

Mary Anne

Erin Fine

POETRY, 1ST PLACE (Grades 10-12)

Her brother's son had rolled in with the rippling haunches
Of the cattle to their bedding that evening.
He wasn't ready, limbs all splayed inside her,
But the rumble spreading across the earth brought him anyways.
Mary Anne screamed as his son arrived, and I could only grip her hand
As her brother said she bellowed like a heffer.

And all that remains is the fear of watching a mother, my lover,
Watching her calf stare down a bolt,
Seeping into the bedsheets.

It's those bedsheets I saw her through,
Too sheer to give any warmth,
But Mary Anne's face was visible through the wet gossamer
As she left them on the line.

What could I do but approach,
Again and again,
With firewood, my hunting catch, or some other excuse under my arm?
When looks through the thin sheets became quiet hands
Became deafening moments of quiet with my head against her chest.

That steady beating
That only sped when I held her
Is gone now,
Away with her sheets
Thrown in the stove.

I learned from his son that skin tears easily
Like it can't wait to escape the bones that hold it down.
He hasn't moved, just at the table with a weeping bottle in his hand.

And I am behind him, and then only the rust in my cuticles remains,
Nails in their beds, that even scrub after scrub after scrub cannot coax out.
I wait under the water from the faucet until my hands feel as cold as hers,
And I cannot tell a difference when I hold hers for the last time.
Or the ones I left at the table.

Tomorrow's Sunday comes before I can brace,
God's morning rays scorning my cheek
And her brother's son against my hip.

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She wants to become a professional journalist and photographer with a personal
focus in creative writing.*