

Two Poems by Martha Modena Vertreace

Back Porch Haircut: Pantoum

“Surgeons in Russia removed a fir sapling from a man’s lung.”

-Harper’s Magazine

Sky-covered kitchen: cabinet-filled sky –
as the western sun,
harvest light,
glazes the kitchen window, now a two-way mirror.

Over you, the western sun; behind me, white walls.
You stand in milkweed, sunflowers, yellowtails, monarchs
snag scraps of your hair as you trim it.
Cabinets, stove, refrigerator hold me
as your fingers ruffle the grey-blond curls,

scraps of hair which yield
to your grandfather’s scissors, razor thinners.

Grey-blond curls which sprout as fast as new seeds
inside the man in the article you show me

before your scissors, razor thinners start working–
the man grows a two-inch spruce lung.
You think the man inhaled the seed
which found light, heat, water within him

In your lung, no two-inch spruce pulls you
to breathe in fir, father a tree,
to claim an evergreen’s share of heat, light, water
while our faces meld in twilit air.

On second thought, breathe in fir, tree-father!
Harvest light; shed the hay of your hair
while our faces meld in twilit air:
sky-covered kitchen; cabinet-filled sky.

-Martha Modena Vertreace

Cat Ice

“Not your father’s moon,”
a scientist tells the news;
and another, “ Indeed, yes, we found water”
when satellite LCross plunged into the darkness
of crater Cabeus two miles deep;
dug up 26 gallons. Ice

in the form of color changes, not icicles,
after the crash. “Wavelengths of light,” the moon’s
fancy wrapping for deep
secrets---the newspaper’s rendering of lunar dark ---
what happens when water

molecules glow like some salt water
bottom fish. At first what seems like cat ice
on the poles, endless dark
a likely suspect for hiding the moon’s

fragile covering. The evening newscaster
frames more questions, deep

into signs and wonders, deeper
even into watershed
daydreams, nightmares, the six o’clock news
headlined with explorers icebound
in a pockmark---the moonscape’s
full of them---darkness

as unforgiving as black ice on dark
streets. What if such deep
larders can hold---not give---what the moon
stores? The discovery of frozen water,
undisturbed footprints, unyielding ice.
But this is not new,

not even old news,
whatever else it may be under darkened

skies. The trick's in the bag when ice
melts, leaving a deep
acceptance of living water,
profound belief in the moon's

green cheese---probably deep
in the dark waters
of a new moonscape---for sure, not your father's

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