

## Three Poems



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#### *The Spotlight*

The lectern in the spotlight  
is simple, utilitarian as a guillotine,  
its glinting blade sharp and bright,  
raised to drop upon the lovely neck.

The field of expectant faces glows  
like so many pale tombstones  
set in even rows, upon rows,  
waiting to be carved by eloquent words.

The prophet who precedes me on the program  
speaks but it's just a low bass line  
that runs under the rhythm of the bodhran  
drumming a bloody dirge inside my ears.

My hands clench shuddering note cards  
that threaten to spew and whirl  
into the dark audience like shards  
of shrapnel or Ninja throwing stars.

My throat has closed. I cannot swallow.  
Wild heart pounds against its prison bars  
pleading with me to flee, but I can't allow it.  
It's my turn on the grisly platform  
and I've pulled on my hood of feigned assurance.

I have already suffered the real punishment  
I now accept the judgment.

*River Fish*

This is my favorite spot of late,  
this boulder where the river twines  
around my aimless, empty afternoons,  
where, chin on knees, I contemplate  
the clacking frogs, the insect whine,  
the darting dragonflies.

Here where blue curls 'round me,  
and sun bends into riffing shallows,  
I can look straight down and I see beneath  
the bright, hard, shell of surface swirls,  
right through the leafy surface picture,  
to clear dimension and detail.

It's In this beamy space I spot you,  
despite your camouflaged repair,  
like a copper wind vane on your pole,  
yielding to the tracking of the air,  
sometimes pointing here, then there,  
but failing forward progress.

What is it like to be a fish?

Do you feel the warm sun on your prickly back,  
the cool stones caressing your fish white belly?

Do you feel the silky press of water purling past your skin  
or is it weightless, imperceptible, like time passing?

How easily you hold your place with a lazy swipe of tail.

Have you no desires or are you trapped in equilibrium,  
feeding your hunger with whatever floats to your mouth?

Perhaps you're waiting for the easy meal, offered  
on a dangling hook, simple, steady, sweetened  
with the promise of long sleep after.

Oh! Suddenly, where you just were, a burst of silt,  
a spreading vee, a surface swell, a tilt into the air  
so powerful it brings the shattered water with you!

Then—momentum spent—a fall back, a smack, a dent  
in the glossy finish where spreading echoes  
of your impact circumscribe it.

Did you win the fat fly hovering there?

I think it doesn't matter.

I know you'll try again and then  
I'll go chasing with you.



