



Autumnal Heart: The Collected Poems of Sue Scalf

Sue Scalf

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The gentle nudge to pause, listen, look for deeper meaning or humor—especially at the worst of times—is ever present in Sue Scalf’s poetry. But her blood runs plenty hot, and that opposition between the thoughtful and the passionate helps to explain why she’s been a revered bard for more than fifty years. The author of eight collections, over her lifetime Scalf lived in a couple dozen homesteads around the US, including a long stint in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. She now lives in Alabama.

TRAVELERS

Despair and fatigue travel together.
Neither believes in dawn or gods;
they plod but leave no footprints
in the slush of snow.
Around them black dots of soot
settle slowly.

Aged and wizened, they breathe
asthmatic breaths; their skin
has the pallor of ash
and carries the stench
of cabbage and gin.

They are the rag and bone men
who pick through garbage cans
down alleys where only rats
grow fat, and darkness comes on
like sick-bed sweat.

Beneath street lamps
where poisonous fog
wraps entrails of gray,
they make their way
toward the yielding bed
of the hopeless heart.

MATT SUTHERLAND (March/April 2017)

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