

SELECTIONS FROM GREEN FUSE 2009 PUBLICATIONS

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Camping Trip

By Pat Maslowski

Camping Trip

We know it's time
to get away. The house
has become our cave
and the world has narrowed
to its opening. Everything
is too well known, too same,
too taken for granted,
has impressed the patterns
of our days.

We've become obsessed
with small things and
the continuous damage
living is.

We've repaired nicks
in the walls and furniture
and tried to mend relationships
that have rusted and snapped
and we know there's never
any going back, just walking
backwards, the lack of
seeing that only brings
more broken things.

We'll make a camping trip
to the Southwest where
the land reveals an ancientness,
strange rock formations, fossils,
corals from an inland sea,
old cultures not immediately
apparent but still present
in ritual and spirit, concealed
in cave and canyon.

We pack the camper: food,
blankets, clothes, books,
computers, maps, cameras,
flashlights for desert nights,
sunscreen, lotion for insect bites.
We leave our home behind
with its nagging memories.

Seen From the Car

The sky hangs low
closing the world down.

Leaving in a fall rain
is a good way to leave.

I cannot touch anything
one concrete block upon another.

Two chairs on a bluff under a tree.
A bird house hanging from a bough.

The shape of a Fu Dog on the mountain.
I've never noticed before. It smiles.
I smile back.

Graffiti on a concrete embankment,
human algae and fungus.

We're riding the back of a mountain.
God's eye view of this valley,
Spanish peaks, rectangles, triangles,
roads cut through, shaving the earth's pelt.

The empty plains, millions of bison
gone, a haunting absence.

They say the Basque sheep herders
went mad after long solitude.

Pink Indian rice grass, woody sage,
rabbit brush in golden bouquets.
Everywhere purple, gold, sage.
We arrive at San Luis Lakes.

San Luis Lakes: Settling In

We set up the camper at dark
despite the electric cord
coiled inside the opening
too tangled and thick to get out.

A Phillips screw driver opens
the box. I pull while you push it
through. No scissors in the drawer,
your pocket knife opens the caramels.

Too tired for dinner, you say,
"Dried soups will do," but first,
light the burner. No lighter
left in the drawer. Now what?

A paper towel twisted and held
to the car cigarette lighter
makes a torch to ignite the propane stove
that heats the water for soup.

You left the drain on the cooler
open, my shirt, your pillow,
your paperback book, my book bag
soaked. If you're nice to me...

I'll lend you my pillow tonight.

We hear the cries, yelps?
"Coyotes?" "No, geese,"
whole lines flying towards
the mauve tinted dunes.

A clamor of geese: this way,
that way, over there. One takes
the lead and then a V forms.
Quiet now all around.

The lake full again after
so many years of drought.
We sit at the table talking.
Will the coyotes sing tonight?

Pura Vida

By

Robert Milo Baldwin

FROM THE LAND OF FIRE

CITY OF TICOS

1

The sign in the airport, not Spanish but English,
promises a ride from where you won't return
without the bribe of a gold ring, all for sex
with girls who are girls, not women.

Yet along the curb, where concrete crumbles,
Texans stand single file in snakeskin boots,
Levis and Stetsons—ready to risk the ride.

Downtown, where fast-food joints of America
stand in neon like the battle of our invasion,
boys sleep on the sidewalk in cardboard boxes,
and Ticos line up for the bus, for the *urgencia*,

while the cathedral stands mute, dark
and shuttered, its guard a chain link fence
topped with cortina wire, beyond the arch
and spire and dispassionate pity of Rome

where girls in tall boots and sputtering light
and a price for the asking
casually smoke menthol, eyes worn like
old coins, passed from hand to hand.

This, I think, is where my daughter lives.
The darkness here, she says, is good as the day;
and from the traffic, I breathe the fumes of night.

2

Here in the Hotel Aurola, the fan in the wall
rattles cold into midnight, hums into morning,

and with the rising of sun, my brain hums,
rattling loose with the fan, and sunlight
is a tropic of green across low mountains,
the city all color and light—inconsolably so.

On the street below, behind a hand-press cart,
a girl too young but round with child
squeezes juice from oranges no one buys.

Out in the park, on benches made of stone,
beneath the shade of trees I cannot name,
I feel the morning and city begin to move
like an animal with wet paws, still thirsty.

Beggars hold out hands for coins, for children
they say; and pigeons, with little red feet,
do not fly backwards nor fly at all.

When clouds of noon roll in with words
of rain, I pass an empty pot of stone,
where remnant rain of yesterday
pools with petals of torn, red flowers.

I cannot identify the flowers or anything else
and only wish these pigeons might fly,
that Miltos Sachtouris got it exactly wrong.

3

These streets are streets with no names,
no numbers. All is by direction
from all else, and naturally we are lost,
as if our word is lost, and we look down
this street, then that street, the litter of the city
scattered like children from the wolves of men.

They never sweep the curb or gutter,
and I wander around, kicking loose papers
the way a child might kick a can.

Here a yellow cafe, a red hotel, a blue facade,
and through it all twists the snake of German buses,
diesel fumes, Korean taxis, Italian motos—
weaving about potholes like one might weave
a thread in the hopeless tear of hope.

I stand here, in Levis and baseball cap,
quite obvious to all, impatiently waiting,
unlike the mountains might wait,
to take my daughter back home—

It's the bubble, she says, the bubble
you raised us in, and she wants to re-enter
the thin clear wall of the bubble—

TOYOTA TAXI VAN

From the city we speed with a buzz
like a Japanese Zero on wheels in hills,

the driver with eyes like ice,
driving like we're racing time,
something no one can beat.

Each villager in sandals we pass,
balanced on inches of pavement,
dares the painted metal of the fender
to graze his shoulder at speed,

and the driver dares him back,
no one blinking as we pass.

What happens to the *gringo*, I wonder,
when the driver kills a villager
—a young boy wobbly on his bike,
a woman with child?

What happens to the man of a wife,
the nephew of an uncle, the mother
of a child now blood on the road?

I reach in my pocket to pay more
for the driver to speed less.

WHERE THE AMERICAN LIVES

Above the terraced fields of coffee,
and the bent brown backs of men,
along a long ridge of winding green
beneath a sky of clouds of white,
from the glass wall of his house
to the stone patio below,

you catch the wide view of cattle
in the valley far beneath us,

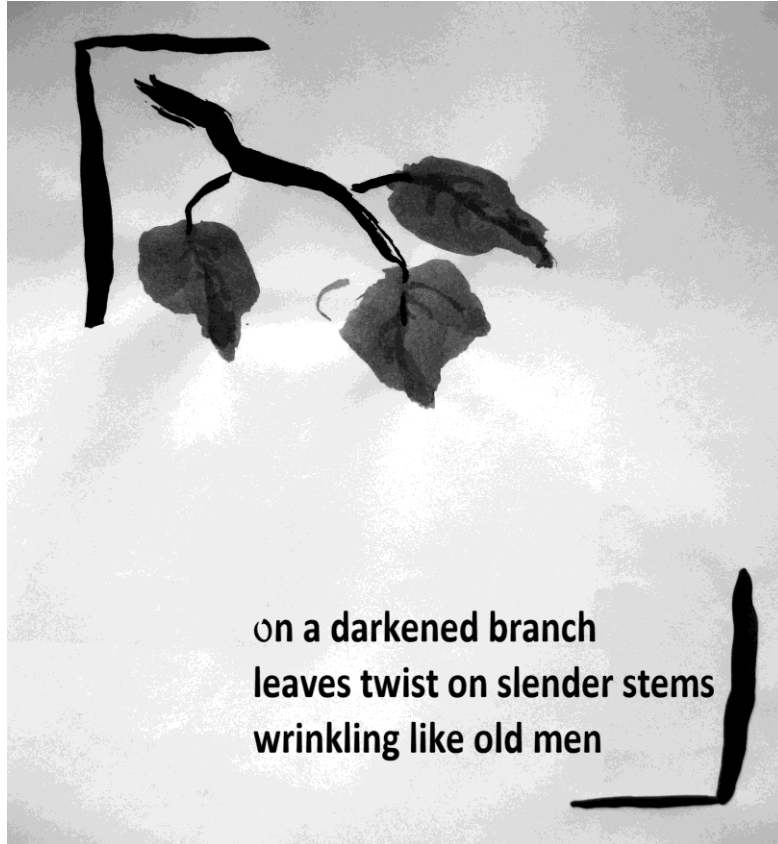
a woman barefoot and alone,
the crown of her white hat
trimmed in thread as red as a parrot,
the curve of her brown shape and hips
visible beneath a thin cotton smock,
visible more so when she moves just so,

and beyond, the mist of rain
the mist of these mountains,

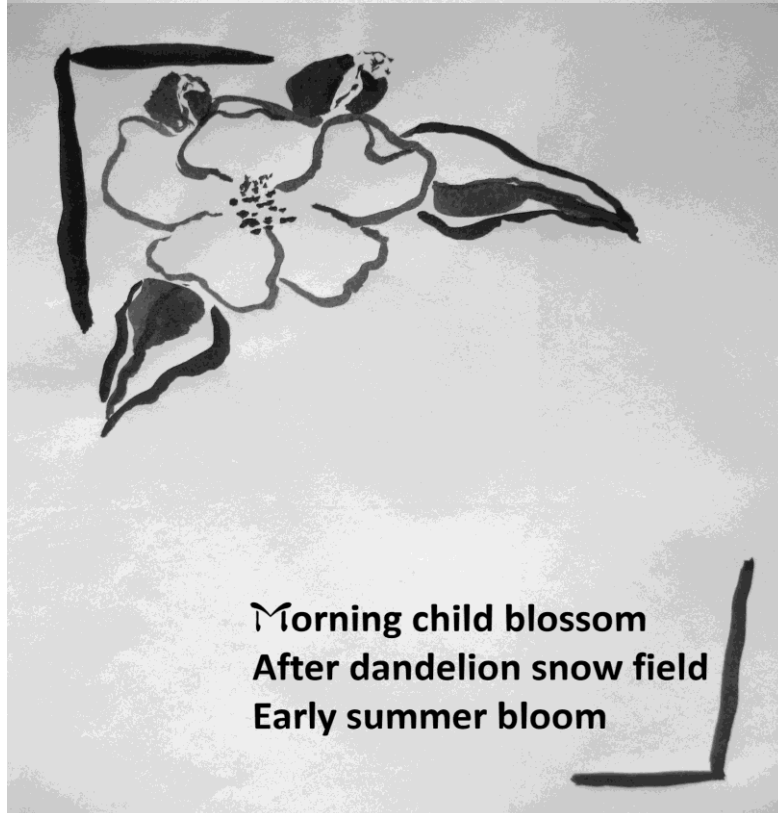
and the American, in his house
atop the mountain, and the woman
his wife, and the valley, cattle, and coffee
his also, and the men, working there,
questioning how this American
came this far south, and what he did

from where he came to never go north again,
and how one man, born in a far
foreign country, has come to own all this,
when they do not, and never will—

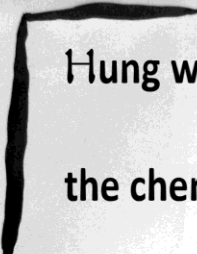
IMPROV, Anthology of Colorado Poets 2009



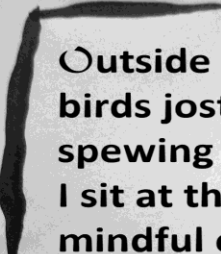
on a darkened branch
leaves twist on slender stems
wrinkling like old men



Morning child blossom
After dandelion snow field
Early summer bloom



**Hung with so much red
sweetness
the cherry branch breaks.**



**Outside my window
birds jostle at a feeder
spewing seed and hull
I sit at the table
mindful of years casting by**

