

(from) **Elegies for Slaughter**

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After summer rain
 angels would trample
 the wet grounds outside
the carnival of glands
 and yet dead poets
always get the last word.

 Perhaps time sweetens
with each deeply-felt elegy.
 We see their picture
 as if they'd live forever
 the day before the Times
writes their obit.

 It is the rare July
angled rain can eat NW faces, shudder
 what's left of the white blossoms
 who refuse to complain
about their well-timed descent.

 Unlike Slaughter the trees
 the Nootka Rose
 Wild Ginger
 Sitka Columbine
Dogwood, Indian Paintbrush, the Fireweed
 remain neutral, hold

 like Tahoma does
 the resonance of every step
 and waits patient
 for us to honor our greed.

Inside in silence
 except for Friday night car tires
 humming on wet road
 below the sound waves
of earth cutting through space

underneath the dimmest constellation

horn

and the sound of the lonely night's last freight train

dead poets pose as angels
send metaphors for your verse
remind you the whole world's alive
inside that green wheel spinning

in your chest. Making a mandala
of spent matches from lit prayer candles
& pink rose blossoms offered to the Lady.

You are only a reflection
of a reflection
of the skill your parents had
in the lightning flash

that became you and for which you yearn
to return
endlessly checking the weather forecast
while the Stuck River rolls beyond the spot of diversion.

You get a hernia as your marriage falls apart.
Or your nose bleeds for recognition
but the grace saving you's
the extraordinary patience

of dead poets.

Dead poets in the garden
scaring raccoons.
Dead poets animating the cat's eyes
for a moment
moving molecules
to drop white blossoms for your amusement.

Dead poets caught in your throat
in the fetal position
like latent antepasados
turning the last bloodfire burn
into your richest, deepest song.

Sunlight's headed south now
faster than the cat can comprehend.
Makes the tips of Stuck waves
more white. Animates Coyote's smile.

Lubricates the stunts of Stellar Jays.
Keeps light shining on Slaughter
not waiting for better weather.

And a poet you knew
will become that light
or that latent angel
or that force moving molecules
to amuse your evening walk
faster than your aging synapses
can flash across their gap.

He who could live beyond the last parenthesis.
She who could hold fire in her hand.
He who makes better weather for those who honor
their ancestral land.
She who marks the Northwest July sun's
closing arson orange and apricot rays
in skin, bloodfire and melted wax.

She who taps the never-ending flow
can withstand every
parlor trick Slaughter
could ever conjure
with the rare commitment to every
blossoming every species
has ever known.