

U N D E R D A Y S

P O E M S

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THE INTERROGATOR IN RETIREMENT

He's waiting for the reverse
metamorphosis, for the extra
feelers to fold in or fall off,
to wake one morning a man.
He has been either furtive
or defensive, a decorative
shell for his lakeside folks
holding on for the pontoon
to take them to the dim shore.
He is a braggart to the thrill
seekers and smiling victims
who desire to glean truth
in twisted sheets, fabricating
tales of terrorists set to topple
America by spiking the wine
at the top writers' conference.
His surprisingly soft hands
clutch books with blank pages
alongside the corridors of ties
strangling necks and skirts
exposing thighs to jackals.
He squeezes pieces of bread
into moist balls and attempts
to decapitate pigeons, each
ping bringing eventual reward.
He wants to love recklessly
but his eyes remain desert
dry, unable to view clear skies
without seeing the curtains,
the sun without feeling flame,

the passage of days without
remembering each pleading
beat of mouth, heart and feet.

MYSTERY SPOT

Hooked fingers mark the spot,
spin the sepulcher and cross,
signal stolen and savage hopes.
In Sunday school, I etched
rows of X's in a tiny notebook,
beneath my little league stats.
Each ink hatch I crossed
not even knowing my desire,
bulges hidden in winter jackets.
In the decapitated woods
we foraged for morels,
those stunted brown dwarves,
and the famed Mystery Spot,
a glade of unplundered wonder,
among signs riddled with buckshot.
There is danger in unearthing
the thing that is not the thing,
the underside of rocks slimy
with unerring crawlers, women
kissing me in a jagged line,
inhaling more frog than man.
A quester is not gentle.
I plundered far and wide,
and buried the very thing inside.

SURVIVOR'S MANUAL TO LOVE AND WAR

Death is a loving dog
with no children or chew toys
to occupy its attention.
It will lick you into submission,
this inevitable pack instinct,
to join the vast departed.
*The standard autopsy needle
which has a straight shank
but a slightly curved tip
is good for survival sewing.*
Love is a dying battery
in your favorite appliance
you cannot live without.
It is impossible to conserve
this indeterminable reservoir,
your capacity to burn through.
*Don't throw any clothes away.
Pull up your socks. Close your collar.
Be prepared to jump overboard.
Avoid attracting or annoying sharks.*
Desire is a prisoner's final meal
with access to the greatest chefs
cooking for furlough in adjacent cells.
You are at its delicious mercy
in a buffet, bubble or bunker,
waiting to sit, to find the price.
*Place your traps where the trail
is narrow. Use entrails as bait
and the skin as a sled to drag
the meat. Home is on your back.*

Belief is the best-dressed bully
unwilling to let you cross a chasm
in those comfortable clothes.
There is little hope of moving
past the cul-de-sacs and suits,
the curvy hips and winding way.
*Conserve sweat by soaking clothes
in the sea. Desert trails resemble
interlacing cow paths. Sleep out
the storm with your back to the wind.*
Survival is a submerged mossy beast
hungrier than any living thing,
a mass that roils the earth in mounds.
You cannot see the holes and hills
beyond the horizon, the tilled fields,
the uneven terrain you'll need to surf.
*Take care of the injured. Provide
temporary shelter. Stay at the scene
of the crash unless you see land.
Try to establish contact with rescuers.*
It will lick you into submission
It is impossible to conserve.
You are at its delicious mercy.
There is little hope of moving.
You cannot see the holes and hills.
Do not get separated from your party.