

Kirsten Emmott / TWO POEMS

JAWS

there was a shark movie
people got eaten by a giant shark
a few reviews mentioned
that there are no such sharks,
none that size
have ever been caught

makes a good story though

Of every 10,000 domestic assaults
on Canadian women every year
two men are convicted

Sarah who was brought
from the Interior
to a new transition house
so her man could not find her
when he got out of jail
said she did not want him to know
he had left her pregnant

by the time her child was due
her fractures and cuts had healed
she had some colour in her cheeks
she had also
started washing her hair
using a little makeup

Dominique who knew
she had a broken rib
said he only hits her
once a year or so
everything is in his name,
she's too old to get work now,
to leave their comfortable place
and go to a basement suite
on welfare
I showed where I'd once written
"chic brunette Quebecoise
looking much younger
than stated age of 48"
she smiled sourly
"Now you know why
since those days
I've let myself get so fat"

Maria, who didn't know her dark skin
was beautiful, her long nose was beautiful,
she thought her arms were too hairy
so they deserved to be bruised,
I saw the row of finger marks
where he held her
as he broke her long nose

Diane who tossed it off
— the broken bleeding eardrum —
with her usual coolness
he hit me, she said,
first time and it'll be the last.

Allan George Foster in 1971
raped and murdered his sister-in-law
He was sentenced to life
but paroled in 1980
his case management officer
at Mountain Institution, at
Agassiz, B.C., called him
“one of the sanest people I have ever met.”
In December 1986, Foster beat his common-law wife
Joan Pilling, 34,
with a claw hammer
for preferring another man
stabbed her repeatedly in the heart
with a kitchen knife
killed her 12 year old daughter Linda Brewer
and her 12 year old friend Megan McCleary
for being female
then raped the corpses
for being female
then went to bed and slept
He was arrested
Before his suicide he said:
I should still be in jail
This would not have happened

not
I would not have done this

He sees himself
as a shark
we kill, say the sharks
it is not in our power to stop

“Sometimes, uncontrollable impulses took over”
says the magazine
of the man who abducted, choked,
stripped and fondled boys
one of them was two years old
Labelled a homosexual pedophile
with sadistic tendencies
he has been paroled again
after only three years of his latest sentence
After all
the shark that takes your baby boy
did not do it; it happened.
Uncontrollable impulses took over.

It is not that I myself
am unable to go swimming;
I can certainly walk in the very park
where Shari Ulrich was raped
by a convicted rapist out on day pass;
I can eat at the very same Dairy Queen
where Dorothy Hoogstratten of this parish
met her husband
(who shot her in the head for preferring another man
and then sodomized her corpse)
I can buy a magazine
right off a rack full of women’s pain,
magazines that say on every page,
you live in a society indifferent
to pain and injustice
as long as the sharks get enough to eat

I can lie down beside a husband

and never fail
to embrace a human being
I can open my arms to him
sure that I will never bleed
from the rasp of sharkskin
In his mouth are kisses only

Come, examine my flesh,
no three cornered teeth have broken off
anywhere on my body

I have let my feet dangle off the raft
year after year
never been bitten

But do not tell me
there are no such sharks

ON BEING REPRIMANDED FOR BEING “TOO WOMEN’S LIBBISH”

We don’t like your feelings, said the boss.
He was reading my file.
His desk was surrounded by barbed wire
and topped with broken glass.
I knelt in front of it.

You feel angry, he said.
You feel shamed by the official cruelties you commit.
You feel.
“I’ll change,” I promised.
I rummaged hastily in my bag for a mask.

Your eyes are too blue, he went on.
Be green eyed.
“Right,” I agreed.
“Contact lenses,” I jotted down.

You’re too tall, he said,
raising his eyes from his notes.
Be shorter. Your feet...
“amputation,” I wrote quickly.
But a thought occurred.
“How will I be able to work?” I ventured.
Live on your knees, he said.