

Kim Addonizio Poems

What Do Women Want?

I want a red dress.
I want it flimsy and cheap,
I want it too tight, I want to wear it
until someone tears it off me.
I want it sleeveless and backless,
this dress, so no one has to guess
what's underneath. I want to walk down
the street past Thrifty's and the hardware store
with all those keys glittering in the window,
past Mr. and Mrs. Wong selling day-old
donuts in their café, past the Guerra brothers
slinging pigs from the truck and onto the dolly,
hoisting the slick snouts over their shoulders.
I want to walk like I'm the only
woman on earth and I can have my pick.
I want that red dress bad.
I want it to confirm
your worst fears about me,
to show you how little I care about you
or anything except what
I want. When I find it, I'll pull that garment
from its hanger like I'm choosing a body
to carry me into this world, through
the birth-cries and the love-cries too,
and I'll wear it like bones, like skin,
it'll be the goddamned
dress they bury me in.

First Kiss

Afterwards you had that drunk, drugged look
my daughter used to get, when she had let go
of my nipple, her mouth gone slack and her eyes
turned vague and filmy, as though behind them
the milk was rising up to fill her
whole head, that would loll on the small
white stalk of her neck so I would have to hold her
closer, amazed at the sheer power
of satiety, which was nothing like the needing
to be fed, the wild flailing and crying until she fastened
herself to me and made the seal tight
between us, and sucked, drawing the liquid down
and out of my body; no, this was the crowning
moment, this giving of herself, knowing
she could show me how helpless
she was—that's what I saw, that night when you
pulled your mouth from mine and
leaned back against a chain-link fence,
in front of a burned-out church: a man
who was going to be that vulnerable,
that easy and impossible to hurt.

First Poem for You

I like to touch your tattoos in complete
darkness, when I can't see them. I'm sure of
where they are, know by heart the neat
lines of lightning pulsing just above
your nipple, can find, as if by instinct, the blue
swirls of water on your shoulder where a serpent
twists, facing a dragon. When I pull you

to me, taking you until we're spent
and quiet on the sheets, I love to kiss
the pictures in your skin. They'll last until
you're seared to ashes; whatever persists
or turns to pain between us, they will still
be there. Such permanence is terrifying.
So I touch them in the dark; but touch them, trying.