

Sylvia Freeman – Two Poems

Fort Sill, Oklahoma

While he was out shooting moving targets
playing war games with the army

I in my seventh month fought an Oklahoma wind
that ripped across a treeless landscape
whipping wet sheets like winding cloths around me
as I struggled to pin them to a swaying clothesline

Day after day strong gusts pushed me pulled me
blew me in every direction but home
wind's shrill voice always in my ears
never-ending rumble of distant gunfire

Night after night televised images of Vietnam
raging angry protests in every American city
nineteen years old missing my mother my sisters
living someone else's dreams

What did I know of birth
or even how to hold a newborn child
while holding back the wind invisible frantic

Trapped

for Kathy Anne

I was in the back yard digging holes
filling them with water squishing mud
making little round pies pushing sticks deep
into earth watching them disappear

Mama and her sister were inside
holding hands on the sofa
faces pale ears close to the radio
They said you were running across a field
in San Marino fell through
a fourteen-inch-wide shaft into an old well
They were teary eyed telling it
hugged me tighter than usual

I was about your age
measured the distance with my hands

wondered if I could fit into such a small space
wondered what it would be like to fall
a long way down with a mouthful of dirt and fear

My brother said I'd just keep sliding
all the way to China learn to speak Chinese
unless there was a ledge then I'd end up like you
surrounded by midnight slick walls smelling of mold
spiders all around maybe even snakes
shiny and slimy like the inside of the well

That was years ago
I haven't forgotten you Kathy Anne
how terrified you must have been
how you must have cried out for your mother
heard her frantic calls bone jarring sound of drills
shovels jabbing into rocky soil digging
digging deeper ever deeper to reach you

I never again walked on those splintered planks
covering the old well where I used to play
but sometimes still stop beside it lie on the grass
peek through the cracks imagine the girl you were
If we'd been friends I would have followed you
run joyfully through the field with you now
trapped waiting in darkness

waiting

Sylvia Freeman lives in North Carolina. Her poems have been published in *Story South*, *Galway Review*, *Carolina Woman*, *Women speak* and other anthologies. She's a Randall Jarrell poetry prize winner for NCWN, a photographer and yoga instructor.