

Kathryn Simmonds

Tomato Plant Survival Song

In a terracotta pot, ambition staked to a broken cane, and nameless
(for the lolly stick has blown away), I pull at hope without a tap root.

My character is lack: lack of vigour, lack of flower, lack
of what it is to be tomato. The Moneymakers and Gardener's Delight
continue ravishing, predictably,

but I'll have no self-pity, no suspicions of this third-rate third-use
potting compost. Light and leggy as I am yellow at the lower leaves

I'll not lament disease: I need my sugar fuels to live.

From veiny hour to hour I live.

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Nothing escapes me,
 woodlice roll their silver stomachs,
bees sip the sweet pea's intimate interior. The fearful caterpillar
undulates and crawls: it shall become, unless that blackbird has it.

At night when foxes screech inside their filthy quilts
I breath their musk shit-perfume
fragrance these splotched leaves. Season my dream.

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Slugs! Their terrible soft mouths.
New shoots in tatters, done for. Why doesn't she bring salt?
Why only frowns and secateurs?

Aphids! Aphids! Look! Their icky feet. Their hairs upon my hairs.

She lifts my blighted leaves, notices four flowers
dangling abortively and pinches them away. No to-ma-to.

I remember that nasturtium, how it bolted, shrank, how she finally
up-ended it, broke its feeble systems in her hand.

I am alone and thirsty.

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It persists. (On occasion now it speaks about itself in third person, which allows for rest, and oh it wants to rest.)

There is no rest. Grow, it whispers to its planted brain.

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Sweet rain! In wet light: blackbird song.

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All day, all night, petals whisper *We'll become*.

Seed-sized bulb of green, small machine of longing,

first dream of fruit, hung like modest earrings

swelling then becoming pale orange pale red ripe scarlet,
gladness edible. Sing your songs for I am entering myself.
I have become tomato.

Oh tomato I am the thing I am!