

### 3 Poems by Britta R. Kollberg

#### A Fable

by Britta R. Kollberg

This is an old story and far away;  
when I turned around at dawn and dozed off again  
my arm fell on its empty pillow:

And won't you sting me, asked the frog.  
That would be stupid, said the scorpion,  
don't you think? You would be poisoned,  
die, and I, upon your back, would drown.  
So, carry me across the water, please.  
And off they went, the scorpion clinging  
to the frog's back, holding tight. And  
then, right in the middle, endless blue  
depth stretching down below them,  
there, the scorpion stung the frog.  
A second's struggle and soon both,  
the frog and scorpion sank  
and drowned. But why,  
the frog asked with his last breath,  
why? You promised!—Don't you know,  
the scorpion said, I am a scorpion.  
I do sting.

What's so absurd about this story, is  
that, even though I see drowned frogs and scorpions washed ashore  
each week, I don't believe it's true. I didn't.

What's even more absurd about it, is  
that I was told this story, right above the surging sea. The storyteller  
drowned, his tale stuck with me.  
And what's most absurd about this story,  
is that I have learned, not long ago,  
that scorpions cannot sting below their belly.  
Only when you touch them from above, they stir and stretch and,  
upwards, sting.

### **Sarah's Sacrifice**

by Britta R. Kollberg

When God spoke to Abraham and told him to bring his son to Mount Moriah, Sarah, listening at the tent door, straightened her back and prepared herself. She cleaned the cooking place, walked to the herds to see the new lambs, and sat silently in the vineyards. She lit the candles one more time.

She took her woolen shawl, laid her hand, heavy, on Isaac's head, and left, alone. She went, Moriah in her eyes.

Yet, Hagar stayed. She served the father of her son and cooked the meals. She listened to the ancient stories, she taught the two boys the law, and love, and hardships near the desert well. Hagar became the bucket of water, the lambs she sheared, the grass under her master's seat. And when the silent evening came, she brought in wine, and bread, she dried and cooled her master's brow. The man called in the boys to leave his blessings, legacy.

Then Hagar told them everything about the Lord: how she listened silently, and stayed, and carried water from the well. How Abraham gave her a son, and how she

raised him and his younger brother. She told them how she fed the herds and attended to the patriarch. She spoke to the boys and told them everything about the Lord.

in response to Søren Kierkegaard's "Fear and Trembling" and Franz Kafka's "Abraham"

### **The Outcast's Who's Who**

by Britta R. Kollberg

You might think I was like you once and then lost everything or  
gained that new freedom: I'm telling myself what to do. But  
I was never like you, and while you keep losing, I am still the same.  
It doesn't matter if I find a home in your words and looks. And  
only when I greet you back, ask *how are you* and you answer  
*fine* (or *sad*—as you wish), only then we may be together in this:  
a bus stop at night, the arrival info panel showing erroneous times--