

NEXT TO NOTHING

poems by

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Wolsak and Wynn

SMALL TOWN OCTOBER

Fall and everything changes
but this place repeating itself in pumpkins.
Every face is a friend of a friend
and being known is exhausting.

When I leave town I'm not coming back.
I'll find a house facing the sea not the neighbours
tell selective stories to gardeners, cat ladies
buy milk and the local paper –
I'm so good at beginnings.

In the evenings I'll unpack
belongings wrapped in newsprint
rested and warm with escape.
The kettle will be more symbolic on a blank counter
orange bath oil extra indulgent
the Merlot more intoxicating.

Back in the drive the boys
tumble and trip out the car doors
and they're up the bank,
scouting for backyard friends
or anything else that moves.

And as if in penance for keeping boxes
wanting options or at least a new conversation
there's work in the door
dumb blinks on my desk.
Everyone knowing I'm back and waiting on something.

THIS NIGHT, THE WIND

This night the wind
is full of itself
heedless of snow and winter
it howls at the shape of sleep.

Under roof and dark
amidst the pitch and squalor
of my uneasy dreams
I think of you, friend

remember how a winter's wind
sends you back to surfing.
Maybe tonight in your attic bedroom
waves are good in Hawaii.

Though on the stretch past middle age
asleep you'll surf two months of days
buoyed by youth, sun and sea
a wonderland of wind.

UP AND GONE

Scrambling and tacking
spinning down the backyard hill
you're all snowboots and red cheeks
laughter and shouts clearing the cold.

I'm only guessing now
what's in your mind.

Out of reach and arms
feeling your muscles lean
apart from me
hands uncurled from around my finger
sight beyond my eyes.

Kitchen table, papers, tea
sadness steams the window
outside the life of your body
in primaries on the snow.

AND AFTER

Maybe this is all I want anyway
a happiness of one.

Yesterday
I wiped out corners
year-old Cheerios and coffee grounds
trapped between stove and counter.

A clean sweep of an empty house.

ROAD TRIP

Most Saturdays we drive for sports
and eat in the car on the road –
two boys in back with the cooler
the oldest up front with the map.

It's mid-morning, late November
between hockey and basketball.
The youngest having played, lost and not scored
has shut his eyes to the sun
and frowns for want of sleep.

I'd rather a goal for the play-by-play
your whole body talking, eyes shiny and black
but even turned away and half asleep
lips like a pufferfish
you're all sweetness to me.

Your childhood is
years of my heart hurting
love and worry too close to call
and tears just a few blinks away.

In my mind's eye
I'll keep our white Subaru flying down the 101
jackets strung across windows
empty juice boxes under our feet and
the smell of clementines.

What will stay with you three?

What will be salvaged from backdrop?

I want for your journey

a memory box of jewels

a thousand bright and shining moments

so many they're spilling from your hands

dazzling through a lifetime's sadness.