Selected Poems

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Lacking green water, knee high grass
they
  entered
  the café.
She ordered
  hamburger,
  a chocolate malt.
His salad lay
  in strips.
  The lettuce
didn’t blow like
  grass
  in winter wind.
The check
  took pennies
  from a piggy bank.
A palm plant
  for their balcony
to replace…
She spoke
  about the books
  her doctor recommended.
His wife
  too difficult
  her black moods
nursing ailments
  he couldn’t cure
even as tall grass bends.
THE INVISIBLE CAN BITE

The wind refuses to be shaped.  
It re-forms the eucalyptus leaves

in its willy-nilly prance, avoiding 
the eye. When it roars its hurricanes

only the damage testifies, unlike 
the significant sun, bold-faced,

revealing my nakedness. Attempted 
analogies fall flat. Ink and print

are caught in their inadequacies.  
How easily we are diminished.

I hear the curse of no, the constant ache,  
shared in my consulting room.

She looks to me believing what I say  
can hold up the sky or prevent a deluge.

She’s hungry for more than golden apples  
with the coming of bad weather. A stranger

had gathered figs but her brother’s wife spit 
bitter wine too long held in her cold storage.

As wind rattles the window, it might be  
the voice of Jove still striving for immortality.
Through the tiny window a cloudless sky. 
The feathered eucalyptus quivers 
in the staccato wind. It doesn't reach him. 
Even the invisible eludes. He waits 
for footsteps to follow. The nocturne 
he hears repeats, endless as the press of dark. 
As a boy, before his father died, 
he could invent, almost believe, 
the undulating ocean, gulls 
cutting the salty air, each in its own 
cotillion, a passport of wings.

In another place, a man not old enough 
to vote, hangs by his thumbs, condemned 
for 20 years, a deadly crime. He travels 
at night to a far-off country. Rocks, 
sharper than thorns, have bruised his thighs. 
A camel transports him to a broad savannah. 
Green wind. A bend in the horizon beckons. 
He is free to follow, though crawling now 
among the prickly bush. Earth's moist fragrance 
quenches for the long haul. The dark finds passage.
LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Though I forget to look for stars
the universe continues
its pirouettes, its extravagant expanse,
putting us in our place.
Bodies on the streets of Kabul
gather flies. Heroes pinned with medals
shine as though killing
were equivalent to a supernova.
Love, the supreme attraction,
generates a longing to embrace.
One day Andromeda will mingle
with our Milky Way,
a love-match we might emulate.
SHE DOESN'T WAIT FOR THE KINDNESS OF OTHERS

Morning greets its winter's tale, a fog
obscuring all but my hurrah for
    the nun
    of 84.
She storms the gates. Protest! Prevent
the deadly shame of nuclear devices
    aimed
    at war!
Behind the iron bars she smiles her
unrepentant smile. Jesus, Buddha, Vishnu
    forget
    to brush
their teeth as they applaud this legacy.
No need to kneel. The sacred work is done.
    Starlings
    gather
in circular murmurations, the air renewed
by a thousand wings. Visibility increases,
    the fog,
    a scrim,
no longer screens. How the oranges
hang their holiness, consecrate the day!