



Heirloom Harvest

I tend my tomatoes and peppers, but haphazardly:
They're heirlooms and so need special care, polishing of leaves,
rich drafts of fertilizer, protection from bugs, mildew, decay.
I didn't give them what they needed.
They stand shriveled, exhausted, while I pluck their meager fruit,
my scant harvest. Like ancients with their staffs,
they lean on their stakes, testament to my lapses.
I can hold my whole obliging harvest in the palm of my hand,
a dozen teardrop shaped tomatoes, four squiggly green peppers.
Medusa could pin the tomatoes to her ears; they'd swing, orange lights,
as she faced down the heroes, turning them to stone.
One couldn't just eat them.
Though you did. Along with the peppers, whose shapes
signified an alphabet older than Phoenician or Sumerian.
We could have unraveled the mysteries of the stars or the spice routes.
But who could deny you: a mother must give her heirlooms to her daughter.
You delighted in their dollhouse size.
All as it should be.
Except. I left my plants too much to their own devices.
I didn't tell you that. You were always good at connecting the dots.

Karen Mandell, MA, USA

