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Three Poems

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Three Poems

Abstract

Three poems: "Where are the words?," "Here I Am," and "Tear My Stillhouse Down."

Keywords

poetry

Cover Page Footnote

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January 17, 2014

Three Poems

by Carolyn Stice

Where are the words?

For what makes a father hold his child down by her windpipe
to lay his belt over the length of her body, or a mother sit by, hear,
and take a moment to spin tales of her own grief she will later use
in her own defense.

For the space between a child of your own
and one not, where an ounce more sympathy should live,
but does not.

For the grandmother, who chooses to re-draw her life,
for three children who are not her blood, or the weight she feels
at putting her own child last because some crimes cannot be
forgiven.

If there are shapes for these things, they are poison warnings,
yellow tape marked "Police line do not cross," and tiny labels that say
"Hazard, may cause choking."

They are the smell of the slaughterhouse
at dawn, just as the first blood hits the floor, mixing with yesterday's
bleach, the scent of adrenaline passing from one cow to the next.

Here I Am

Here I am: Staring at someone
else's shit in the toilet.

Those skid marks sliding
up the side, that no amount
of flushing can kill
and me

the only one willing to wield
that nasty brush.
Here I am knee-deep
in the sour-milk smell of laundry
the dryer broken and the wet clothes freezing

stiff on the line.
I want a life, less complicated by shit.
I want your body and my body
in a late summer wheat field, just us
and the geese overhead, honking their way south.
I want the bite of winter to be
a little less keen.
I want

a space for melody and poetry
where Adam Zagajewski and the Pixies can riff
on the life of the soul
and I can fit my mouth against the curve
of your ear, for however long it takes

to unwind our sorrow. I want
the scent of mint to linger around me
after you are gone
rushing off to whatever it is you do
with your day. When it is still
I listen for your voice. I am hollow.
I am tripping all over myself
all over that invisible line
we cannot cross.

Tear My Stillhouse Down

The press of leg against knee
brings me back to my body call it longing
my eyes on the flat of your wrist
I want to feel the scrape of it against my thigh
I imagine the women you date the fullness of their lips
The shape of their ear lobes your long fingers around their calves
This is not a love poem I have been in love

am in the hollow of love
where you hear your own breath echo
against canyon walls again and again

I do not want you in the night when my body folds
under the weight of day I want wide afternoon
when we can languish together in midday light
sinews and muscles sliding smooth against bone
the shimmering edges of touch making us loose in our skin

My throat is raw from pushing desire back down
I want it to be the grey-green color of bile
but the heat on my skin

names it the crimson of July tomatoes
picked at their peak

Carolyn Stice is currently working on her PhD in Creative Writing at UT Knoxville, where she is managing editor for their graduate literary magazine *Grist*. She has a particular interest in the work of female poets, especially that which deals with the landscape of the body.