Poems

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Poems

Abstract
HOW TO DISAPPEAR, SOMETHING HAS DIED IN HERE, AND THE MAP'S NO HELP for Gillie In Canada

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HOW TO DISAPPEAR

First rehearse the easy things.
Lose your words in a high wind,
walk in the dark on an unlit road,
observe how other people mislay keys,
their diaries, new umbrellas.
See what it takes to go unnoticed
in a crowded room. Tell lies:
I love you. I’ll be back in half an hour.
I’m fine.

Then childish things.
Stand very still behind a tree,
become a cowboy, say you’ve died,
climb into wardrobes, breathe on a mirror
until there’s no-one there, and practise magic,
tricks with smoke and fire –
a flick of the wrist and the victim’s lost
his watch, his wife, his ten pound note. Perfect it.
Hold your breath a little longer every time.

The hardest things.
Eat less, much less, and take a vow of silence.
Learn the point of vanishing, the moment
embers turn to ash, the sun falls down,
the sudden white-out comes.
And when it comes again – it will –
just walk at it, walk into it, and walk,
until you know that you’re no longer
anywhere.
SOMETHING HAS DIED IN HERE

Something has died in here,
something the cat dragged in and lost.
It’s probably been festering for weeks
but hits us suddenly,
a rotten stench that fills the freezing house
and makes me gag for air.

You move the sofa, shake out wellingtons,
shine a torch in every gap.
It’s hopeless, there’s no trail to follow.

Bring the dogs in, I say. Watch the flies for clues.
Give up. You light a fire, burn josticks,
throw my perfume everywhere.

I dread the maggots most
but dream instead a vole falls down the chimney,
dead already. Its body twists and hisses
in the flame and skin around its teeth dissolves
until there’s only bone and splitting fur
and smoke that stinks.

AND THE MAP’S NO HELP for Gillie In Canada

Lost in the rain on my own and the map’s no help.
I’ll sling it in the back and drive
to Ottawa, to East Farndon,
to the house with the drive at the side.
I’ll check the mirror for light blue Skodas
and the sky for loons, off-course. You never know,
maybe something’s seeping through the sky.

A puddle the size of Hudson Bay on the road.
I’ll hold my breath as I drive through.
And you? Are you diving?
Staying under for as long as it takes
to surface clutching so much more than mud.

The rhythmic slap and donk of your canoe
is shifting in this tired engine, in these wiper blades,
and I think I’m on the wrong road in the dark
when a signpost caught in the lights
names somewhere familiar
and somehow, with just one turn of the wheel,
I’m almost there.