Luna Only Fits in One Key-hole

In my version of the story, my sister is distracted by the Wan Woman’s bracelets. In my head, they are made of gold and silver (and my sister knows they are never of iron, because it sears them like supper in summer, in the backyard, broiled—crisped) And one that rides up onto the woman’s marble hand (we’ll say she was skinned in lily petals, but maybe it was loamlike brown) Has a stone—Colored in the full-moon-blinding light —And my sister blinks at the opposite of sunspots in her eyes; It’s a moon-chip caught and silver-bound with rooted filigree, Second-hand shop birdbage, a dainty-craft—a shadow before. In my head, a benumbed hand staggers toward the blinding bauble, Before the succumbing to the frost-shock of the flesh of Wan Woman’s hand, Feeling the cold that hides behind stars trapped in stone, and a bit of dust Where they didn’t polish the moonbeams off. In my head, the Wan Woman croons like wood-birds, Do you like it? And my sister replies, Is it made of the moon? Yes. Would you…? In my head, my sister is entranced, the offer is mistaken (Forgetting all those stories we read in the tents we made of our covers while monsters beat like moths against childhood’s quilts). She realizes the snare long before the metal even moulds like Gleipnir to her wrist (stick-thin in her prepubescence) As if she was Loki’s pup—but the tempter keeps her hand in this version—And my sister only watches placidly from this side of the veil (I pretend all that was the her I remember passed to the moon) As the crystal torch is tucked above and away, but not before carving out a hole In the shape of lax, screaming mouths. But the moon? She would whine like windy cattails, only sad to carve loose so much deep-tissue Where the light could shine through. Whoever said you could have it? The Wan Woman gives that predatory cough, that push behind the cloth That makes the trees in tapestry
And her key—my sister’s self—is stuck up on a milky hook in my night sky.

A More Robust Sap

If we are what we eat—and the food our mothers eat is shared
Then are we too not it?
So sweet little one from rampion bit, it seemed, was far more beet than babe,

(Though no tender vine, far more than fuchsia thorns were hidden)
And the sap that in her veins did seep made a wildcat of one whose hair was more of flax
Then was metaphor-intended.

So seeing this and finding cool petal-flesh too unnerving for warm, bleeding-heart’s attention
Measures were taken for cultivation in high altitudes.

(Though tender vine, far more than fuchsia thorns were hidden)
And the sap that in her veins did seep made a wildcat of one whose hair was more of flax
Then was metaphor-intended.

Thus unfertilized she makes a net—high (stuck and stairless with only sun for salve) in stones above.
Fingers, frenzy-lean, topped by nails ground down to combs
(All the better for cockroach-catching, though they be bloody raw)
If she wants for heartier feasts, she need not weave a single strand—fine gold
Dust-burnt to tarnished wire, (tangled by nights spent
Howling wolves to silence until the moon stares wide-eyed, insomniac
Just as the shuddering twigdoll with sap through dusty tubules pulsing madly—never sleeps)
Does perfectly fine.

She lets the wind throw it—sunlight spider threads through lightplay captivating—
And though neglect is its perfume, and movement so insidious pulls taught
Filamentous-fine ‘til with fine wire choking, her headwebs’ snare is wound-back to burrows
more suited to little lawn-wolf (insect hunters that cause the skin to creep)
So to begin with snaps and wettish tears the search for that which thickens her sugar-ichor.

She sits thus in leavings vile
(Though she hardly smells it)
Recluse little princess of buried bones and time-melted flesh, and things hidden
so appearances fail to reflect hermit hollow monument
Where tarnished nets spread out gossamer streamers to catch the airthings
—living brittle bonesnaps, juices thick as nature’s cordials caged in center—
The sweets of the mild and unthinking fruits.
She sometimes longs for most meaningful of sweet-meats,
(To gain that which she had lacked at birth, to calm demoniac temperament not quite sanguine)
So to work she sets with cries frantic as birds—little bleats not falsling full,
But cries and longings for desperate sought milk lack the lies of more domestic cultivars
And so, in foil of righteousness wrapped, bearers of pulsing dulcet treats unknowning,
Grasp the coils of thread-net drifting down
(she leaves only barest panic-scent from treetop hothouse bondage dire)
Before free range, full-blooded limbs are caught and circled ‘round by little hunter’s rope,
To a garret-burrow, a bed of marrow-tapped bones, private midden-nest,
And the strongest sinew sweetmeats, she has found,
Taste best when aged a day (or so) in ruby juices far more thick than her own wan sap.

**Dandelion-pop**

Little lizardly body,
Warm and beneath skin loose with the effect of ages and firelight tales,
Struggling iridescently all the while
In your hand, hand sticky with snot and flower pus.
You’ve found them (shiny pixie thing) beneath the harebells and pluck wings like petals—
One, two, one, two—
Feeding little demons planted inside through daily pills of exorcism (and chalk dust).

The sound a game of ‘Loves you Not’ makes is what
Pixie’s wings, like petals, like dandelion heads
Double thumb-popped in a spray of grandma’s shamanism resembles.
We all find this at about age ten,
From old haints, shrieking pillars of chalk (humanly shape-spread),
Wage war on the child, kill the heathen—the inherited You—
Taught from garden and hearth-side, those precious passed-down things.
All in lulls after recess by the churchside with Mrs. Beldame.

A mild satiation—found—in mutilation
(puppy-dominance having since torture-gotten)
But you’re stared at, bored at and beat at, through eyes of amber-chip.
Deep down behind stretch bone-bound echoes—long, dank corridors
(infant-fecal and old-flesh rancid)
Instead of sugary bell squeaks from rosebud mouth.
And at the ends of tissue-tunnels back through blood,
Great-great-grands lay hidden (gaggedboundbranded)
Like lepers, or mooncalf old aunts.
Snap it in half and it (good little child at teacher’s behest)
Twiggishly (at snapping)
Bleeds sap that bubbles with yesteryear syrup, but smells of swamp-rot.
Leaking up past antique sap to burn delicate windows in fickle flesh, it
Heads to our shadows
Beneath the bed
At the bottom on the stairs
And in the shapeless things our great-great-grands named,
But your parents always said were the wind.

**Flood-leavings**

It’s past the place where foxes’ tails grow
(out the tops of leggy grass, skyward-listing)
Past the trees that sprout forest of daggers across their trunks in turn,
Past the place where nothing grows
And frogs are seared white, fish are with boils branded.
Something upstream belched a flow of slug-crawl rainbows
And thickened soupskins where water stands summer-stopped.
Though you could smell the water’s rot,
*She* still somehow existed there.
When the air hung thick with June and flies—
After the flood oozed home again,
Vomiting little bauble-things,
A little dust from deep in the lungs,
And a few, more coruscating, things.
Half here and half there,
*She* lay where she’d been hacked up—so much phlegm—
Not quite sunk enough
(drug down by half-buried tires and moldy roots-of-things)
To be soup-skinned over, but just enough
For searing medium-rare with only barest, turgid streamlet’s kiss to cool
(and even that always nitrogen laced by stone-walled colonic evacuations).
In strictest secrets, the three (neighbors, two, and me),
It was decided we’d capture her—
We knew the tricks and rhymes and things to twist out screams and pleas—
(For she, like Samson, found a weakness through Delilah)
So off to the trickle of waste the three of us brought stolen scissors,
Like little sewing-box Excalibur, to shear famed-aureate hair.
I was dared and approached first. I did, proving textbook honor
(Empty, schoolyard, juvenile, where experience lacked reason for disenclining).
Pushed past honey locust (Nature’s barbed wire).
The neighbors-two hid behind.
More than stones ground beneath battered soles, my very steps ground
The most delicate of spun-glass inklings (best not thought now) to dust.
And there she lay.
“T’ve a mirror,” I offered, holding said bauble arm’s length toward consigned rot and stink.
“Like I care,” said she, “A carcass need not be reminded she is flyblown.”
And, indeed, where skin (so I thought) was once church-angel marble,
showed only angry red, peeled
As birchbark, revealing most tender worls beneath.
Her scales sloughed off, became confetti
(It made the bluebells shine, a cemetery charm).
I didn’t blame her, so I threw the mirror off—
“Get the scissors,” my neighbors said.
And I did. She moved naught.
It was a pathetic wallow, I thought (a little cringe at whiff of wharfsmell), where she lay.
It smelled of Things So Old as to be rotten past sweet
While runoff-waste tarnished her hair and pressed lines
Of worry and want into (what was left of) her skin, while bottles and tires held her there.
Her eyes were abyssal deep (despite the runnel in which she stewed)—
Looked past me, past my friends behind the honey locust
(but we always called them hawthorns).
Not at me.
“I’ll cut your hair,” I threatened, scissor-waving, but was too repulsed to grab at detritus not quite hers.
She blew bubbles, encased moans, something profound dragging down her head. Her hair—
Samson source once so precious, floating now like frog-egg curds—
proved a nursery for crawling things—
(I was hesitant, tried to pull away).
“Go ahead,” said she, turning to show the abuse of ages, knots of forgotten things in her locks,
“Send me back to your books.”
I waded in (you forgot the smell after a while) scissors with armor-glint in hand
While the offcast artifacts tried to drag me down—and crushed her there.
Her hair was like bleach at the touch—
hands stung red, though knuckles white—
But the scissors only closed on air—
All the force and goads and dares in the world couldn’t close them.
“It’s okay,” she said in voices I’d forgotten I knew, “At least you bothered.”