

Doug Holder - Five Poems

The Suburbs 1962.

Mom
a gurgling scream
from the backyard.
Something had invaded
the Lilly of the Valley
penetrated the well-trimmed hedges,
had tread on
the impossibly green
carpeted lawn.

Undoubtedly
a monster
something of that ilk
that lurked under my bed
a nocturnal nightmare
escaping to daylight
something one-eyed
requisite tentacles
in a fury of suction
and destruction.

I watched
the diminutive black man
tumble through
a tangle of lawn chairs
falling at the pit of the barbecue.

My father and his friend
took their cue
whisking him away
white knights saving the day
whisking a speck of dirt
from the dreamy illusion
of our summer day.

Curiosity Killed The Cat

A housecat escaped

ran a bit too far
died under the maw
of a foriegn car.

Why did he leave
his cushioned seat
for something
so abstract
on the street?

Just before he was hit
he sniffed the pavement
for some arcane scent--

What was this
holy grail
that made him wildly
slap his tail?

JACOB WIRTH

Jacob Wirth is a historic old tavern in Boston that I have been eating and drinking in since I was a snot-nosed Boston University undergrad. I have an old poster from Wirth's in which they quote a waiter Fredrick Fritz Furth (1875-1951):

" Yesterday it was the fathers who were my friends. Today, it is the sons. Yesterday, a man came in and brought his boy. Today, that boy's son came in and calls me Fritz..."

I look at the young man and see the father, and my memory goes back to many things when I should be thinking of frankfurters and pumpernickel bread.."



JACOB WIRTH (Boston, Mass. 1868 to?)

The sawdust
on the floor
has gone the way
of all dust.

But it is the hard slap
of the house dark
on the dark, mahogany bar
that sustains me.

Yes ,
they have made
concessions
to a high
definition TV

but the ancient
beaten ivories
of the piano
still hold its torch songs
on Friday nights.

And
it seems
there is still a wholesome , yellow statement
of cornbread,
and a saucer of
baked beans.

The long dining room
has stretched over 100 years
and in the rear
there is a pay phone
in its battered booth
before you hit the head.

And that din of laughter--
(and I admit
I miss the cigar smoke)
and the bright red--
sheaves of corned beef
sprouting from dark bread.

What was once alive in this city
is still
not quite
dead.

Then You May Have Complicated Grief...

.....Based on an ad I heard on the radio from Mass. General Hospital in Boston

Have you ever experienced death?
Have you been in grief,
past the cut off period
of six months?
Has it affected your life?
Has it strained relations with your wife?
It is our belief
that you may qualify
for a study of complicated grief.

Receive our treatment
and we will dry every
drenched duct.
There won't be a wet eye in the house-
you will reconcile with your estranged spouse...

Remember don't hesitate
grief is dangerous
after the due date.

AT 56: In The Cafe

They want to remind you
Time is marked
on the pockmarked
Facebook wall
but still it is
the cheap sentiment
you adore
one more gift
before the exit door.

And on a summer day
it is all
at once serene
and then suddenly
obscenely green.

And outside
the cafe window
you see the
freshly minted lovers
their first awkward kiss
the awakening red thrusting tongue.

And now you measure your life
in coffee spoons
as the lovers swoon.

Doug Holder is the founder of the Ibbetson Street Press. He is also co-founder of the Bagel Bards, a group of writers who meet weekly in Somerville, MA. Holder's work has appeared in the *Muddy River Review*, *Istanbul Literary Review*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Fine Line*, *Long Island Quarterly*, and others. He teaches writing at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston and Endicott College in Beverly, Mass. For 20 years he has run poetry groups for psychiatric patients at McLean Hospital--(just outside Boston)---the onetime residence of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Robert Lowell.

