

Three Poems by Bernice Rendrick

Anise Seeds

On my evening walk
to the redwoods,
familiar oaks and pines
lean more this year over Ruins Creek.

The tall clump of anise
bends from recent rains.
I recall gritty seeds in my pockets
carried home for cookies other years.

Gray trees have lost leaves,
opened like shuttered windows
to new glimpses in the woods.

I don't go far,
turn back to our house
as I did for fifty years
and you'd be there or returning soon.

The day empties....
the chill of dusk descends,
a pink glow spreads in the sky.

I walk towards home,
cross by your *Liquidambar* tree
as the last leaves prepare to drop,
a flame over your ashes.

My wedding ring catches
the fading light.

Poem Written by Candlelight

Dark day of rain
following dark night of sleep
with intermittent napping--
as if to sleep for all the days and nights
I did not-- as if I've won the sleep lottery,
all machines also drowsing,
the washer, the radio
silenced by wind and rainstorm
until the unexpected event of quiet
descends, thick as fog along the beach.
Sleep for all the mornings I wanted
to return to the dreams, sleep for the nights
of anxiety when it eluded me before medical tests.
Sleep for the times of my daughter's illnesses
when I stayed stark awake.
At five, I drift into winter dark sleep,
dream the rumble of the PG&E truck
but no blinking eyes wake
so I slumber and snooze, hear the hiss,
see pale yellow light from Bob's lantern.
At eleven I get up and brush my teeth,
sleep again for all the cancer concerns
of family and friends, sleep for the irreplaceable
loss
when Amanda died before her time
and for every brain-starved emergency
weathered through. I withdraw into sleep
for the pain-wracked nights I rolled on the floor

not knowing the symptoms of gallstones,
terrified, convinced I was dying. More healing
sleep for the cracked sternum after the accident.
Heavy lids send me into a deep trance. I rest
for the late hour holiday cooking
and making love at two a .m.
I sleep because tomorrow I'll need it
to take a bath in a cup of water,
to make dog food from soggy meat and
tepid bones in the refrigerator. I want
sleep for the storms hovering, yet to come,
sleep to bless the bars of satin light
that prod us into another morning.

Falling in the Garden After Watching the 2012 Olympics

for Gabrielle Douglas

I stretched, bent across clay pots
the way Gabby had done her routine--
reached toward the clump
of oregano I wanted to snip.

From the balance beam of good intention,
I tumbled on hands, knees and a thigh--
took a tomato plant in a tub with me
onto the lemon balm, mint and rosemary tangle.

An aromatic cloud rose
as if I'd been sprayed by a giant atomizer--
basil floated around my face, penny royal
blended with a splash of rose.

I waited in the scented air
for the warning throb of pain,
a sharp stab of splintered bone,
for shock to subside.

Sprawling on the thick carpet,
thorn blood decorated my arm.
I still clutched a paring knife,
a herb bouquet.

I tend to blame the gophers
for that row of pots
where beans and peppers are safe.
My share of the small harvest.

No fractures or broken bones
thanks to layers of soft leaves.
I felt blessed, caught
in the garden's net again.

Bernice Rendrick attends The Poetry Circle at the
Scotts Valley library and is also a member of Poetry
Santa Cruz and Front Street Poets. She has
published recently in *RED Wheelbarrow* and *C.Q.*
and is included in the forthcoming *Widow's
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