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Three Poems

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YOUR CHANCE TO SING

Your wife says that Judy Garland will make a fine singer
if she ever forgets all that posturing
in those pretty pink shoes. That & hurling out of the sky
housefirst onto the backs of old women in
partyhats. You sip beer, try to hold onto your stomach.

For the 17th straight year you watch
Dorothy drop from the eye of the storm into living color.
As always, the sky is a deep green.
Pink&white flowers chatter at her feet like false teeth.
Dorothy says My Goodness.
Then a moment later she says it again, a little more shrilly,
while the hot air balloon from the Omaha State Fair
pops upward like a fishing bobber
or like her mother embarrassed in the garden, huge skirts slapping.

& she is left with the staring faces.
Their cheeks are white & slack as clams.
They touch their heads & hearts as if that explained something.
The balloon is slurped upward.
As always, when Bert Lahr barks you scramble crabfashion

out of the crowd. There is a lightbulb screwed into your skull
& a bright pink heart pinned to your belly throbbing.
You are used to balloons getting away
& girls' faces going sad. You curtsy
& tap your magnificent shoes & start to sing.
For Kansas, you sing.

WOMAN IN A YELLOW ROBE

The lifeguard's chair lies overturned
like the bones of a dead cowboy, legs up, out of his
element. On the rise above, your mother sits

in a flapping yellow robe. Having given up the girdle you
see propped at her feet like a collapsed birdcage, she
waits for your father to row in. Right now
your twin sisters play havoc inside her belly, she
can see lumps where a hard right punches into sunlight.
She can also see down there with the beercans on the beach
you her first son uttering sharp cries
like a gull. Your arms are white & spindly as something reared under
tons of green water. You want to learn
how to swim, you barge
back & forth on the beach flapping, scan for your
father to row in carving black stairs on the water.

When she gets to her feet forcing a grin, the sand sticks
to her robe, & her robe, orange
where it is moistened, sticks to her rump.
But the front of her, that part facing the water, facing you,
is yellow & flapping
as a huge butterfly drilled into the grass. & the wind off the water
blows sand like snow or like glittering confetti
through her white broken cage.

BEACHED

The rowboat is nowhere in sight.
But you notice a swimmer making her way down the beach.
You see that her legs are brown & sturdy as logs,
her sloped shoulders roll.
She talks to herself, sucks in her breath.

Somehow you know who it is she's always looking for,
who it is that agreed to pose with her today
in a striped oldfashioned swimsuit.
Instead he has escaped into the woods with a bottle
leaving shreds of his suit snagged on branches.
She's angry now, but doesn't want to muss her hair.

You watch this, as she approaches.

How she rails, playing out her ghost lines.
& when she plunges over you, when her hatchetsharp heels
plunge into your chest slicing waterlogged ribs,
she glances down & smiles.
It is her son she sees, this drowned man swollen like
a potato. With a grin she reaches for you.

Let's attend to this little problem of yours, she says
looking up then darkly, & we'll take care of your father later.
O God won't we though? Won't we, my poor drowned boy?