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Six Poems

by Will Walton

Loss of a Bird

Smoke rose from the dead crow.
Its stiff body hung upside down
from the telephone wire
like a trapeze artist. Its feet,
soldered to the swaying cable.

Another crow landed on the wire,
squawking loudly, turning its head
in short, spastic motions.
It became frantic & began circling
the hanging bird, awkwardly flapping
its wings in a mad fit of grief.

Soon, a second & third joined in,
then a fourth & fifth. Before long,
there were close to a dozen crows—
all squawking, flapping
for their fallen friend, unaware
of the irony in their assemblage.

I say 'friend' because I think
in language. They didn't know
what a 'friend' was, but they knew
how it felt to lose one.

When I got the news my best friend
had drowned, I wanted to do the same.
I wanted to scream so loud
I couldn't hear myself feel. I wanted
to shake my head no, fuck no,
& if I had wings I would've wanted
to flap them in a frenzy of fury.
Instead, I put the phone to my chest,
slid down the wall in my hallway
to the faded blue carpet, & cried.
Something was lost—
the crows knew it & so did I.

And Another Weeping Woman

Tear-soaked palms
hide her eyes from the sun.
Her back's hunched.
Clouds of breath
shoot from the slit

Autumn 2008

Summer 2008

Spring/Summer 2008

Winter/Spring 2008

Editor's Note

Guidelines

Contact

between her cupped hands.
The bus-stop bench holds her,
but is incapable of solace—
its aluminum as cold
as the trail from the clinic.
I'd stepped out for a smoke—
a break from the magazines
& worry of the waiting room.
I hear her across the street,
over the city. Her cry
takes lead in the orchestra—
hanging just above
the car horns,
percussed sidewalks,
& staccato swishes
of the passing taxis.
Compunction wails
from her diaphragm.
I stand, staring,
pulling, biting
the end
of my Marlboro.
I watch her & think of you.
I crush the butt, putting out
its fire, & walk back inside.

Smoke Ring

Smoke eased out
in intervals
from his cast lips.
Not one
resembled a ring.
I tried.
I was no better.
We laughed.
Everything
was funny.
I've heard people
say they didn't
get high
their first time
We did.
High as hell.
Rode our bikes
around like kings
of the neighborhood.

He hung himself
Sunday. A friend
called & told me.
Said he struggled
with addiction
& depression
for some time.
I haven't seen him

since 8th grade.
I guess somewhere
along those 19 years
he picked up
something
he couldn't put down.

We never did blow
a smoke ring. But
we were high as hell
we were kings.

After a Party at a Friend of a Friend's

I woke & he was there,
staring,
close.
His empty eyes
mirrored
the daybreak,
frozen
in a state
of unknowing.

I counted
the points—
there were 12.
His rack,
like an oak
looking down
on its leaves.

I pictured him
bent over,
chewing,
thinking of only
his next bite,

while someone else
thought
of
theirs.

My stomach spoke
& I thought
of mine.

I sat up on the couch
to face death,

tied my laces,
& left
the beast staring into

a sun it no longer needed.

Pair of Eyes

'That pair there'—I point. She follows the line
of my finger, then grabs the sunglasses,
& sits them on top of the display case. I pick
them up, sandwiching the 2 temples
between thumb & index, resting them
on nose & ears. 'Nah, not these,' I say, looking
in the mirror. 'Let me try those.' She reaches in,
& pulls out another pair—they're mirrored.
I put them on, & look again. This time,
into a world robbed of infinity
only by its own absorbance. I stare
at myself staring at myself. My existence,
like a Russian nesting doll. I hand back the glasses,
& thank her for her time. When I get in the car,
I turn the ignition, & apply the brake.
I pull down the visor, & catch a glimpse of myself
in the mirror. This time, there is just one face,
one pair of eyes—green, with lids that open & close.

Silence in March

Smoke piped from the exhaust
of the old Volks. Dad popped
the latch to the front hood
as I neared the car. I opened it, threw
my backpack in, & slammed it shut.
When I got in the car, the radio
was set on 107.7 Oldies Rock—
"Uncle John's Band" playing.
I'd almost fallen back asleep when
Hendrix's version of "Watchtower"
woke me up. The last solo faded,
& the DJ came on—said he was sad
to say that Charles Bukowski,
after a year-long battle with leukemia,
had died. 'Who is he?' I asked.
'He was a poet.'
A sound bite from Buk's last
reading in Redondo Beach played
as we pulled up to the curb.
I reached out to open the door,
but stopped when I saw the tear.
I held the handle, suspended
in language. The poem ended,
& the DJ returned. He said,
'For the voice of generations, let us
please pause for a moment of silence.'

Will Walton is thirty-two years old, and currently lives in Georgia. He has a BA in Creative Writing/Poetry from Valdosta State University. Most recently, his poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poetry Quarterly*, *Lost Coast Review*, *Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream*, *Common Ground Review*, *IthacaLit*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *The Oddville Press*, and others.

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