

Dear Miss Dickinson (Response to ““Hope” is the thing with feathers” by Emily Dickinson)

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Dear Miss Dickinson

(Response to ““Hope” is the thing with feathers” by Emily Dickinson)

Antonia Baylor

I read yer pome.

You said that hope is that thing with feathers
that perches in the soul,
but my brother shot a feathered thing
with the BB gun our uncle got ‘em for his birthday,
and it jumped,
and it dropped,
and it landed like a shiny black sandbag on the driveway
in the alley
behind the church.

You said it sings the tune and don’t ever stop at all,
but that hollow bullet’s ring
gave our poor birdie his final song.
So, hats off to you and your high-flying hope,
but mine ain’t any perchy pearl feathered thing,
cause my hope’s crippled enough to get
BB gunned to death on a Sunday afternoon,
in our blackest clothes and shiniest shoes.

Hope asks for all my crumbs,
cause like my daddy said before the wake
“It’s hard work missy”
when hope drops still hot on July cement
and feathers ain’t the only falling thing.

Down with the bird
And the whole damn tree
And the song
And the bullet
And the church
And the beak
And the gun
And the cousins
And the coffin

And the hearse
And the “sorry for your losses”
And your brother
And the tears you cried cause he just killed that perfectly nice bird
On today of all days.
Hope is that thing that’s ugly,
dragged dull and flightless behind you,
burdened headstone heavy in a box
onto daddy and uncle’s shoulders this afternoon.