

Hypothetical Intelligence Test

Kathleen Cole

If I could wear a tuba
if I could twist, shape, slide myself
into its shine, if I could be
so flexible

if I could eat anything
I think I would eat a wedding
sweet crumbly tears and black licorice thoughts
the bride, shaking in her heels
and the groom, drunk on second thoughts

and I think if I had a tail
I'd cut it off
and if it grew back
I'd cut it off again.

And if my little screwdriver could talk
I'm sure it (or rather,
he) would tell me
how he makes his kids work
on Sundays, how they grumble
and how his wife disappears
for hours at a time.

To Learn How To Grow Old In Stockbridge

Kathleen Cole

Hazel wished for broken bones
and teeth that did not hurt.
She had a schizophrenic son
and a daughter too young

for a personality. She left Jim
after he stole a cow and left
bullet holes in their station wagon.
She found Thurman at the top

of a roller coaster in Georgia
and loved him for his accent
and his tomatoes. He had
one daughter he'd already forgotten,

another who was a lesbian and
three sons, all blond and toothless.

They couldn't afford to drain
the grease off of their spaghetti—
my mother would tell me this
particular horror story as she served
sweet tea and macaroni.