A Carcass Worth Devouring

By Georgina M. Cox

Each morning, men come crawling to my screen,
To tell me I'm the prettiest they've seen.
They call me gorgeous, darling, something rare,
And I pretend there's someone standing there.

I am fat. I've learnt the tricks of light,
Which flesh to hide, which curves to hold just right.
I know the angles, where the shadows meet,
How to make a slaughterhouse look sweet.

I tuck away the parts that make me sick,
And serve the rest with every practiced trick.
A little waist, a breast, a softened thigh,
A carefully constructed, gorgeous lie.

I'm both the butcher and the butchered meat,
Arranging all my pieces at their feet.
They feast upon the portions I provide,
And never see the carcass left inside.

My face, however, takes a special art,
A thousand little murders from the start.
I tilt my jaw until the shadows lie,
And teach my eyes to make a grown man cry.

I flare my nostrils, purse my lips just so,
And learn precisely where the light must go.
I make a siren of this borrowed face,
Then wash it off and find myself disgrace.

I've mastered how to look beneath my lashes,
To turn a man's attention into ashes.

I know the stare that makes their breathing cease,
Yet cannot find a single inch of peace.

I make a spectacle of flesh and bone,
And dress my degradation as my own.
I offer skin when conversation dies,
And call it confidence beneath their eyes.

A neckline lower, something more to show,
A little more of what they want to know.
I know that sex can make a woman seen,
But God, how quickly flesh becomes a screen.

And every *pretty* burrows through my skin,
Like something sweet that's rotting from within.
Each *gorgeous* finds a hollow place to breed,
And lays its little eggs inside my need.

I swallow every compliment they give,
As though their words might teach my flesh to live.
But praise is such a strange and bitter meal,
It fills the mouth and leaves the stomach ill.

They tell me I could have whoever I desire,
That men would crawl through broken glass and fire.
And I could make a hundred men adore
A body I've spent years apologising for.

They'd kiss the curves I've learnt to decorate,
And call divine the flesh I've learnt to hate.
They'd lay their hungry hands upon my waist,
And find a sweetness I have never tasted.

And isn't that a foul and funny thing?
To know precisely how to make men sing,
To have them kneeling, begging to be mine,
While I recoil from my own naked spine.

For when the screen goes dark, the siren dies,
No practiced pout, no carefully lowered eyes.
No flattering light to make the shadows kind,
Just all the flesh I thought I'd left behind.

I stand before the mirror like a crime,
Examining the damage done by time.
I pinch the skin that strangers long to hold,
And wonder when I learnt to be so cold.

I search for what they see beneath my face,
Some buried scrap of beauty, some small grace.
But all I find is someone playing dead,
With all their lovely words inside her head.

And still tomorrow, I will dress the wound,
Arrange the flesh, make sure the light is tuned.
I'll turn my body into something sweet,
And lay its choicest portions at their feet.

They'll call me pretty. I'll pretend it's true.
I'll thank them like I always, always do.
I'll let them love the woman I designed,
And pray they never ask what lies behind.

For what a wretched thing I've learnt to be,
A woman everyone desires but me.
I've made a thousand men believe I'm art,
Yet cannot find the beauty in a single part.

And perhaps the cruelest thing I've ever done
Was teach myself that being wanted meant I'd won.
For I could have the whole world on its knees,
And still be begging someone to find beauty in me.