

## Recapitating St. Francis

(in the Steffie Bova diary poem genre)

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It always happens that something I like gets broken.  
So it was with St. Francis.

I had wanted one for years,  
and finally Anna, our daughter, made me a ceramic St. Francis,  
with a wolf and two birds.  
She glazed them a glossy pewter color, like shiny metal.

An hour after I set St. Francis outside, Mike knocked him over,  
breaking off half an arm -- so many pieces, impossible to glue.  
Yet I kept St. Francis in our rock garden, jagged arm stump jutting,  
rationalizing: the break is symbolic -- we must be the arm of St. Francis.

(Mike said the wolf bit off the arm and we should paint the edge red.  
I said no.)

For years the one-armed St. Francis stood amid grape hyacinths or impatiens.  
In time, both birds fell off and only the wolf remained his companion.  
Then last week Mike toppled him again.  
This time when St. Francis fell, his head broke off.  
For a couple of weeks, his body lay in the dirt near his rolled-away head,  
until a friend visited and noticed, and I was ashamed enough to grab  
St. Francis and his head and bring them into the house.

Last night I said to Mike, "Do you want to recapitate St. Francis?"  
Mike said sure. So I got the Krazy Glue  
and ran to the basement to fetch the de-antlered buck  
that Brian, our son, made so long ago, carefully glazed to look real.  
The buck's place was my flowerbed, but somehow he got broken.  
I just couldn't display him that way, and I hate to glue things,  
so for years he remained on my laundry table, his fawn beside him.

"Can you glue this too?"

I asked Mike, holding out a hand full of ear and antler pieces.  
Sure, he said.

"I'll help," I told him, hoping he wouldn't need me, because I don't like to glue things.

But I did hold pieces together after Mike glued them....  
We talked about how he made models when he was a boy.  
He used rubber bands to hold pieces together, or held them with his fingers,  
reading assembly directions while the glue dried.

I thought about my dad telling me how when he was a boy  
he walked around town just to listen to his corduroy knickers rub together.  
He called them “whistle britches” because they squeaked.

Kids used to have a lot of patience, I thought,  
Kids entertained themselves.

Then I realized I had glued my fingers together with the Krazy Glue.  
Mike pulled them apart without blood,  
but it hurt and left a horrible glue residue like dead skin.  
I said, “I should stay away from glue.”

Today, for some reason, I worked by myself on the buck  
and didn’t glue my fingers together,  
but soon realized we’re missing one whole antler.  
After all our work, the buck might have to resume laundry duty.  
I can’t rationalize a one-antler buck in the flowerbed,  
even though antlers fall off in real life... it just looks odd.

St. Francis was fine this morning, totally recapitulated.  
I used a marker to color the white chips on his forehead and cowl.  
After all the ear and antler pieces, I was glad St. Francis had only one head  
and it was in one piece.  
I might hang a little flower basket on his half-arm to hide the jagged edge;  
I bet the real St. Francis liked flowers.

Normally I don’t like lawn knickknacks, and I hate gluing,  
but Anna made St. Francis when she was a little girl  
and Brian made the buck when he was a little boy.

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