

Rebekah Keaton – Two Poems

Coal

Dark this thing between us,
warm ash caressing our lungs, long after
fathers, uncles, grandfathers rose up
from the earth's cold embrace.

When young, my brothers and I donned hard hats,
hid the rich treasure in secret places—
under toys, under laundry.
We knew the possibility: coal if compressed
makes a diamond. If one is patient.

We squabbled over who would be the mine's superintendent.
The youngest, I coveted this position.
My father's father only had an eighth grade education.
He worked up the ranks, and held this job, so I knew,
despite what my brothers said, it was possible.

Now, we live far removed
from the mine that produced this coal.
We rarely get our hands dirty,
but these lumps we keep on shelf or desk
leave a fine silica dust on us nonetheless.

I pick it up, feel its weight:
dense, cold and black. I see it sparkle
with all its possibilities, born on the backs
of those who loved us and bore these burdens out.

Here, look at your hands: they glow like firelight.

Last Call is Wafer Thin

The failed practice, your ex-wife's
imaginary lover, the girl who filed
a restraining order when you would not stop
replying to her 3AM texts, and, certainly,
even the tax man, are not God's stewards.

You must understand: no one calls you
out of the shadows, piling disappointment
with sharp exactitude upon your body.

Still, you are afraid to sleep.
In the shuttered room, the tumor grows,
bursts through the pulled skin.
What the nurse calls frank, fresh blood
spreads across pure white bone of the clavicle:
your body a hothouse stem.

Parched. Lips crack. I offer the cup.
Try, I say. You deny it,
preferring, perhaps, the last sweet bouquet
of a forbidden fruit.

You hold it, aloof, in the mouth.
Crisp, fragrant, dissolving proof.

Rebekah Keaton's poetry has appeared in various journals, including *PoemMemoirStory*, *New Plains Review*, *Rust + Moth*, *Blueline*, and *The Stonecoast Review*. She earned her Ph.D. in English from Michigan State University and is associate professor of English at Niagara County Community College, just outside of Niagara Falls. She lives in Buffalo, NY with her husband and twin boys.