# **Cultural Daily**

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

# Kari Gunter-Seymour: Four Poems

Kari Gunter-Seymour · Wednesday, May 5th, 2021

#### The Weeds In This Garden

Long ago, I built a self outside myself. I ate what my family ate, answered

to my name, but when they said *let us pray*, I kept my eyes open. There is a price

to be paid for resistance. Whatever you call me, I have called myself

worse, invented words made up of letters from my own name.

Now the backs of my hands, all bone and strain, I think cannot be mine.

Who hasn't killed herself at least once, only to grow into someone needier?

Who hasn't bent with her wounds to a mutinous patch, weeds

shooting up like false rhubarb, every wisp, stem, and sodden pith

a testament? Who hasn't scratched at the question of what it means to be here?

\*

## Pain-Ripened

Because my job was to stay clean and thankful, mostly invisible, as though telling me what to do told me who I was, I rubbed basil between finger and thumb to breathe the inside of a thing, walked the verges of muddy stream, sugared ridge and hilly breast, clear

of knotted root and dirt-wrapped wire, color-flushed on wildflowers, my mind a buzz of song, psalm and sonnet.

Here. A dead bird. A tiny Christ, riven in light, my sorrow lifted in wisps and moans to the mouth of the wind.

Shedding blouse, skirt, tender garments, I opened my flesh to pain-ripened sun, swayed to the pitch and pluck of sky.

In some languages to be *carried* is the same as to *fly*.

\*

### **Ruby May**

My mama hates children and dogs. Even her own. No matter that she makes this clear, announces it regular. Wherever she goes, there's a child or hound set to wallow her, as if she smells of jelly beans or Alpo. Manic, she will coo you penniless. Depressed, she'll peel the skin off your face with nary a whip of her curly head. Now she says, I wanted to live seemly, set out to be kind, reaches for her Bible. She says Uncle Bub used to tickle her up under her chin and otherwise on whiskey nights. Says she and Fanny June would build forts with kitchen chairs and Grammie's starflower quilt, crawl deep inside, lure the cat with baloney, lie side-by-side, lock fingers in pinky swear, hearts crossed, hoped he'd die.

\*

# **Bethal Ridge Cemetery**

On the edge that time thins, I stood

with aching arms, in a wrinkled dress. Among the stones a holier-than-thou, dark-robed and flailing, recited psalms by the shovelful.

It's the body that feels pain, but the brain delivers it. To this day, sometimes driving I see black wings flapping between bare branches and overreact.

Someone once told me we make everyone in our dreams into another version of ourselves, that rage isn't rage but sorrow turned back on itself, the shape made of regret.

There must have been birds, the noon-time smell of grass. I can't say. Feathered arias and earthy balms are not meant for a woman with a fist in each pocket.



Purchase the book by clicking here

This entry was posted on Wednesday, May 5th, 2021 at 10:05 am and is filed under Poetry You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.