

Susannah W. Simpson

Tricycle

There is a picture of us; I am three and you,
with your hair already thinning, are bent over
my tricycle. We are oiling the pedals and bent
over the same way, hands on knees as we
watch the pedals spin. It was always the same,
you working, me standing close enough
to hand you tools, while my brother read MAD
magazine or listened to his *Moody Blues*.
He never asked how to string a plumb line
or what "to shim" meant. So, when I bought
my first home, paying \$100.00 a month
for #63 Airstream in Trailerama,
You sent money for Christmas:
"Get an electric drill with a sanding attachment."
Now, my step-sons lose my ball peen hammer,
break off the tip of my flat head
into the wheels of their skateboard,
and leave the can of WD 40
to rust in the driveway.
Still, I long for a daughter who loves the smell
of sawdust, admires the golden curl
of wood shavings, and can drive a nail
into an oak plank in three strokes.

Reprise

He remembers the press of my young thigh
against his cheek, remembers the scent
of my bed and the sounds of my sighs.
He recalls the curve of my hip clad
in black satin and remembers a halo
of my hair under lamplight. He translates
the song of the dragonfly, whale, and bee
and reorders the architecture of clouds
above me. His kiss, like the razor-ed edge
of a palm leaf, draws dark blood from my lip,
and his tongue inhabits shower droplets
as they slip between the folds of my skin.
He is the bougainvillea's purple pigment
and his absence is the surprising
prick of its thorn. His hand is the wind
rippling green water; he is North Star,
sextant, spyglass, oarlock and rudder.
In his wake, cataclysmic waves capsize,
beach, this vessel.

Southern Honey

They drive out past cowbirds in cane fields,
white puffs against coal black soil.
They follow along a forest of electrical towers,
the Iron Giants, and pass an elaborate radio transmitter
that send signals to Venus, the planet of love.

In the autumn--- he introduces her to bees
that visit the Florida holly——tells her their honey
is pale green. He tells her summer bees turn
their backs to the hive, fanning their wings
to cool the queen.
He tells her melaleuca honey
is only Baker's grade and a teaspoon
of wild honey will cure her.

He takes her to a manatee cove
where silver piers stretch into Okeechobee's water
and she collects lotus pods washed
onto broken rocks. He spins tales of rattlers
under the porch, of anacondas in the cypress,
and how as a boy, he floated past sundown, floated
out into the Atlantic on ink black waves.

Susannah W. Simpson's work has been published in: *The North American Review*, *The Wisconsin Review*, *South Carolina Review*, *Potomac*, *POET*, *Nimrod International*, *Poet Lore*, *Salamander*, and *Xavier Review* among others. Her poem "Lily" was anthologized in *Full Moon & Foxglove* by Three Drops Press, UK. Her first book: *Geography of Love & Exile* was published by Cervena Barva Press (Somerset, MA.) December 2, 2016