

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dorianne Laux: Three Poems

Dorianne Laux · Monday, January 5th, 2026

The Two of Us

And here we are, two creatures
of no consequence strolling
through the seasons,
an archaic ache between us,
his side still sore where the rib
was coaxed out, me with an apple
at my mouth, about to begin
a life outside the confines
of this garden, beautiful
as it is, that we can never
return to, banished to
birth and blood, fire
and flood, death
and its aftermath,
and yet we still bite
with our god-given teeth
into the meat.
So sweet, so sweet.

*

Cystectomy

When he was sewing the slick flaps
of skin back together,
I could see nothing and no one,
only darkness. I could not feel pain
though I could sense
the forceps strong, repeated tugging,
his hand pressed against my brow
to steady the needle, smell
the alcohol and his aftershave.

Outside the office I could hear
 the nurses talking, walking
 room to room delivering
 the tools of torture, stainless
 steel lancets and forceps,
 the numbing agents that deaden
 the flesh. I wanted
 to say "That's enough now."
 But instead I thought of Oklahoma,
 and the brothers I followed there
 where we lived in tents
 while they built a cabin,
 the river we waded, the deep
 well they dug. My job
 to collect flat stones, mostly
 pieces of shale to place
 around the dark hole where we'd
 stand and turn the lowered
 bucket over our heads to take
 a shower, the flat slabs
 smooth beneath our bare feet.
 I loved the nights, how I could stare
 up through the hole of the teepee
 and watch the stars pass by,
 the Perseids, Cygnus the Swan.
 Pancakes in the morning
 fresh eggs from the chickens.
 It was a land of asylum
 from pain, like the Lidocaine
 they shot me up with so I could
 endure being made whole again,
 the needle, the knife, the clamp,
 and the healing thread
 that held me together.

*

Names

Maybe there are names for the strange gods
 of the forest. Gods of the cove. Buds opening,
 flowers closing their all-seeing eyes to the dark.
 Maybe there's a name for the air when it's hot
 or cold besides ungodly hot, lung-freezing cold.
 Maybe the air has a nickname like Bud or Buzz.
 Buzzy for cold. Buzzard for hot. Maybe not.
 Maybe the word for knees is clutches, fastened
 as they are in arches of bone. What is the weight

of a taco, empty shell or filled with a slaw
of chopped delicacies. What's the name for
the crunch, the spice, when you notice you're full.
Maybe the trouble is language is free, easy.
You just pick it up like a Kleenex, sneeze into it
and the words spew out. What if each word
cost you a dime or a dollar? Would we be more
careful, more prudent, more precise? Is that
collection of sticks a chair, a house, or a boat?
Would we save more, spend less, undress
in the closet, feel instead of speak? Would we
reduce every question to when or where?
Save a fortune on *never* and *no*, spend freely
and wildly on *yes*?

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