

Kalyna Review

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F.I. Goldhaber

Ode to a Buggy Whip

I
Strands of leather wrapped around tiny balls of steel
Hang from rusted hooks forged by a smith long dead,
And shimmer in moonlight, gleaming with beef drippings
lovingly rubbed in by a groom not yet old enough to shave.

II
Swinging through the air, the crack startles the horses.
They move only when the whip breaks the sound barrier.
The scent of leather mingles with earthy warm smells
Of straining horses, straw kicking up from their hooves, the road's dirt.

III
The carriage, creaking as it sways from side to side,
Jostles the frail woman who's shivering within,
Exacerbating her agony. She screams, and
The whip cuts across horses' rumps, the sting spurs them to gallop.

IV
Oscar, frantic to get Melinda into town
Ignores the flecks of blood spit back at him as the
Whip circles above his head to strike horse flesh
Yet again. He jumps down. Pounds on the door. Yells. No one responds.

V
Weeks later he brings the tainted whip into town.
The leathermaker weaves in a new cracker with
A needle big as the finger bone of a child.
Reeking of tannin, he glares at Oscar for harming his mares.

VI
Returned to its place on the barn wall, the whip waits
For darkest night when it encourages the stars
Rushing home to relinquish the sky and herald
The wedding day's dawn when a new bride will become a mother.

About the author

As a reporter, editor, business writer, and marketing communications consultant, F.I. Goldhaber produced news stories, feature articles, essays, editorial columns, and reviews for newspapers, corporations, governments, and non-profits in five states. Now, her poems, short stories, novelettes, essays, and reviews appear in paper, electronic, and audio magazines, newspapers, calendars, and anthologies. In addition to paper, electronic, and audio publications, F.I. shares her words at events in Portland, Seattle, Salem, Keizer and on the radio. She appeared at venues such as Wordstock, Oregon Literary Review, galleries, coffee shops, bars, bookstores, libraries, and community colleges. <http://www.goldhaber.net/>