How divine is forgiveness?

It’s a nice concept but what’s under the sculptured draperies? We forgive when we don’t really care because what was done to us brought unexpected harvest, as I always try to explain to the peach trees as I prune them hard; to the cats when I shove pills against the Gothic vaults of their mouths.

We forgive those who betrayed us years later because memory has rotted through like something left out in the weather battered clean then littered dirty in the rain, chewed by mice and beetles, frozen and baked and stripped by the wind till it is unrecognizable, corpse or broken machine, something long useless.

We forgive those whom their own machinations have sufficiently tangled, enshrouded, the fly who bit us to draw blood and who hangs now a gutted trophy in a spider’s airy larder; more exactly, the friend whose habit of lying has immobilized him at last like a dog trapped in a cocoon of fishing line and barbed hooks.

Marge Piercy, from Available Light

We forgive those we firmly love because anger hurts, a coal that burns and smolders still scorching the tissues inside, blistering wherever it touches so that finally it is to ease our own pain that we bury the hot clinkers in a mound of caring, suffocate the sparks with promises, drown them in tears, reconciling.

We forgive mostly not from strength but through imperfections, for memory wears transparent as glass with the pattern washed off, till we stare past what injured us. We forgive because we too have done the same to others easy as a mudslide; or because anger is a fire that must be fed and we are too tired to rise and haul a log.