

MARGARET REGES

Joplin Tornado, May 2011

The worn scent of petals and so much blue light from behind the trees

The worn scent of petals and so much blue light from behind the trees, crabapple, dogwood, the busted, flayed appearances of magnolia buds, full-blown, crushed under the heel.

The cloud a plume of slow ink and twists of dry grass stuck to the palm of one hand.

There would be in the strings of grass the low-flung shadows, the collar of a shirt, the blue shadow at the eye and nose, the soft-blown tangle of hair in matted sticks.

The punctured scent of crabapple, a tree snapped at the middle, the cupped hull of air in crabapple branches, and the body flung into the blue field, bits of rain and dirt clinging to the neck.

Boughs plucked and tossed in the field, the stems of flowers, the body of a woman thrown like a cloth over the hood of a car, so many folds of slack air.

So many shadows of leaves, the parted mouth, the cheek smudged with peat, webs of split branches, and the hair a maze of water droplets and crushed glass.

There would be a dog moving at the field line with an arrow at its neck, its face bald with mange,
the humidity a dense fuzz, and sinews of the cloud line turning outward, opening.

An arrow at its neck, its face bald with mange

Men walking the field through the broken splints of wood, the black grit of shingles glinting in the sun.

The grass dampening at the mouth, the prickling shift of ribs and muscle, the stiff blood at the arrow's shaft where it meets the neck.

The body sinking deeper into the mats of grass and mud, the memory of snow pushing across the face, this soft tissue a mask over the nose and eyes.

Deeper back, the soft-patterned memory of frost, the cave-shaded patterns of snow, the blackness of water light.

How time bows out and moves inward, sliding down the soft edge of a lens.

Walking with a man through the streets at twilight, the stiff braid of summer grass not ending with the breath.

Backward beginning the pattern of frost on the withered blades of grass, and the dream patterns of light against the lids of the eyes, red webs, splintered frost, the trace of light on night water.

Twilight, the stiff braid of summer grass

Dream film and the wind carrying the scent of mown clover, the air beneath the trees a blue-green grid shifting beneath the gaze.

Walking with a stray dog with a chipped, bare hide in the waves and pockets of wind, low clouds gathering and the red skein of haze behind the trees fading.

Your boy running in the wheel of air and the torn scent of rain, the branches all in one breath rising up, the bristle of humidity gathering about the face.

So long in the breath of air from the topmost branches the large clouds and the close feel of rain, as if rain forming first in the uncut blades of grass.

Your boy and the wind moving its bulk over the road, the sound of the wind collapsing against itself, an engine spending itself, the air caving in over the backs of houses.

Forming first in the uncut blades of grass

Sliding ink, the slow density of vapor gathering into black trunks, and a woman running by the side of the highway near the small trees.

The rain in a slow curl over the fields, the rain stinging the skin, slapping the heart, a dense screen gathering over the field.

The woman scrambling the fence, tumbling in the ditch, lightning against the face and the sudden failure of a streetlamp, the light of the neighboring houses dimmed, the form of the woman breaking into white filaments of rain, moving in torn breaths.

A tree wrenched outward, the blood tinge of the pith twisted into hairs, rain-sodden branches deep in the grass.

The sound the negative of the field, the sound the core of the wind doubling into itself, and the shock of wind tossing the grass.