Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Kelly Grace Thomas: Three Poems

Kelly Grace Thomas · Wednesday, January 15th, 2020

How the Body is Passed Down

My mother unzips the body.
Passes it down.

The dress tailored
too tight. Leaves red

indentation of buttons.
Pressed hard as apology.

My mother was still hungry. Royal
with fridge glow. Learned

that loneliness
eats with its hands.

My body has always been
a window I cannot throw myself

from. Breasts stomach thighs
dimpled and swollen. Wetted

wood in a house I was born
into. But did not build.

I see my mother’s hips
every time I open

the fridge. Every time
the fridge opens me.

My cabinets stocked
with shame. What a mother

feeds her young.
Now I know

a body can haunt
itself. Be a fear

no one else believes in.
A ghost

that only says
my name.

(Previously published in the *Los Angeles Review)*

*

Burn the Boats

Because I believed somehow
it was my fault: I never told
anyone how great grandmother pinched
the extra chub around my waist
and asked *who will keep you*
now? Pointed to every empty man
not at our table. Told me I'm only as good
as what I can please.

my only harbor. I carried this: a body
full of broken boards
and boundaries.
I never told anyone
how my first love dropped threats
like an anchor. Warned me
what would happen
if I took on water. Sinking always slipped
between his speech. I believed
being boarded equaled boat. So I floated
for seven years subtracting

what I had for another body. Parts
of me couldn't fit inside his hands.
My first love never let me use his front door.
Instead gave me a dark porthole
to climb through. I only remember this: in bed
he would measure the circumference of my thighs.
Then beg for less. I became the smallest vessel
I could steer. Every day he climbed through
my story. Until I gathered enough

distance to choose another
name. I can't turn back.
I strike a single match.
Burn myself brighter.

The boats that built me
smoke on shore.

(Previously published in *Bayou Magazine)*

*

Small Things

The webs of Walnut Creek are all spun
white. In our new town, I notice each
grocery store glare. Sticky stares
follow Omid down each aisle.
Still my love keeps quiet
hands. Wears kindness like salt
and pepper stubble. I study him
as he hums to houseplants.

It's been hard for me to learn a love
so gentle. To believe him when he chants
me close. Hushes *gorgeous* until I fall

asleep. In the morning, he scrambles eggs.
Spatula in hand, he spots the lonely
daddy-longlegs in a quiet corner. The wall weaver
nestled next to light. He says, *needing a home*
is such a small thing to be forgiven for.

He lets the delicate geometry
stay. I am slow to learn
how to handle a living thing. I study Omid

as he smiles at spiders. I ask him
how? His speech soft as saffron, breath, a net
I lean against. He tells me he's been called a terrorist
more times than he can count. His answer: save something
smaller. Call each a guest. Leave all doors open.
Just because the world has called something
poison, he says, *doesn't mean we kill it.*

(Previously published in *Rise Up Review* and is forthcoming in *Best New Poets 2019)*

(Author photo by Monique Mitchell)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, January 15th, 2020 at 12:00 pm 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.