

Literary Supplement

Third Place

Winter Solstice

Stepping through snow by the river
an old man wanders
under stars.

Beyond the bridges, bluffs, and trees,
buildings rise in layers of lights,
brilliant squares,
official rows.

Following footprints, chained and blended,
frozen holes, eyeless orbits,
the seeker scans river ice,
rifted, broken,
serpent skin.

Rabbit moon, full and yellow,
rings the valley,
remnant sanctum
in a busy dream
of the gleaming city palace.

The warrior stalks
a little faster through chilling mist
to a dark ravine
where a stream
barely flows.

His shadow enters
the Serpent's lair
and memory of her Dragon mother
embraced by the siring Eagle
called down from clouds
in mid-summer.

He breaks a willow for a wand,
crouches near a quartz rock,
taps to signal his totem bird,
born of night.

Pines stir,
wind wheelies
pale-faced fronds.

Tapping, stopping,
starting anew,
a sudden whirling intense tattoo,
the shaman summons other things...
mumbling, croaking,
slithering near.

Raven descends from a cliff above,
alights on a bush of withered fruit,
tilts his head to pattering sounds.

Spirits hum, dancers weave
a wanton flower in fiery lines
that pulse and coil
then unwind,
spiral up tallest swaying pine
to a twinkling
Eagle eye.

Wholly hollow, hallowed and full,
the unknown drummer shapes a green jewel,
formed by rhythm beyond time and measure,
beaten rhymes from solar treasure
molen in the depths of black earth's pressure.

Wholly hollow, hallowed and full,
an emerald form in the palm of a fool
begins to shine as the old man chants,
smiles through dreamers to enhance
dim hearts turned from Spirit-glance.

Wholly human, holy, free,
the Dragon's brood includes all three
Serpent, Raven, and stranger-shaman
raising from the pit a ritual stamen
serving as the Eagle's literal lamen.

Star-flash
in icy rock.
Eagle shudders,
thrilled on the peak of December.

by Rob Wilkie

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question of a long dead brother

next to dried flowers on the mantel
your face haunts unsmiling.
eyes loom larger than their fifteen years
out of gold frame demand
what of your world have you appointed guardians
against slow glaciation of the heart?

foremost the unopened letter
i wrote in easy repentance, left on your pillow
that snow hissed morning in april.
apologies in correct grammar on pale blue ledger lines
from the straight a's sister, clarinet section leader
winner of the citizenship cup award.
(there were six that year, the town newspaper
showed me, black and white smile, second from the right.)

one wad of well chewed gum.
licorice black cat, stretched and tongue probed
it flavoured all our school bullied thoughts
mittened battles in school yard snow forts
the after homework hours, unruled, unpunctuated.
pulled between fingers, warm squalid representative
of the unformed gut of a child's mind.
i threw it away in a kotex wrapper.

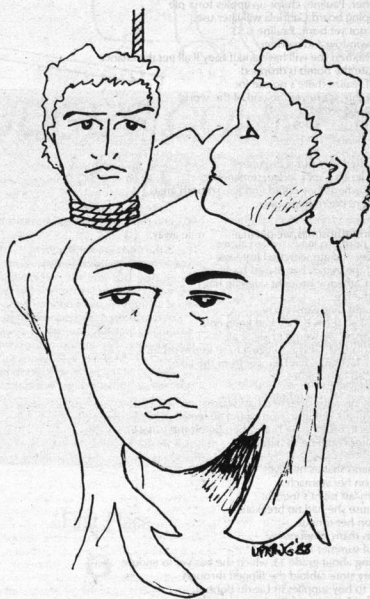
guard the time of hot steam against chin
rising from mugs of earl grey tea
fig newtons and afternoon conversation on tongue
cool jelly of golden hornet's crabapple and quince
warm buttered toast, not the solitary apple
eaten between hunched shoulders and another book.
i used to listen to you close the fridge door
mount the stairs alone to your radio and room.

the plaid slippers left by your bed.
feet placed in their worn soles
settle into the shadow of your feet
your direction, a wrinkle on one inner sole
causes a limp in the left foot.
in these slippers i smell exhaust of stolen vans
hear breaking windows, feel steel on wrists.
i wear them for this.

a pebble from lake superior — camping the shores of goderich
you found it in the smell of dead fish
and polluted bubbles — showed me its skin
worn smooth by generations of thinking fingers.
jumping brown waves that rushed
shoulder high to shore, you screamed, shook wet hair
over the thirty book i bought for three dollars
at the goderich library book sale.

a bassoon solo, straining against a military percussion
ghost of the third movement of a favorite symphony,
alone the melody is a sidewalk pedestrian
in concert it jaywalks, disturbs traffic flow
creates the tension of differences. there was the way
you brought wind and snow into the house with you
sprawled your body heat out at supper,
your elbow brushed mine, oblivious. your patched cap.

one autumn leaf, veined in fire
blood that pulsed most brightly before the instant
drop into the wind of a grey november
the mulch chewed under for spring strawberries.
each leaf imprinted with the reddening trunk of maple
the one out-of-pattern rope swung sideways
your body, neck broken, hung against april green sky.



the first dark course of blood along my inner thigh
met with intellectual resolve and sanitary napkin. now, after
i would scream, cry out at this first sight
of such blood, this sudden red weeping of my belly,
rumors of your first sex behind woolworths
with sheila lindstrom, she was bleeding,
you knew blood before i did — not the small fingertuck
but the blood of bowels, puberty hemorrhages.

the nails of four fingers, pushed
deep into the flesh of palm, dead cells hardened,
cruel, driven into the living to keep me
from weeping, still the blackboard of conjugated latin
swims to blurred carnations before my eyes, outside
the maples, colored a greater green by spring rain,
their scent prowls the air, humid about skin.
four hall moons, dug redder than your grave flowers.

imperceptible the sag of wallpaper's corner edge.
the ache mounts in joints, ligaments, veins
white fire over eye lids, a hand of fire clenched
year long in the gut opens, seeps outward.
pain clutched, without air, the body whips about
heaving in this first release of grief.
i hard closest this raw and murky ache
its thaw of frost rimed muscle to life.

by Beth Goobie