Joplin Rapture

May 23, 2011, 5:34 p.m.

Big Sister told her boys
tornadoes only touch down in trailer parks,
but did she see the cows that flew
or the eighteen-wheeler that steered across
the sky? I didn’t. From the clawfoot tub where
I lay, hunched over her newborn, I
saw nothing. But heard a freight train of wind,
 Crack of timber, screech of stone,
as their house funneled up, taking sister,
husband, their boys, leaving
me, leaving all behind,
 including this unnamed baby girl.

Princess Camp
In every story, my friend Joe Z says, there is at least one lie; and as I overhear someone in the Denver airport say she’s sending her eight-year-old to Princess Camp,

I think I’ve picked up the thread of one. Princess Camp: manicures, French braids, silver sandals, the British royal wave. I want to bolt from my vinyl seat and ask this mother: Why not Wonder Woman Camp? Bullet-proof bracelets, a lasso, amazing feats…. So where, you ask, is the lie? In the dreams of a parent crazed for her girl to inhabit the shiny kingdom she always lusted for. And the girl? Here she is, back from Starbucks with a bag of Kettle Chips. Her hair is cropped. She wears cargo shorts, dragon-tee, Nikes—compelling boy-girl, stalking proud, as if slung on her belt, she already wears the Lasso of Truth.

When Carlos Came into Class

He stopped and asked his pregnant teacher: Yo, Mrs. W, how’s the fetus doing today?

(This, the same sixteen-year-old who had told her to name the baby after him—boy or girl. No Carla, only Carlos.) Then, handing her a Tootsie Roll, he said, Hey… I always wanted to use fetus in a sentence.

Art Information

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A poem of hers from Field appeared in Pushcart Prize XXXI. Her chapbook Memos was published in 2015 by Omnidawn, and three of her memo poems [4] were in the Spring 2014 issue of Talking Writing. A poem from Memos also appeared in Best American Poetry 2015.

For more information, visit Susan Terris’s website [5].

Photo of Susan Terris by Margareta Mitchell.