

Where I'm From *(A tribute to Mt. Sterling in the tradition of George Ella Lyon)*

I am from
Tidy closets, armed with moth balls,
But stripped secret-clean.
Our skeletons rocked on the porch,
Drinking tall glasses of sweet tea spiked with Maker's Mark bourbon.

I'm from
Waste not, want not.
Pretty is as pretty does.
And, you don't know your ass from apple butter.

I am from
Royalty,
Reared up on Queen Street,
Riding a chestnut mare named Cleopatra,
And listening to the King...
Until he was found dead next to his porcelain throne,
(My mother wailed for a week, clutching unused concert tickets).

I'm from Mouths,
That tasted of Ale-8-One, small town gossip, steeped sassafras,
Berryman's chili dogs, Marlboro menthols, and answered prayers.

From Hands,
That played honkytonk piano, birthed slippery calves, rubbed on Coppertone lotion,
Dug potatoes, picked purple irises, and applied layers of lipstick in Pink Frost.

From Feet,
That trod through fresh manure,
Danced in black, shiny shoes in Miss Rosalind's recital,
And tracked through October Court Days hot on the scent of a funnel cake.

I am from Legend,
The rhinoceros that lived in the tobacco barn,
Great Aunt Pearlie's ghost,
A buried treasure at the bottom of the pond guarded by an albino catfish,
And, a faraway place that never slept called New York City,
Where I was determined to move one day.
And, I did.

But...inside me,

A bone and flesh compass,
Needle never wavering,
No matter how far I get above my raising,
Always leads me back,

To where I'm from.

By: Donna Ison