

Stories behind poetry

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I was asked to write a book about stories behind poetry of North American women poets by China Foreign Press in 2007. Since I loved poems by Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson, so I did some research for that kind of topic. However I worked in IT field for full time and had a family to raise, I found it was very hard to commit myself to the task. So I declined. Today I thought about the topic again because indeed stories behind poetry were very enchanting. Here I want to share several stories of my own.

First, I will tell a story about the poem related to Facebook. I joined Facebook long time ago, but seldom used it. After one invitation following another, I was a little frustrated: Do I know him? Do I know her? The worst thing was that you only had the correct answer when you clicked *To Confirm Friends*. And it turned out the result was not what you thought. One day, I chatted with my friends and complained, they suggested, why not write a poem? Sure. Here it is.

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Online headlines:
I found true love!

Yet, the other day when I sat
in a beauty salon, the song
love at a grocery store
stirred up mocking sighs--
smart, at least, find a cook.
And I added,
at a bar, a loser.

Uploading my photo, I wonder
what you know of me.
But who cares?
Facebook claims its magic--
among an ocean of faces,
all we need is a click.

One could imagine
a door ajar
in a waiting room.

The interesting part is that the dialogue in the poem was from one incident when I shopped at Jones New York. At that time, the song “love at a grocery store” was aired, one staff member smiled,

“How smart to find a lover in grocery store, at least he likes cooking.”

Another staff member commented, “True, never find a lover at a bar; he may turn out to be a loser.”

In the poem, I change the setting to be a Beauty Salon, to give a hint that photos uploaded to Facebook may not be the real side of one. Thus the whole poem could be connected together in its meaning.

The last verse of the poem was inspired by my friend who asked me, “why do you keep writing?”

I thought for a while and left a message, saying, “I guess I am waiting...”. He commented, “ah, in a waiting room.”

I end the poem like that to give some room for imagination. As we never know the result from a relationship connected by Facebook.

My second story is for the poem: “My Car as My Body”.

Two months ago, when I was driving, I heard noise. I thought it may be a flat tire. So I stopped to check. It was that the exhaust pipe had dropped to the ground. Standing beside the country road, I phoned for help. It was a long time. Luckily it was a beautiful day, I watched many cars passing by and was glad to have several cars stopped to help me. Later in an Auto Shop, when my car was lifted, I saw its bottom rotted. I wondered how many years this car would last. I asked the *mechanic*, if I wanted to sell this car, how much it would be worthy. He replied, not worthy 1500\$. I sighed that time flied. I recalled when I first drove it, it was a brand new car. Another mechanic walked in and offered to fix it for me for free (if I buy lunch for him). I laughed and declined.

On the way back, I thought the first line: My car is like my body...” I sensed it could be a good poem, thought not sure what else I would write. So I told my close friend that I may write a poem about aging and relationship. He laughed, a good choice. At night, all the verses came to me. Here is the final draft.

My Car as My Body

*Scraped by furtive knives
open scars brand her silence.
Laid up in the dust,
she waits for a mechanic
to smooth her silvered skin.*

A man walks in,
glimpses the touch-up process—
aged and not worthy.
He leaves.

*Laying myself down in a beauty
salon, I watch my face lifted up.
Inside a cocoon, I dream
a dazzling rose
with bees fumbling around.*

Outside, a hot season,
warm waves rush—
men come and go,
riding new convertibles.

*Headlights flashing far,
a tattered fish leaps,
hangs above the night river.*

More Stories
More Stories

will be released soon. Stay tuned.

Thanks and have fun.