

Three Poems by Laura Bayless

Washed Ashore

Brine-bleached logs and driftwood bundles
festooned with webs of snarled kelp
tossed ashore by winter storms
converge in scrambled compositions.
Gray stick forts built by beachcombers
invite entrance, shelter.

I commune with debris,
equivalent lifework wreckage,
stroll south in shifting sand,
leave deep footprints.

In shadowed alcoves
multi-colored pebbles find refuge
under sandstone bluffs
draped in dense robes
of sea fig and coreopsis.

I collect stones carefully –
brown, red, black-speckled,
polished and pitted,
one the jade green color
of breakers just before
they dissolve into crests of foam --
consider what I might leave behind
in the ebb and flow
along the arc of a coastal curve.

Beverly At the Garden of Memories

One cold and windy morning in April
my cousin comes home from Arizona
in a glossy cedar casket
to the bleak cemetery
across the street from the truck stop.

Only four of us come that day.
No one sits on the three benches
under the green canvas tent
meant to shelter a dozen mourners.

After we murmur a few
awkward words of goodbye,
the groundskeeper pulls away
the imitation grasscloth,
reveals the concrete-lined pit.

We stand, watch solemnly
while the coffin is lowered slowly,
tipping slightly, then straightening,
as if my cousin has turned over
in her sleep, a subtle thump
marking the end of her descent.

I pluck a white tulip from my bouquet
tied with white lace ribbon,
toss it onto the polished wood lid,
alongside the three white carnations
the others have already offered.

Across this cement-bordered sector
of the Garden of Memories
with its few trees and flat markers.
I locate the grave of my cousin's mother,
the aunt I most closely resemble,
imagine who will come someday
to cast a white flower in my name.

Something About the Wind

Across the sea
white-tipped waves
stream ashore.
Whisked froth shatters
against eroding bluffs,
recedes from rocky coves.

The hand of a stiff breeze
passes its cadence over the land.
Foxtails and oat grasses
pulse up a steep hillside meadow.

Along the ridge trail
warped cypress limbs sway,
twisted by years of resistance

to fierce ocean windstorms,
resilient trunks still rooted.

Cold gusts whip my hair
into my eyes, chafe my face.
The sting of the strong wind
wakes a tremor
of submerged grief.

Laura Bayless