

Ryan Knighton / FOUR POEMS

Dogs Can Kill You

Squinting up at the mighty absence of nicotine he thinks
my god, gardening is all I can hope for.
That might just be enough to do the trick, whatever
the trick really is. He doesn't know
anything about aphids or crabgrass, but harbours suspicion
it's more Reaganomics than Wordsworth. Nature
is a laissez-faire affair, not real if it fills in your application
for the five year plan of empty Sunday make-work projects.

After hockey season declines with a hand to its forehead
then expires, gasp, silver screen style, how can this
compare other than there is no comparing to what's natural.
So against it he's fortified in the kitchen's freeze-frame
taking his coffee standing up, uncertain where
to direct his feet from their tiles because, gasp, the ashtray
is on the deck & his shoes by the door, two sleeping dogs
smiling the way shoes do.

No, it's not true, all of these false particulars, he knows
but a mind is far fetched, like a real dog, maybe
the one in her house, really asleep, & really kind
of running, unnatural, in her own bio-chemical dream
under skies heavy with sticks & bones, all of it
prime for pelting.

When the Old Poets Go Their Sadness Goes With Them

I suppose when you leave us your office
you will take your trees and oxen with you
pack them up on a significant mule, out of anthologies
and Christianity, into a blue Adidas bag
with the Post-It Notes and pink highlighters
all the crummy stuff at the bottom of teaching
and serious administrators. The basics
you lent your labour to, a prolonged meditation
on cows and aging, a memo trees groove to the mind
that lends itself. I don't mean to take
anything away from you. The root causes:
all the cool and philosophical ones
live to 85 in bad suits, and the passionate knuckle-dusters
well, they just don't. Let this be a lesson to you
and your mutual funds. As for passion
save it for the logging community, it's called
being earnest at the CBC. All our callers ask
just close your mouth when you chew
and let the young go to grass.

The Motion Carries

Hurried with George
from the union meeting
past our library Virginia Woolf
crouches between us
with her scissors, our minds
domed in toques & Liberal
cutbacks, how they hang
from the campus trees.

But what scared me most
about The Blair Witch Project
were the phantom sounds
gruesome camp
of hands scratching at your tent flaps
all night long. You know
the what-was-thatness
beyond a world and its language
deficit.

Mrs. Dalloway's madness in birds
go on chirping beauty in Greek.

You know what we mean
to do about it
how someone wants to attack a world
from behind, make it *the* world
someone might leap for
spooked from windows

as today's agenda has it
a poem can't catch

that goddamned thing out there.

Not On My Watch

As if you'll know you want to write
a poem because you feel like taking
a walk or something

he said. Now we're in the muck
off-leash at the dog park, a warmth coming on
& find Bobo's pissing down the back of my leg

again. Just to think: we want the most comforting sleep
the one with someone's breath in someone's ear, a light snore
unbearable on a good day.

Put your hand to it, cock
hammer & stirrup to the vibrations
of still being here.

Same goes for the dog
howling all night at you-name-it, whatever skulks
just below our windows

& lets loose inside
some doggy feeling
of *mine mine mine*.