Daughters of Silence

eight songs about experiences of women

Joelle Wallach
Daughters of Silence

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Daughters of Silence

Inzer Byers

They taught you well, antebellum women, daughters of silence, daughters of silence.

Knife thrust of a child’s loss pierces the heart, scalpel of husband’s betrayal carves your flesh.

Close your lips tightly, deadened senses, go dumb. Go into your chamber, lock the door, daughters of silence.
Daughter of silence, stay until the agony is locked away for good.

In time the mask becomes your face. They taught you well, daughters of silence, silent daughters, daughters of silence.
Woman Kills Sweetheart with Bowling Ball

Laura Kasischke
Riflessivo \( \frac{1}{4} = 69 \)

\[ \text{poco } f \quad \frac{3}{2} \quad \text{The moon is loose} \quad \text{in the} \]

\[ \text{gut-ter to-night. It rolls without} \quad \text{kiss - es} \quad \text{or hand prints bet - ween us.} \quad \text{Its mouth} \]

\[ \text{an } \frac{3}{2} \text{ of sur-prise.} \quad \text{O to - night} \quad \text{the phan - tas - ma of love} \]
crib.

Its tongue ugly and blue.

She climbs, she climbs the stairs while we sleep. 

Her skin hangs heavy and empty as hate. She floats so slow, she floats as though she is swimming in

blood. The lights are out, the little suspicion sleeps and dreams and whispers in its

crib. Its tongue ugly and blue.

She climbs,
sotto voce

she,  
she has  
invented  
gravity.

lightning and lilies to please you.

Though  

Look her left hand bears for you sweetly a gift of

sotto voce

she, she has invented gravity.
Two things we women notice most at first, choosing what to leave to lighten long the trail: one the almost endless line of abandoned household things.

Easy at first, choosing what to leave to lighten
The other thing we women

always home's center, now left rocking alone on the dusty trailside

Later leavings get harder:

my mother's rocker

wa-gons: heavy pots, that extra chest, things expendable.
At first we’re just recording.

sotto voce

We speak sparingly of them, laconic journal entries:

do notice most: the graves, alone or clustered.

poch, portamento

two miles, three graves; four miles, two graves; five miles, seven graves.

poch, declamato

At first we’re just recording.
Then comes the sickness; our own deaths begin. Quick-dug, a hurried prayer,

hardly a marker, no time for mourning, always the need for moving

on. All things cherished left behind, blest

be the tie that grieving binds. Graves look different with a family.
Blest be the tie that grieving binds, link to link, hearts' leavings. All things cherished left behind.
When I Couldn’t Afford Poetry

Susan Donnelly

Joelle Wallach

\( J=88 \)

\( mf \)

\( f \) ruvido

\( poco \)

\( \text{clo-set full of words, heaped up,} \)

\( \text{re-ad-y for Good-will. On the re-frig-e-ra-tor door, the list } \)

\( \text{long-er: ketchup spattered words I would have writ-ten. Prose} \)

\( \text{stalks me, interrupted at ev-’ry turn of phrase: gar-ru-lous} \)

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aches, cu-mulus

bills, kids’ teeth, __ Master Charged con-science prod-ding me a-wake, hea-vy with

words.

Breasts __
a-ch-ing, ____, full ____ of words, sun-ny-bloom-ing wine days, head -

aches, cu-mu-lus
and waiting,

Words, hustled into dust pans,
words clogging the drains.

Home, speechless with good sense,

and always waiting,
Words! Words I would have written, words I would have

pages blank, pointless as store-fresh Wam-sutta per-

calm nobody’s slept in. Words! Words I would have writ-ten, words I would have

written heaped up... waiting, waiting, speech-less...
Don’t write to me if you are married or over fifty.

Don’t write to me if you equate sophistication with the city, learning with degrees, success with acquisitions.

Don’t write to me if you are the sort who would exile if you equate sophistication with the city, learning with degrees, success with acquisitions.

Smokers, if you can’t stand cat hair, are weary of wrinkles, wary of...
time or otherwise think that perfection is due you, don’t write to me. But
if, in the night you ache for a real, whole woman, write to me, write to me, write to me.
write to me, write to me, write to me, to me, to me.

lontano e dolce

poco rit.

poch. più mosso
when he moves inside me. Although I screamed up the deaf street, Betty and

though the stranger dragged me from my car

I am not robbed of

my lover’s smell or touch nor the arch of colors

when he moves inside me. Although I screamed up the deaf street,
Jane laugh with me 'round my kitchen table, the jealous cat creeps
up to warm my lap. Although the abandoned
house had doom eyes, graffiti mocked me, my mother
warmly
teaches me the names of flowers, splitting milkweed pods, silver a-
calls me Pi - xie, Pi - xie.

From the back door af - ter
sup- per, he shows me Cas-si-o-pe-i-a who moves as we move on earth.

All through the thuds, the pant-ing and the pig squeals, pie-ces of mo-ments tum-

ble smooth, en-close deep si-lence like mauve and brown peb-bles ga-thered on Nau-

set Beach.
Hymn From the House of Trouble

Laura Kasischke

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whose name is the name of a saint, a drunken fair-haired
drunken fair-haired
the one with the evil twin.
The evil twin, the evil twin with a bottle
whose name is the name of a saint,
an-ge\textsuperscript{2}l from hell, passed out all night like a child in my arms.

night in the House of Trou-ble, sac-\textsuperscript{2}red snap-shots of the dead.

men are drin-\textsuperscript{2}kers, slow, slow drink-\textsuperscript{2}rs drinking un-til they on-\textsuperscript{2}ly look like

men I love. The way he looks, the way he looks and the smell of his
All these snapshots are you be-fore the bot-tle in, your hand is emp-ty. So leavé, my

See, all these are snap-shots of you look-ing green-eyed at the beach.

molto
it will be with you, again.

a better, harder, longer life to come; and I'll come back

and back to this place I am and when I do it will be with you,

because I've become a believer in another God, in another life.

love, because I've become a believer in another God, in another life.
There's a rhythm to it, folding the dough over and over the fluid motion of the heel of your hand. Don't be afraid, fold it over, push it away with the heel of your hand.
When I was young, Grand-ma Marguerite made the dark loaves of the old world. Grand-ma Ruby in Mississippi made corn-bread, black-strap and jam. All over women make bread. Don’t be afraid, keep up the rhythm, we’ll talk, my son, of bread that fills us and
The fluid motion of the heel of your hand. Cen-tu-ries

Don’t be afraid, a rhythm.

to it, kneading to stay a-live.

My son, you know

what be-fore only a daugh-ter would learn: how to sur-vive in-side this

rhythm.

The fluid motion of the heel of your hand.
Of women making bread. Don’t be afraid, we sing and fight, cry our tears, knead our
broad, grow our corn, sow our wheat, we who survive the rhythm of it.

Don’t be afraid, my son, and in the name of women who walk in shadows

denied shelter, the woman forced from her home shifting ashes for revenge

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the woman who tends the fire, whose hands bring healing, the woman searching for food who sees children burning, and in the name of the exiled woman who sings us to sleep. Don’t be afraid, over and over push it away with the heel of your hand. And in the name of the woman who tends the fire, whose hands bring healing, the woman who tends the fire.
there’s a rhythm to it, folding the dough with the heel of your

who refuses to bow down, in the name of the woman who turns to the Mother of God,

the woman whose child dies in her arms, the wound and fire of her

longing. I promise you we will return. Don’t be af

raid, there’s a rhythm to it, folding the dough with the heel of your

poco dolce

sotto voce

pp dolce

poco

poco

poco
hand. We will return. The fluid motion over and

Don't be afraid, Don't be afraid,

there's a rhythm to it. Push it away with the heel of your

hand; don't be afraid,