

TIM NOLAN

The Eulogy

He could be funny, but only in small groups
of meek women—which is to say—he was not

very funny. He had beautiful and expressive
hands which he normally kept in his pockets.

When he was roused to passion, as he seldom was,
it would usually go unnoticed. He did have

strong feelings for animals—his family crest included
the loon—that symbol of fidelity and lonely song.

He was quite a mimic—I personally remember
how he could sound just like Bobby Kennedy—underwater—

if he was drunk enough. I suppose you all remember
his obsession with orchids—it was strange at the end—

his fretting over their blossoming—*when would it happen?*
Then, his disappointment when they would fade and drop.

He was a collector of sales receipts—some of you
may not know this—he would ask you to empty

your pockets to show him where you'd been, what you bought.
At his confirmation on June 4, 1954, he chose a verse

from the Old Testament, *The Book of Haggai*—"He that
earneth wages earneth wages to put in a bag with a hole.

Consider your ways, sayeth the Lord." Let us consider
him . . . as we head downstairs. There must be other stories.

Baseball

This summer I've watched more baseball games
than any summer in my life—even when
I was ten-years-old and the Twins were

great—and when baseball players had to work
in the *off* season as beer distributors, high-
school history teachers—even then I didn't watch

this much baseball—because now my own son
is ten-years-old and I watch all his games—
which are *real baseball games*—the pitchers

intentionally throw *slop pitches*—I can't believe it—
and I know each kid's batting stance—
his own peculiar address to the future—I know

the way he stands on first after the thrill
of facing the likely *out* and overcoming it.
Then—there's always a game on cable TV

and Frank will watch anything to the end—
even if it's the Braves and the Phillies
in some *blow-out*—and so—I'm back

to that *rhythm of baseball*—which is boredom
projected into the future—like life mostly—
but look at the sky out there—even if

everything's going to hell—there's still this
oasis of baseball—regular, boring, made of threes
and likely outcomes—and maybe—made of *home*.

Totally Random

So at last it's summer and I'm driving
my teenage daughter and her friend to the latest
blockbuster movie at the Mega Star Cinema,

and we're chatting in the car about the last
latest blockbuster movie we each saw in the last
week, and Lizzie says—*It was like a monster movie*

with the weather as the monster, and Lizzie and Mary
now dissect the movie in a way that belongs
to fourteen-year-old girls and is very pleasing

to me because they see below the surface of this
Big Culture, and I'm thinking—*Maybe we are*
raising healthy skeptics, even if they are

goofy and loud and easily amused and shyly
knowing, and now they are observing how
totally random it was in the monster weather movie

when the wolves showed up on the Russian freighter
that had eased down Fifth Avenue, scraped its hull,
and came to rest on the steps of the New York Public Library,

how random that the wolves were so aggressive
when they would probably just cower in the cold
and turn in on themselves, *doggishly*, and could books—

even the Guttenberg Bible, burn at all if it was 170° below,
and random, *totally*, how the girl had to slice open
her leg on the bumper of the taxi cab, just so

the boy could search the Russian freighter
for those Russian medical supplies. I said—
they wanted to work in a love story too,

and the girls both go—*But that's so random . . .*
And what about the randomness of divorce
in the movies and everywhere—everyone's

divorced and happily divorced and even *in love still*
but divorced and the ex-husband and ex-wife are both
beautiful and understanding parents with beautiful

and wise children who help them find a way
to themselves, and I'm thinking—these girls here
in the car are so smart and alive that I would walk

from Philadelphia to New York City in my snowshoes
and special Arctic gear to save them, but at the same time
I'm thinking—*how totally random*, being in this car,

rushing down Xerxes Avenue so the kids won't miss
the previews, and random the previews and random
the President and the Congress, random the transit of Venus,

completely random—the beginning of this endless summer
of being fourteen-years-old, and inevitably random
watching the boys slouching into the Mega Star Cinema,

their baggy pants and rangy wolf-like prowl, and
random my watching, *random* as in—a *random bystander*—
all of this—makes my promise to return—seem *full* with intent.

The Unified Theory

The physicists sought something I don't understand—
a unified theory—to connect everything—
but I sense the problem is not one of *matter*—

that the unification—if there is such a thing—
comes down to *spirit*—and—*intangibles*—
such as the laughter of my son at my small joke—

or the way the yard is so fresh—and *renewed*—
after the rain stops and the sun comes out—
or the way the smart cat in the window watches me

with *intense indifference*—and the place
of unification—if there is such a place—
is somewhere behind my forehead—in my eyes—

seeing out and sorting out—and while there may be
a vacuum in deep space—there is no vacuum
here—in fact—it is this *abundance* that causes

confusion and leads to the desire for order—
and the theories somehow find their way back
to us—because we are *tuned* to majestic chords.

