

Axe in Hand

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Lunar Navigator

My child, my son, his body
embraces his age awkwardly, thirteen,
he's memorized maps of the moon,
from the light of the Northwestern Limb
to the shadows of the Crater Grimaldi and he dreams
of a reality without gravity. Feathers and stones.

Stones and feathers. He knows how to calculate
his weight on Mars. He can tell you how many light years
to the spiral galaxy; he can explain why a rock
and a penny drop to earth with the same velocity,
but he cannot find his face, because he can't find a hand
to push the hair from his own forehead,
look the girl he likes in the eye and smile.

Luminosity: Radiant energy and other forms

Broken.

Through your kitchen window a universe of motes, dust
rides currents of light, settles down into the cracks on the floor.
You see a blinking, maybe it's a signal from somewhere.
You can take that warmth, bank on it, reach for it
hands orbiting, fingers spiral to catch—
nothing. There is only the pattern
of lines in an empty palm, those etchings
identified you before you knew yourself.

Electric.

Wires run like vessels in the body of your home
to outlets. Faith would say it is a simple thing,
on or off. (But there is always voltage running through).

Hidden.

Between the shadow and the shadow caster there is a world
trapped under the same bushel which covers you, and when you are ripe
for sleep, when you breathe down deep to the bottom of your lungs
there will be that lingering sweet scent of harvest.
Crisp-apple sugar maple leaf.

Borrowed.

You are dreaming. That smell is only the night. Can I mention Autumn
one more time?
Divining lines? Reflections are a child's joy, the first taste of rain and
puddle's stomped,
mud between toes. Some comet that's been gone so long its name has
been forgotten.

Last time we sat around the campfire watching the flames and
debating currents:
electric, rivers, wind, how dark and cold the air sung through us,
but when you glanced up at me, the fire burned away that song.

Dad's Tomatoes

There are three things I will never forget about my father.

He wore cowboy boots. When he came home from work he'd fall to the chair, lift them in the air, "heel then toe," he'd always say. I'd yank them off, land on my butt, then put them back on, wading around the room in his laughter.

He used to kick holes in doors. Sometimes it seemed he wanted to break himself, beating his boots against the wood, but always the doors broke first so that solid thing inside him stayed hard and whole. Other times he'd just spill, like red kool-aid on the carpet. The worst times he oozed like hot tar on a tin roof.

He played guitar and sang The Green Green Grass of Home, Proud Mary, and Tie A Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree...if you still love me. We danced on the couch and chairs and no one cared.

There are three things I had forgotten about my father.

He used to talk to people who weren't there. Or maybe they were, but I never saw them.

He came to my high-school graduation dressed in a mushroom colored 70's suit wearing a shirt my mom had made for him ten years before. The last remnant of fifteen years of marriage. He was there, I didn't say hello. Then he was gone.

He told me once, "God is an asshole. He sits in heaven shitting all over us, laughing. We're here to suffer. That's it." All I could think to say was, "No. That's not true," and hug him as he wept in my lap because my mom would not take him back.