

**ROSALIE MOFFETT**

**Nervous System**

It's the one where the wolf spider's silk  
sac is separated from her. The eggs,  
removed, are replaced

with small lead shot. Mute, round changelings.  
They're returned  
to the spider. She can be described as frantic.

She struggles to lift them,  
to hurry away. Subsequent experiments  
show, with heavier loads

she will break even  
her legs, so  
intent on reclaiming her eggs—

**ROSALIE MOFFETT**

A scientist, my mother betrayed  
sympathy, describing the study to me.

She held spiders

in such high regard, how could I not sorrow  
for the spider-mother. Little Miss Muffett  
they called me, but I was never afraid, never

when I was little. When it hit me  
I was grown: fear my mother would forget me, one copy  
of my self deleted,

leaden shape  
in her mind  
where I once was.

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Her blood so thin when they drew it  
her arm grew itself a blue-black  
blotch, huge. *Too much*

*aspirin*. The body, in pain,  
needs venom—the brain, its mass of castle-cells,  
has pain-only traffic routes:

ache and pang and sting travel on channels  
velvet tarantula toxin  
can block. *To dream you are bitten by a spider*

*reveals a conflict*  
*with your mother*—but think of the dream,  
the idea of a spider the brain holds

like a lit match, a little request  
for venom, a little  
like my mother: her blue arm, her self

which held my self, an idea  
of me, until I was real.

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I don't say I'm afraid to hear  
something final, some certain  
end date. *How is she?*

I employ a polite veer away: *She remains  
in high spirits.* Or, depending on who's asking,  
*Her lemon tree is blooming*

or *Her dog excels in agility class.* Which is true:  
her dog, at long last, can be coaxed  
into the narrow tunnel with one cloth end collapsed,

a thing existing for this sole purpose:  
to appear to have no exit. No dog  
likes the way it looks.

One way is to army-crawl in, yourself,  
a treat in your pocket.  
Some dogs will follow, and some dogs will meet you

at the other end.  
But my mother could not crawl, could not  
show the dog

it was possible to enter the dead end  
and find a way out.  
I don't know what she did, but now

I watch her point, say *In.*  
And the dog crawls in.

**ROSALIE MOFFETT**

A web: the most practical art. Whatever  
the world offers in the way  
of sustenance snares in those careful lines.

Every morning the spider  
finds a way to string from branch to house,  
from solid thing

to solid thing, in order  
to stand on what  
looks like air, waiting. It's hard

to believe. By this,  
I mean we forget there's a space  
where we might wait

for our survival to be furnished.