

Weeding

by Star Coulbrooke

Weeding is my meditation, my therapy.

—Iris Nielsen

For the light blue mat of star flowers,
fragile-seeming, powder light,
I pull with all my energy—I pull for them.
I pull their tough entangled stems,
their sticky hairs all meshed together,
pulling them from mat on mat of partners
all in bloom, all blooming with these tender
stars, cloud-light and feather-soft, stars
that drop to dark earth as I pull, a patch
of soil now seeded with what must
come up again in season, so many of them,
like stars encrusting my home sky
out in farmland by the river where the Milky
Way encrusts the already-starful dark,
no lights to blot their separate blooms
all falling, falling like these blue star
flowers I hesitate to weed, these blooms
we call weeds, thick as stars.

The Badger

By Star Coulbrooke

Front leg caught in the jagged vise
of a spring-loaded trap,
the badger hisses, bares its teeth,
thick fur framing its blazing
black eyes and glossy snout.

Butch, the farm dog, springs
upon its muscled bulk.
They fight, the badger
dragging its trap, flailing,
teeth and claws ripping
a long liver-colored ear,

Butch yelping, re-grouping,
sinking his teeth in
the badger's nose. We stand
in a half-circle, Dad,
two brothers, my sister and I,

legs shaking, teeth clattering.
I could not pry my eyes
away, Dad and my brothers
goaded, not cheering,
hoping for the ending,

Dad not meaning for this
bloody battle. He told
Mother later, when he said
to Butch, Get him,
he regretted it.

We kids, blood flying in front
of us, what kind of lesson
Butch and the badger
could give. Sixty years
to see what we didn't back then,

when Dad stitched Butch
with a needle and thread,
buried the badger,
and hung up the trap.

And There a Butterfly
by Star Coulbrooke

Among the blue vervain and cattails,
redwing blackbirds
swerve and sway, trill and warble,
a thicket of bowing and tossing
in a backdrop of towering clouds,
and there a butterfly drinks its way
through star-clusters of native pink
milkweed, drifts over the shaded
path where we walk, hearts aching
in the pure frothing air
of this our beloved world, at the edge
of the twenty-first century's
deep, deep breath, our dying earth
alive and blooming.

Concrete Cat

by Star Coulbrooke

They come to pour footings
a crew of two with shovels
and one to run the excavating machine,
all noise and motion
outside the window
where River the cat jumps to the sill
and paws at the glass.

Let me out there, his eyes say,
watching them dig deep and lay forms
in the trench, crane truck
pulling up in front of the house,
lifting its unfolding arm
between power lines, up over the roof
to the back, where it lowers the big tube
down to the arms of a man
who guides it over snapped-together walls
of footings-to-be.

River's eyes move with the motion
as if he's stalking a toy or watching birds
from the window, for he's a housecat,
never been outside except in a carrier,
house to car, and wouldn't he love,
his eyes seem to say, to get in that trench
and grab that swaying tube.
Thankfully, we know he won't.
He'd be scared to death to go out the door.
Otherwise, he would certainly be
a concrete cat.

Star Coulbrooke founded and coordinated the Helicon West Featured Authors & Open Mic Reading Series from 2005-2020, which included the Helicon West Community Broadside and the Helicon West Anthology.

As the Inaugural Poet Laureate of Logan from 2014-2019, she led monthly community poetry walkabouts to promote poetry appreciation and provide writing prompts on various themes, inviting participants to share what they wrote and submit their writings for community poems which Star composed and published in her most recent collection, *City of Poetry*.