

Blue Heron Nests

Blue heron nests gone. Dead trees
stand knee-deep and bereft, drowned
when beavers remodeled the marsh.
I promised a glimpse of nestlings,
parents forking up fish and frogs.
Instead, this post-biblical scene
bordered by a rough, unkempt trail
inviting us to stumble and fall.

Although the landscape slopes
in all directions at once
our aging joints support us.
Huge glacial erratics loom
over us. Bedrock extrusions
knuckle up awkward slopes. We walk
as precisely as we can,
dodging roots and mucky spots.

The forest is leafing out,
thickening the dapple of shade.
We aren't as self-renewing but
we chat casually as we hike
as if sitting over mochas
in a brimming city café where
the disappearance of blue herons
wouldn't reckon into our lives.

Slop and Waste

Mopping the filthy sidewalk
at the shopping center pays
fifteen dollars an hour.

Poetry of cigarette butts, candy
wrappers, and register receipts.
Rorschach of urine, gum, vomit

and occasional puddles of blood.
An overhang shields me from rain,
which today forms a crystal wall

within easy reach. Shoppers
pass without greeting me,
although I know many by name.

I took this job to understand
the dynamic of slop and waste.
I learned all I needed to know

on the first day of wringing my mop.
Now I do it for fun and money,
and for the empathy of rain.

Phoebes Nesting

A Friday shaped like a meat hook
invites me to hang my carcass
where everyone can see and applaud.

Overnight, phoebes built a nest
sheltered under the eaves where
hawks can't accurately stoop.

I dreamed that I parked my car
near a gaping old barn. Someone
cruelly inclined had it towed.

Now the figure of the meat hook
hangs over the entire village,
rebuking our grisly appetites.

Although I take it personally
I rarely eat beef, preferring meals
that won't get up and walk away.

Dawn thrusts its rosy fingers
down my throat to determine
if I've been cheating on my diet.

The phoebes sing the same two notes
over and over, greeting the sun
with crisp instinctive sincerity.