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Poems by David Meischen



Adrift

For Karl Auld, January 1, 1949–November 27, 2019

i.
A crockery bowl, a jar
of pickled jalapeños. Your hands
are busy making guacamole.
In the entryway behind you,
print curtains on a windowed door
where party guests will enter. A word

from behind my Instamatic and you look
up—your line of sight, my line of sight, merging.

ii.

I have carried us
for more than fifty years.
We are a space inside myself.
Always I have known that somewhere
I am with you. When you
stopped breathing was I gone?

iii.

You crouch on the living-room rug,
a guest whose name I've long forgotten
strumming his guitar beside you. Knees,
hips, back, shoulders—you arc yourself
into the harmonica at your lips,
a Dylan tune unwinding from your breath.

iv.

Once I made my way
to Munich just to be with you.
Before snow arrived we walked
the English Gardens. You mocked
a hostile goose. You stood beside me
while a stranger snapped us, a swath of green
unfurling beyond. Atop a little hillock in the distance,
the garden's Greek temple. A columned miniature,
it gleams against a chill blue sky, cloud-flecked.

v.

I fell in love with you
when we were twenty, perfecting
whiskey sours—fresh squeezed lemons,
sugared, bourbon's smoky intimation. You knew
what I wanted when the liquor murmured in me.
You raised your glass to mine. *I love you*, I said.
You took a sip and smiled. *I love you, too*.

vi.

The bond between us bound me
to myself. Your last breath cut me
loose. Where do I go with this grief?
How do I lay you down?

vii.

One day in Munich I walked alone.
In the shutter's eye, a shroud
of snow, tree limbs charcoaled
against a sky pale and cold, bitter
as the air that grips my fingertips.
Distant walkers—stick figures dark
against the snow. Our little temple, empty.

- [5]



Shortly Before the Last Day

The vase opens her mouth as morning wakes.
She makes an O of surprise. Light spills
through the near window and the vase sings
her single note, almost inaudible. Listen.

She forms an O of delight as light spills
over rumped chenille, pours onto polished oak,
a single note, almost too bright. Listen:
Someone's mother is breathing her last

under rumped chenille. Floors of polished oak
harbor secrets of the house, the room, the bed.
Someone's mother is breathing her last.

Beside her, the vase swallows her own shadow.

Who can keep their secrets—house, room, bed,
table—these petals fallen, their fading perfume,
the vase that held them swallowing shadow?
She, too, is dry. She cannot quench a choking thirst.

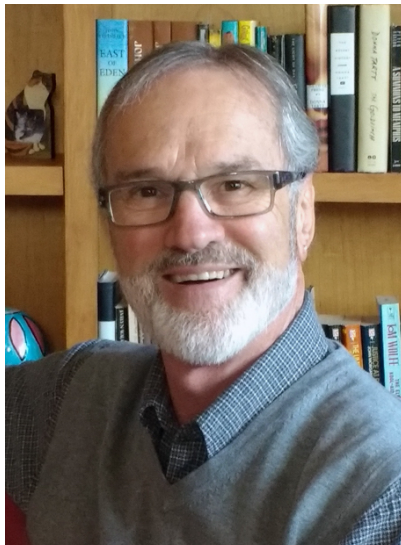
Her fallen petals fade. Their bouquet lingers
in the fading woman's dream of flight. Her cup
is dry. It cannot quench her thirsting roses.
Waking, she drinks the day like water

from the cup in her fading dream of light
through the near window while the vase sings.
Awake now, someone's mother drinks the light,
her morning astir, her vase an open mouth.

- [5]

Art Information

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David Meischen is a Pushcart honoree, with a personal essay in *Pushcart Prize XLII*, and the author of *Anyone's Son* (3: A Taos Press, 2020), his debut poetry collection. David's first published short story appeared in *Talking Writing* in 2011. In 2012, “[Agua Dulce](#) [6]” won the TW Short Fiction Prize. His fiction is featured in *Storylandia, Issue 34: The Distance Between Here and Elsewhere: Three Stories*. Co-founder and managing editor of Dos Gatos Press, David lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with his husband, Scott Wiggerman, who is also his co-publisher and co-editor.

For more information, visit [David Meischen's website](#) [7].

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