

Steve Klepetar – Three Poems

Australian Figures

Saturday night, and from the market
a band playing some distant three-chord
rock that goes round and round, lyrics

nothing more than a simple chant,
punctuated by crowd noise and cheers,
then sudden silence. A motorbike

in the street below, and after it roars by,
quiet again, so quiet that absent bird
song probes the air. Afternoon a glass

lantern encasing a candle's glow.
Along the beach, children pick
through seaweed beneath an aching sky.

Snowy gulls swim in the little bay
or leap gracefully above waves
as the tide swells, covering the sand

with foam. Two girls walk barefoot
through the surf, their arms and shoulders
covered with colorful tattoos – parrots

and dragons and trees dangling their heavy
fruit. One wears bracelets on her wrists,
coral and steel wires twisted into braids.

Her friend wears round her ankle a silvery
chain with beads like berries, round and red.
They speak, but their words sweep away in the wind

Tidal Hour

If I could live at the lip of this rock
and stare out to sea every day, gazing
at white boats streaking the horizon,
dragging their wakes like a painted
line, if I could do that and feel the sky
as a blue skin ready to shed, to curl up
and fall away, I might grip the mystery
of my blood. Here in this country of
strange seasons, two boys ride bikes
onto sand, fishing rods bobbing
in the wind. They are silent, faces blurred
with sweat. Behind us, the old prison,
the art center, and town – Market Street,
with its traffic and sidewalk cafes folding
in on itself, wondrous at this tidal hour,
strange as a mirror dangling on a chain.

Twenty-Eights

A dream in the middle of the day –
an empty road running along a rocky
coast by a river petering out just short
of the sea. Water churns and foams
beneath a natural bridge of rock.
We have left a forest of giant trees,
with huge holes burnt into their trunks,
forming blackened caves or tunnels
of wood. Green parrots hurtle
from branch to branch, and when we
ask what they are called, we are told
“Twenty-eights. ‘Cause that’s what
the farmers use to shoot them.”
So many graves here, where vines
thrive in sun and soil. So many graves
and ghosts everywhere. Prophets
on Facebook tell me I am a child
of God, tell me how to live, how to
adjust my attitude, to sign petitions
for tigers and turtles and children
who live on the street. “It’s so easy,”
they say, and I confess to loving ease,
even when ghosts whisper to me
on the wind in an ancient language

I don't understand, flooded with words
for kin and craft and caves, where
sixty-thousand years ago I left handprints
on the walls, which seemed to sigh
and call out names from the restless deep.

Steve Klepetar lives in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His work has appeared worldwide in such journals as *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Chiron*, *Deep Water*, *Expound*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Red River Review*, *Snakeskin*, *Voices Israel*, *Ygdrasil*, and many others. Several of his poems have been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize (including four in 2016). New collections include *A Landscape in Hell* (Flutter Press), *Family Reunion* (Big Table Publishing), and *How Fascism Comes to America* (Locofo Chaps).