

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Susan L. Leary: Two Poems

Susan L. Leary · Wednesday, July 22nd, 2026

Contrition // Revelation

To survive, I disguised myself in mimicry & became
like the girl who sat alone in the back of the church weeping,

the one who had disobeyed the rain by running through it
& sought God's forgiveness. At home, my prayers were not solemn

but noisy, the tea kettle shrieking like a bereaved mother.
The bucket with the rusted horizon of a handle filling slowly,

dramatically, as the roof leaked. Even in my dreams,
the telephone never stopped ringing & though I wanted

what I heard to be factually true, the men of my childhood
with stiff collars explained enough birds could change

the color of the sky. So I kept my aggravation to myself.
A restraint that exposed a playhouse where only a counterfeit truth

was starring. The most difficult thing to say is, *You have hurt me.*
& do you know how much you have hurt me? I am practicing

my lines. I am shaking in the stairwell. I am hallucinating
a miracle that never comes. God, grant me permission to be naïve.

*

[My Brother Was an Artist]

Sometimes I want to shake the kids in the most compassionate way. Those for whom I wish more defensible epiphanies, like that of the transfer student in the front row who's here because, well, he *didn't want to be a landscaper*. A fact—like how the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell. Like how my brother was an expert in lawncare maintenance but he's not anymore because he's

dead. No one chooses their hands. No one considers the hands a visible structure for the mind, especially my brother who barely made it out of high school.

In an episode of *LOST*, we learn Michelangelo stared at a hunk of marble for years & called it *work*, just as my brother had the backyard where he spent hours reading about root systems & turf application, bottles clanking as he pulled one after the other from the cooler, the gold liquid the same shiny hue as the heat against his face. I don't mean to complain or to resurrect the dead, but my brother was paid an unremarkable wage to keep his best friend's father's business afloat while the best friend took vacation after vacation & my brother took pride in that.

Our existential crises might be better earned, but the point is nicheness is everywhere. In under two minutes, Miranda Priestly unraveled the history of cerulean blue from *a pile of stuff*. There's a preferred method to thawing shrimp as well, to being good with one's words, to winning a round of laser tag, then greening the grass. Recently, a tweet circulated about whether or not there would be jobs in the afterlife, assuming the afterlife is true. Let's hope not. Let's also hope nothing is unprecedented, that when we're dead, we're not without consciousness but more awake inside it.

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