
Anniversary
(in memoriam, Pat Logan)

The road turns off
just where it always does and rising
comes out to the second corner
where the graveyard is.
Your grave. You. Behind us,
in one of those reforestation stands
the government plants, the pines
grow taller in their narrow columns
as if to show me how there can be order
in returning what we owe.
I remember what someone told me
of a woman whose husband took her ashes,
as she'd asked him to, and with their children
travelled for a year to scatter them
all over the world, a gesture
that tries to say what death allows
in each of us, no matter how we meet it.

It makes me want
to tell you everything:
what I ate for breakfast,
my son's French teacher's name,
how my basil's doing this year
or the deal I got on this Lincoln rocker
from an antique place I've just discovered
on the Wilmer Road. The man there — you'd like
him, Pat — who told me how he'd farmed
for years and years and then risked everything
on something else he loved,
his hands stroking a desk or chair
just as they've bumped the right curve
of a cow's belly, learning the season
of the calf within, listening to wood now,
what to bring forth
from layers of decisions made by strangers,
for their own good reasons.

Remember that day you taught me
how to look for four-leaf clovers?
"Don't try so hard," you kept saying,
"just peek from the corner of your eye,
like this," running your fingers
through a patch and coming up with one
every time, surprised as I was
and with no more faith, but opening
your hand out anyway, that gesture
which belongs to any gamble,
no matter how crazy, the movement
by which a life gets changed
for keeps, a reach
for what we only hope
is there

just as this yearly journey reaches
deeper into what I only thought
I understood: your death
is final, and touching that
brings out the colours — certain
as the grain in oak or cherry —

of a wider life that grows
through the small demands the present makes
pushing me back to the car for the ride home,
already planning the sandwich I'll get
at the truck stop on the highway; empty now,
the woman who runs it taking the time
to put her feet up, sink back
into the knowledge that will hold her
until I arrive; my wave, her smile
what we'll begin with, the common
courtesies, as if they were nothing
to be surprised by.

Bronwen Wallace

Heifer

I see you prance by the gate
waiting to stalk me again
tail extended and up
you give yourself away, foolish heifer.
the bulls in the pen are interested
but put off by skittish cavorting
your wild and rolling eye,
comic and unpleasant. I expect you
my haunch flexed
the hoof is raised.
rowdy girl, you rout and grab
lunge hard up my udder.
the blow is dead-on
to your lowered shoulder
you stumble.

I regret
if your pink-dotted, wet nose
was bruised again
ramming into my flank.
but you don't say excuse me much
never remember your loss of milk teeth.
my staring is more timeless:
simple with years of letting
the dust of it all drift and settle.
in other words, you don't notice
how ethereal I've become lately
you always bullying for a suck
violating our fresh sense of space.

the sunset radiates
since you bug me
I pivot and amble toward it.
my tail slaps you
as my shoulder shivers away flies.
the sensation moves little sputters
down to my udder
where a tugging
makes me suddenly odd and off
struggling to recall
a tender-mouth calf.

Pamela Oxendine