

Krikor Der Hohannesian – 5 Poems



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The Price

I.

These days it's called *hoopin'*
or just plain *hoops* if you want
to save a syllable's-worth of breath,
which you just might need....

Back in the day even more generic,
it was *the run*, as in
we runnin' this Saturday?

No such thing as a hard foul, 'less
you got your nose broke or
a finger bent 90 degrees back.

When the ball was up, we were off –
cheetahs on hardwood,
to shouts of *jailbreak!* and
man, don't you ever stop?

We talkin' survival brother. If you stopped
you might's well sit, 'cause the other side's
gonna reach 13 first and there's five more
to take your place.

II.

A memory now, all of it,
alive only in gnarled knuckles
and treacherous knees, feet
with the instinct to run
even as the brain howls *NO!*

and there ain't no runnin' from it,
 a corner's been turned,
 the walk grows shorter,
 your time to sit close by.

THE DUNES AT PAMET BEACH

Standing here, toes dug into
shifting sands, images of war
and human suffering an ocean away.
No sounds of strife assault the ears,
only the gentle rhythmic slap-slap
of a pacific sea tatted with whitecaps,
a neap tide washing over mussels,
clam shells, shards of feldspar and granite.

A bloated full moon, birthed
from amniotic fluid, oozes
orange-red, as from a wound,
through the gauze curtain of haze
veiling the horizon. Scant hours before
it had gazed down on Gaza, Jerusalem,
the West Bank, Aleppo....

Cape Cod National Seashore
Truro, MA

WHEN THE EARTH WAS FLAT

Life was simpler before Copernicus,
the earth was flat – plain and simple, though
where it ended no one seemed to know.

Did the oceans flow
to some undefined edge,
spill over like a giant waterfall?
How, then, to explain the tides?
Or the conundrum of what lay
beyond land's end? What about

the diurnal arc of the sun or
the nightly spiral of the moon and stars?

Who knew then of quarks and mesons,
black holes and gravity? The flat
earthly plane was at the center
and all else revolved around it,
edges be damned but for a few –
those intrepid explorers whose
collective gut knew there had to be more to it.

Which brings us to asymptotes, spheres
and circles, the paradox of no beginning
nor an end, the enigma of birth and death –
a puzzle left to woodland deities
and gods of our creation – that is
until Galileo and his ilk came along,
heretics all, excommunicated
for the sin of audacity.

THE ATTIC

Tapestries of gossamer
festoon rough-hewn rafters.
Knotty old floorboards
groan under a century's burden of
memories, dust-coated secrets
buried in decaying chests, hearts
stilled and gone frigid.

A shaft of skittish sunbeams
pierces a grimy window,
spotlighting crazed sepias
of austere gentlemen
in over-starched high collars
and ladies bedecked
in lacy décolletage
and frilly hats, looking
quite prim and proper.

In a dank, dusty corner
where the sun never visits
a doll lies long-abandoned,
naked and crumpled, eyes
rolled back in a face
of fractured china.

ONE BY ONE

One by one
they have left port,
its bustle of life,
sails luffed, set out
into the wind of forever,
over the horizon toward
the harbor none of us can know,
know only there is no return,
a scar of grief on the hearts
of those left behind.

Now, in these days of
more frequent partings
a reminder that my turn
is not far off. When my day arrives,
come to the quay, dear ones.
If I haven't yet left, squeeze
my hand, let us shed
salty tears, a last smile
for what bound us all. Or,
if my ship has sailed, linger
a while, smell the fresh salt air,
let the wind caress your face,
dry your tears, and may the warmth
of the sun bless your day. I
will be a dot on the far horizon.
Look for me, remember,
I will be waving.

Krikor Der Hohannesian lives in Medford, MA. His poems have appeared in many literary journals including *The Evansville Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Connecticut Review* and *Hawai'i Pacific Review*. He is the author of two chapbooks, *Ghosts and Whispers* (Finishing Line Press, 2010), a finalist for the Mass Book Award and *Refuge in the Shadows* (Cervena Barva Press, 2013).