Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Sydney Lea: Two Poems

Sydney Lea · Tuesday, November 10th, 2026

Darkness

I was not lost, only turned around,
as old Vermonters say.
I know the countryside cold,
so I'd find my way out of those woods, that swamp.
Still, a darkness under those trees this morning
recalled a chilling moment.
16 or so, alone,
small flashlight clamped in one hand,
I groped along a slim limestone seam,

intent on local fame:
I'd explore the cave, then report to my friends,
each one of them besieged like me
by an adolescent hunger to show
the world how tough he is.
I saw I was not when I snapped off the light
at the first fork I reached.
A blackness instantly descended,
more absolute than black.
As never before, I understood

what helplessly *lost* might mean.
I turned myself around on the spot.
The feeble torch showed webs,
pale insects within them like hovering souls.
Chalk-dust fell around me,
so fine I seemed to dream more than sense it.
Four hundred miles from that cave,
where a sense of my doom had struck me,
I stood today, mud clutching my boots,

then staggered as fast as I could from the murk,
the unnerving forest, the bog,
no human trace there but a rust-riddled bucket,

from an age when even wetland
had been cleared for pasture. The woods have simply
returned to claim what was theirs from the start.
I emerged from my brief confinement,
as I did from that tunnel decades back,
tracking my puny beam of light

into a fathomless future.

*

All That's Waiting

—for MRB

Under radiant foliage two months before winter
I pledge I'll stand right here beside her

for just as long as I possibly can
and her gentle face will catch the sun

all through the rest of my life and then
of hers and her smile will live in winds

like today's or any which will endlessly flutter
the threads of that frayed old Irish sweater

she always wears whenever she's knocking
around the house or when she's hiking

inherited garment that's worn and tatty
and can't mask the inner and outer beauty

that has blessed me for more than forty years
as has that beguiling scent in her hair

which I am daydreaming now will persist
the one I catch when she comes in like this

from out in October chill with the lively
dogs so young they'll surely outlast me

and all I describe may wait in some Eden
that at worst it does me no harm to imagine

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