

Fulcrum

B.J. Buckley

Prairie balanced between winter and spring, vacant, monochrome: too silent: absent of bodies. Empty save for this pale wash of light, inaudible whispers of stars. But soon it will fill with snow again, with dust, with dawn, icy rain, each grassy hollow where deer slept, or foxes, where geese as the sun fell pressed themselves to the earth against howling brute forces of wind. Why does the heart think *room* and *abandoned*, those words whose echoes are *wall* and *ruin*, in this field, bright field forever unbounded? Sky curves away, away, touches nothing. Even mended, the fences kept nothing in. Everything's here that ever was, lightning, flame, cold ash, spring floods drowning new wheat in the furrows, hunter and hunted, birth blood and bones, some so tiny even God might miss them, counting his prodigals, dun sparrows, lambs.

Whisperer

B.J. Buckley

Machine gun rain, drops steel-hard and cold
that ricocheted like bullets, bitumen smell
as they pocked the asphalt, and all six & a half
skinny feet of Swede Granstrom were stretched
soaking wet 'cross the double yellow lines,
next to the stallion spilled from the wrecked trailer
in the pitch dark, and he was singing Brahms' lullaby
in a voice so clear and pure the angels wept.

Driver was dead, pickup flipped and airborne over
the bobwire fence and rolled so many times it was flat,
and the driver under it, and Clay'd gone along
the highway to try'n get flares lit in the downpour,
and I was standing over Swede and the poor broken
horse, both back legs snapped, it was crazed
when we got there, that horse, screaming and biting
and struggling to rise, beyond dangerous.

Swede got out of our truck, unracked the rifle,
handed it to me, cooing and clicking his tongue
and humming the music, and he sat next to
those flying hooves and laid himself down,
put one hand on the stallion's neck and said
easy, easy – that horse made one last anguished
twist and was still, breath rasping like torn paper.
Swede sang to it as if it was his own sweet child
afraid of the dark, Swede sang, waved me over,
mouthed *here* – pointed his finger just below
its soft delicate ear – said *now*.

Vixen Song

B.J. Buckley

Fox-haunted fields, autumn, the leaves red
ghosts: blood, hunt-stain, bright hunger,
that low-slunk undulation through fading
grasses, slick slither in and out of cattails
in the borrow ditches, fur flash, death's
soft frame. Mouse, vole, pocket gopher,
pheasant chick, bug and beetle, sweetest
berries bears forgot to pick, fallen apples
and their worms, the fields' waste: trampled
barley, broken corn, seed from sunflowers
drying on their stems: nothing spurned.
At last light, foxing on a page of heavy frost,
straight quick line, her tracks: she passed so
close, incendiary, and her wild breath burned.