

The Trunk of a Green Malibu
poems



Valerie Poulin

Also by Valerie Poulin

POETRY

Something to Hide
Brushing Back History

NON-FICTION

Seeking Representation: A Step-by-Step Guide to Finding a Talent Agent

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She takes a hammer. smashes her life. to smithereens. Cherilyn Sarkisian rocks on.

[After Stuart Ross
and following Larry Fagin's "Landscape"]

The bright green apple sails over the white fence.
It joins the other apples,
on their way down south for the winter;
having long outgrown the small running shoe
(and the field).
Neck ties turn to watch the apple pass.
Happy mice make themselves at home.
Her passport and boyfriend arrive.
They are cute, I pinch their little legs.
A rolled newspaper tossed on every doorstep.

After the rain, the wind died in front of him. It flowed down the river, upright. The turbulence showed the grass its seat, and even the book seemed greener than the shoes on his feet. He grabbed the sun on either side, directed the clouds to turn left, but the clouds landed, grey and deflated, in a yellow plastic pail. He clenched his teeth, looked for a way out. His feet, pressed to the ground, would shortly come-to.

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her kids eat plaster
no gyproc for them
(uh-unh)

they want to fill their bellies
with the real thing

so they chip pieces
from the growing
hole in the wall

cram chunks between chalky lips

the oldest pushes powdery flakes
into the baby's squawking jaw

when their father finds
all five hiding in the hole
he smacks them

one-by-one

with a belt, one-by-one they climb
to freedom

the children
follow their father

lick their dusty chops and wonder
at the banquet before them

they munch on brick and mortar

until the roof
surrenders

A nightmare:

the drum, strange, flat, and tiresome
screams and bumps
embraces dance
glorious and mad

it slows, broken
listless and serene

the drum worries, cries,
weds an axe

assumes silence.

Her knees looked
like freedom to him

he tumbled
from hands to knees
when
he finally managed
to right himself
he was courting
her feet

beauty did not take her where she wished to go

a cheating spouse, it stayed out late
returned home in the early hours

I dream of time
waiting for the alarm clock
to poke my shoulder

I swallow a decade of
diary entries
and when she opens
my mouth
bits of paper fly out

as the moon dissolves, I pick
at loose threads
until seams unfold

the sky dropped

rain filled her footsteps
heirlooms packed away
inside trunks
strangled by rope, and
dragged from land to land

beets for borscht
lie in wait, green leafs severed
and wilted from the rising heat
a fly buzzes against the glass tapping out
an S.O.S. before
dropping dead against the window's sill

she looks to her hands
a name on a certificate of birth
letters typewritten out of order

a child born the thirteenth day
of the thirteenth year

remembers a time
when

she pinched eggs from a neighbour's henhouse,
raced after the bell of an ice cream truck
to bargain an even trade

she remembers the day his best friend stuffed
a secret in her pocket, the colour
of his face as he pitched
a teakettle, the colour
of blisters as her skin
screamed

she remembers a time at a dance hall
when a companion pulled her close
cradled her worth

even
in the July heat, she shivers

in a neighbourhood of widows and orphans
in a home broken by birthmarks and skin colour
a rose, quieted

her skin works its way
loose in his hands
 unknotted by illusion
and biography

chaos theory against
brown limbs, palm pressed
to lifeline, knuckles deep
 against thigh

in the eve of an electrical storm
when everything looks better
in the fading light
 he leads her
to the edge of day

She grew up on Johnny Cash, Hank Williams
and Sunday morning coming down

He collects her stories
 holds them in his palm
 fingers them
smooth
he rubs away details
until they taste
like moss, or earth
 soaked by rain

she makes a wish
tucks it into his pocket
a conspiracy of silence
inside a crumpled dollar bill

she tells him how she wishes
to as beautiful as
 breath held

she wishes a poet might choose
the prettiest letters
set them in ink
for her

he rubs away details
fingers them smooth

by day, she is a dressmaker and housewife
career dragging on the heels of motherhood
by day he works construction, by night he pulls beer
they are both trying to make ends meet

You scoop the broken pieces off the sidewalk, wonder who
would leave such a thing of beauty curbside.

Its plump body fills your hands.

A porcelain vase, stamped with blue ink, unable to retain
its balance atop Tuesday's trash.

Tenderly, you carry home your treasure, glue the missing pieces in place; offer
her your gift.

You hold what remains and every time
you remember, you rewrite the details
in the shape of a vase.

He dragged the moon
across the stars
folded the wreckage into love letters.

He led her upstairs

lay her name between his hands
under the street lights

scratched a love note across his bed sheets.

In the morning he served her
cigarettes and toast
poured a cup of coffee and closed the door.

she gave her beauty
to bars
and strangers

packed away
what was left

 he drove off
with her suitcase
in the trunk of a green Malibu

About the author

Valerie Poulin is a highly functioning poet who crunches numbers at a Toronto talent agency and does what she can to avoid real work.



Her essentially small collection of poems *Something to Hide* was a Shaunt Basmajian Chapbook Award finalist, in 2003.

Ms. Poulin's book *Seeking Representation: A Step-by-Step Guide to Finding a Talent Agent (in Canada)*, is currently enjoying a return engagement, and its sixth year, at Toronto's TheatreBooks.