

Poems for Sixfold
July 2020

Ambulance Ride

The ride was running over dog's tails,
through nursery rhymes, past fire sales.
Red light through the dead of night,
a strong wind ravaging the avenue of old
saints, their fragile bodies shattering at
the sound of our engine fully revved,
virgin throats suffocating in
our invisible swirling smoke.

I feel white against my neck oozing warmth
and gaze at nothing while our
flight washes the roadside.
The tide must be going out.
From some far-off place, I can see
a face framed by a streetlight—
or is it a halo on one of those saints?

Faces, faces, and more faces.
Now stooping, now staring,
now whispering softly,
but only to each other:
The World Series must be over and
they don't want me to know who won.
(I had a bet with somebody.)

And now, without warning, this
screaming red torpedo disappears through
the mouth of the whale and we
are plunged into
the brightest darkness.
Unlike Jonah,
I am saved from the sea.

Early Morning

Four o'clock on a cold winter morning -
or maybe it's five. House creaks
like an old man's bones. Furnace
wheezes to life - long hiss of gas
ignites into flame, sheet metal bangs
once: sleepy molecules spurred
by the sudden jolt of heat.
Motor kicks in, dutifully settling
into a steady, throbbing hum.
Wife curled at my side is
a symphony of non-synchronous
sound, an atonal melody, like
something out of Schoenberg.
Dog snoring at her feet provides
the harmony and the counterpoint.
Cat coiled on her forearm
purrs out the rhythm like a string bass.
And I, lying awake in the wondrous
heavy darkness, strain to listen and
remember old dreams and marvel at
why I've never heard any of this before.

Glimpses

Early morning glimpses
of dew stained grass and
mist rising from lonely fields.

Glimpses of the rising sun
painting the sky, leaking in
through old Venetian blinds,

casting long shadows on familiar
naked skin lying there,
warm to the touch.

Glimpses of you and me,
flesh to flesh, but joined
only in predawn dreams

of each other as other
people, quivering, panting,
remembering times when

the night was electric and
the stars meant warmth, and
the distant dawn sang out

like the Ode to Joy
instead of a haunting and
lonely factory whistle.

I Have Never Been

I have never been to Dublin –
Ireland, that is – to walk
the winding streets, to
trace the trail of
Leopold Bloom.

I have never seen Paris
from atop the Eiffel Tower or
stood wide-eyed marveling
at the Mona Lisa.

I have never heard an
opera in La Scala or
ridden a gondola in Venice
or eaten Tuscan food
in Tuscany.

I have never tanned in
the Azores or combed
the Malagasy beaches
at dawn.

I have never stood at
the base of Mt. Everest,
a Sherpa at my side. I
have never seen the
full moon rise over Mumbai
or strolled the parapet of
the Great Wall of China.

All that I have ever done
I have done with you.
I have lived my life
in the shadow of
our backyards touching.
And yet, standing
on the shoulders of
our love, I have moved
through time and space;
I have watched this
universe spin around me.
And I have seen everything.

Morning after the Loss

Cold October morning.
Sky the color of old iron.
Dull misty gloom rising,
dense as a forest, cruel,
damp, dangerous as despair.

Stepping blindly
into what should be
daylight but
is more like the underbelly
of a stagnant pond.

In the distance,
dirty yellow lights
leak into the darkness,
tiny rectangles of life
in this circle of nothing.