

Three Poems by Loretta Diane Walker

Ode to a Skinny Wondering Muse

Polymnia, a daughter of Zeus, presided over lyric poetry, and was believed to have invented the lyre
—*Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology*

How can such a scrawny gypsy
fill the white emptiness of the page,
feed the hungry margins a poem?

Oh wandering sister, you are not *Polymnia*.
There is elegance in the way you trap
stars in your tangled tresses,
grace when you balance your gaunt feet
on Saturn's moons.
Loveliness in your night-colored eyes.

Free the tattered clothes from your shoulders,
dip yourself in the sky's milky river.
Let the earth feed you the unknown, the unseen,
the unspoken words she swallowed in the beginning.

Seven Wednesdays

Seven Wednesdays have passed.
She is with me, still—
shuffled between three homes.

Night she asks for Mommy.
Morning she asks for the same.
Afternoon she wants baby brother
but he is in heaven sleeping with Jesus.

Stability walks a tightrope as we wait
for the government to draw a conclusion.

They ripped her from the arms
of love to keep her safe?
Fear of abandonment knots
her three-year old fingers and she says,

Sing with me.

We croon cocooned in lilac sheets.
My voice cracks under the weight of her tears.

Lessons From Night's Visit

night
walked and
jumped

moved with
an unexpected yearning to
sit at a table with my family

on the table's surface
a freshly
cooked meal

night gathered around me
our hands folded on top of our heads
a vocabulary for friendship

I've learned
what it means to be
family

a year
contains a lot of contradictions
strengthens in new ways

climbing
is a confrontation of morality and an
adventure that makes me feel

I've learned *that grass
smells great and wind feels
amazing and rain is a miracle*

earth,
a swirl of chaos and conflict,
is beautiful

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Loretta Diane Walker, a multiple Pushcart Nominee, and Best of the Net Nominee, won the 2016 Phyllis Wheatley Book Award for poetry, for her collection, *In This House* (Bluelight Press). Loretta was named "Statesman in the Arts" by the Heritage Council of Odessa. In December 2016 she had the rare opportunity to be the commencement speaker for the University of Texas at the Permian Basin. Loretta was honored to be the featured poet in February 2017 for *Red River Review*. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies including, *River of Earth and Sky*, *Her Texas*, *Carrying the Branch: Peace Poems!*, *Bearing the Mask: Personal Poems of the Southwest*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Illya's Honey*, *Red River Review*, and *Concho River Review*. She has published four collections of poetry. Her most recent collection is *Desert Light*, Lamar University Press. Her manuscript *Word Ghetto* won the 2011 *Bluelight Press Book Award*. Naomi Shihab Nye states, "Loretta Diane Walker writes with compassionate wisdom and insight—her poems restore humanity."