

ALL THINGS DUSK

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The Soul

You can hear wind echo
 over water
and the loose rhythm from the well
 of the pine warbler's chest
a trill growing out
 from the trowel of its beak

You can nearly see
 the shape the song takes
 as it loops down
 gravity-bound
 following the brook
through the sleeves of balsam fir

 freeing south—

 the source being
carried back

You are the rambling
 sound of what fills
 a song

From silence we spill
 and silence we fall

Loss

You watch the yellow lace unwind
from a young girl's hair while
the mirage on the road wavers.
You replay the day your daughter
died: glittered gold streamers whirling
from handlebars as she was riding
her bicycle, totter of training wheels
tipping to keep balance,
but the hill's
 loose gravel
and a guy driving distracted
by your wife's summer dress.
At dusk all the colors quickly
roll into the grave of night, and
come dawn they return, but one
always seems etched inside the eye.

The sun spools behind the hill, the girl
tries to secure it, but wind catches
the lace, flings it across the horizon.

Flesh and Blood

Trees and buildings become islands
in the morning mist, the valley
a strand of clouds like a scarf frayed at its edges.

When I return to the house I search a closet
for the doeskin mittens my grandfather made
from the first deer he hunted,
instead find the cap my grandmother knitted
and a felt shawl she'd sewn, and hang them on a nail
near the door—a nail found in an old maple, the one
from which sweetness used to run,
removed and brought inside after many years retired.
It was the nail on which he hung his rifle.

I imagine the deer: hooves clomping
through the woods, no fear so near to death—
death: the unknown forest.
And I consider my grandfather,
cold and hungry, quiet, waiting.
I think of the fog that must have surrounded them,
each an island in their own existence
brought together by something small and fast—
a nail to the heart.

I think to check by the wood furnace
and there, under a cloud of cinder, the mittens lay.
I steal them up, dust the soot off,
clap them against the house's exterior
sending woodash to swirl like snow.

Heron

The old fisher-
man balances
himself against
the wind on one
leg, the other
folded, tucked
to his torso;
with a pole he
fishes—its beak
shovels at sand,
digging, water
wells up and lug-
worms lured in:
the trowel of
his bill filled.

Drinking Mead with John, Bowen, and Evan

We stand around the chicken coop passing the unlabeled glass bottle from one sod-grimy hand to another. John watches a hen as Bowen recalls the Hardwick Memorial Day Parade of 1996: old men wearing popcorn-bucket hats driving three-wheelers in drunken pattern; floats rolling by with people throwing candy to the curb
Who has any idea what they were pitching?
and the marching band that lagged a quarter-mile behind, that could've used help from a vehicle
Maybe they should've been on a float to begin with
while they chased after the last truck shouting through their instruments as they went. This is when they met, John and Bowen. Evan edges near the lone chick, distancing himself from the conversation, but before long re-enters the group to take another pull—

“Where’s it from, the mead?”

“Fell off the back of a truck” John says.

Blackberry

Purple thimble body,
 colors sewn
from midnight to dawn,
 all dimple and cheek,
brown stubble needling out;
hanging here, late August,
knit by the sun's spinning-wheel,
 plump, little sponge
weaving the fabric of water;
I sheer the green thread
of your stem, you unravel
from the tangles of vine,
 spool into hand;
as I turn from the bush I see,
like a knotted ball of black yarn,
the bear at a distance,
her body, thankfully,
 stitched to sleep—
 full from the facts
of this fruitful earth.

Poems in this book premiered in the pages of the following:

Architrave Press: “The Soul”

Avocet: “Bear,” “Body of Birch,” and “Morning Meditation”

Balloons Literary Journal: “Argument”

Carbon Culture Review: “Looking Out the Window with a Spider Web”

The Citron Review: “Kingfisher of Mooselung Pond”

Cold Mountain Review: “Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker”

Fogged Clarity: “Loss”

I-70 Review: “Dow’s Crossing”

Lalitamba: “Summer Afternoon”

The MacGuffin: “The Composer Sheds Her Sheet Music”

The Meadow: “Two Chairs Under an Apple Tree”

Muse: “Summer Song of Lake Michigan”

Parabola: “First Evening, Mooselung Pond,” “Dragonfly of Milkweed Manor,” “Garlic Harvest,” “My Grandfather Chopping Wood,” and “Manifest”

Scintilla: “Becoming One of Them that I Hear in the Evening”

Southword Journal: “Butterfly Bush”

Talking River: “Poem for Roger Allen”

Three-Legged Stool (The Clare Champion): “Heron”

Through the 3rd Eye: “Pinecone”

“Summer Song of Lake Michigan” was awarded second place in *The Michigan Poet’s* ekphrastic contest for which it appeared as a broadside. Tip of the cap to Foster Neill.

Great, relentless thanks to Li-Young Lee for selecting this book for publication. I must weave you a nest for the doves of your life.

ABOUT THE HKU INTERNATIONAL POETRY PRIZE

The HKU International Poetry Prize, initiated by the School of English at the University of Hong Kong in 2010, is an international award recognizing outstanding poetry written in English. Judged by renowned poets, it celebrates a body of original work in a first book of poems published by Hong Kong University Press. The HKU International Poetry Prize looks to the history of poems and honors the craft and achievement of contemporary poets. We pay special tribute this year to Ms. Aarti Hemnani, Creative Studio and HKU Black Box Theatre manager; Mr. Eric Mok, acquisitions editor at the HKU Press; and the HKU Cultural & Humanities Fund for their generous support and dedication to the HKU International Poetry Prize.

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