Mike Cole: Poems
What he didn’t know
could fill a silo with stone catties

What he drinks will kill more than he knows

the tickling stink of it gave me the reasons I needed
to move on
when convictions failed me like Easter's kite:

that bundled-up day of still breath
hanging in front of Lord's Prayer Lips.

Just enough snow to piss the oldest one's name into, hoping
good spelling brings her closer than the string lets out.

the same field all queen Anne's after the thaw. for now,
it covers her medicinal pale shoulders
once touched, trembling, in the turn-about steps
of the play we were kid-hired
to dance and throw each other around in

the lace, not the field

Brittle now, my dog's still frame is more like both;
and in them, too.

But where would I dig if we were to go back...to the field?
surely, the hedgerows are edging on deceit
with new stones
and old ones a different color than we thought possible

it would only yield labor
and piles of unknown
against frozen skies

Ash & Hemlocks' imminent deaths

Weight
That White Man

To a sidewalk that begs for more than we can afford,
he asks the same
but not the same.

Cantilevered Face

Pulling cranes to erection,
his unbalanced lip flesh
tells us of drivel.

That White Man
The Shed out back

Old tarps caught the blood
they could be hosed down
sparing stained gravel, two-by
ran the perimeter

Dad built it.

Four-inch slab roughened
Hickory’s elbows, then
Bailey’s together until
he was put to sleep buried
in near-frozen ground with my brothers tossing lime
masking smell

A family affair hung from rafters by hind legs.
Metal scent still lingers
for coyotes’ and coydogs’ delight.

The kennel was great for climbing
with foothold at three feet
to next rung
step to roof
five pitch to fifteen; unwalkable unless hopped over
only an eight-foot drop to buckle knees
under the antlered north face.

Burn barrel out back
the out back
melting plastic bags of
tissues, maxi pads, chicken skins
and other usuals.
There was no fire when Matt forgot his keys.
His scarf was used to wipe his ass
for his afterschool shit.
The Christmas lights on the spruces
and his hands tried to keep my feet warm.
I don’t know if the scarf was burned or washed.

Uncle George put the eyeballs in his mouth once.
Word drinker to a skyline
blinking past where
You sat and I, lichen,
or weed for a salt clutch
against brick and not brick
made but breathed
by resin sacs
accumulate.

This
must be your tablet
scribed simple;

but,

they were poor then
your fingers bruising
through rapidity forgotten
cuz of wanton thirst.

No, sit longer
fresher breath
one of my gifts
stored in June’s coming.

If water were smoke
I’d wax the bulb to waft
them away to screens’
sightly phoshoresent.
Black Smoke.
Hot
Pressed
Macadam

waiting for silent thoughts
gliding rhythmless

move!
past Burnt Hill & Oval Lake

It tells of our elevation: This perspective

but, what state, what
river once pressed its heels
here where the wind
becomes ours to
Buzz and Crank
and throw

but complain when the pictures fail us?

understand
Everywhere is Here
and the water dries
soon enough

that nothing gets wasted
only air

in its efforts to resist
our intake

The Moth
a dancer fool
knows only the two places
Of light and of Not a thing

if i could outrace its erraticism
a planet should move
and would became ground for paper wings’
wet glass
West Desert Highway

aphoristic fuck-me-yous
after motor oil
heat

dry toungue shout
but nothing

what if this is our settle?

laze for always
that thing in your neck
deciduous

still hanging
from range to basin

her death rattle
came as
a fart of the highest regard

over driven ties
rumbled
rotting lettuce
for ice lacking

they bring the grid
rotating c(r)o(r)ps(e)

head back to your older new
clear water
skin and shims
corrugate barn roof
longer
pantheon of hay
make feel
authentical
look! a bear

or bar
let me drink it
alien versus predator

my eggs
go one without the
other

stamens nearly twice
the size
forest fog knee
high a third
moon's refract feels its
ocean giving
the sky dark
bugs

blue

cantilevered hull
siloing space ring-
worm spore
accident
waiting

whose borders are
these aiming triangles
sure kill
all the lights
wet ore
slick glare
framed dog teeth matte
from years
as trophy’s triumph
too long missing its face

don’t play coy
parachute
remember central
america and sham mud

i love you to Death
je t’aime à Mourir
aussie
Beaming, sway through all that distance. Why are you so happy to see me? You sound like a squirrel but turn out to be a mini-van. Cheap tricks take as far as an open closet

Red cup near where? Your speaking Chinese is cute admitted rosemary on red dots lower than usual. Saturday night couples constant the walk with earbuds dangling to stop following atop sargent walk with cross-strap blouse

what game is it with four strings on four corners? Those beams splaying across the west we can’t drag our toes or we get them wet.

Flatlanders will never know what it feels like to climb a hill. I miss going up.

The guard has praise for our tennis team. How grave.
Trembling spotlight without nerves; but potholes and washboard show Kilgus those eyes. Jawa or deer? joke.

Funnier his bullets are colors to sting where tomorrow kill with the real ruger won in lottery passed on through christmas tree to steady my aim at twelve

but what I really wanted was your badass camo pickup and sly smile always a step ahead scheming to paint G 'n Fuckin' R on the side

or stories at every bar of the time you ---

Did you really wrap up in wet toilet paper and set yourself on fire? ...not surprised

You’ve shot more animals than anyone. Duke knocked up more dogs than any other. You work more hours a week than most could on all your pills and booze.

How many times have you said the N word?

I, the naked fisherman, floating behind the canoe, laughed when you warned of the sucker fish; really, though, it made me fear all I can’t see in the water.
I'll drive the lower woods from Lembeck's but keep close to the road so they don't head over to Botella's

those flatland assholes will start firin' at anything that moves

Mikey, sit up at the edge of Farrell's pond Dad'll take the ridge here's my seat don't shoot the house

Mom always wears orange when she walks the dogs during deer season. So do the dogs.

You kicked em out right to me buck and doe but they stopped in front of the house
got clear when they heard the uneven steps through where the pond drains

first time I shot at deer running dropped with pinhole behind the ear we didn’t find until we skinned him no blood but from guts streaks under eyes over peach fuzz cheeks I still smell warm metal
no luck now
for any of us
I saw

his front leg dangling
but sprint unbroken

we found him two hundred yards
down in DaCosta’s
field bedded in thicket
licking what I did

I had to shoot before he jumped up and ran further away
twice in the ribs looking for
lungs or heart
he just looked at us when we made it
to his side unable to go
but still breathing

you pulled out your
knife the one I have
now in a box in my basement
and cut his throat but it just
changed where the air came out

your remorse at this killing.

I’m always amazed at how far you can walk with just one human foot.
You must be exhausted
Reach to each finger tip and tell height horizon. To rocks and stalks.
Chip board in two; perimeter tango.

I can see that space better when I’m laying down counting up through limbs take me to the one I can jump from. Branch bare where boy palms wrung you a swing near sap pant leg bound will never stop. Grass is just as sparsely covered.

Everything raw and awkward.
Jackson Hole was beautiful at fifteen.
Cross country Bonneville to rollerblading Motel 6’s.

Check in then escape to parking lot.
Oval paths good for a hundred laps ’til blank sky pulls all asphalt acrid heat out of too big Santa Fe chili tee.

Wing dings and root beers take place where backseat snacks fuel four-wheeled legs.
Regular shitting long distant remembered.

Las Vegas palm trees near pool’s white vinyl lounges. Cheapest because of Dad’s AARP discount.
this is the darkest hour
the darkest one

i used to climb trees at this time
i was young

Sweetly burning ash wash
directions to limbo
looking for rope always
swaying
base

stand overhead doesn’t even silhouette
though, well known, it’s only
six pegs up
stump to the left, or right?

scrape
rub

set distance forgotten when shadows
too weak don’t stretch
this time

with me it’s fine

for i only find
confusion
in the lights of the world
awake

savored darkness
leaves landscape unpainted by
form
meaning
here
where forgetting welcomes
all
that can be planned

words should be saved for the other hours.

longing for certainty
i will keep these short moments

kiss the owls
Hemlock
trunks and limbs
sticky forearms
blue jay calls & black crows

Shale
blue grey ridges
car parts swamp hollows
P.I. rash

My midsection moist of woolen rest
and itch
even in this weather
the dirt can float

Living room leftovers stack themselves in a tree edging Gober’s field.
We call it a Condo.

Two by four ladder climbs to it.
A new view.

Always quiet, mostly scanning
the calm cold starts its
meal at my toes. Fingers

Count from one to one hundred thousand
obediently timing centennial intervals.

From a mile away I can hear the screen door snap shut on my home’s north face.
Sound travels fast through this still air staying closest to the frozen earth.
Twenty feet above it I become the ground by nine
even grey clouds by ten
three inch galvanized screws at noon.
The chickadee and scent of brother Bill’s oversized overalls over Uncle
George’s Canadian boots are all cold and counting up in thin layers.

Dad asks if I saw the coyote. “No,” I say thawing over dashboard defrost.
The Doberman
named Thor was hot for —
measuring thirty-six tall
and pounds
no way to stop him
But by fist

from George
to halt
what kid gate
could not keep out

The dew claws
young back moles
scraped
squeal staccato
rhythmatic dog hump

who must have died
years long past
with no sound
but warm dirt thump puffs

The elixir
was one-hundred and
one proof of
taste not known to
make a dead man come back
saluting four guns’

ash of George put
where he worked
his hand to a rock
melting errors
in a clavicle mishap
terribly
Nonetheless calloused
gentleman in heat, appalling
chart me.

please he protested. Heaven
prone girls in hardware irrational
Intelligible terrified when

I wave true
the second dying Could be worst
Form girl hands

Elements will be missed

this

August
police room. Ghost
room

banker rats
better
contract Solitude

president wetland. In blue,
telling self parts
for the bony.

She kills electricity made of
drowning
email send an email even
worm wealthy

little dirt plaid
shirt face takes
in more human

my breasts cower.
distance the nearest statistics of You
could anyone understand

taste like The miracle
before spasm makes light
Last Day of January

She questions his motives;
he’s cutting back on bread.

A rear tire slowly leaks;
Pennsylvania winters are hell for undercarriage.

Long lines pace;
a man with chocolate cookies smiles at them.

No motor vehicles;
but a car reshapes benches.

The streetlamp stands over two young men;
one says *super frois*

It waits on the kitchen counter;
the backpack’s color is marsh green.

He turns to the north star’s pink flick for forgiveness;
a bat.