

Poems

by Vickie Cimprich

Sunday at Citeaux

Mass dissipates. Hinges of heavy wooden doors,
shoe soles or chair feet on tile or lineoleum,
a few whispers or murmurs among guests.

Frequently, bells reconvene men in cowls.
They gather in a large white cave
roofed acoustically, exquisite
to their arcs of song.

(After Compline, the racing bike
speeds out. No hands.
Arms that waved chanting
out of the throats all day
cross on the brother's breast -

back by 21:03.)

Pre-dawn til dark,
alternate choirs of different warblers
whose names I also do not know
- nor do they come or go
by names - sing and say
the dependable directions.

Where Orange Was

Poppy petals, on hillsides,
in fields, archeological ruins
and between the rail ties
of side-tracks at Amberieu.

A *limace*, slug
as long as a hamster
testing the asphalt road
near the Forêt d'Izeure.

Pentecôte at Bonneval,
when it broke into baptisms
that fluttered and writhed
over each of our heads.

For more poems by Vickie Cimprich, see pages 42-43.

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Humbleine At Juilly, 1132

No more tiresome are the fables told
about my splendid brother Bernard, at Juilly
where I keep vows, than among our people
at home.

In armor, furs or cowl, mounted on steed,
or blazing in Clairvaux's pulpit or its parchments,
the figures he cut or conceived
made the monk he was and the monks we all are,
his family and friends -
not excepting Aleth our mother,
never really left behind -
known.

One guest father from Molesme teased that
if Bernard ever showed up at Juilly,
I should bow my head over refectory table,
and bind him, as once did Scholastica
her brother, holy father Benedict,
with God's storm. For a longer visit's joy,
I too should staunch my stubborn brother's
retreat, towards Clairvaux. Or Rome.
Nay. That he, here or far, loved us
at Juilly, Molesme, Clairvaux, was felt,
in choir, chapter, in letters kept and given away.

And in my thoughts of well-stocked ponds
at home where each one learned of each
what can be taught of how to fish.

Juilly, 1129

Half a life ago, before half
the family and many friends
followed Bernard to the white monks,

his sister learned from him to pull a bow,
release her arrow.
When he took her for the hunting
the cousins laughed, then.

Now, oftentimes at evening speech
among the nuns, Humbleine gives it out
that it was she who laughed loudest,
dangling her rabbit by the ears
before the men's faces and the boys'.

One late spring, the lambing time,
she's told to stay with several lay sisters
at a cottage up on one of the granges.
In the morning snow, a hare comes by.
Her fingers and shoulders
want to shoot,

now that she has no bow.

Vickie Cimprich lives in Kentucky. Her first collection of poetry, *Pretty Mother's Home—A Shakeress Daybook*, was researched at The Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill in Kentucky, which Merton visited, photographed and wrote of before its restoration.