

## **Ellen Dookling Reynard – Three Poems**

### **The Gate**

You used to be the guardian—  
no one could pass except through you.  
On either side, the pole fence  
repeated your message:  
only he who has the key  
may enter here.

Little by little the fence drooped,  
then fell, unable to bear  
the weight of its responsibility.  
Then, you stood alone.

At first you relished the freedom,  
you were happy to stand, straight and tall.  
You thought nothing was as fine,  
as sublime, as you.

But then deer and foxes walked  
around you with no respect,  
men and women laughed  
at your pretense, saying,  
"who needs a gate without a fence?"

You sagged on your frame,  
the cold wind blew you open  
so all might enter,  
even he who had no key.

### **Moods of the Sea**

watch out tonight  
for the wind-whipped  
surge that can snap  
the most resilient reed  
and sculpt the hardest stone,

and beware the seeming  
innocence of the ebb  
when it vanishes beneath  
the surface, gains force

and sucks the unwary  
out to the depths.

you wander down from the dry  
heights to better hear the tide's  
crash and sigh

repeat,  
repeat.

your bare toes curl  
where soft dry sand  
gives way to hard wet cold.

a wave rears up  
from the gloom  
and rocks you back  
onto your heels.

water rises to your shins  
as it rushes past,  
then slows,

spent,  
flows

back down to where you stand,  
peels sand from beneath  
your feet,

and pulls you headlong toward  
the deep cold cauldron  
invisible in the briny gloom.

turn your back, yank yourself  
away from this sinister invitation  
and stumble up to safety, dry sand.

the thump, thump of your heart,  
syncopated beats to the tide's  
crash and sigh,

repeat,  
repeat...

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morning sun glimmers  
over moving currents  
gentle now after last night's fury.

wavelets spill over each other

bubbles rise and fall  
soft as the breath  
of a sandpiper.

to gauge the ocean's mood  
you dip one foot into the water  
then step in, both feet—  
silver minnows tickle your ankles.

the water licks your shins  
and does not disturb the sand  
beneath your feet.

look out to the horizon  
where a dolphin breaks the surface,  
where the sky shines into the sea,  
where the sea shines into the sky.

breathe with the singing surf,  
your heartbeats in sync  
with the tide's  
whispered  
    repeat,  
        repeat...

## **Unheard Symphony**

I walk the pathway, believing all  
is silent, but I'm as deaf  
as stone in my stupor, numb  
to the breezes that hum a song  
to my muffled ears.

So I do not hear  
the symphony of birdsong  
before the air splits  
with the whine of a chainsaw,  
jolting me out of my so-called silence.

When the clamor calms  
the bird chorus emerges  
in the midst of a phrase  
from deep within the forest.

My mind stills, spellbound  
to hear, in a two-beat rest,  
the solo call of a single cicada  
searching for a comrade's response.

Is there such a thing as silence?

Ellen Dooling Reynard spent her childhood on a cattle ranch in Montana. Raised on myths and fairy tales, the sense of wonder has never left her. A one-time editor of *Parabola Magazine*, her chapbook, *No Batteries Required*, was published in April 2021 by Yellow Arrow Publishing. Her poetry has also been published by *Lighten Up On Line*, *Persimmon*, *Silver Blade*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, and *Muddy River Poetry Review*. Now retired, she lives in Clarksville, Maryland where she is working on a series of ekphrastic poems based on the work of her late husband, the French painter Paul Reynard (1927-2005).