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POETRY BY KATHRYN SCHIEF

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I pretend

I didn't
love him (I'm not stupid)

but

as abused women do, I saw a lovely side of him,
a secretive, hurt, endearing heart.

My friends hated him, of course—
he insulted fathers and the Ivy League,
his favorite anecdote told
of a child mercenary in Costa Rica:
gouge out your eyes for a quarter!

He proposed in a garage but the diamond was real.
On someone's sofa he spoke of growing things:
seed planting, house building. But—
was that death in his voice?

A week later the cop
who found him
called. Told
me how, not
why.

Elegy

I.
He had no land, no money.
He wanted to be a farmer.
A rich friend of his
gave a carriage house and field,
asked only for vegetables in tribute.
A fine place, refuge for a homeless soul.

I was to be his wife, having

no options in life.
I watched him from the window.
He dug holes, set poles
for greenhouses to make things grow.
The land resisted, stubborn
like everything he'd faced before.

My African violets died
in the shady carriage house.
Elsewhere, it was the 21st Century.

II.
His hands, rough as ever,
yank up my skirt.
In a past life, he sat cross-legged,
cobbler on a dirt road.
Now he growls, *You know you want it.*
I want to say, *I'm torn.*

III.
The last time I saw him
in that never quite home
he stood by the flamingos
(the one touch I'd added)
smiling at my camera
leaving behind his eyes.

Kathryn Schiff resides in the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts. Her work has been accepted by *Kalliope*, *Pank*, and *Drive By Poets*. She is currently an MFA student at Goddard College, where she is poetry editor of the Spring 2007 *Pitkin Review*.

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