

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Robbi Nester: Three Poems

Robbi Nester · Wednesday, April 8th, 2020

Blueprint

The astronomer and fisherman are brothers.
choosing a solitary life. For both
the sky's a blueprint, where they find direction,
dark grid, fathomless and mute
as the inside of a bell, where they alone
perceive a sound, guiding them
to planets circling like seabirds, silver
schools of stars. Between bits of brightness,
their starved minds conjure ships out of a swell,
nebulae where none had been before.
The sky feeds from their hands, becomes
familiar, almost tame, unless
watching late into the night, when phosphorescent
motes speckle an endless field, a waking dream
might shock imagination from its sleep, the knowledge
that the precious charts, coiled safely in the cabinet
are a delusion, that the face glimpsed in the mirror, so
reassuring in half-light, masks a swarm
of shifting particles.

*

Lament of the Midnight Kitchen

Surprised mouth, the plate,
no longer passive, speaks,
and all of china sighs.
How long it has suffered,
so close to the sweet, the savory,
so far from taking it all in.
The fork bares its skeletal gums.
The spoon's moon face,
featureless as ever,
nonetheless manages to seem smug.

By day, our faithful servants,
 at night, they mock us,
 our grinning and chattering,
 the tongue like a sea slug,
 a bathmat in the red and white
 sauna of the mouth.
 They plot a revolution.
 Let no one forget the knife,
 that sharp fellow,
 his dangerous grin
 presents a remedy
 for all these resentments.

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The Mezuzah

I used to sit at my mother's vanity
 and primp before the glass, fingering her dainty
 ornaments and peering at familiar strangers
 smiling from their ornate frames.
 I was an only child, confident in my position.
 I knew the story of my parents' lives,
 marked before my birth and after.
 No limits hampered me.
 I could be anything I wished.

Then my fingers found a hidden drawer
 tucked into the bottom of my mother's jewelry box.
 Triggering the latch, I saw a golden chain
 coiled on the velvet lining of the drawer,
 tiny likeness of a Torah scroll.
 Inside, a scrap of prayer conferred protection
 on the one who wore the charm, which had to be
 a child, considering how miniscule this was.
 I cupped the necklace in my palm and scrambled
 down the stairs to ask my mother whose this was.
 But when my mother saw the necklace,
 her mouth opened and closed
 without a sound. Then she said,
 "For the baby boy we never had,"
 told me these were gifts
 for boys, but not for girls,
 who didn't get the parties
 boys did at their birth.
 For the first time I felt
 I must have been
 a disappointment of a kind.
 She turned away to fold the still-warm

sheets into the basket.

leaving me with questions I would never ask.

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