When My Mother Wanted Me To Get Beliefs She Didn’t Mean This

I.

Ten million people
visit Lenin’s mausoleum
in Moscow’s Red Square
between 1924 and 1972. I
am not

one of them, but I have
an academic interest so

when he appears (sleeping in my guest bedroom)
I’m not surprised.

II.

The next morning he teaches me
the precise mixture of
acetic acid diluted with vodka
to erase
the dark spots from his flesh.

When I explain Stalin’s purges, he
holds his head
in his hands, saying,
“chto ne yavlyayetsya pravil'ny”
almost until we both believed it.

And we would have
if I hadn’t jabbed him
in the neck with a hypodermic needle
to make purple-hued splotches
on his cheeks and jaw
disappear.
III.

Lenin and I take up salsa dancing  
the Tuesday after I  
find him obsessively refreshing  
Stalin’s page on Wikipedia,  
as though that could refresh  
what had already  
ocurred.

I can’t object when  
the first premier  
of the Soviet Union  
becomes the lead; I don’t want to.

IV.

I tell him shorts are no good. He’s  
going to end up with grass in his  
white canvas sneakers, and I’m not  
going to wash his grass-stained socks or ankles.

As Lenin starts the lawnmower, he laughs,  
he asks when de-Stalinization began.  
“1956.” is my answer.  
When he gets close enough  
I hear him saying “1956” over  
and over. I try to grab him;

he’s too old for this, his knees aren’t  
what they used to be, his fingers will curl  
into claws from that grip, but

his shirt skims my fingers as he runs.

Lenin collapses a moment later,  
keeling over, gasping, asking me when salsa class begins, asking me  
if it’s true. And I can’t answer while watching  
the sun glance off of the sweat on his face,  
while he looks up at the sky, his lips moving soundlessly, repeating  
pravda.
To Subjugate / Verb / To Bring Under Domination or Control

If Walt Whitman and William Wordsworth walk into a bar
implying or inferring that they had
a subjugation to do
with the bloody woman- and when I say 'bloody,' I mean
she is covered in blood, not that we
can confuse
the peach tree for her lack of taste regarding
the methodology of suicide.

Let’s ask her: have we considered ways to subjugate our hands?
Maybe if you tell them that they are bad and you will always be bad
and then you will die.

You’re asked if you want vanilla ice cream for dessert,
presuming that there are flavors of books on “How To Subjugate”
my mother never warned me
about the pit before I grasped anything.

Spatter / Verb / To Cover With Drops or Spots

This is not your private counseling session
spattering
words against

yesterday’s
obscenities
banter

as much as
different thespians performing
disparate imitations of Van Gogh,
flicking fork-shaped tongues at the night sky
to spatter extracted plasma across the backdrop.

If we could travel
to Mercury in thirty seconds,
would you buy your next banjo there?

Spattered atoms across the surface.

H(ydrogen), O(xygen), N(itrogen), C(arbon)
your mother says to stop saying that already. Weren’t you listening the first time?

**Capitalism / Noun / A Free Market Economic System**

I. Primitive Communism

You’ve heard this before.

Your mother was told:
*A lady doesn’t act that way.*

Your father’s best memories of his father involve a cold beer and John Wayne movies.

In the sixth grade you learn:
*The consumer can control the market.*

You’re a consumer of your parents in more ways than one.

II. Slave Society

You call Walmart and ask,
*Can I return my defective parents? My mother can’t make pancakes. My father won’t show me how to hunt deer.*
Yes, they say.
They were defective when you got them.

III. Feudalism

As it turns out, you don’t like pancakes. *Short, Blond Mom (Mother Series 429-1962)* cries all night because she thinks you don’t like her cooking.

It’s not that you don’t; it’s that she’s a perfect lady.

IV. Capitalism

One day while hiding in the attic
you find two thick instruction manuals covered in dust.
You see two familiar faces:
*Tall, Brown-Haired Dad (Father Series 913-1957)*
*Short, Dark-Haired Mother (Mother Series 315-1963).*

Troubleshooting Mother 315-1963
Her cooking program is overrun. *She will not be able to make pancakes unless you teach her.*

Troubleshooting Father 913-1957
*His programming does not come with the 'hunting' option. See page 214 in History.*

History Father 913-1957
*In his factory he was beaten into a corner with a broom handle. Will not perform violent actions. Pacifist coding.*

*Caveat emptor,* you say to yourself.

IV. Socialism

You call Walmart again.
*Listen,* you say,* I exchanged my defective parents. Can I exchange them back?*

*Sure,* they say,* but how long ago did you exchange them?*

*A few months, maybe,* you say.* But I don’t have my receipt.*

*Sorry. There’s nothing we can do.*

You become a vegetarian a few days before
*Average Height, Red-Haired Dad (Father Series 1030-1967)* offers to teach you how to hunt.

V. Stateless Communism
You’re shiftless, Short Blond Mom sighs
when you don’t go further than the local college.
You’re unambitious, Red-Haired Dad states
when he hears your major is philosophy.

None of that matters. You drop out of college.
You’re kicked out, done, out of there.

You become a bartender for two different bars, a waiter at a diner in the mornings
to pay for a sleazy apartment.

And on your days off
you drink beer and watch John Wayne movies.

**Antecedent / Noun / 1. Something Coming Before 2. GRAMMAR Word That Subsequent Word Refers To 3. LOGIC Clause Expressing Condition**

Until I have to pick up the antecedents,
miniscule chips of shoulder bone
combined
with vertebrae that still
pink strands of muscle,
dipped in the leftover necessity of Grammatology.

1930 and generality entered
we were in for what we didn’t know,
the twist of our families leaving
in the antecedent whiteness
between, under, and over the
typefaces of pages
or essentialism
which comes from
pissing at a urinal with
your pants down.