

REUBEN:

We drove to Wisconsin from Chicago to meet my husband's people  
And his mother sat me at the table and laughed and gave me lemonade  
The powdered stuff you mix in the kitchen where the guests can't see  
Seven types of porcelain and wood crosses on the wall  
Pinstripe blue wallpaper  
She wanted to know if I had any of those big city allergies  
Like gluten or no vegetables from the nightshade family  
She left to pick up her husband from the American Legion  
And Francis took my hand and led me down to the basement

St. Francis got a biography only four years after he died  
1230 A.D. by a guy who lived with him  
A monk named Elias of Celano flocked behind him at every step  
They loved to study, and talk, and I  
I think of them eating bread and cheese  
Rye crumbs scattered in their laps  
Talking about how many lambs will be born in spring  
The state of the garden and how many potatoes  
Still sit, dusty in the kitchen  
I know they must have talked about God  
Miracles and whatnot  
But the ordinary days  
Specks of cheese caught in a beard  
Laughing with a full mouth of bread  
Spittle and choking on a dirty joke  
"Oh honey, your stigmata's getting on the taleggio"  
There was a cave they'd go  
St Francis and his lover  
To seclude themselves  
I loved that  
Not to hide  
The choice to be alone beneath the earth  
As though they could have rolled around in the sun  
And decided to be responsible about it

My Francis opened a plastic tote and pulled out a folder  
Printouts of a like—Geocities or Angelfire website  
You could print whatever you wanted at the library for 10 cents a page in 2001  
The grayscale pixels wavy and thin as spider silk  
He kept it underneath his mattress  
He'd printed it with the grand idea of sneaking it  
into his mother's library-plastic-covered Nora Roberts  
Just to provoke a thought, a consideration  
And decided it would only backfire  
I asked, did you ever look at it?  
Oh yes, he said. Yes, yes, yes.  
He maybe went down on me after  
After I came we both lay on the carpet  
Underneath the cold wisconsin earth  
When a woman came to St Francis  
And asked if she could be a monk  
He cut her hair and called her Brother Jacoba  
He waited until after to tell me that. King Shit.  
I don't know how they really know that  
But the cave and the bread and the man  
They're real. It's all there, waiting.

Honestly,  
The gall it takes to fuck a saint.