

Three Poems by Richard King Perkins II

The Impertinence of Ice

Route 176 absorbs the roar and agitation spinning across it; an Illinois dawn rises from harvested fields. Winter will not release its net. A huddle of willows waits, still pinioned to cryptic ground. The fall of tendrils hadn't even recognized the first signs of attack.

Grandpa George was a talented farmer, but now he names abandoned hay bales as cows; tells us again he'll paint the old farmhouse white when it thaws. We remedy the conversation with small bits of humor, deciding that it must be grenadine that makes lemonade pink.

Identity is a divergent evolution, filled with growth rings and dead branches. None of us remember well the people we used to be. Turning right on Rt. 47— potholes of black freeze, impossible to avoid. The impertinence of ice has exploded the pavement we opaquely travel upon.

Magnitude

It ended when I could become no larger
and began when I was less than a speck.
I am unrecognizable by machines
of analysis and magnification.
Tomorrow, I will be a galaxy
but at this moment I'm a remote scintillation.
Tomorrow, I will be the sound of worlds colliding
but I'm just a rubbing of grass blades at this time.
Between now and then there will be
books unread and compliments never given.
Stories I forgot to share.
Between now and then there will be
one side of the bed gone cold,
an ancestor's name mentioned for the last time.
Intimacies that never happened.
These are what I try hardest to remember.
Growth is not an adding to—
growth is a taking away.

Flesh Shall See

We hear the worst thoughts in human history
elevated by perceived status;
bloated, droning, insulated—
ideas stanchioned on white mountains at midnight
disregarding the supplicated, the needful—
demon-hooved partisans standing frozen
with their singular, hell-forged wisdom
broken off from the voracious absentia
out masquerading in the false mechanics of morning.

Short-circuited, we fall asleep into a vast delusion
and our minds begin to decompose the future
we've all been promised; adobe pyramids
and gleaming, supple metals, our minds sutured
by catatonic philosophies and the snakes of our
intended resurrection; the simplest existence of love
without consequence and entitlement without cause;
until the droning wakes us with an oppressive start
and still we will look stupidly to the East with hope.

Richard King Perkins II is a state-sponsored advocate for residents in long-term care facilities. He is a three-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee and has had work appear in hundreds of publications including *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Bluestem*, *Emrys Journal*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Two Thirds North*, *The Red Cedar Review* and *December Magazine*. Forthcoming poems will appear in *Broad River Review*, *The William and Mary Review* and *The Louisiana Review*.