

Robert Ford

Gulf of Tonkin

You drop out unexpectedly, from the rippled underside of
a continent of cloud that began to seem unbreachable,
still high above a country that is little more than an

idea to you. And it is not the sheer enormity of the Earth
that grabs at you, reaching in through the window of
the aeroplane, like it would at an astronaut peering down

on sunrise, but its intricacy, daubed in all those pixels of light,
suddenly revealed; the grey and green, the browns, the scattered
shards of mirrored glass, that slowly tune themselves into

rice-fields and hillsides, villages, trees and reservoirs.
Behind shuttered eyes you try to fix the captured image,
delay, at least, the perspective's frantic disassembly.

Buckets

Bob Dylan saw rain coming in buckets,
like this morning, along Some Sound,
perhaps. It's how a rain machine would
rain, in a robotic swipe of broad noise,
devoid of space within itself for any
individual drops to make themselves heard.

Curtains of it collect off the shallow roof,
making steely, dripped-in pools at the edge
of the slipway leading down to the shore,
before seeping their way back loyally
through the weeds and stockpiled rocks,
into the long, swollen finger of the ocean.

By opening the window, I could almost
drown the spiralling voices of you and
your sister, arguing about whatever
it is today. Closing my eyes, I could
replace them with the hammered-on
notes of his guitar, drain myself away too.

Border

He didn't sleep again last night.
It could've been the shouting from above,
the hard fist of concrete under their hips,
or just the endless hum of emptiness.

One day he's going to cross the river,
when the low tide catches the cup
of the moon on the horizon, with nothing
but a tall, rigid stick to steady him,

his money knotted safely in a bag,
and a length of blue rubber pipe for air.
From under the water's needy flow,
he'll aim for that point where the fence

appears to droop wearily, where there are
trees lashed behind with dense vines.
The rattle of dogs, straining against their
rope collars, will announce his arrival.

At Grandma's House

there's a basement with a beaten sofa.
You can escape there by descending
an elbow of warped wooden stairs that
corner their way around the back of
the house from the side-deck. No-one

will see us leave. Take an open bottle
of anything brown from the cabinet.
We'll refill it later with some cold tea,
maybe stale root beer and water. I've
got this little bag of grass, enough to

roll a slim one. We'll be totally invisible
down there, getting high, beyond the wash
of their blunted adult voices. Don't you
think they sound like they're underwater,
like they're the ones already underground?

Robert Ford lives on the east coast of Scotland, and writes poetry, short stories and non-fiction. His poetry has appeared recently in *Scrittura*, *Clear Poetry*, *Alliterati*, *Dream Catcher* and *Firewords*.