



IN THE



BY

BROOKE MADISON

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...Brooke Madison's 'Sparrow in the Sea' is an ekphrastic poem reflecting upon Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting (controversies aside), Landscape with the Fall of Icarus. Bruegel has captured a work-a-day village landscape, scattered with various preoccupied figures who appear to take no notice of the two legs and few feathers rendered offshore depicting the final moments of Icarus' fated fabled flight. Enough of this incidental backstory, I just love the way Madison plays with the image of Icarus' falling shadow as it makes its impressions along his descent leading up to the scene Bruegel presents. What is most remarkable, besides Ovid's Metamorphoses and Bruegel's masterpiece, is how*

beautifully Brooke describes the work as it is portrayed. Delving into their and her imaginings and giving voice to the impressions of the indifferent, undisturbed non-lookers. "...for too many times we have heard the faint / splash of a man slipped into turquoise sea...Icarus is a sparrow / in the snare, and we have work to do." She is a must read.

Five Stars

Senior Editor CHARLES writes...*Both W. H. Auden and William Carlos Williams wrote poems referencing Bruegel's Icarus who is often seen as a symbol of Man's folly. In most cases Hez would mention this in his WILI in order to give the poem he was critiquing some literary elevation. But this one doesn't need it. A Sparrow in the Sea stands on its own. In her cover letter the author stated that this was her first ever submission. It's rare to encounter such obvious talent in an emerging writer.*

Five Stars

Sparrow in the Sea

--After Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

There was a flitting moment as Icarus eclipsed
the sun, and the diaphanous shadow of a madman
with wings sprawled across the cobblestone
path and rock-prickled shore, imprinted itself
on swelling cloth sails and the white coastal town,
where we hushed our jobs to search the salt-
sting air, wondering how tremendous the bird
must have been to steal the hearty boast of the sun
even for a second. When we saw no great phoenix
or heaven-sent hawk, we returned our ruddy
hands to the plow, to the helm. Miracles

do not come to us. We are used to men thinking
the rush of wind will help them flee their chains,
fulfill a dream away from labor and submission,
find freedom in the passage between sun and sea
where the heart isn't fastened to the yoke. We know
this is a fruitless hope, we know to bow
our heads back to the rake and sickle,
for too many times we have heard the faint
(no stanza break)

(no stanza break)

splash of a man slipped into turquoise sea,
thrashing then devoured by gushes of water
that inflate his lungs, the undercurrent plucking
feathers from wax wings like a wolf tears
into a flailing hen, blood, bones, and breath
until he sinks into the bowels of black ripples.
We do not care to look. There is nothing
to be done; Icarus is a sparrow
in the snare, and we have work to do.

THE POET SPEAKS: *Poetry is a completely new concept to me. I have always loved creative writing, but never considered reading poetry until very recently. For years I thought: Why would I read a sappy, weirdly spaced collection of big words trying their best to be philosophical? I'd rather read exciting things—fantasy, horror-- heck, I'd even pick up a romance novel before reading a poem!*

How wrong I was. I learned of my close-mindedness once I took an Intro to Poetry class my first semester of community college, not expecting it to be easy per say, but not something I would ever pursue. That was until I failed my first assignment. What a shock! From that point on, I started to really care. What was it that made my lazy words slapped haphazardly onto a page deserving of such a bad grade? It made me ask, what is poetry?

Over the course of the semester, I greatly improved. Through trial and error, I got a sense for what decent poetry looks like. It also helped immensely that I started reading poetry seriously for the first time and ended up really liking it. It was a whole new avenue of creative writing to explore!

The second to last poem I wrote for my Intro to Poetry class was "Sparrow in the Sea". It is an ekphrastic poem based off the painting Landscape with the Fall of Icarus by Pieter Bruegel. The main feature of this painting which struck me was the farmer in the foreground with his head down, working diligently while Icarus is drowning in the sea below. In fact, no one in the painting thinks to help Icarus, or even so much as look at him. I found it to be startlingly reminiscent of our society today, as we often must put our jobs above the well-being of ourselves and those around us. In this way, we are like the farmer, too busy working to care about those flailing about in the water below us. And who are those drowning? Often the ones who fly too close to the sun—those who attempt to escape this cycle in pursuit of achieving their own private dreams. We think of them as foolish; how dare they try to make a living off their passion! But to ourselves, we say: What if...?

I wrote the poem from the perspective of the farmer for this reason. I wanted to explore why no one but us, the audience, looks at Icarus. My wonderful teacher, Ms. Alexandra Burack, informed me that this poem was publishable and left many helpful suggestions for revision. I was excited to submit this poem to Fleas on the Dog and was ecstatic to hear a response back.

I am still not fully sure what poetry means to me. I'll figure it out at some point, but for now, I am just absorbing as much of the genre as possible. Thank you for reading my poem.

AUTHOR BIO: Brooke Madison is currently pursuing a major in Creative Writing from Chandler-Gilbert Community College (AZ). She plans to continue her education at Arizona State University. Brooke's dream job is to become a children's book author and illustrator. She enjoys digital art and writing fiction.

