

Selves Try

Early in August, Northern Appalachian
nights, yet warm, deepen earlier.
Stars jitter to amphibian choirs.

In the old house kerosene lamplight
judders silhouettes on bright-green
kitchen wide-board walls.

Blessed candles burn near a cradle.
Light quavers on a convulsing baby
whose eyes roll in his fevered head.

The priest prays, *et libera nos a malo* . . .
The children are silent.

A woman kneels, elbows on a chair,
hands clasped high on her forehead,
index fingers pitched, lips restless.
A man with sawdusty shirt and hair
stands in a corner, face as grim
as the doctor's departing words.

Later, the edge of morning hesitates
a moment as thin as a wall shadow,
then drifts from a ridge into cloud.
A thought with only faint dimension
forms a cool dew, for it has no choice.

Blind Man
(Thanks to Lucille and Otis Spann)

He listens to wine
for tales of roots
and scents wet clods
thrown by hooves.

He stares
into the wind
for the tears
and taste of roads.

He wonders
what pattern
music might shape
on a warm silk shirt.

Direction

Leave solo, follow
the Little Kettle River,
for like all, it flows to the code.

Rest just once, desire
in wisdom-softened mosses
where the old growth never perished.

Read alone, lovers
carved in bark and arrowed hearts,
now transformed gnarly monograms.

Hide alone, alert
for regrets and drooling dusk
stalking you and nuzzling your tracks.

Climb ropeless, hugging
the blasted quarry cliff face,
use raptor glances for handholds.

Stop at last, repose
deep in the bubbling hotspring
downslope from the whitewashed mission.

Descend then, eyes shut,
and waltz with the lap and wash
of cipher voices in the tides.

Last Game on the Big Pond

After school and supper they are glad
to find glib ice and no need to cut a sapling
to make a scraper from old dory boards.

Overshoes for nets, sides, and game on
until sky and ice are the colour of the puck
that slid into the channel, open that winter.

Walking home they scoop the shoreline
phosphorescence with sticks and shoot it,
illuming the lake like a ghost ship ablaze.

The puck still drops below varve rhythmities
that team with an old tree's rings to shape
a blade held over replay of olden winters.

This Day in Future

The lazy ant did not listen
to morning traffic reports.
The blue lobster thought
his old carapace fit better.
The mutt dug boneless pits.
Yesterday was a grand day
with its trails, togs, and Ts;
all content beings live there.

A widow had placed an ad
in Lost and Found each day
for so many years that many
checked just to see it there.
Today it is not and we know
that she, those lines each day,
and moments of now are lost
in ours and tomorrow's too.