Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

David Graham: Three Poems

David Graham · Monday, September 8th, 2025

Impatient Elegy

My mother sure is taking her sweet time
coming back for a visit. I thought the dead
were supposed to linger a good while,
pull up a chair by your sleeping form
and murmur soft truths like leaves touched
by the wind. But not Mom. She boarded
her train early, clutching her one-way ticket,
and didn't even wave out the window
as it pulled away. She'll eventually write
a funny postcard, I imagine, maybe send
a clipping every once in a while with no note
but "have you seen this?" scrawled sort of
hastily in the margin. I know she'll enter
my dreams someday, but it won't be on tiptoe
and she won't come to lay another blanket
over me or gaze in wonder at my graying face.
No, she'll be reading some book and laughing.
She'll stop short, look a bit surprised to see me,
then continue reading favorite passages aloud.
She'll mix her drinks stronger than mine
and if I remark on it, she will just look at me
with that face, that I've-been-to-war face
that she spent her whole life perfecting.

*

A Note on Democracy

My neighbor flies two flags,
one on each side of the porch
jutting out over the sidewalk.
He never brings them in

at night as my soldier father
always said was essential.
Something about honor,
something about ritual.
The flags fly in rain or whirlwind.
They flutter and ripple
in the dark as the country does,
unsupervised and unseeing.
On holidays or working days—
nothing to distinguish them
anymore. I guess they're all
working days, even unto
the night shift, and double
shifts forever. The neighbor's
dog keeps barking all day long
and most of the night, as though
she knows nothing better.
As if her rightful owner
would come any day now
and carry her away. There is no
such god, and by now she seems
not to believe it herself.
Barking is what she has instead.
It's sort of a song, a comfort
that the unsupervised and
unseeing must need in the dark.

*

Smoke at the Lake

It's sacred ground because
we remember the dear ones

who walked here and walk it
no more. The scent of barbecue

on the wind, children splashing
and shrieking down at the beach,

and because it's getting late
one by one the old ones

have risen, grimacing a little
at their frozen knees and stiff backs,

all heading back toward the house
and beginning to turn to smoke.

*

(Featured image from Pexels)

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