2012

Ground Oregano

Debra Marquart

Iowa State University, marquart@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_pubs

Part of the Poetry Commons

The complete bibliographic information for this item can be found at http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_pubs/146. For information on how to cite this item, please visit http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html.
Ground Oregano

Abstract
Bitter green, bottled dust of pungent woods
I've carried across cities and states, past its prime,
almost gone now, origanum vulgare, twenty-five years
since I tucked it in the spice rack after he insisted
he was allergic, although I'd used it in the lasagna,
chili, and spaghetti he'd eaten with relish, without illness...

Disciplines
Poetry

Comments
This poem is published as “Ground Oregano.” River Styx 88 (2012): 66. Posted with permission.

This creative writing is available at Iowa State University Digital Repository: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_pubs/146
Debra Marquart

GROUND OREGANO

Bitter green, bottled dust of pungent woods
I’ve carried across cities and states, past its prime,

almost gone now, origanum vulgare, twenty-five years
since I tucked it in the spice rack after he insisted

he was allergic, although I’d used it in the lasagna,
chili, and spaghetti he’d eaten with relish, without illness

or complaint, so I guessed he was lying to make a fuss
just as he invented the problem with dust that required

me to do the cleaning, just as he interrupted stories
I told with words like ostensibly and presumably because

he was a spoiled man, spoiled first son of a fussy mother
who interviewed every teacher, every guitar and piano

tutor he studied with, as if he were heir to the throne
of Antigua. After that, I pinched the bitter green into

everything, then fled with the vial, filed it all these years
beside my thyme, cinnamon, cumin. Even now, I see it

on the back shelf, unusable, almost gone. Oros ganos,
from the Greek, a gift of luck from Aphrodite,

known as joy-on-the-mountain. When fresh and strong,
oregano can numb the tongue, make words unsayable.

Did I mention his mother was his first grade teacher?
They carried matching briefcases to school. At the end

of each day, they sat together at the kitchen table.
While she worked on her lesson plans, he busied himself

marking in red the erroneous papers of his classmates.