

CHARLES REYNARD

Alone in the Garden

No orchestral composition,
just a solitary chord,
slender reed of memory,
sepia sense of loam after rain.

There she was, so alone
in her wedge of garden,
the front corner of the white
house on Indianola,

ten feet from the steps
where her husband had fallen
Sunday, blue vein marking
the stroke on his temple.

She conversed with zinnias,
spiky *delphinias*. Her laugh
a soft throat rattle at her joke,
not knowing how to pluralize

these companions. Her son once
told her the plural of sheriff:
sheriffim. She had no notion
how it was she could bear

the wait of her aloneness,
how the dreadful pact each day
discloses, woven in the wilderness
of moments freighted with such grief,

another solitary thread
to a weary but enduring eye.

Final Moments Of Sleep

If I were to select for you a metaphor
it might be *fuoco o fiore*, fire or flower,
for passion and miracle
in this other language. Or lemon
water, for sharpening the palate,
awakened grammar gift for knowing now.
I should pronounce it to be the new light
rumpled with 8:15 morning shadows
of the quilt on the bed by the window,
its panes-taking view of old souls:
late winter trees spidering Victorian
dormitories, the diminishing drifts
of dirty snow on the gray ground, soon green,
the diminishing drafts of smoky chill
in air, soon strung with morning
noises, aviaries of anticipation,
vocabularies of new metaphors
you will wake in a moment to become.

Silent Winter Music

Some Saturday like no other day
I may not feel fatigued mortality,
like the creamy wafer moon, full
in the chilly vapor of my breath.

While the near royal blue of early winter
sky might falter or fade, disappear
with the rest of the phosphor lamps of light,
the shiver crawls, a strand of night fear.

I will want the reassurance the silent
music of morning will go on,
that nearing age sixty is an early
second half second wind deal, when my picks

are cleaner and passes quicker
than ever, when my lover, gasping,
appreciative, would say I was twenty
and I would know it was true.

Nearing Bountiful and Heart Break

Longing is my lodge,
a sheath in the weather
so that I'm not entirely
ruined by the journey,
destination never reached.
It is the poem in a dream
that won't grasp the pen,
a novel whose great heart
of truth might reach out
like father's papery hand,
fingers probing the corners
of night for *the one* chapter,
or the dome of the moon,
just below the sight line
of the ridge bordering
the prayerful sea of peace,
the highway sign not painted
according to DOT regulations,
saying Bountiful and Heart Break
are *near*. It is the law promising
more of symmetry than gravity,
expecting only, at the most
critical moment to change.

The Utility of Heart Break

It is a small town in a mostly rural county on the map of a pear-shaped state, the name of which is regularly mispronounced by its own citizens. Not a big town, hard and unbreakable. It is soft much of the time, then sometimes thin and brittle. Depending on the map you select, you can place your fingers on the topography, the ridges of respiration, the ravines of longing, the wind-flattened grasses of open space where mind sleeps peacefully. The water system was voted in the last half of the last century. Yes, it has a hotel of the same name and a slobbering baritone theme song. The city hall and courthouse is at the intersection of Surrender and Submission. The political map discloses few boundaries in black and white. The bypass and the major arteries are in washable crayon. Although the creek, rarely in a rush, babbles toward Heaven and August feels like hell or Kansas, it is frequently like returning to Bountiful, for the utility of Heart Break is its earth, the desolation of dirt, its whispered water, the creation of crop, the hope lining its quilted grief, its plain speakers, and their awe as couples sit, hands laced, in the Saturday evening motion picture theater. The Chamber of Commerce, who is actually a grandmother, retired from being teacher and principal after 36 years, proposed a new slogan: Take a Break in Heart Break. The utility of Heart Break is the odd perfection found in the town cemetery's connection to the babies, born in the symmetry and rhythm of death, so that its population from no more than one day to the next has remained exactly the same for as long as anyone can remember.

Conspiracy of Rivers

So natural that all of them
would swear the oath, pour their
conflicting stories into turbulent,
muddy water roiled from conjoining
testimonies, like a conspiracy of rivers.
It is the burden of truth to suffer
its abrasions, beveled by rules,
filtered with objections,
before it is welcomed as proof.
The relation of truth and proof
is not often any more
than a ragged slant rhyme.
Court is an alternate universe:
search for truth and *due process*
chance cousins of arcane
genetic origins. Cynical good fortune
if they were to meet in the corridor.
Truth is the gift wrapped in the elegant
cloth of doubt (called *reasonable*),
ribboned in systematic rubric,
finally named justice.

Juvenile Day

Like loaves and fishes, a miracle
to find one desultory day each week
amid traffic days, motions days,

felony days, here in Heart Break:
courtroom on the second floor,
the intersection of South Surrender

and West Submission, where
I sit and await with mumbled prayers,
the coming of those like Danny.

The law, in its due and majestic process,
assigns fault, sometimes responsibility.
There's a difference, I frequently say

from my bench-top Olympus, incanting
the fifteen minute legal liturgy, called
Permanency Review, once every six months.

Wherefore, I find it is not your fault,
Danny, that you have Post-Traumatic
Stress Disorder, Oppositional Defiant

Disorder, and R-O Bi-Polar illness.
Or that you are under the influence
of Depakote 500 mg, Zoloft 200 mg,

and Seroquel 40 mg. But it is
your responsibility not to swallow
shampoo or thumbtacks, not to run

away, steal gas, shoplift matches
from Dollar General, and not to knife
your neighbor or your nurse during

the manic phase of your moon,
the unspeakable sorrow hidden
behind your chaotic chronicle

(which we cannot talk about because
you may break, Family Service says,
even though you are doing better).

Blessed, son, I hold you in my hand,
so helpless to help, so blind to watch
over you in your garden of griefs.

The Law of Love

May simply be battered theology,
secular humanism or particles
in the law of physics, but we are one.

Legally speaking, I usually cite
authorities, and although I suspect
commandments exist, unremarkably

there is the fact I am slow to Scripture
(say unlearned, unable, sometimes simply
uninterested), so shamelessly say

it is the scripture of intuition,
the heart's truest fiction that we are one.
The nerve ache when memory prints pictures:

bruised homeless, mass-goers under clouds
of Uzis, torn victims, the hollow boy, 9,
who saw mother in her final moments,

ragged agonal breaths (*her head, leaking*),
world-wounded, barely surviving members
of the tribe. A sense of *identification*.

Makes me think: when I am stopped for over-age
drinking, the officer says please show me
some *identification*, I show her

these pictures, saying again we are one
and how, literally, by all brutal marks
of radical identity—this *is* me.

In the House of Law

Sent at an early age to live in the house of law,
he sat alone in the dining room at the veritable,
steeped in a glazed pot of verity, no face for rest.
The practice, rhetoric's dance on heads of pins,
found no truth, though for sake of contention,
he argued its presence as guest.

Rooms in the house of law bawled with phones.
The kitchen tossed salads of convoluted fact
with abandon, dressed in preternatural cunning.
No living rooms, dreaming rooms, only rooms
with Daumier prints, for waiting, for worry.

Would she claim this wreck of law,
disguised as man in disarray?
Fevered overdue process corduroyed his brow
shadowed in the venue of alone.

Could she shred his contract, consume his tort,
strictly deconstruct his holy constitution,
charm his statutes? Might her patience sit
astride his trembling body of years,
braid, from ribbons of all his brilliant briefs,
a valedictory of his longings.

One last hope-filled offer: to be her door
in this house of law, to be a density
for her to open, walk into his emptiness,
spacious space, anomaly of soul.
Come again, he asked, with hinges and oil,
with deadbolts to secure me as I close
behind you, clothe you with the nascent night.