# **Cultural Daily**

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

### **Grant Clauser: Three Poems**

Grant Clauser · Wednesday, December 6th, 2023

# Happy As

In high school my friends and I would drive around in Stem's van, high as kites, we'd play a game called *Happy As* and name three things we were as happy as, like apple pie, skipping school, making out with so-and-so, then try to beat each other with joy until the weed buzz wore off. One friend shipped to Kuwait after graduation, then Afghanistan in the first wave, and never came back. Another dropped out of college for rehab. The third I bumped into ten years ago with not much to say. Me bald. He'd gone gray. Worry and doubt, those close companions of age worn across our faces like tattoos. Other troubles roam around in blood cells for years until they find something inside you to break. Joys too, but never by themselves. I wanted to ask him what he's happy as, if he could name three things, and I'd try to top his list with mine. Happy as the bills paid on time. Happy as a call from the kids. Happy as the resting heartbeat that's been wrong about so much.

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# **Planting Pawpaws**

Their seeds look like coat buttons smeared in the fallen fruit's ripe custard.

Pushing four of them into compost pots in fall for planting is a category of defiance, a confidence that seasons and shadows.

sunlight when it comes, will be kind, that life will limb into sturdy bones, that bones will leaf and bloom, and blooms expand to fruit settlers here called Hillbilly Banana, or Quaker Delight. A complicated sweetness that surprises in a season when everything else is dying. My therapist friend says you can talk yourself into hope, a new life, but it's work to force something bright from a dark place, like searching the woods for a fruit tree that bends between borders and wastelands. A neighbor gave me a bucket of them, and I spoon the pulp, seeds and all, directly into my mouth, smooth the small stones with my tongue and spit them into my palm. Some may rot in the planter, may be scavenged by squirrels or broken by ice in winter, but if I'm lucky, if all the promises nature makes with fingers crossed and eyebrows furrowed, then one day I'll lift ripe pawpaws off the ground and give you some.

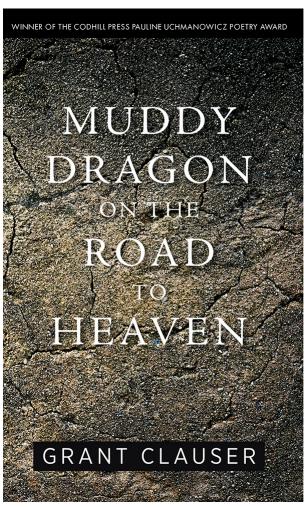
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#### **Lower Hawk Run**

A thousand times I've studied the whir of water when a trout sips my dry fly from a riffle, and each still stirs me like a child surprised with a toy. The small joy of it. Like how perfectly hemlock needles drift in the current at the same speed as my elk-hair caddis. I bend my knees slowly into the river, careful to not disturb the resting of time, believing water itself is time pushing and pausing, adding to itself, all of it eventually to an abyss so great even the sun can't reach the end of it. This trout. This fly. This dash from hiding into morning light. Let's all be children again, finding delight in small surprises, bending our lives with the ease of water

flowing over stones, great things moving through us.

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Muddy Dragon on the Road to Heaven by Grant Clauser

## Purchase Muddy Dragon on the Road to Heaven by Grant Clauser

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