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No Rubric?

Sandra Kurtii Pylvainen

Students say to me,
Give us the rules,
the *length*, they say.
the rubric.
And I do not.
I give only
a blank page,
white as a bedsheet,
unwrinkled,
still cold.

Poetry Reading in Room 415

Sandra Kurtii Pylvainen

The tall boy with sad eyes rises to read his poem.

I'll go, he says,

but moves slowly, searching his folder for the poem,

then finding it, steadies himself

and maneuvers between the crammed desks

and students sitting on the floor, to the front

where he adjusts his stance in the front of the room,

yanks fingers through his long hair. He begins softly,

My old man, he says, *came home last night--*

He gropes, stumbles,

moves words, like furniture across a room.

No he didn't come home last night--

Last night, last night didn't come home...

words rush then stop

push, each one passes out of a mouth,

dry slow tongue clicks like texting

into the stale air of a crowded classroom,

sweaty, hot breaths, windows all open,

but late May delivers no wind.

He tilts forward as he reads, leaning into air

his left hand fisted in his pocket like a rock

right hand holding the poem, which rattles in his

shaking hand.

He reads about a father

whom he carried to bed

It's not easy, putting a grown man to bed

a voice spoke

with grace

to place himself in this unsteady world

that, like a father, cannot teach a boy how to walk.

Aesthetic Experience

Sandra Kurtii Pylvainen

Yes, they have felt it
these teachers who
slam in and out of stinking classrooms
papers strewn, books stacks aching, all careening
towards June emptiness.
They felt it, though others wouldn't know it
by their disheveled hair, and practical shoes
their outlet clothing and the creased foreheads,
deepening over paper grading.
They felt it long ago when as children their mom or dad read
a story, just so, and waited, just so, for the words to topple each other
as the chase was on for the loot, or the animal died, or the family sank into poverty.
They felt it too, yesterday,
when Charlie read a poem
in front of class, all eyes, ears waiting at some heavy door
as each word escaped his mouth, like his own name
calling him home. Fierce words, so honest
his tongue bent in anger over the last, the last
when the hush burst, exhaling puffs of grief
and silence took the room.



Sandra Pylvainen recently completed her doctorate degree at Michigan State University in the Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education program. She teaches English Language Arts at Waterford Kettering High School in Waterford, Michigan where she includes poetry reading and writing in her classroom. She has previously published poems in *English Journal* and *Passages North*.