

Claire Scott – Three Poems

Armband

If you die first
my love, I will wear a dark armband
sewn from the fabric of a favorite shirt
& worn over the sleeve of my sweater

I won't be able
to stand in long lines at Ikea or
Costco, my legs buckling beneath me
people will show me to the front of the line

eyes full of sympathy
& secret relief that they haven't lost
a loved one, that they can return to a life of
light laughter & late night TV

doctors' offices
will instantly usher me to stark rooms
with tissue paper gowns knowing how
desperately I need Ambien, Klonopin,
Ativan, Xanax, Zoloft

my wise analyst
will cancel her patients & be available 24/7
in case I need to see her which I will & I will
weeping thick tears on her time-worn couch

yet you say

people will pretend,
wear black armbands to avoid waiting
carry boxes of Kleenex under their arms
faking sobs to convince others of their misery

seriously?

why would anyone
choose this world of untouched plates
unwashed hair night-gowned walks
through vacant rooms

orphaned silence
in half a bed

waking startled at dawn
remembering realizing there is yet
another day to shuffle and shamble

why would anyone
choose this world
simply to be first in line?

Barbeque Devil

Those dreaded dinners on Thursday nights
overcooked meatloaf, dry & desperate
the devil leering from a bottle of BBQ sauce
pointed tail, sharp beard, menacing horns
but it was his pitchfork
his three pronged pitchfork
poking & pushing sinners into the pit of hell
flames licking their feet

that terrified me
each time I stole gum from Saul's corner store
each time I said I had brushed my teeth
or finished my homework
each time I told on my sister so
she would have to stand in the corner
while I made faces at her back
the image of Barbeque Satan

flashed through my head
his pitchfork poised
craving, coveting, convincing
my hackles rose
what the hell are hackles?
my tongue tangled

my face flushed
I slept with the lights on, not just my

Superman nightlight, I slept with the ceiling
light on, the bedside lamp on, the bathroom
light on, a flashlight by my side
the windows closed even in July
my room sweltering over ninety degrees
each night I vowed to never steal or lie or tattle
but the gum was always there the next day
along with impossible math problems

ridiculous lists of presidents to memorize &
a sister who called me a mealy-mouthed monkey
today I eat meatloaf with catsup
my sister & I chatter on & on for hours
I no longer steal gum & barely lie
but I still sleep with the windows shut
& I still sleep with the lights on

alright

Minor Embellishments

Can memories be embellished, elaborated
painted pink, doused in fantasy, dipped in inspiration
can we put down the yardstick of true/not true

valid/not valid, happened/never happened
and simply change what didn't work
what caused pain, precluded possibilities

adding a few i's, crossing out a few t's
substituting a word or two
or perhaps an entire chapter
does it matter?

as for me, I'm nostalgic for moments in others' lives
for a past not exactly mine
a Fulbright to London to study Monetary Economics

(I who can barely add and panic on planes)
a trek up Kilimanjaro, reaching the summit
as the sun glints off blue-white glaciers

(totally nauseous at high altitudes)
a famous chef at a five star restaurant
people traveling for miles to taste my minced moose

with marmalade, my ten layer coconut cake
laced with absinthe and apple sauce
(I eat only take out Chinese and frozen pizza)

moments stitched together to form a life never lived
a life so perfect, so satisfying
even though not exactly mine
not exactly

does it matter?

Claire Scott is an award winning poet who has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Healing Muse* and *Vine Leaves Literary Journal* among others. Her first book of poetry, *Waiting to be Called*, was published in 2015. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.