

Sandra Fees – Two Poems

Cutting Hair

I trim his hair on the back porch.
We argue. Couples do.
We put down the thread,

pick up another.
He hands me the clippers
with attachments, first for the neck,

then the temples as I twine my fingers
against the warm cowlicky scalp of him
before scissoring the top.

As if cutting a glossy picture
from a magazine, I snip around the ears
which I've saved for last

remembering it's the trickiest spot
where my father said the hair
tickled and poked.

I look down to find my hands
older but not wiser,
the end nearer now

than the beginning
and we more like our parents
than the young lovers

we imagine ourselves.
Silvery-white clumps form
a field of goose down at our feet.

I sweep the remains into the yard.
My face flushes, tinged with what
happiness looks like.

Autumn Ritual

I weary of fixing things, replacing
what can't be fixed, hair dryers,

laptops, chipped porcelain, the drawerful
of eyeglasses with expired prescription

lenses, a box of defunct cell phones
in the closet. The big appliances

break down all at once. Even the heart
breaks in tandem with the cracked

carburetor alongside an exploding star.
I try to make what's already spent last

like my favorite jacket that won't zipper.
The last layers of amber and vermilion

leaves softened by rain spill into the street
like fragments of last night's dream, a car

moving in reverse no matter how hard
I press the brakes. I tug the zipper

though I know it's hopeless, press the brakes.
No one else wants the tattered or stuck.

Even Good Will doesn't want the half-assed,
the tarnished or cracked. Even God thinks

twice. Yet I've noticed that when it comes
to love there's no dividing the whole.

The river birch stripped to bone, not
broken but revealed, a season of turning,

a purpose. This, a time to listen, to lift
the foot from the pedal – and coast.

Sandra Fees is the author of *The Temporary Vase of Hands* (Finishing Line Press, 2017) and served a term as Berks County, Pennsylvania, Poet Laureate (2016-2018). Her work has recently appeared in *The Blue Nib*, *Kissing Dynamite*, and *Sky Island Journal* and is forthcoming in *Dodging the Rain*.