

Christine Nichols – Two Poems

Stag's Leap

For Sharon Olds

There is a hesitant acceptance
at the beginning.

As if everything
could be okay.

It's standing on the table legs
of no other way to be.

But here

a shiver of recognition
spider walks down my back

before it grows thick,
twists and writhes
like an oily snake
hidden in deep grass.

I almost close the book, but
my hands won't move.

I am the rabbit
transfixed by the yellow slit
of the cat's eyes.

Then, it jumps
off the page.

I feel her breath leave the ink
and enter my mouth.

It pours hot and unwashed
into my lungs.

The agony of it
flattens me to a round hot stone.

I cannot breathe
as her life
is born in me.

Night Left A Footprint On My Shoulder

Was that a whisper,
like a lover's icy breath,
ghosting across my neck?

Or was that a rattle,
like the bones of the long dead
strung into a necklace,
ringing hollow against a glass pane?

The mattress shifts, and
I smell an aftershave,
like ozone after lightning,
but before I can be sure, it's gone.

There, I think I see the back of him,
sliding out the window.
His dark duster almost
catches on the sill.

I turn and see in the
moonlight mirror, just at the edge
of my naked back,
Night left a footprint on my shoulder.

I know it was him because
he left the tread of a worn Converse sneaker,
it's weave a windblown sand dune,
puddled on my skin.

But I will forget it was Night.
My vanishing tattoo is the only evidence,
a whisper of the
silent steps
Night makes.

Christine Nichols is a new poet from Stillwater Oklahoma. She has work pending or previously published in *Red River Review*, *Eunoia*, *The Glass Coin*, *Of Sun and Sand Anthology*, *Shadows Express*, *Vox Poetica*, and *Mused*.

