
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Karla Huston: Three Poems

Karla Huston · Tuesday, April 30th, 2024

A Woman Lighting a Cigarette

after Paul Hortovsky

She does it with the filter tip
held between the first
knuckles of her first
two fingers, bringing it
slowly to her mouth,
pads to lips, fire to tip.
She changes to her other hand
to smoke it, tap it
like a wand. She holds
her cigarette like a teacup.

A man lighting a cigarette
holds it in the vee
of those same fingers
where he cups it
for the first inhale.
It'll stay there
for the duration or he'll
move it up a bit
but not as far as the
woman. A man holds
his cigarette like a fist.

*

What a Poem Needs

A poem needs a velocity
of verbs, a keening of nouns.
A poem needs a reader
to breathe it, to exhale

the secret of the dark, of light

A poem needs a river,
needs streams of smooth
stones, needs a confession
of snowflakes, needs a wisdom
of owls sheltered in a cedar

A poem needs trees, empty
of leaves, winds—sharp north
where doves hang
like gray ghosts, one red
cardinal pinned to a branch

*

I Hold My Pen like Taylor Swift

between my middle and index finger
which, I might add, is an acceptable
alternative pen hold. I also use
fountain pens. I learned cursive
in fourth grade where we were never
allowed to fill our pens on our desks,
even though there was a bottle slot.
No teacher wanted to clean India Ink
off the floor. Taylor Swift writes
love songs to new and old lovers.
I write poetry the best I can
though my poor poems won't appear
on the latest *Billboard 100* chart.
Taylor Swift has had many lovers.
I had one, but I have many pens,
and almost as many bottles of ink.
Taylor Swift wears red lipstick
with cat's-eye liner. I can't tell you
the name of any of her hit songs.
It's a safe bet she's read
none of my poems.

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