

Bill Abbott – Three Poems

Papa

Dominant in any room,
Gruff in attitude and voice,
Not willing to entertain weakness,

He led that mule, pulled that plow,
Drove the backhoe,
Whatever was required.

He wore overalls and a white shirt,
Muddy work boots,
A Deere ball cap,
Dress clothes on Sunday,
His skin was tanned and rough
From long stretches of sun.

He wore glasses. His white hair ringed his head.
He smiled rarely, his dusty laugh reserved
For watching wrestling.

His rocky voice
Told you when you weren't
Being enough of a man
When you were still a boy.

Fire Boys

When you first light a smoke bomb, it briefly burns.

If you put it next to plastic, it doesn't stop burning.

We were boys in the back
Of his back yard
In the swelter of another
Central Tennessee summer.
Down the gentle slope,
Under the trees,
By the barbed wire edge,
We decided to use
The leftover fireworks.
Having already blown the hood
Off my landspeeder

With a Black Cat,
We moved to the idea
That battle-smudged,
Smoke-tinted Snowtroopers
Fit our idea of cool
Yet possible.

So we set up a Snowtrooper
By a smoke bomb and lit it,
And learned,
In that late summer afternoon,
That some fires don't stop burning
Until everything around them are destroyed.

Florid

They say "Bloom where you're planted,"
But I was never allowed.
Instead of growing wild and free,
They set me in a planter,
Moved me from place to place,
And kept me confined to a small space.

Uprooted too often from place,
Artificially grown within my limits,
Moved from town to town,
Unsure how to make friends,
Unsure how to stay in touch,
I never bloomed.

At one point, I made friends
With another boy
And heard, on the way home,
That we were moving again.

An old friend asked me
Where I think of when I think of home,
And I had too many answers,
And none of them fully fit.

I don't know how to bloom.

Bill Abbott is the author of *Let Them Eat MoonPie*, the history of poetry slam in the Southeast. He has been published in *Ray's Road Review*, *Radius*, *The November 3rd Club* and *The Sow's Ear*. Mr. Abbott lives in Ohio and teaches creative writing at Central State University.