

Laura Anne Heller – Two Poems

End of Harvest

Lucinda

Sundays, alone, I go to her
and the apple tree at the edge
of the field. I climb the low limbs
and step up onto the high ones.
I can look out over the field.
The farm tall with stalks and autumn.
From this perch I can see rows
where the corn died and I can see
the place where Mother died. She rests.
I know where the knife is hidden,
stained by earth, that Yazoo red clay
in the soil, and rust of its last use.
And I can see him, the old man
on his porch on the other side,
cigar smoke trailing in the breeze.

Finding Home

Lucinda

Harvest arrives and brings neighbors.
The news spread like a tree's shadow
across the delta farms and fields
as the sun returns home to dusk.
An orphan girl. Motherless. Sad.
They heard from whispers in the bar
that my father ran out on me.
Poor child. Hungry child. All alone.
Church women come with casseroles,
young farmers' wives with bread and beans,
and I just smile, shy, and thank them.
The man sits on the porch with me
and nods each concern and prayer.
He holds my hand warm when winter
wakes with a cold wind at mid-day.
As the sleet covers the sun-burnt
dirt, and as the Sunday women

drive up the road with dinner plates,
and as I take hold of his hand,
I ask, "Why can't I stay with you?"
He sighs, his smokey breath a cloud
hanging in the cool evening air:
"We'll see, child. I cannot know yet."

Laura Anne Heller lives in the Jackson, Mississippi area, works as a public librarian and archivist, and writes from her Mississippi and Kentucky roots. She prefers the persona poem, allowing older voices to tell stories from Southern history and culture. She has poems included in the Mongrel Empire Press anthology *Ain't Nobody That Can Sing Like Me: New Oklahoma Writing* (2010), and a published book, *Lexington Lives: Poems for Those Who Lived & Died in Lexington, Kentucky, 1800s-1900s* (2013).