

EVOLUTIONARY ADAPTIONS

and other poems...

By Brad Garber

***Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes:** Here are four poems that aim to intrigue and hit my bull's-eye (How is it someone so trite finds himself editing poetry?) They are each universal, personal and poignant. **Cave** is flavoured with atavistic imagery for each and all. **Amazon Burning** is distinct and discerning—it takes you there: ‘...the tentative rising of a tapir / or the tree-root flesh of anaconda.’ **Decision** holds heartfelt insights: ‘Her culture was bridge / golf, bowling, and booze.’ **October 2019** is not long ago and filled with reminiscence and anticipation. Here is to wishing someone well...‘Red pines don’t do well, alone. ...They need to grow in a group.’ Don’t we all...? (Spacing is poet’s own) HS*

Evolutionary Adaptations

Man that looks like a woman

Tiger that looks like shadows

Lion that looks like savannah grass

Octopus that looks like stone

Snake that looks like a leaf

Lizard that looks like a toad

Fish that looks like a horse

Moth that looks like an owl

Fly that looks like a bee

Decision

What do you with her

 this way
 peaceful
surrounded by beeps and tubes?

You touch her feet
 watch her bloated face.

You speak to her
 as if she might hear you.

You walk down a long hall
 peer out a window

think about her.

You came from her . . .

Remember those times
 playing Yahtzee, after school
 her constant cigarette
 gin & tonic.

The time she blasted
 a shotgun shell
 above the head
 of a trout fisherman.

Sneezing "ah shit"
 in church
just to piss off your dad.

Her culture was bridge
 golf, bowling, and booze.

But, she loved roses
 and you.

What do you do with her
 as her life drains out of her

 at least, that life
 that was?

October 2019

My father sat on a south-facing porch
on an October afternoon, in Wisconsin.

Red pines don't do well, alone.

A fickle sun warmed us.

They need to grow in a group.

The field that spread before us
golden in the autumn light
was devoid of iconic trees
that were nurtured and trimmed
victims of isolation and exposure.

My father, depleted by a slow cancer
spoke about his education, at age five
at a Catholic elementary school

in Ohio, how he brought gifts
of his father's dahlias, to the nuns
and sat in the back, without beads.

*White pine can do well. There are
big ones up on the hill.*

He graduated at the top of his class.

What do you talk about, but trees
and the childhood goat named "Tuffy"
who used to butt him off the picnic
table, while "Babs," the beagle barked?

After so much life, what matters
but memories and trees?

Are you heading back up to the cabin
next summer?

If I'm still here.

We watched the bluebirds and listened
for the knocking sounds of woodpeckers
back in the dark woods
on red pines clustered together.

Cave

I walk into the cave
am surrounded by echoes
soft whispers of sandals
cries of babies swaddled
deep in animal skins.

Falcon beaks and eagle
claws and coyote teeth
litter an earthen floor
carpet of success and death.

Baskets of reeds and grass
long blown away like dreams
tumbled here in storms
are lost among the sage
like errant children at night.

Walls of sharp stone
press down like spikes
in a medieval torture
chamber of ice and hunger.

I look out over a sun
dropping beyond reach
over shadows of hillsides
and imagine game
spread over vast plains.

Families in stony dirt
blood and excrement stained
waiting out the next season
as if things might change.

The cave no longer home
is what we take with us
when we move through
the homes of ancestors...

the cave no longer home.

Amazon Burning

I will never see your secret spaces
listen to the bold songs of birds
or the screeches of primate tribes
in trees along slow muddy waters.

Nor will I spy the silhouette
of the silent jaguar's shadow
or the tentative rising of a tapir
or the tree-root flesh of anaconda.

Never will I shake the bronze hand
of the Yanomami, Akuntsu, Pirikuru
enter their dwellings and lives, gather
stories of lost and buried cities.

No, the Amazon will come to me.
I will breathe its ashes every day
and feel the burden of its absence
in the lungs that give me life.

THE POET SPEAKS: *In my early life, I wrote music and performed in coffee houses, on radio, and in open-air concerts. I have been writing poems, lyrics, essays and indescribable stuff since childhood. Being alive and observant inspires my poetry. I write about the human experience, as experienced and imagined. Squirrels, birds, trees, food, sex, life, death, ceremony, silence – everything is fair game. I am attracted to writing prose poetry, when my mind runs like an open faucet. But, I admire and employ subtle structure, also. Every stylistic form is important for the imagination. Poetry is one of the oldest art forms, with the possible exception of peeing one's name in a snowdrift. Influences include Carver, Frost, Whitman, Riley, Stafford, Paul Simon and Dr. Seuss.*

BIO: *Brad has degrees in biology, chemistry and law. He writes, paints, draws, photographs, hunts for mushrooms and snakes, and runs around naked in the Great Northwest. Since 1991, he has published poetry, essays and weird stuff in such publications as Edge Literary Journal, Pure Slush, Front Range Review, Tulip Tree Publishing, Sugar Mule, Third Wednesday, Barrow Street, Black Fox Literary Magazine, Barzakh Magazine, Ginosko Journal, Junto Magazine, Slab, Panoplyzine, Split Rock Review, Smoky Blue Literary Magazine, The Offbeat and other quality publications. 2011, 2013 & 2018 Pushcart Prize nominee.*