

# SESTINA: A WOMAN IN PARTS

I'm afraid I can't say anything with my chest,  
forever unsure of the next word offending you or any man.

I wonder if I scream loud enough, a cry  
would slip out from under me. I wonder if I can be the woman  
I need to be, or the man I could never be? Oh father,  
why did you have to curse me with your beaten hands?

...

I've never been one to not lend a hand,  
matter of fact, I'll give you everything I have in my chest  
of drawers, but beware, I got all my bad traits from my father,  
yet I wasn't spared the pleasure of being a man,  
still forever cursed with being robbed of my womanhood,  
I'll look to the sky after the mirror and cry.

...

I've changed since I last saw me, yet I still cry  
whenever I feel any emotion immensely. Only a touch of a hand  
would be so nice, someone to reach out and help my shell of a woman.  
Mother, help me, I'm drowning, the weight in my chest, did you too  
become a woman when a man  
stole something from you first? What made you so intrigued by my father?

...

I don't know how to go any farther,  
so i'll just sit here and whine and shout and cry;  
sit and wallow in my own pity. Man,  
I wish I had a seat at the adult's table, hand  
me a plate, don't end my sentence with a sigh and an eye roll, hug my chest,  
tell me that I'm beautifully made and intricately woven.

...

I first knew the fear of being a woman  
when he hugged my throat with his hand. Father,  
you were supposed to protect me, not hurt me and make my chest  
ache and swell—still, i'll have to forgive you and hold your hand  
in mass next Sunday when I pray to god and honor thy father because he is the man.

...

Every time my reflection stares back, I don't know who they are. Not a man,  
barely human— slimy, disgusting woman  
smiling back with sunken eyes and broken hands.  
This thing is getting wrinkled and used day by day, it's father's  
crow lines denting the face, a tear held in the corner, trying  
to fall, trying to stream. It just stares back into my eyes and touches its breast.

...

I fear he'll never grow up and become the man my father  
needs to be, yet, i'll never grow into the woman they all want me to be; so let's hold hands and cry,  
hold hands and say everything we wish we could say in silence, and say it with our chest.

