

Allison Thorpe – Two Poems

Nesting

The summer I turned ten
I came down with scarlet fever,
the rash roughening neck, face,
the folds of my reddened body.
My mother fretted more than usual
fearing heart complications or even death.
She hovered like an anxious ghoul.
I could sense her outside my door,
listening keenly for any signs of life.
I'd cough gently a few times
so she could get on with her day.

My window slowly measured my world
my only connection to the excitement I once had.
I heard the gleeful shouts outside,
watched the bike races and street baseball,
yearning the wind on my face,
the curve of the ball in my ill-fitting mitt.
My mother kept the room dark,
but I would sneak from my weltered bed
and peer at the summer fun happening without me.

But something new was developing in my view:
a nest forming in the branches of the maple outside.
Playmates forgotten, I watched the birds
fluttering their tireless trips with bits
of paper, string, straw, anything handy
until creation nestled the mother within.
One morning a peeping woke me,
and I saw the insistent beaks open and reaching,
heads scrawny and matted in their newness.
I worried their existence as if they were my own,
feeling disturbingly like my mother.

Then done day the birds were gone,
my vigilance brought to an abrupt end.
I begged to go outside and jump into life once more,
but my mother had the *better safe than sorry* mindset.
Long after the itchy redness had peeled
and the sore throat allowed firmer food
than broth, my mother still fussed over me,
cutting sandwiches into cleaved bits
in case some stinging swallow remained.

With just a wisp of summer left, I was finally released.
Roller skates in hand I hurried the stairs
into a new world: a wild riot of colors,
everything brighter, fresher, the air
a delirious rapture of scents, my ears picking up
mowers and radios and women laughing.
I looked back to our house, my sanctuary
of illness and felt alien from it.
I marveled this newfound freedom, how far
from home our wings might carry us.

Sophie

She prowls libraries
hunting books
with clean slates
and checks them out

Clicks her cowboy boots
along art gallery halls
contemplating canvas strokes
dismissed by others

Picks up the penny
dead in the gutter
even the dog
will not stop to sniff

As rock and rap spill
from car windows
she is the one sitting in the park
listening to the church bells chime

Allison Thorpe is a writer from Lexington, KY. She is the author of several collections of poetry, the latest being *Dorothy's Glasses* (Finishing Line Press, 2015). A Pushcart nominee, she has appeared in such journals as *Appalachian Heritage*, *Black Fox Literary Magazine*, *The Citron Review*, *South85 Journal*, *Foliate Oak Literary Magazine*, *The Meadow*, *3 Elements Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, and *Third Wednesday*.