

Peeled Grapes

Sharon Olds

When I call my mother on Mother's Day
I thank her again for making me, and for
lamb chops, for smocked dresses, for Buster Brown
Mary Janes, my metatarsals
blue in the radiation box. She laughs, she loves this,
she says, I hope you haven't forgotten
that I peeled you grapes, when you were sick.
You what?! When you were sick, I would give you
a bowl of peeled, chilled grapes.
She giggles. I cannot see it, my mother
giving me a cold bowl
of eyeball glitter, and then I can see
it is a Pyrex dish, there is chill and light and
time and work all over the place,
ovals of pallid mesh, flay
to cheer me up, her labor turned
to my little joy. It is true she tied me
to a chair one day, but she brought me alphabet
soup. It is true she was hairbrush-wild
and lay on top of me poor dotty
soul, for me to pray for her
while she cried on me, but my mother with her long
entranced erotic fingernails
peeled grapes for me, she did not mean it
but she said it: Be yourself.