

## 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*.