Cultural Daily

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Robert Okaji: Three Poems

Robert Okaji · Thursday, October 30th, 2025

I Started to Write about the Frog Pond

The line between negative and positive wavers below the surface, ever balancing. Something plops, unseen, in the shade. I say I am fine when really I'm wailing inside. God damn it, this isn't fair. I feel the cancer's growth, imagine eternity winking her left eye at me as if to say it's quiet here. Join me. I'm not ready for that. What, then, do I desire? My right hand often works counter to the left. I have learned to shrug it off, much to my bureaucratic soul's dismay and my imagination's disdain for reality. You are under no obligation to picture this, in fact you shouldn't, but I want my wife to press her naked thighs against my ears as she whoops and invokes the name of the patron saint of orgasms. I want to spill red wine on a white carpet, eat cookies in bed. I want to fertilize weeds, watch them blossom. I want to memorize the name of every frog in the pond. I want to read all twenty volumes of the Oxford English Dictionary. Twice. But I'm starting to wheeze at night, pain keeps announcing itself in unexpected regions, and the immunotherapy infusions seem to be feeding rather than razing the tumors. I fear that a heavy thumb is tipping the scales in zero's direction. There ain't no here there, and I am so limited these days. In time, in patience,

in body. The frog pond is of course a metaphor, yet it exists three miles from my house, teeming with life. Oozing, messy life. How I want to watch it go on. How I want to go on.

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The Purity of Starch

Betrayal or spark, I cannot refuse this course. One thought, the merest breeze, and I imagine days with books lying open on pine stumps, caught in a wavering dream of wildflowers and perfumed hair, of short nights and tangled sheets, the lemon-half moon hovering overhead. This is too much. It is never enough. I want the purity of heavy starch, the stillness of sanctity, of certainty in discretion and falsehood strummed true. I want this flaw healed. I want skin on skin, tongue to tongue, and unuttered words seared through flesh and into bone in that chamber where everything is nothing, and implication drills deeper than truth, truer than love, and only we remain hidden at its core. But morning's news carries warnings of rising waters and wreckage washed downstream, and as I listen to recordings of your voice, because that is what I have today, I sip coffee and wait, knowing the emptying begins in this moment, now.

*

If Not Grief

Sometimes I think of what I am losing. How emptiness fills the day.
And grief lines this quiet space.
Your body, lying next to mine.
The fine hairs on your cheek whispering my name.
Our love.

(Featured image from Pexels)

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