

The Wintering Bee

A lone scout from a city asleep, she battered the glass
between herself and a waggle over fragile blooms.
I lifted the sash to allow the hapless Lazarus bee.

But the shamrock on the sill was neglected and root-bound, like me,
and so it could return to her no memory. How unkind I thought
it must seem to find so little of the past in this post-resurrection world —

no clover blooms, no swarming hive. So I cut for her some yellow —
vibrant daffodils. We shared drops of honey and sweet green tea;
in gratitude, she'd never ever sting. Then I was just a man, and soon

she'd come undone by my failure to re-enact her tribal dance.
It was only in those last second days that she found so much want
in an Australian shiraz and fell into a bottle left carelessly

unfinished. Oh but didn't she live! Wasn't she loved!
Surely none could tell me it was all without a purpose.

Storm Chasers

Even in his dreams she won't surrender
herself to him; but sometimes her blouse,
cotton white, does melt away in the rain.

Breathing deep a mother's final gesture,
she squints her eyes and pedals past the skunk's
crushed remains. Jack lingers to save one kit

hiding under skeins of blackberry briar
beside the potholed road; he roams too near
three speckled eggs, and so the killdeer feigns

another broken wing. Like her mother
she'll race ahead, change her name, and marry
a landed bastard, before drinking herself

to death. Tilting over his handlebars
Jack chases up the county's steepest grade,
narrowing the gap she's opened between them.

Her bicycle wheel still spins in the grass
at the tower's base; he follows the ladder
to see her climb another rusted rung,

and swoons when she shouts to no one, *Yes!*—
at the shape of her mouth when she says it.
Imagining such heights, his stomach flips;

and yet, grasping for a slippery hold,
he ascends. Cresting the swaying scaffold
he swallows bile: marble-sized hail pummels

the empty iron tank—a deserted
timpani playing to rows of hard green
peaches and newly tasseled corn below.

White forks ionize the air. She teeters
on the safety rail, scissoring her legs—
bare above the chasm. The black funnel

peels the tin from her father's roof. Her hair
whips Jack's face as he encircles her waist
and trusts the orphaned skunk into her hands.

Melody

Providence held her to orchard paths, dropped a match
in that house where nobody lived. Having stayed five years
a ghost, only a Unitarian choir would suffer her leaving.

Imagining gravel streams, asphalt rivers, she waded
into the depot for any passage her savings might afford.
A gust stole lyrics from my hand; the paper cartwheeled

across the yellow line, past a mandolin case – pretty at her feet.
No coquette, she looked away to smooth her fluttering
dress – robin-egg blue – just so, by God, we never met.

Hardwood Autumn

Abiding more when out of doors (or well into his drink),
Big Mike takes the better part of a day to harvest half
a dozen rows. His John Deere stops near the yellow-leafed copse,

where at ten years old they buried hickory nuts in loam –
he and that pretty neighbor who, at sixteen, married quick
some blue-eyed boy whose daddy owned a Chevy dealership.

Mike spies his Angie yanking boxers from the line, clothespins
tumbling to the grass. Tonight he'll face reprisal meatloaf,
without complaint – or salt. He'll share with her the phantom deer:

each fall, they graze the edge of harrowed fields, white tails like flags
as they bound away. Won't be a lie. *Should've seen 'em, Ang.*
Dove into them woods like swimmers plumbing the depth of a pond.

Mood Indigo

Like a blue flame in a speakeasy, that's how Grandpa found her,
shuddering and swaying to *Mood Indigo*. But family lore won't
explain what a hard-handed man could whisper to such a woman
that would let her trade downtown celebrity for orchards and fields —

the glamour of tending endless rows. Seventy-two years later,
her mind's returned to Chicago. Having met again the warmest man,
she's slipped into that old blue dress, packed her valise. Through the screen,
see her rocking the front porch swing, waiting to ride to where she already is.