



Image from Auntie Dogma's Garden Spot

Dale Walkonen

Two Poems

How the Air Tasted

I remember how the air tasted in the hills of Crocheron Park
as it grew late. We smelled of dirt and tar that bubbled from the road.
You walked ahead of me, going where I didn't think we should,
inexplicably finding a matador's cape in the abandoned Teller house.

I remember Myer's woods, crocuses,
I remember looking inside a daffodil's velvet yellow world,
my yellow dress, its scoop neck.
I remember never wanting to grow up,
as though it would be some terrible calamity.
I remember when women always wore dresses.

I remember morning catechism,

my questions ignored by the answers given
God made me to love him
I remember the threatening swish of nuns' black robes
and serve him in this world
as they swept along our desks
and in the next big black rosaries,
the clack of the round wood beads.

I remember playing monopoly, the sound of rain on the attic roof,
having German measles, not the bad ones.
I remember catching a snapping turtle. It bit me.

I remember flying my kite forever into the evening, into the dark,
I remember sneaking out to sled alone in the street,
blue shadows on snow, the cold thrill.

The Fool's Epitaph

At the school of the Sacred Heart, we sat on hard wood seats
fixed to the floor by nails,
sought forgiveness
from the crucified nakedness of Jesus,
felt embarrassed by his little drape, his mournful crown.

Home was for the living,
for rolling in the grass, holding fireflies in my palm,
watching mother's hands cut apples, mold crust for pie.
Here, my father spun the tale of Willet and Cuyahoga
to my brother and me, spellbound in the firelight.

In my cherry tree, climbing high
with dirty fingernails and snot-covered sleeves,
I believed in blossoms and the holy family.

But some nights I held faith in nothing, faith
firmly founded on father's frequent drunks: was it my fault
he staggered up the stairs
instead of hoisting me on his shoulders to seek ice cream?

Adolescent tornadoes sent me flying in cloudy wonder,
set me down far from home,
hungry for applause, for laughter. I learned red nose,

white face, became a solemn fool.

When father, then brother,
mother died, I fell
not from trees, but down,
through my own deep hollow

until death took me
into his arms, held me close,
shook my body, showed me
the delicious enclosing of cold feet in warm socks,
put the dead away away like tin soldiers, in their boxes in the ground.

I stood on the earth and sought no one's affirmation,
only the coming of sun and rain,
reliable companions.

Dale Walkonen has published work in *Slab*, *Eclipse*, *The Chaffin Journal*, *Primavera*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook, *Journey*, was a semifinalist in the 2008 Black River Chapbook Competition; she has also written a critically acclaimed play, *Mayday! Mayday!*