

## Linda Shere – Three Poems

### The Receivership of Hopelessness

When I was nine, we went to  
the Lake Mahopac fireman's fair;  
a small, stuttering Ferris wheel  
drab in the sunlight,  
cheap kiddie rides,  
an arcade with leaning walls  
of bright neon stuffed animals.  
My dad had taught me to shoot.  
"Aim, don't breathe, shoot."  
The metallic slap of the ducks--  
"Folks, we have a winner!  
Choose your prize little lady,"  
handing me a big, bright turquoise bear  
--but it was just about the shooting--  
that I then left leaning  
on the cotton candy machine;  
warm eddies of blue sugar.  
We stayed till dark and the fireworks.  
The Ferris wheel lights didn't come on--  
a dim circle that eclipsed the night,  
the cars swaying with cries.  
I remember wanting to go home,  
my lips blue and sticky.

My grandmother rarely went anywhere,  
staying home, waiting for the sound  
of our cars on the gravel.  
When my grandfather won an award,  
one of many, to be given at a special dinner,  
she'd reluctantly dress up; fumbling  
to get into her sky blue silk dress.  
Beads that shone in the candlelight,  
eating only a piece of rye toast  
with a slice of cheese.  
She never ate cake.  
I think she would be surprised,  
maybe pleased to know, that later,  
I took her name.  
And wonder, where in her,  
in that submerged identity of  
a sustained hopelessness,  
I would find aim.

## Last Days of Sailing

He and I went sailing  
around Madeline Islands,  
on one of the last days,  
one of only a few on the choppy water,  
cold, the wind good.  
The shore coming and going.  
Oh, it was good sailing.  
In the early dark of October,  
we hoisted the boat out of the water,  
cradled in its sling –  
the lake instantly  
closing around its absence.  
The weight of displacement  
equal to the loss dripping  
from the wet hull. As we...

I remember it being so easy--  
seduction on thin blue stationary;  
*Dear, I am writing to you from  
Nepal, from a café in Florence,  
I'm in Paris for a few days.  
Let's go sailing next week.  
I'll be back.*

I could see in my kitchen  
the days ahead;  
of little girls who made  
the earth small and lush,  
sweet at night. The quiet  
disintegration of floor boards,  
rotting with each word.  
Deceits planned  
for the middle of the day.  
promises in the dark--  
before the bitter rind of dawn.  
Closely guarded memories  
wrenched from their berths.  
In the cloister of my motherhood  
regrets in the margins. I didn't  
count on the sorrow,  
lasting.

## In the Peach Orchard

Awake now too, he turned to ask,  
Do you want to talk about it?  
Do you want to have sex?  
trying to not sound hopeful.  
Yes and no to both,  
knowing either one  
would end the possibility of the other.  
I went to sit outside for a bit.  
I sat on the bench near the rows of  
peach trees we had just planted.  
Their thin trunks wrapped in burlap,  
the curved leaves shadowed  
arcs on the wet grass.  
He had looked good planting them,  
strong and tender.  
He looked good now coming to  
sit beside me.  
Is it about your show he asked?  
The work is good you know,  
stop worrying and come inside.  
Whatever attraction I might have felt, fading.  
This was somewhere he could not go.  
I would not let him.  
I was painting Joan of Arc;  
a sad strong lonely journey.  
A one woman show.  
I had even given her a hawk for company.  
On the night before battle she is said to  
have told her men; stay close,  
I will need you in the morning--  
many of whom hurrying into battle  
would sleep their last that night.  
Someone played a quiet fiddle.  
The corralled horses nervous.  
Armor ready.  
I don't know what isn't in vain  
if everything is.  
I don't know what art is  
if everything is.  
I imagine her hawk in his belled helmet  
feeling her tremble,  
muscle and sinew thinking it time for flight,  
dancing on her arm,  
claws into the leather gauntlet.

**Linda Shere** was born and raised in NYC, now living in Vermont. Most of her life has been as a working visual artist and began to seriously write about eight years ago. She is a two-time Bread Loaf poet, 2018, 2019 and the recipient of a Vermont Studio Center fellowship in poetry, 2016. Currently, and for the last twelve years, She is an adjunct professor teaching Storytelling, the Media and drawing. She has four grown daughters. She wakes up some mornings wanting city streets and museums.