

Two Poems by Linda Scheller

August Pfleger

Cupping the match flare,
he lowers his face to the flame,
guiding the cigarette with a toss
of his jaw upward like a horse
testing the reins. Leaning
on the smooth wooden handle,
he studies the sky, calculating
the angle and force of autumn.

October in Niederkirchen
meant new beer, bratwurst,
sauerkraut, mustard, singing
and schnapps, dancing with girls
wearing dirndls, their braids flying
as they spun like colorful leaves,
whirling to fast accordion music.

Tonight when the field is raked,
the cows milked, the horse fed
and bedded with clean straw,
he will take down the concertina,
sit on the back step and play
the old songs to the same stars
seen by his family back home.

A Matter of Birthright

Heaven blessed them with a son, God's best gift,
Elevating the second over the first, a mere girl.

In her hands, a tray. He sits between their parents
Served by her, balancing bowls of lentils and *rotkraut*.

Just like his father and grandfather, he is the rock
Adam made innocent, oblivious. Pronouns shimmer.
Children learn their value early. Strangled by
Old appliance cords and tightly knotted aprons,
Brittle magic writhes like smoke inside her skull.

Invasive species, she is borrowed, temporary, a rib.

Ash and gasoline make her bed, while her brother
Moves to the music of yellow light and numbers.

Eve's descendants bleed in penance, they tell her.
Silence is the shadow cast by sin. Apple peelings
Augur domesticity, initialing her destined lord,
Unknown but inevitable as the waning of life.

Linda Scheller is a poet, playwright, actor, and teacher living in California's Central Valley. She serves on the board of the Modesto Stanislaus Poetry Center. Recent publication credits include Slipstream, Steam Ticket, and Santa Fe Literary Review. Her first book of poetry, *Fierce Light*, will be published in early 2017 by FutureCycle Press.