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Three Poems

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Three Poems

Elizabeth Johnston

Dress Up

I try on a poem,
twirl it around—
ripple of murmurs, low whistles,
me, batting lashes:
“This old thing? I’ve had it for years.”

What is this we do?--
dragging worn and mothly musings from our closets,
shaking out confessions,
holding them to the mirror,
squeezing into them like truth and beauty,
as if they matter and have meaning--

parade of poems, just skin and bones
strutting down the catwalk
dressed up in dirty laundry.

Lost: Poem

“Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain” –Anne Bradstreet, “The Author to Her Book”

At the playground mothers
pass out sandwiches, lotion skin, wipe mouths.
I’ve written a new poem,
but seem to have misplaced my kids.
Cursing, I drop my pen, plan wringing of necks.
By the time I find them
(one yanking a toddler from a swing,
the other struggling out of her shorts),
my poem’s gone missing.

I want to cry, post on trees a sign:

Lost: Poem.

Last seen beneath the maple,
sun was setting just so.

A bit ill-formed, and rambling,
wearing mother’s heart on its sleeve,
tends to wander, answers to no one.

Reward: two kids.

Customer Service

Pack lunches, fold laundry, help with homework.

Wait your turn, I tell my poems,

noisy bunch

but they're impatient--

like customers in a returns line,

each clutching a package,

grumbling about the policy,

demanding to speak

to the person in charge.