

What she craved

by Marge Piercy

My mother sugared grapefruit;
my father salted it.

My mother sugared cantaloupe;
my father salted it.

My mother put sugar and lemon
on leaf lettuce from her garden;
two heaping teaspoonfuls into
her milky coffee, with cake.

Her teeth rotted out and were
yanked from her bleeding jaws
by a cheap sadist downtown.
Still she craved sweetness.

In a life with too much that
was bitter, tear soaked salty,
sour as unspoken grief,
sugar was her comfort

a little sweetness in the mouth
lingering like an infrequent kiss.;
sugar was the friend kept her clock
ticking through running down days.

"What she craved" by Marge Piercy, from *The Art of Blessing the Day*.