't win
that I bury landmines in time so each day is a challenge to run through.
That's not right either. I say time as in "had a good / bad"
a fence around the past tense / No Trespassing.
Constellations are so predictable—you think we'd be tired
of night / the way stars hold their light as if it were precious—
tongue-toughened thumbs of light.
We had talked about it once. Someone said will?
Someone said yes. Someone said
fate is a conscious will—a barge that leads a cruise ship out of harbor.
My yes barged in on.
I've lowered a cutout of you into my mine (you're standing
in a field where we before or after made love / for the sake of saying so
where what would have been a sheep
but were only sheep bones
laid close enough to your head they might have been / bedposts).
The lights are blinking on and off—
is it alright to move closer if someone's left? Despite
assigned seats? (fate's
not gonna like it) Usher, usher us.

from **Re-**

“and who she is and he/
are templates.”

-Lisa Fishman

CYCLE (ENTER/VEER/CONFIRM)

Their bright bodies fight their brightness with powder and clothes.
Wormholes their physicist looted for these arms warmed up in them
for this: the demolecularized vernacular of their touch.
Thou, he throws out of his mouth, that keepeth me kennel-wise
that I might keepeth thee too through the instruction of dehydrated meat
hyped up by apocalypse kits equipped in the pretense
cells might be salvaged. Lard from the carcass turned salve.
How their hands were lanced after that glance at having,
that the tense might maintain itself and they would.

+

Away from the arrow of the inlet they rowed
toward what was writ on the invitation: Tonight, we will finish off
the flimsy-skinned oranges, the last of the oranges
will be blasted by all attendant mouths
that vow a sky for them, under skin. Their paddles
grew petty in the current so they set them aside
and laid like paddles beside them. One commented on
a baggie the body imitated. Or the body a baggie
resembled. To be shut that way and turned and shook
and to be shut that way still so that nothing is sequestered.

+

These little alms of him she licked his name clean from.
Clear form for his face to restate itself. Station of a name
where a face fuddles for the nozzle of an identifying mark

to demarcate a specific in pronoun's vast lot
in the acre allotted to masculine which is nonetheless a mask
she frisked with her tongue to find the stash
of him who is both and not. She pinches the strings where the letters in he
meet to tie.

+

Through the preacher's sermon slit
seeped a surplus of praise
snagged on the pew they drew
for this service.
The line is too thick, she insisted,
and he smeared each seat
so they could be seated again.
Whose heart this time
should we weave for the midday snack
to be snug in, one asked. Their basket
adequate, the filling commenced.

+

In the formal rising of bread
they net with their mouths
each of the seeds in each
clay pot needs replacement
as does the pan
whose contents now pan their intestines
like a camera a landscape
scraped by the herd's hard hair
as they bury their sleeping into a nearby
slope that pays its loan to seed
with green.

Evergreen Game

*When we play chess, we partake of the eternal,
because chess concepts depend on formal relations.*
-Fred Reinfeld, *The Human Side of Chess*

1. e4

played in 1852, only later called
“the evergreen in Adolph Anderssen’s laurel wreath”
though he had no wreath—the Father of
World Championship Chess
played the game in 2-3 hours at a café,

e5

pieces jutting toward the ceiling
like little toes: which gets privileged with wiggle?

went *went* *went*

it was a treat when father popped my toes

2. Nf3

a family tree, if a tree, is a conifer
so that autumn could be all the time, or never
the tree won’t tell, in its boast of narrow leaves,
ever green

Nc6

if my father is branch

if I, needle

if (and not if) we buried the runt-pup near the cattails

if (and not if) it was his suggestion, or my

cone-pride—needle & branch

3. Bc4

green behind the ear; thumb; with envy (with *vie!*)
the year behind you (as an owner with his pet and a leash)
the year that lashes

that possesses you as photosynthesis a leaf

chlorophyll a plant-calorie
what makes blonde hair green is chlorine

quiche "Florentine" involves spinach, wilted
(and this is good—to wish the wilt)

whist ...in which two pairs of people try to take the majority of cards
tryst ...in which a pair tries to make a majority between them—
 to stomach the world (*monde*) between them

mondegreens a (albeit) happy mishearing, which leads to an alternate universe of
 understanding (father : father) father-fodder)

Bc5

Why not inherit precision, like an eye color
or jaw-line?

That magnifying glass, an extra stub
among his fingers—

a carbon speck suspended in a diamond.

I know that(s):

Rolex, its second hand a giveaway, a handout hand—
so very water, the hour, as it seeps through.

In a fake, minutes domino and lay flat the hour.

Imitation: a desire to get away with it.

Why not inherit his indecision—to leave
a hole in my fence, and a murmur.

4. b4

Small methods of control—

pack a week before trips

measure out a cup of cereal each morning

count to one-hundred-and-twenty at the end of each shower

(one to one-hundred-and-ten, hot water; the last ten seconds, cold)

to train oneself—

food is a necessity rather than delight
touch is most enjoyable from one's own hand
to learn the game is not about not—
losing. One's often trained by playing
simultaneously white and black sides:
hand *and* quiver, mouth *and* taste.

Bxb4

If a window's rolled down it's not tempting to fling open the door.

5. c3

Cities are crosswords we cram into:

In an alley, some one balanced me
against a brick wall.
A bra hook clawed into my spine.
I pressed close as a scar to the wall
where a saddle-shaped hook rode a scar
into my spine.

To match a definition of home,
but with a body too long—

one: single, individual,
odd, uncommon.

all one: making no difference,
insignificant.

Ba5

won: to have carried out defeat

won: to have become number one,

world champion.

(a title splits the individual from the everyman)

6. d4

Divided myself into worlds:

city, city, the heart,
the head. I used the same name
in all of them. The same mouth.
It wasn't easy, remembering who
of me wanted what, and who.
Each afraid I might forget her.

exd4

move: to stir the emotions, to transfer, to act, to settle.

move on: to leave, or change.

7. 0-0

Father Of
Father Of Chess Of This Chest
Farther From This Chest is my love than I would want him
First, an hour away Then a sea
Four states over on the ribcage of this country we fondle now
counting four states over and back
Father Who Art Who Is Art
I confess to the meat fallen in my mouth
off the day-bone dangled there
Father Who Imposes Father Who I Superimpose
on myself toward my love to further us further

d3

Argument for long distance relationships—*your body cannot dictate where your soul resides.*

Argument against—*nomads.*

8. Qb3

The liver was once thought to store
memory, thus the popular saying
we drink to forget.

Qf6

Memory: a collector's Smurf glass
shattering like bone
with bones
thrown down the stairs.
Memory: Twelve steps to free

Krispie Kreme donuts
Memory:
Remembering: to celebrate inaccuracy

9. e5

time is the hand god fondles us with

Qg6

There are days I would stand
in an offering plate—having nothing
else.

10. Re1

A demon possessed my dream,
I woke to he who mumbled a Latin prayer—
softest nightlight of words.

Nge7

every amateur and champion should have _____ memorized by heart

11. Ba3

The first time? No.

No, though I had
practiced. Having
caught bodies
moving together
like cursive letters
across a bed,

I was in awe—when my sister and I played
house, I asked to be husband.
We lined the shower with pillows,
moved up and down on one another's thigh—
little moans clinging to the tile.
A kind of knock-knock joke, this happiness.

b5

When one *knocks on wood*

that wood is most frequently

a table, whose parent is tree,

whose grains are weaved through it

like genes. When one *knocks*
on wood, a door is least frequently
that wood, for fear jinx
will be home, and answer it.

12. Qxb5

A child's prayer to the bathroom door
her mother hides behind:

O, divider. Praise your single tooth
sliding into its jaw.

Grow roots around she who crouches
there.

Sing praise to the mirror sky holds up to space.
May he who shoulders you get lost

in the noose of your grain.
Keep this room small.

Praise the knob that will not turn its cheek.
That preoccupies his hand.

Amen.

Rb4

he did get through

13. Qa4

my father and I counted
cows after dinner
when I visited his farm

a herd of grass

one made it through
the fence

the herd divides like hair sections

I recounted two times
before I noticed

the grazing field is the body

Bd6

body a hyphen on the field
a hyphen fended off between us
as is the trend with compound words
compounded in this small intestine this line

if we if now parenthesis
what addendum interrupted
what we might combine to
circle the culprit the thief of our circle

14. Nbd2

The palm reader scanned
my left hand, the one that signifies
health—*how much do you want
to know?*—Everything.—
Where do hands go...when...

Bb7

Amenorrhea: (the end
of a prayer, which means a petition
or the slightest chance) –er-re-uh.

Cervical dysplasia: display
(feet in stirrups) she- (pronoun
of female, or one who produces
ova and bears young) –uh.

Infertile, or unproductive—
antonym: prolific—producing
abundant results.

15. Ne4

We prank-call the doctor—

This truce.

Qf5

A skull half-buried in night—

the sun shovels warm bones across us.

The pup's unfinished scalp

moons through its dark fur—its brain
a bullet point—a bullet pointed
toward it. My love wasn't
disappointed by the moon.
But the sky, too large around it—
his robe around me, the sash double-wrapped.
What a lie—delicacy. What a—delightful lie.

16. Bxd3

A man watched people
's reactions as they passed a dead pigeon
on the sidewalk he killed for the pleasure
of their discomfort—
his smile spread like a wing.
I put my hand on the bird,

Qh4

Interrogators say when a person is lying
he blinks more. The mangled tongue
harangued by eyes.

17. Nfb+

Does it count if the cone doesn't fall—
needle-hammocked, instead

gxf6

Or a cone's rolled in peanut butter, then birdseed,
and re-hung in a tree, where
hunger makes it a cone again.

18. exf6

a young game is one in which neither player has the advantage
a pathetic game is one in which a player loses in under twenty moves
a beautiful game depends on the principle
of truth which is the basis of all beauty
of harmony of proportion
of profundity of goal seeking

of rapturous satisfaction

Rg8

young, e.g.
pathetic, e.g.

I drew myself like a bath
so he wouldn't suspect
how little I wanted him—
this unkindness felt kind.

beautiful, e.g.

19. Rad1

My car joins the traffic-syringe—
each stop light, a skin to push through.

Find another way in.

Qxf3

takes-the-edge-off versus forms-a-new-edge

20. Rxe7+

A suspension bridge
I couldn't cross
without queasiness—

Nxe7

my head between my knees, my heart—

21. Qxd7+

the voice on the answering machine
was gravelly, which accentuated
the ominous

the way the sound engineer engineers
a tire-tread-disheveling-gravel sound
to clue the viewer in
the car approaching is also encroaching

the voice again
every aisle stocked with the same *hello*

Kxd7

When the king is put in a series of checks without mate resulting, it's called stalking.

22. Bf5+

Living together

is one move closer
to living apart.

Ke8

a *no vacancy* sign, and
what's turned away
is justified

a *no vacancy* sign
on the heart, though
it has four chambers,

which implies
a turnover
in affection

23. Bd7+

On a strand of DNA, 64 cellular hexagrams.

A ladder by which you enter the house built into the family tree.

Kd8

On the chessboard, 64 squares.

Of which never more than half are filled.

24. Bxe7+#

The board on which he taught me
to play was a gift from his mother.

It came, piled with assorted cheeses,
melting through their foil

(the scalp again) (the moon)
(his mouth opened up like a note

tacked to the door) (*I intended to come*)
(knock, knock) (a note tacked to the door

instead of an answer) (the *I* intentional)
what knife did he use that left no marks?

(I a blade slid from its you-case)
(what did you use, He?) (what has I left?)

Note on ‘Mate’ and ‘Evergreen Game’: each of these pieces came visually—imagining various scenarios in which one uses words like game pieces, and so on, and then replicating those scenarios through various means on the page.

Note on ‘Re-’: this is a project interested in its subjects (‘he’/‘she’) as things that can solely act and react; interaction is reserved for words.

Kristi Maxwell’s first book *Realm Sixty-Four* will be published by Ahshta Press in January 2008, and individual poems most recently appear in *Spinning Jenny*, *Typo*, *580 Split*, and *Dragonfire*. She is pursuing her doctorate at the University of Cincinnati and writes about poetry at <http://kristimaxwell.blogspot.com>.