

Susana Gonzales – Two Poems

Scarecrow to Dorothy: What have you learned Dorothy?

Alone. Dog long dead.
Uncle Henry a memory and Auntie Em
secured in an old folks' home.
Does she dream in color?
Does she watch the skies?
Does she pay closer attention than most to the weather report?

Her only real hope in that dusty Kansas town
would be to marry.
Become a lawyer?
She certainly had a grasp of *quid pro quo*.
And eye for an eye. A broomstick for a wish.

What have you learned Dorothy?

It takes courage to live in the mundane,
a sepia-tint town comprised of daybreak,
sunset, and the plodding
existence that occurs in between.
It takes heart to go on
once you find there's nothing
in the Wizard's Bag for you.

Look around, Dorothy.
This is all there is. If ever there was a time
you needed brains, heart, and courage,
now is that time.
To accept that tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
holds only memories
and farm chores.

Grandma Worked the Fish Cannery

Grandma too, rose before dawn
along with hundreds of women
who worked the canneries. Ladies
uniformed, crisp nurse caps
rode the ferry in the dark
to the island terminal
chattering, giggling, enjoying.

What can be enjoyable
at four in the morning?
What can be pleasant
about raw sardines anchovies tuna
clattering clanging down
chutes carrying cans
to the ovens?
What can bring joy to workers
like these who smile
slicing gutting squishing out
innards, the skeletons;
what indeed can bring
Grandma satisfaction
amongst this putrefied stink
that got locked into the delicate
filigree of her wedding band?
Her skin left that smell
long after she left a room
and I breathed Grandma in
deeply, deeply.

When the cannery horn blasts
the silent night like an air raid siren,
calling the women back to their work,
it means sardine season and overtime.

So quietly she pads about the kitchen
tying up the laces of her Nurse Mates;
flecks of fish linger, like forgotten despair,
beneath layers of thick shoe polish.

I see her now walking with dignity
the six blocks to meet the ferry;
picking up yesterday's chatter
together with those hundreds
of white starched women
gathering, cleaning, preparing
the food they feed themselves.

Susana Gonzales is an emerging poet who focuses on how the political is linked tightly to her personal experiences as a Mexican American lesbian feminist. Raised in the Air Force, she has grown to see the world through multiple lenses. She lives in southern California with her partner Suzanne and German Shepherd, Kennedy. She has been published in *Poetica Review*, *Drunk Monkeys*, *The Santa Fe Literary Review* and the upcoming edition of *Sheila Na Gig*.