

Picasso's Self-Portrait at Twenty-six, 1907

Cheeks stabbed with dark lines.
Tender mouth
any woman would want.

Hair slashed
in broad black strokes. His mother
said *If you become*

a soldier, you'll be a general.
A Spanish Napoleon, don't you
think? Face a bold
triangle. Wide nose and brow.

His mother said, *If you become*
a monk, you'll end up
as the pope. Yes, wouldn't he have

been Leo X with mistresses
and power?
But his eyes, oh, my dear,

you can't turn from
those eyes.
Large and oval with black

centers that absorb the world.
Picasso said, *Instead I became*
a painter and wound up

as Picasso.

— Diana Pinckney

