

Barbara Reynolds – Two Poems

Childhood Redux

It's a wonder we survived –
sipping lukewarm tap water teas
brewed with blue gray berries
picked from backyard shrubs,

and munching petals of road side daylilies
that mimicked the crunch of sweet iceberg lettuce
while pollenating our noses orange.

We slurped from rain-fed forest streams
with the notion that the motion
of sifting woodsy debris purifies water

and heaved our developing bones off boulder cliffs
into thickety snow drifts, mystery deep
and concealing we cared not what.

But we never mistook the look of
poisonous pokeweed berries
for clumping grapes,

and wittingly obeyed the creed
if it's sweet it's good to eat
after tasting their bitter seed.

Heirlooms

The third move proved
to be the last, into a thin set
of malnourished rooms
where legs could stretch
from the couch and toes
would nearly touch
the opposite wall,
barely bringing the children
the closest they had ever been.

Little of a life that was meant
to be more was left to sort.

The sister maintained
no one wanted the sheets
with re-stitched selvages,
claiming the Salvation Army
could not redeem them
and only a dumpster
would willingly receive them.

The brother unfolded a bathmat
limning a faded field of blue columbines
bounded by raveling hems.
“I need that,” the sister said,
plucking it from his fingers
and placing it on her lap,
then thumbing through a stack
of photographs that mapped
the newly dead.

Snow fell on the open bed
of the brother’s pick-up truck
holding a confusion of orphaned furniture
tucked in between the sheets,
one tottering bureau having passed
from brother to sister to son
back to mother now passed on
to another.

Barbara Reynolds teaches and writes in Somerville, Massachusetts. She has an MA in Critical and Creative Thinking and is an adjunct professor at Lesley University’s Graduate School of education. Her poems have appeared in *Avocet*, *Weekly Avocet*, and *Indolent* books, *What Rough Beast*. She was a winner in Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Funky Nest Contest, poetry category. After teaching mathematics for over thirty years, she is finally focusing on her first love, poetry.