

TIRE SWING, FROZEN RIVER

When she sleeps on the horse in her yellow slicker,
he holds the harness which keeps her hat
from flying over the mountain. Also, so it won't snow.
If she kills the hen with her massive hands there will be
no quick feasting at the pub, stripping the wings
will span days. Her uncle's step-brother's son
takes a chainsaw to his truck then treats his daughter
like an egg. Early clouds, then clearing.

(partially inspired by photos by Laura McPhee)

REDEMPTION OR A CANOE

What was she thinking about on the bridge?
Hot biscuits from the oven, ripe peaches
& pies ready to explode? Summer dresses stiff
on a line strung from what's possible to June?
When you were five & your gargantuan mother
held you trembling over the side for stealing apples
& your little heart bounced in its casing, did she know
what would follow? She might just as well have dropped you.

& THE SUN IS A FINE BUGGY OF CHINA: BALLOONS!

You say that if what we believe
to be salt turns out to be sand
& graces nothing but glass
that breaks then it is neither
the beginning nor the end of the world.

Just that yawning field in the middle,
brief leaping hiccups of glint
like kids that bleat on hillsides
& know nothing of the bleeding
which comes after dark.

You paint with that all night
& hope the dawn will replace the colors
leached from the earth & still
have heart, fat wash hung to dry
on the sky's testy line.

LIFE, LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT

You're tired of cards & lamentations
about the indomitability of the human spirit
& the likelihood of love finding you
before the next inescapable birthday.

It's inevitable, I suppose.
World weariness prevails in the end:
the custodian, the attendant,
the purveyor of day old bread who
gets accused of taking yeasty indecencies.

Justice is cold, straight from the box,
no time to melt into the waters of forgiveness
before evening's broodish blast
takes measured reason away,
& office workers run through the streets
clutching warm high balls
they're mad to find a simple cube for.

Off balance above the missing net,
the tightrope dancer tumbles for mercy.
The crowd gasps with fear or anticipation,
perhaps even indignation at having a night
so dearly paid for ruined.

Check out the guy who demands a refund.
Be cheered he's not *your dad*.

PUSH THE ENVELOPE! THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!

They're making pygmy ice tea.
It's wrong, & sad, but plenty of
people line up to drink it.
"Dunk me" they say, flashing
primal pelts, grunting
in their interpretation of ignored
& exploited natives. Hey, don't grimace, it's real
like TV & could lead to something!
No one mentions that there haven't been
aborigines in Nebraska since, well, ever, but
the Vitamin Water people are doing
really really well, the corn-oil engine display
is attracting an extensive crowd &
the Vietnamese spring rolls are surpassing
previous pork-styled sales so if certain people
might have lost their job
when the tractor factory closed down
then who could blame them, especially if appropriately
sized, for impersonating someone else?
What better way to express *American*,
then by embracing another culture,
pressing the water out of it,
& getting paid?