

Wind and Water

Larry McLeod

We came down to the water late in a late summer evening
Three men near forty and a boy
A stick-legged white heron fished intently on an opposite
shore
His long bill striking
Making ripples, eating fish we could not see

We strung our lines across the pond
Then cast into the rising light
Or falling
Stars and moon came bright
As though it were the same light
Had only moved from here to there

We rode the water in the midlight of yesterday and today
To check the hooks I did not care about
The boy cared
He had come to fish and his father cared
If only for the son

Between this prose and poetry
The subject is three men, a boy, water, stars,
A white heron and where he sleeps in a leafless tree
In the land of white birds
In my morning sleep I have seen him
Leave his perch with a great flapping
Struggling into the morning fog that floats
Upon the water

Like this, like that
A slave in the bow of an ancient ship
Counting the cadence
Sh-roo-umm
Of oars rising and falling
A scene from a dream—
Angels wildly dancing upon the water,
A white smear disappearing in the black
Leaves washing down a crevice in the mind
The white heron rising
Leaving the water until light returns

We lay on our backs
Watching for falling stars
Who would die?
Drinking beer, recalling our fathers' sayings
The old dead times
Our separate lives, selves
Perhaps for a moment bound together

One friend is dead
We will piss no more together
On the dark road
Nor into the moonlight water

Today I rode through sweet October
And came to the pond again
To watch the first leaves come down
When the wind stirs the trees
Watch them gliding, angling
Softly touching the water
Twirling, floating to shore
The white heron will not return today
He is gone to rivers far beyond this place

There is a moment when the wind comes
And we are dry and curled and turned
The naked tree
But the leaves in their life and fall
Are not us
Whatever it comes to is hidden
And is not the same magical, mystical kingdom
Beneath the silent yard
Nor heavens we gaze upon
Beside a pond at night, nor wind nor water

I have given my few bright coins
To children who will spend them
And I wait by the water
Knowing the wind alone will not bear me home