

## **Late Summer Light**

From the west shafts of orange light  
cast long shadows through the pines,  
fledgling robins, breasts still speckled,  
crisscross patches of light on the lawn,  
peck and search for insects and worms.

In early summer robins sang before five,  
flew back and forth to their nests,  
long before we arose from crumpled sheets;  
soon now they will leave, flocking south,  
too soon dusk will drop down on all of us.

## **Somersaults in Spring**

Only a week after dirty snow melted,  
bright tulips bloomed—  
lemon yellow, crimson, orange—  
colors unreal against so much brown,  
like little girls' skirts  
when they do somersaults in spring;  
it all fades so soon—  
like childhood—  
colors so bright  
we want them back again with  
all their gaudiness and silly laughter —  
so brief that first breath of spring.

## Sticks and a Tennis Ball

Into Shady Rill's gentle current,  
where the brook runs shallow beneath maples and pines,  
he tosses sticks and tennis ball to two golden retrievers,  
who splash, fetch and return to him,  
                    over and over again.  
He acts young for his size, but whatever his disabilities,  
                    these dogs don't care,  
they'll play in water all day.  
I wish for him it could always be  
                    summer with two dogs in Shady Rill.

I wish I didn't know about a teacher's grandson,  
buried this summer after an overdose  
                    of heroin and fentanyl,  
I wish I didn't know about a neighbor's son,  
                    stationed in Afghanistan,  
I wish I didn't know about a woman  
                    killed by her boyfriend in this park.  
I wish he could always be a boy with two dogs,  
                    who will never let him down,  
who will fetch until sundown and beyond.

## Lazlo's Afternoon

He lies on a raft which drifts on the pond,  
first east, then west, defying its anchor.  
The boy peers over the edge, watches brook trout,  
fins shimmering. Once in a while a fish  
swims to the surface, eats a floating fly.  
He wants to cut this rope, float free from his anchor,  
but for now  
he watches fish.  
Dragonflies hover over, daring the trout,  
afternoon sun pierces water,  
shines on fish, magnifying them,  
tricking us into thinking they're bigger  
than they are.  
And Lazlo wants to be larger,  
to swim away.  
First ask what you'll do with that freedom.  
Will it be better than  
a summer afternoon,  
sun,  
drifting on a raft?

## Plastic Plant

In a corner of the dining room stands  
a tree of plastic coated with dust,  
that never grows, never flowers, never needs water  
always ready for the next Florida condo renters,  
though it's a plant of sorts,  
made from petroleum polymers  
remnants of ancient palms and ferns  
sucked from the earth.

Outside two swallow-tailed kites drift on breezes  
and land in a long leaf pine  
where a few yellow throat warblers watch warily.  
It's absurd to anthropomorphize a fake plant,  
but I wonder if it would rather be outside,  
where it could feel  
a bird's talons on its branches,  
rain on its leaves.

So little of the Everglades is left here,  
though an osprey circles  
over condos and golf courses,  
traffic roars on Pine Ridge Road.  
where there are neither pines nor ridges,  
only halogen street lights that glow from dawn to dusk,  
water that flows to begonias near hole 10,  
but no longer through glades to the sea.

There is life though—  
ants so tiny I have to a squint to see them  
crawl all over the plastic plant.  
I carry it outside where, during the night,  
rain washes its leaves,  
and in the morning two house sparrows  
land on its branches to peck for ants.  
Plastic plant is back in the ecosystem.