



red clay legacy

| poems | BY RHONDA WELSH • AVAILABLE JULY 7

Do Not Touch the Merry-Go-Round

*“You cannot ride the Flying Chairs.”
“Stay away from the Tilt-a-Wheel.”
“Do not touch the Merry-Go-Round.”*

We performed scenes from their failed marriage
like inadvertent weekend thespians.

Daddy bathed our outings in irrational fears.
Through frustrated tears I met his ritual with sighs.

I learned to roll my eyes like mama
when he said something foolish.

This was often...

He wielded humiliation like a hammer
especially at the Michigan State Fair.

I'd cry when he dragged me to the House of Horrors.
The more I yelled, the louder he'd laugh.
We never went in. He just liked to hear me scream.

I was so much like her.
Except he could control me.

Ten years. Ten fairs.
I never did ride the Merry-Go-Round.

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Another Day

Oozes like an open sore.
This flesh wound refuses to heal.
Pain reverberates off the walls.
So many reasons to call it off.

Should we put us out of our misery?

But baby then you look at me.
And I fight for us one more day.

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Summer of Coltrane

I dreamt I was married
to Gordon Parks.

It was the summer of Coltrane.
Warm rain fell every afternoon
right around four.

I was more enthralled with
myself than I was with him.

Gordon resented me for it.

Richard Roundtree
was a frequent visitor.
Gordon always wanted to
photograph me in big Parisian hats.
As if we were strolling
down the Champs D'Elysee.

This was strange
because we lived in Black Bottom
before the Davison
sliced the races in half.

Gordon advocated
diversity and freedom
and artistic expression.

But he gloried in keeping
me bound.

I was wrapped round
his beautiful finger.

And I liked it.

During the summer
of Coltrane and warm rain,
I dreamt I was married
to Gordon Parks.