

Poems about Poetry
Sixfold, October 2024

Death of the Poet

Death begins with a
head full of good intentions:
You peer down upon the paper,
virginal white like
a new bride, larger than life
itself, a treeless landscape
of unfulfilled promise,
but you can't
consummate the relationship.

Words

(for Wallace Stevens)

If we were to study
the intricate pattern
of particular words

on the partially printed
page,
we would see

the simple

truth of the

nothing

that is always there,
dribbling down upon

a field of winter white
as cold as

the last November

frost sparkling in
the dampness of dawn.

I Found a Poem

This morning, while sifting through
my archives like
a curator at the Smithsonian,
I found a poem I wrote when I was
nineteen. With the detachment
that comes with age, I read
and re-read, trying to remember
that poet, that voice shouting over
the gaping chasm of fifty years,
a cool half-century.

But a poem, like a memory, is only
a photograph, a grainy image frozen
in time. And so out of context are those
words, layered with honest lies,
misplaced rhymes, metaphors
infused with the hope of living
forever in that moment,
before love, before loss, before
the acceptance of mediocrity,
the acceptance of life as it is
and not how it should be
or could have been.

As though the pure, white canvas
that was the future held no promise
for the young, abstract artist.

I read the poem one last time
then burned it, adding those
ashes to all the others
I have saved over that
ever-widening span
of years.

I Wanted to Write a Happy Poem

It was the moment—
or so I thought.
I was ready
and I was poised to write
that happy poem—
you know,
the one full of
roses and sunlight,
blessings and youth
and love is all around.

But then I saw this
April sky hovering overhead,
gray as a gravestone; I saw
the timid green leaves
in the garden slowly emerging,
waiting for the warmth that
is more like a fantasy
than forthcoming. I
felt the cold winter kiss
still fresh on my cheek.

And sensed the illusion
of it all and breathed
the faint transcendent hope
that tomorrow the sun
will shine and my pen
will work a different magic.

Poetry Reading

It's the same every time.
I come to this banquet
that is sumptuous and rich and
ripe with expectation, always
extravagant, always compelling,
as though life itself hangs on a chain
of words, words like chocolate truffles,
but always someone else's placed
neatly on my plate. Words singing
of sadness and love and the
business of living. And I
listen and feast on the words
like a starving artist and lose
what little voice I had
before the dishes are cleared
and I am alone and wordless.

And when it is over and the dishes
are put away, all I have left
that is my own is this witless chain
of words dangling precariously, writhing
like a headless serpent, pulsing inside
my brain. And so I sit, staring into
a void, trying to make sense
of the half-made poems
echoing through my soul, back and forth
like my name across the expanse of
the Grand Canyon. And I think
of all the poetry forever locked
in a single moment of silence.