



The Maker's Market

ANGELA TOWNSEND

ONCE A MONTH, THE TOWN HOSTS A MAKER'S Market. This strikes me as one of the most sacred activities in suburbia.

Like most holy things, it comes in the overalls of the ordinary. No less than bread and wine, the Maker's Market is made of earth. Fringed women selling earrings hide their liturgy under laughter. A wall of watercolor sunsets may not appear sacramental. The curmudgeon with his carved pine pens is no chaplain.

There is no corner of the Community Center that doesn't whisper *Amen*.

These are the makers brave enough to bear the name, bold enough to ask \$13 for plastic flowers on silver hooks. They are the vanguard of the village, all of us crafty creators who cower before our own call.

Sculpting in words alone, I've yearned to be a proper artist. My parents had a coffee table book championing the "twice gifted"—writers who vaulted into visual art. I knew even at seven that I would never be among them.

But those writers were not twice gifted. Like me at seven, like you at seventy, like the pen man and the earring sisters, they were infinitely gifted. The painting and the writing were sprinkles. The life was the cake.

My friends do not believe me. They believe that I am special because I write, that creativity is a calling for fairies and moonchildren. I tell them their cassoulets are Chagalls; their power to soothe outshines Stradivarius. They think they're cleaning the kitchen, but they are writing domestic novels. They dismiss their deeds as drudgery, but when they make red Jell-O for the toddler or drive two hours to see the icy dying aunt, they put Picasso to shame.

Picasso was shameless, which is why he dared sprinkles. I am still shearing myself of shame, so woolly and matted it will take me a lifetime. Shaggy knots fall off each time I write, each time I share, each time I dare to hurl my comets and know the market may not bear them, no matter how earnestly I bleat. But beware: I bring my clippers everywhere I go. *Baa baa*.

You never know what will happen when you make, but you can no more stop than you can stop loving this life. My friends don't believe me on that count, either. They believe they are Eeyores, or just honest. They insist that exuberance is inborn or absent. I tell them they betray themselves daily, truth flashing in their eyes when they kiss a cat or put on their green earrings or greet the dawn. There are a million moments of happiness in the hairiest day. We are here to make the most of it, to tell the story with our pens and our beads and our paints and our brooms.

Sometimes it will be dripping diarrheal dreck. I should know. I write that particular genre often.

Sometimes it will touch the right person—perhaps only one.

Sometimes it will overtake us and overcome our fear and override our dusty distrust of the Maker.

Always it will be good enough, meaningful and mediocre all at once. This is the reminder that remakes my bed of courage every morning.

We want mediocrity insurance, but we have blessed assurance.

We were made to make much of this beaded, blurry gift of a life.

We can make each other braver.

Don't make me pull out my clippers. ✎



There are a million moments of happiness in the hairiest day. We are here to make the most of it, to tell the story with our pens and our beads and our paints and our brooms.

