

Vice Versa

David Estes

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How I like the idea of lives being made like poems, and vice versa.

Robert Travers

I read poems weirdly pausing at places one is not really to pause at
and reading briskly through probably what is meant to be a pause.
I just keep rereading and sometimes it makes no sense.

Michael Morris

Titles

1. Barefoot Mary
2. When a song is a life
3. Kansas Ave
4. The Pool
5. California
6. White Fence
7. Veranda (Bretton Woods)
8. of Art
9. Fall
10. Intramural Basketball
11. The Lesser Ones
12. Morro Bay

Barefoot Mary

Our poor kids never taken to
Disney
but instead
to another chapel
just a little further up
and around that corner
in Rome;

where the Caravaggio hangs
dimly-lit,
unless
you have a coin.

When a song is a life

In the search for an archived file I found instead
a song I once and still admire.

It reminded me of Jeff. Someone I liked growing
up though he didn't play sports
and was a grade younger but years ahead of me
full-bearded while I was still
peering closely in the basement bathroom mirror.

In college he once showed up
for dinner wearing a nice dress and spoke of its
comfort but immediately stepped
into a closet when hearing the unexpected knock
on the door. The last time I saw
him was at Rebop Records where I was looking
for a Tom Waits CD. I asked him
what he was listening to and he suggested this:
Shadow (State of Bengal Remix).

Kansas Ave.

Razed lots
the years flattened
by tornadoes
and urban
flight except for
that McDonald's
at the
corner or this
building where
she still
lives now
alone with a
phone book
opened
at her side
dialing strangers
she hopes
she may know.

The Pool

I write poems on my phone during long walks through town or up narrow paths in the woods near the creek I smile when I look up seeing all the others writing their poetry yesterday on the phone he told me that you swim a mile twice a week and that it has made you stronger he also said the pool is a good place to cry.

California

I bought a beret
and never wore it
though I did wear
a tie but for less
than a week
soon after reading
how an artist
perhaps
Giacometti
surprisingly did;
I taught art
that year at
a school near
campus and most
memorable of all
was seeing Jesse
Jackson walk by;
the kids cared less.

White Fence

Near the bridge near the school
is a quiet property
with unraked leaves, brown
and brittle
nearly weightless
to the early risings of these
longer days;
but what has stopped me
is the turn and tilt
of a squiggly-wired white fence
a shallow-arc,
breathless
and reminding
of how someone once cared.

Veranda (Bretton Woods)

Awakened
to the wide-awake chatter
of wildlife
and soon settled
to a background Sonata
from the hotel lobby
with Free Coffees — this one
unspilt;
our days now alone.

of Art

Sort of similar to sharing your sunscreen
with a stranger on a beach
and that person
(and especially their new spouse)
are deeply appreciative
and kind
but then ride off
back to the only Bed and Breakfast
on the island.

And you turn and walk on
thinking about them
for a while.

Fall

Do you remember our family
visit to the Lincoln Memorial
just a few weeks after Nixon
waved farewell? How a young
man wearing a saffron robe
handed me a small green bible
then approached Dad asking
for a donation? And how Dad
appeared baffled but reached
for his wallet until I returned
the book insisting that I didn't
even want it? And how in all
the commotion you lost your
balance stepping back on the
high-rise marble stairs to fall
crumpling in the August heat?

Your knees bleeding dark onto the warm white-stone.

Intramural Basketball

Kirk died yesterday;

reminding me

of how annoyed I was to be playing out of position

so many years ago;

little me

already up the court to open space

for our approaching guards.

But now I smile seeing how he saw himself:

a general

marching across mid-court

with that little hop and skip to his step

and pounding his dribble

loud enough

to be heard back in Indiana;

he lifts his free hand fingers splaying: "Four!"

a signal

of what only he knew he wanted us to do.

We didn't have plays;

at least not that I knew of.

The Lesser Ones

How wrong I was
asking Michael McClure about his lesser
poems.

He didn't know me.

And I had only read a few
but must have felt that was enough.

Which ones, he asked.

Morro Bay

I recall Morro Bay in late-morning

the bird life, pelicans
and entitled seals below the pier
so loud I thought eventually I would tire
but I didn't;
so how are we not living there?

We continued on to San Simeon
where I ripped my jeans, significantly
on a barbed wire fence.
Huge elephant seals speckled the beach
sand-covered and still, boulders
until we neared

and then later we checked out the Castle.

David Estes received his BA in History from Cornell University and MFA in Sculpture from California College of the Arts. He has recently become interested in poetry and how it relates to making images.

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