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POETRY BY ANN E. MICHAEL

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Good Friday

Forsythia had just begun blooming
and, along the road, coltsfoot,
yellow in the sunlight, and it was
a clear day, the street was dry
so there was nothing inevitable
in the momentum of a small
sedan traveling east on a back road.
The driverâ€”it was only
10 a.m., had she been drinking?â€”
took that curve too fast,
overcompensated the turn, braked
too hard on the gravel embankment.
Slid, rolled.

Jumped the shoulder,
stopped by the trunk
of a 20-year-old hickory which bears,
now, a cambium-layer scar.

Thereâ€”where the bank is steep,
rocky with that runoff stream
splattering behind it and between
pellets of bluish safety glass
sifting through bouldersâ€”
bloodroot opens its white blossoms,
its leaves like crushed fists pierced
through their centers by a stem.

Campbell Hall, NY: 1961

Inside the white-steepled, cedar-shake church
empty of congregants after Sunday communion,

I sat on the polished pew and swung my legs,
my dress shoes too far from the floor to scuff.

My mother had gone home, across the driveway.
I watched my father open the door to the ambry

and replace the folded vestments, satin, tasseled.
A glass-doored cupboard held Communion vessels

gold in the gold light through the clerestories.
I was thinking, probably, of strawberries

and powdered sugar and the pink stain on my pale blue dress.
I was thinking, perhaps, of birds' nests

and whether or not the barn swallows in the steeple eaves
had hatched out their new brood.

I was thinking so diligently I made no sound and,
being small in the tall-backed pew, I was invisible.

I heard the scree and shudder of brass hinges,
the heavy doors' baritone—amen—in closure.

Dust quivered silver in the still nave air: forgotten.

Pastorale with Dishes

Beneath Beethoven's Sixth
I hear you in the kitchen,
the klaxon of flatware
as you sort knives from forks,
shuttle spoons into their
molded slot in the drawer.

I recognize the creaking
of the glassware-cabinet door
while cellos glide over
another familiar phrase;
I recognize my familiarity
with those shelves, cups,
plates and butter knives—

the routine we exercise daily
between the breakfast oatmeal
and the last light snapped out
each night, the promises
we try to keep as the commonplace
collides with the exquisite—
plates rattled in the cupboard,
Beethoven's cuckoo calling, calling.

March Snow

The neighbor's sow got loose,
made her way over the stone fence
to root along the leafless thicket
edging our meadow.

The last snow's fallen.
The pig's chapped trotters
look painful, raw;
she leaves a trail of rounded Vs
in the damp, white layer.

We pity her bloodied feet.
Her teats drag along icy stubble,
she investigates cold mud.
We deem her neglected;
she eyes us without interest,

suspicious enough to spurn
our calls and our apples.
Evasive, she trundles
along the rubble wall.

On our patio, the snow
has already melted.
She stands there a moment,
peering at the cats:
a white pig.

On sore feet she treads
over rocks toward
our neighbor's barn.
Her tracks disappear in an hour,
along with the last, late snow.

Ann E. Michael is currently teaching English at DeSales University in Center Valley, PA. Her poems and prose have appeared in anthologies, magazines, newspapers and online sites. Her website is www.annemichael.com, where you can find information about her books and other publications.

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