

The Bear in the Sauna and other poems...

By Mary Ann Noe

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: Ms. Noe is a treasure. The first poem relates an image in a puddle. Who waxes poetic over a spill? Thank goodness she had a pen at hand instead of a mop. "The water, leaking away in the heat," "The beautiful bone birdcage / Lies tipped in the grainfield," Noe's voice has a lovely rhythm to it. "Look! She's still aloft!" Read on...HS (Spacing is poet's own.)

The Bear in the Sauna

I peered at the birch planks, hot beneath my sweating feet,
Wood fastened to crosspieces with pairs of silver screws.
On the floor, I saw the bear's head.
A small bear without ears,
Formed by water from a departing sauna soaker,
A streaming swimmer drying off,
Water puddling into a vague footprint.

The bear, its nose a fat teddy puff,
Looked up with eyes of silver screws,
Its face round, benign and friendly.
The bear grinned, begging me to play.

Look closer—a child's bear no longer.
The water, leaking away in the heat,
Defined itself into a brown bear's nose,
A wild nose, flanked by wary silver eyes.
I pulled my feet up against my chest and looked away.

My gaze swiveled back, under protest,
To see the long, narrow snout of a grizzly,
Sharp and wet against the birchwood.
The eyes, menacing now with a silver glint,
Dared me to offer my feet, my toes.

I huddled, perched safe on my slatted birch bench.
But even as I watched, the grizzly faded,
Heat pulling at its jowls, drawing them into oblivion.
The bear in the sauna disappeared,
Leaving behind reproachful eyes,
As if it were my fault the wood reclaimed him.

On Mortality

The beautiful bone birdcage
Lies tipped in the grainfield,
The birds within absconded by buzzards,
Coyotes or wandering wolves.
No heart, no bellows, no sack of stomach left.
What remains, faint threads of red,
Drape like embroidery floss awaiting the stitcher.
Below ears still poised to catch a predator's padding,
Eyes, already resigned to their fate,
Peruse what retains a sense of form,
Without the form itself.

I stop, drawn to the beaten trail in the field,
Too wide for a slender deer run.
Foreshortened, the abrupt cul-d-sac
Reveals the memory of success and failure.
The turkey vultures rise en masse.

Still Aloft

Once I was a Piper Cub, red and white striped,
Flying high and light,
Doing loop-the-loops and barrel rolls,
Wagging my wings at spectators.
They hid smiles behind hands
To keep me from getting too hoity-toity
From my exuberance and my sleekness,
Though they admired them all the same.

Having outgrown the Cub, I became a blimp.
Floating serenely—looking serene, at least—
Above mere earthly concerns; I ignored them all.
Those watching no longer hid their smiles,
But shook their heads at my arrogance.
I drifted, wrapped in my bulk and my thoughts,
Ignoring their tut-tutting.

But now I've loosened my skin to become
A biplane, old-fashioned in the extreme.
Out of date, perhaps, but still able
To fly with exuberance,
If not with sleekness and speed.
A certain satisfaction comes with being refurbished,
Still drawing spectators who point and marvel,
"Look! She's still aloft!"
I tip my wings at them,
More dignified—and safe—than a waggle.

A Migration of Congress

I swear, Congress in session flew over yesterday,
Honking and carousing and carrying on,
A true Washington conglomeration.
They might have been discussing
The most efficient route to Florida.
I watched them wheel and shift,
Changing leaders to break trail,
Providing moments of recovery for the others.
Much like Congress, they wrangled
Confabbed, changed direction.
First south, then west, then,
With a complete turnaround, north again.
Yet, generally, the members found the path,
Gradually set the sun in their western quadrant,
And moved with noisy discussion toward their common destination.

THE POET SPEAKS: *Thanks to my father, who could drive and spot wildlife at the same time, I inherited a good eye. The strangest things appeal to my poetic sense. Spotting a cluster of grounded turkey vultures while biking one day, I rode over and found what was left of a deer; hence, the poem "On Mortality." The contrast of the military precision of a jet flyover with the blimp floating serenely above the same football game made me realize that, while we may not be jets or blimps any longer as we age, we're "Still Aloft." As for "Migration of Congress," no matter where you live, governing bodies don't seem to differ much, always wrangling and wrestling, much like a gaggle of geese beginning their winter migration. When poetry strikes me (hunting for it is too deliberate, and too elusive), I trail along behind Frost, Whitman, Moore, Cummings, Atwood, among others, lapping up their imagery and, in some cases, wry humor. I want that "pop" at the end, or the line that lingers before the Aha! moment sets in. Poetry can do that, and that's why it sticks with me, and I with it.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: *I have been writing since I could pick up a pencil, though my early poetry and writings should probably line birdcages. However, since then, I have published short stories and non-fiction, as well as poetry. My work appears in Women's Fiction; Haruah: Breath of Heaven; Main Street Rag; and Green Prints: The Weeder's Digest, as well as in the online travel magazine GoNOMAD.com, and in the anthology Dumped: Stories of Women Unfriending Women. Along the line, I taught high school English and psychology for, well, many years, but am now retired and free to write even more. Visit her at maryannnoe.com*

