

# 4 PROSE POEMS

By Howie Good

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *We love Good's incorrigibly literate footholds on the anti-rational and that so much information—literal, symbolic, philosophical—can be packed into so few words. And what words! This master of compressed form combines the density of poetry with the music of prose to create flashes with the sting of revelation. His lyric ear scrupulously exploits every phonic possibility along the way and there is never a false note. Quote: '...you have to know how to tell at a glance night from darkness.' And 'They have a word in their language that means to get drunk in your underwear with no intention of going out.' You see? **Read Howie Good's '4 x 100' in Issue Two-Fiction.***

## **Air Like Poison**

Hey, did you see those sea turtles down there? I often see them, though not as often or as many as I did before there were boats, the bridge, some buildings, even a small amusement park. Wherever they go, the turtles seem to leave a trail of watery stools behind. The ocean feels a little sick right now. There's actually too much sunlight, too much air like poison. And it all comes from the same place, a collected disarray of memory and daydreams, the millstones that early New Englanders used to crush Giles Corey to death for being a witch.

## **Grandson** (with Apologies to Werner Herzog)

Now that you're 8, you have to know how to travel on foot. You have to know how to make fire without matches. You have to know how to catch a trout with your bare hands. (It's fairly easy. You just have to understand how the trout thinks.) You have to know how to forge a document, let's say a gun permit, in a country under military rule. You have to know how to open a safety lock – surreptitiously, of course, with burglar tools. Most important, you have to know how to tell at a glance night from other darkness.

## **Lost in Blockbuster**

There are places a person can get lost and not even realize he's lost. I had to cross the creek by tiptoeing over a rotting tree, ignoring as best I could whatever that was, I felt grabbing for me with big, meaty hands. Some of you actually believe in fight, fight, fight, the three worst things you can do. So, it wasn't just happenstance that no one but me happened to be there, or that it was night by then, or that everything was also nothing, a lot like when the next to last Blockbuster Video store on Earth closed.

## **'This Message Has No Content'**

They have a word in their language that means to get drunk in your underwear at home with no intention of going out. This is becoming, I guess, normal. And we never wanted something like this to become normal. First, they took the chiefs and warriors away. Then they took you and put you away, and now no one knows where you are, even who you are. We're what's left from the massacres. Yep, I see it a lot, a balloon that's not a balloon. There's no meaning to it, and it's of no real use, whatever exactly "it" is.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *There are too many answers, too many paved trails, too many Sherpa-like guides. I think puzzlement is really good. I believe in puzzlement. You can see it. You can feel it. It's a starting point. These prose poems are little bits of puzzlement.*

**BIO:** Howie Good is the author of *The Loser's Guide to Street Fighting*, winner of the 2017 Lorien Prize from Thoughtcrime Press and *Dangerous Acts Starring Unstable Elements*, winner of the 2015 Press Americana Prize for Poetry. His latest collect is *What It Is and How to Use It* (2019) from Greybook Press. His microfiction quartet '4 X 100' was published in FLEAS Issue 2-Fiction.