

Eric Greinke – Five Poems



Featured Poet

The Word

Two boys, one black & one white,
were friends in the 4th grade.
Though they usually got along,
one day, during recess, they fought.
Both were angry, so for awhile
they tried to slug each other
until the black boy lost balance
& the white boy sat on his chest.
When he couldn't break himself free,
the black boy called the white boy
the worst name he could think of.
The white boy didn't understand.
His mother had ordered him
never to use that ugly word.

The Secret

She usually rode her bike
to school, but that day she got
a ride from her mother, so
she was walking home when a
van pulled up alongside.
She quickened her pace down
the tree-lined dirt road. He
tried three times to coax
her inside, but she wouldn't
take the bait, so he jumped
out, grabbed her & shoved
her into the back seat. He
showed her the knife & told
her to shut up or he'd
kill her on the spot. He drove
down a grown-over two-track

to a little clearing, where
he made her pull her pants
down, then took photographs.
When at last he let her go
outside their small town, he said
he'd kill her if she told.
She didn't tell their secret,
but her mother noticed
that she began to wake up
crying from scary dreams
most nights & got angry
over nothing. Her father
said it must be hormones
& wondered where the hell
his sweet little girl had gone.

Little Doll

Phalla had a great life
growing up in Cambodia.
She was her father's favorite,
the most attractive of his girls.
He dressed her in fine clothes
& called her his little doll.

When her father died,
with no one to support her,
she was forced to move in
with her maternal grandmother
who considered her spoiled.
They argued every day all summer.

Finally, to teach her a lesson,
her grandmother sold her
to a brothel in Kampong Som,
where they stripped her
& locked her in a room
& raped her many times a day.

Some of the men reminded her
of the way her father looked at her
when he called her his little doll,
but more of them made her think
of the look in her grandma's eyes
when she won the argument.

Unforgiven

The last time Tammy spoke to her mother
she was desperate in a Utah jail.
She'd phoned her mom every day that week,
pleading, begging for help, for her pills.
She was there for forgetting to report
a change of address to her probation officer.
She had gone down on a drug charge a year ago.
She was bi-polar, with a history
of several suicide attempts.
Xanax was the only thing that kept her calm.
The nurse at the jail wouldn't let her
have her medication, she told her mom.
"If you don't help me get my pills,
you'll be the worst mother in the world."
Then she hung up. Her mom called the jail.
She spoke to the probation officer,
who assured her that Tammy
was "always closely monitored."
The next day was Thanksgiving.
Tammy's sister called their mother
to tell her that Tammy was dead.
She had hung herself in her cell.
She never did get her meds.
Her mother felt like the worst mother
in the world, just as her lost daughter
had predicted in her final desperate call.

That's Entertainment

Bloody soldiers lie like sticks
On a hurricane beach

Bionic limbs replace shot off
Branches, grotesque woodpiles

A posse of killer clowns tunes up
Guided by the grinding wheels of half-tracks

Shells scream through the morning mist
Black smoke swirls over abandoned boots

Greedy leaders take a hard line
Defending the borders of their minds

A militia of monkeys reigns
Over the temporarily insane drains

We're still marching in perfect order
Into the red-stained, funeral smog

Eric Greinke's poems and essays have been published in a wide range of international literary magazines since the late sixties, most recently in *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Rosebud*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *The Tipton Review* and the *Taj Mahal Review*. He is a Contributing Writer for the *Schuylkill Valley Journal*. His most recent books are *Shorelines* (Adastra Press, 2018) and *Invisible Wings* (Presa Press, 2019). www.ericgreinke.com.