

Wax Nostalgic

Mom knew I faked the Chicken Pox
but still got out the 'Poorly Box'
a tin of puzzles toys and comic books.
Best of all, that flip top pack
(built-in sharpener on the back)
sixty-four pristine Crayola crayons.
Waxy ammo in neat rows
poised to strike at paper foes
cross inked borders and obliterate.

I sketched burnt sienna battle scenes
of searing white-hot laser beams
blasting blue cadet and Prussian too.
Made magenta hover planes
drop black bombs, bash melon brains
shoot silver rockets blowing mulberry fire.
When the yellows turned to run
I drew a lime-green Gatling gun
rent lemon flesh, slew quaking dandelion.

For endless hours the carnage raged
'till nearly every single page
was covered with explosions, flame and gore.
Red and orange took the brunt
sharp points ground to shiny stumps
broken nubs held by tattered sleeves.
Then purple night began to fall
the able-bodied list was small
the ranks reduced to maize and periwinkle.

My violet madness waned at last
(bedtime was approaching fast)
I began to put the crumpled crayons away.
But one remaining sheet lay bare
and so with multi-colored fingered care
I traced a pair of tan and turquoise hands.
They grasped a lavender bouquet
and underneath this floral spray
four golden-lettered words—
I love you Mom.

Poor Tax

Slumped in her kitchen, tongue
sliced by bitter envelopes—
rent, utilities—she counts apple-green
tickets bought every month since
her boy was born, twenty-three
so far; his scrape-off future.

She scratched on once,
before his father left—
Free Ticket—never again tried;
vowed to save them all until
her boy starts school, buy him
name brand shoes.

Small fingers grasp burlled curtains.
She lifts him to see wonder—
snowflakes quelling hunger.

Tomorrow: *Power Ball*
hits two-hundred million.

II. A Loving Son

Sleep clings to you through this night.
You exhale shallow, stained breath
offering a delicate choice—the neat seam
stitch on the edge of a cushion.

Many loving sons would cling to a half-light world
where mothers and children dream but never grow.
The dreamers burrow down into a dark womb
where one thing becomes everything.

Any loving son would not hesitate.
I cross to the bed, press down
on the pillow, fingers crushing
yellowed lace. You breathe—yes.

III. Second Show

A respirator eased Mum's breath--
oxygen-fueled dreams:

Granddad slips in, lifts his child
from bed, her arms wrap his neck--
they both float out the window
into a Yorkshire sky long past
yesterday. He whispers: *look up*.

Winter-blue and green
conjure stars:

the Aurora Borealis pulses fire
in her tired brain. Memory ribbons
in gas light, a street lamp's glow
Withernsea, home-base for tag,
wicket for a twilight cricket game.

Christmas garlands
shape-shift, flame,

the London blitz; a young nurse,
she tends the wounded. The Aurora
flickers, a spiral theatre, a staircase,
she climbs with her dad, hand in hand,
up narrowing steps to the top,

the penny seats above the balcony.

Five for Kelda

Closure

Childhood is buried in a shoe-box among poplars,
a shadow split by blacktop. Beneath the highway,
under a razed roof, we grew--mismatched
shingles caulked together with tar.

Now commuters rabbit to a dead-stop, grid-locked
in our old kitchen. Strewn along a thousand yards
of tarmac: white papers, sprung briefcase, crushed
no-spill mug. In the center lane, a vehicle rests

on its roof. Before impact, before horn blast, glass
shatter--did they smell coffee? Beyond the siren,
the lights, the ambulance-stare: an emergency curtain.
Dangling between a hatch-back and the breakfast nook,

arms splayed out: a static hallelujah on the verge.