

Joel Moskowitz – Three Poems

Denial

for Aaron S.

I try not to dwell on the world's demise
and how one person can forestall that time
of nothingness. Perhaps you think I should
meditate on the obliteration—
is it not a citizen's requirement?—
to explore the darkness, the depression,
the colors bursting. Rescue humankind
and animals, stop the downward spiral
is what you're probably contemplating.
I'm contemplating a cup of coffee,
stepping away from slippery thought puddles
about icebergs, brimstone, a roiling sun
swallowing us all in a drunken fit.
I'm pouring in the cream and the sugar.
My mug warms me. I hold it with both hands.
It's the small things. I sit back, ignoring
the ozone hole. Am I superficial?
Perhaps, but... what if we all drank coffee?
Caffeine stimulates creativity,
and that might be the thing that saves our world.

The Art of Composition

after Kenneth Koch

To look again sometimes causes pain
and makes you feel inconsequential
and unloved. Perhaps when you went to bed
you thought you'd made some lasting contribution,
or perhaps you had an inkling
that the beauty was only in your head.
It's when you wake up and look around
that you realize your love of the world
is almost impossible to express,
though there's a chance.
Your dreams aren't that large now.
Gone are the coffee table books

about your origin, including
photographs of you with glowing eyes.
Gone, the crowded wine and cheese receptions,
but there is still a wedge of glory waiting for you
in the next room if you can just combine your genius
with something else which is largely a question
but certainly includes ink stains on your face,
some days when you get lost in your medium,
other days when your narrative bears fruit,
and then you must promote your career,
which we won't discuss here because
today we're talking about composition,
and I'm sorry to say that to gain immortality
you must work hard, almost like Sisyphus,
who at least attained fame through his process.

But don't lose heart!
Spend long hours alone;
and a pearl of grace might find you
and connect you with a lost part of yourself
and tell you how to finish what you started
in a startling yet inevitable way.

The Calling

for David T.

How can we know what we are
meant to do? An engineer hears a calling
in the night, then, becomes a teacher.
But some people don't hear
and others can't heed the calling.
It's not as if a grave is only a hole
for a person, so how can we know
the calling is *the* calling?
Everything's a question, but what is
ours? A painter wants you to paint,
but a gardener, garden.
And a soldier?
Do you feel the wind flowing
in your bones, or is that runoff
from your emotional stream?
People who love us know us
and they are right of course
but they are wrong

as the back of a mirror
is painted silver. We all bend
our ears to our own trombone hearts,
our blood cells plump like Mao's
little red books but different for each person,
telling us what to build, what to fight,
to play the violin or the accordion,
to make a bomb or make a fortune
or give it away.

Lace will soften the sound
of traffic jams, while in your chest
your valves are working overtime.
Listen! And you'll hear the music
that you already know is there.

Joel Moskowitz, an artist and retired picture framer, lives in Maynard, MA. His poems have appeared in *J Journal*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Midstream*, *The Healing Muse*, and *Whiskey Island Magazine* as well as the websites muddyriverpoetryreview.com, BostonPoetryMagazine.com and Soul-Lit.com. He is a First Prize winner of the Poetry Society of New Hampshire National Contest.

