

Ms. Schadenfreude Escalates

At first it was just little things:
 a neighbor's stalled car, a colleague's
 spilled latte or a broken heel
 on the boss's new Jimmy Choos —

nothing serious enough to require
 the sympathy she was sure
 she was still capable of feeling —

just minor mishaps and disappointments,
 the kind she herself had
 long grown so accustomed to,
 she wondered why others had not.

*Maybe they had not had
 their fair share of them, she thought.
 Maybe I have had more
 than I ever deserved.*

And so, each event began
 to feel like a moment of justice,
 cause for the tiniest bit of celebration,
 the bitter party for one
 she held behind closed doors.

She learned to nurture a feeling
 she had yet to learn a word for,
 to savor it like an expensive drink.
 Because it was so strong.
 So strangely sweet.

Ms. Schadenfreude on the 4th of July

It was not that the fields and gardens
really needed the rain. She didn't,
frankly, give a good gad-damn
about bone dry soil or failing
crops, wilting perennials, foliage
fried by a pitiless sun.

It was the idea
of all the soggy hot dog buns and bowls
of potato salad going to waste,
the picnics and parades cancelled,
all those floats and flags washed out,
the ruined plans and dampened expectations —
it all that made her snicker at the deluge,
the whole dreary day.

Not until evening,
when the darkening sky should have been exploding
with spectacular works of fire, did she feel her own sense
of let down, the absence of the *oobs* and *abs*
that would have been emanating from crowds
of upturned, expectant faces – including
(and so much like) her own.

GRACE BAUER's newest book of poems is *Nowhere All At Once* (Stephen F. Austin State University Press, 2014). Her previous books include *Retreats & Recognitions*, *Beholding Eye*, and *The Women At The Well*, as well as four chapbooks, most recently *Café Culture* (Imaginary Friend Press, 2013).