

Three Poems

by Tyrone Jaeger

Perhaps the Dam Will Hold

I'm drying out like a late Raymond Carver
story but these Arkansas rains . . .
Leaks trickle in the kitchen and living room.
Drips pop in pails and tupperware. Water above,
water below. My APRN assures me the pain
and blood only internal hemorrhoids. Breached pipes.
Ruptures abound. I survey the storm
from a window and behold the sill,
carved in child scrawl *it is okay*.
I might rage. The child denies—and later
tosses my way a wadded paper confession
I did it. :(x2 please do not be madx2
I might cry but instead close my eyes and whisper
it is okay. itis okay. itisokay.

Another Wet Winter, Arkansas

Dock submerged in flood brown
I paddle up the lake's narrowing roots
two creeks, Beaverfork and Pickles Gap.
The gathering of fog disperses,
ascends, a sect awaiting worshipers
and three corn-fed bucks climb the slope
and stop, peer down at the water drifter, me.
Winter-wiped trees and greenbrier lay bare
the wooded shoreline. I marvel at the awful
flotsam—basketball, bicycle helmet, lures
and bobbers, styrofoam cups and bits—tossed
from boats and cars, washed off lawns, draining
down the ditch—and one prostrate, dead forever
goose, head immersed as if in shame or prayer.

Lost in the Forest of Unaware

You at fourteen, a sapling with spooked brown eyes,
careful through the hallways, where the bathroom toughs
wait at the stair top, lookout bored with no teacher on
the way to bust smokers. You are fresh meat to be grabbed
and taunted. They smell your fear through the pine-scented
deodorant your mother said you should start wearing,
but she is nowhere and does not exist in this thicket
of bodies and threats. Inside that bathroom they suck
on cigarettes and you imagine murder on their minds.
I promise that someday you'll see that they were just
fucking with you. Still, you have teary sleepless nights
and want mothering, but your parents watch St. Elsewhere
and where exactly are your words? Years later, you will
be the boy who walks in the bathroom to smoke a pinner
and will see your tweaker cousin has, miraculously unaided,
tied to the stall frame a nerdy classmate upside-down
by his shoelaces. Let 'em down, you'll say.
Your tweaker cousin will laugh and fire his lighter.
The boy falls, head-smacked on the tile. He mutters
thanks as he exits the door, and you'll stand at the window
uncertain why you entered in the first place. ▲▼▲