

back to go and other poems

by RC deWinter

Poetry editor Hezekiah writes: I think Ms. deWinter is the cat's whiskers. With my luck she is likely an ailurophobe—well lose some win some—but she is witty, wise and winsome. There is nothing quite like a cynic suffering from limerence and can describe the symptoms so delightfully succinctly. (But then again neither do chose and choose and lose and loose follow the same rules in spell-casting .) I'll get you started: "thin skin bleeds as i scrape off / impastoed daydreams" And to think it is rumored that she paints and sings as beautifully as she writes: "the siren song of love lures me every time / as sure as sin i run panting toward it" Among others, don't miss ' tongue and groove' or 'Scouting' either. I'll give you some privacy...she is also quite a-musing. (Spacing and font size are poet's own.)

back to go

thin skin bleeds as i scrape off
impastoed daydreams
slathered on in the madness of desire

digging a fingernail under each thread
i unravel embroidered wishes
soft silk unloops sliding out soundless

tunneled scarlet holes close
with almost silent sighs
leaving the barest trace of pattern

applying reality's stringent antiseptic
i wince as i sponge away red rivulets
wondering if there will be scars

life wraps me in its unemotional embrace as
denuded of design i breathe in deep
breathe out slow step off go

love and roses

i paint a lot of roses and i don't know why
they're not even my favorite flower
but sure as sin every few weeks
there's another rose on the easel
glowing more beautifully than in life

what care i lavish on them
each brushstroke as perfect as i can make it
and every time i finish i tell myself
this is the last one
i'm not painting another rose

maybe it's the symbolism that snags me
into doing what i say i won't
roses love love roses roses love
the universal symbol of the infinite variety
of that treacherous emotion

and just as with the painting
the siren song of love lures me every time
as sure as sin i run panting toward it
and every time it proves a myth
i tell myself that's it - never again

who am i kidding - i'm a sucker for myth
no matter how many the times or ways
my heart's bloodied on those rocks
like a masochistic homing pigeon wielding a paintbrush
i fly back to love and roses

tongue and groove

each slide of lips across flesh
lights another small bonfire
to be quenched by your talented tongue

a stray breeze tugs curtain
from open window
nuclear gold explodes
light hits eyes
another day ripped from the future
reality's scorched earth

burnt black and blinking
i rise from sleep's trench and start my descent
an unwilling conscript
in an army of survivors
wishing i could let go the handrail
and miss a step or three

the animal instinct for survival
overcomes the striatum dance
i'm in the midday kitchen
standing stiff in my straitjacket of skin
an automaton making coffee
you look like a nun says my mother

i permit a grim smile during
the sacrament of caffeine as
your sandpaper tongue slides across my soul

Math Anxiety

I've done the
arithmetic once,
twice, three times,
every day.
Isn't three supposed to be
the charm, the magic?
Add. Subtract.
Multiply. Divide.
Start over.
Nothing adds
up – there's no correct answer.
Frustration rises.
Pencil points
break. Erasure holes
blossom. Tears
blur numbers
into useless squiggles of
graphite, ashes of
sabotage,
a conspiracy
of silence.
In the bleak
dungeon of my mind stands the
hangman, laughing as
he twirls his
hemps in smooth circles:
the wrong kind,
not fit for
smoking. I snap the pencil;
I am done
with mathematics.
Better the
swift sharp blade
of the guillotine than the
rope's deathdance dangle.

Scouting

To break up a day full of not much
I sit by the window gazing out at the universe of men.

Some of them, trying for debonair, are armed with
unimaginative bouquets of hothouse flowers,
stiff and scentless. Bundled in layers of bright tissue
tied with gaudy ribbon chosen by a clerk who doesn't care.

Others – aiming for casual – the Come-As-You-Ares,
carry brown paper bags of some middling liquor.
Not too cheap. Not too highbrow. Looking at their watches
as they practice sincerity on their way to the door.

All mixed in with the slick and smooth, wearing expensive jeans
and maybe a sports coat over a crisply casual button-down.
Pockets full of tired witticisms, scripted compliments.
The ones that worked in prior forays.

I see them knowing none are dressed as themselves.
Unwilling to forget what the world says a man should be.
Unwilling to be the man they may or may not know they are.

Vulnerable and nervous.
Lonely and afraid.
Maybe strong.
Maybe gentle.

Will these men ever see me – really see me?
Not likely, and their words will be the proof.

Old thoughts in new skin. Words that make me feel
like I've swallowed a glass of nothing. Like I'm being
squeezed into a dress that doesn't fit. Shoved into a
too-small frame leaving me wrinkled. Distorted.
The truth of me buried under folded edges.

I know who I am, what I am.
Lonely and afraid.
Vulnerable and nervous.
Strong but gentle.
What I own. Can give. Don't have.
What I need.
And, having been loved by a man

wearing nothing but his own skin,
unafraid of everything I am,
I know the real thing when I see it.
I wonder if I ever will again.

THE POET SPEAKS: *The inspiration for all my poetry is a varied amalgam of past experience, my present life, current events, dreams, fears, desires, art, people here and gone, science, history, the writings of more people – poets and not – than I can name and pure imagination. I often say I am made of words. I've been writing since I could hold a pencil. I wanted to be able to write in rhyme like the poems I read as a child, the kind that were taught to children in the 1950s. Rhyme captivated me and though it's out of style today I still write it and sometimes insert a rhyming couplet in prose poetry just because. Why poetry? Poetry is the language of the soul, of every glittering star, of every pebble buried in the mud, the shadow you can't quite see. Poetry is a spur in the side, a knife in the heart, a memory in the mouth. ~ RC deWinter*

AUTHOR'S BIO: RC deWinter's poetry is widely anthologized, notably in *New York City Haiku* (New York Times, February 2017), *Cowboys & Cocktails* (Brick Street, April 2019), *Nature In The Now* (Tiny Seed Press, August 2019), *Coffin Bell Two* (March 2020), in print in *2River*, *Adelaide*, *Event*, *Genre Urban Arts*, *Gravitas*, *Kansas City Voices*, *Meat For Tea: The Valley Review*, *the minnesota review*, *Night Picnic Journal*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southword*, among others and appears in numerous online literary journals