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## Six Poems

*by Will Walton*

### Loss of a Bird

Smoke rose from the dead crow.  
Its stiff body hung upside down  
from the telephone wire  
like a trapeze artist. Its feet,  
soldered to the swaying cable.

Another crow landed on the wire,  
squawking loudly, turning its head  
in short, spastic motions.  
It became frantic & began circling  
the hanging bird, awkwardly flapping  
its wings in a mad fit of grief.

Soon, a second & third joined in,  
then a fourth & fifth. Before long,  
there were close to a dozen crows—  
all squawking, flapping  
for their fallen friend, unaware  
of the irony in their assemblage.

I say 'friend' because I think  
in language. They didn't know  
what a 'friend' was, but they knew  
how it felt to lose one.

When I got the news my best friend  
had drowned, I wanted to do the same.  
I wanted to scream so loud  
I couldn't hear myself feel. I wanted  
to shake my head no, fuck no,  
& if I had wings I would've wanted  
to flap them in a frenzy of fury.  
Instead, I put the phone to my chest,  
slid down the wall in my hallway  
to the faded blue carpet, & cried.  
Something was lost—  
the crows knew it & so did I.

### And Another Weeping Woman

Tear-soaked palms  
hide her eyes from the sun.  
Her back's hunched.  
Clouds of breath  
shoot from the slit

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Editor's Note

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between her cupped hands.  
The bus-stop bench holds her,  
but is incapable of solace—  
its aluminum as cold  
as the trail from the clinic.  
I'd stepped out for a smoke—  
a break from the magazines  
& worry of the waiting room.  
I hear her across the street,  
over the city. Her cry  
takes lead in the orchestra—  
hanging just above  
the car horns,  
percussed sidewalks,  
& staccato swishes  
of the passing taxis.  
Compunction wails  
from her diaphragm.  
I stand, staring,  
pulling, biting  
the end  
of my Marlboro.  
I watch her & think of you.  
I crush the butt, putting out  
its fire, & walk back inside.

## Smoke Ring

Smoke eased out  
in intervals  
from his cast lips.  
Not one  
resembled a ring.  
I tried.  
I was no better.  
We laughed.  
Everything  
was funny.  
I've heard people  
say they didn't  
get high  
their first time  
We did.  
High as hell.  
Rode our bikes  
around like kings  
of the neighborhood.

He hung himself  
Sunday. A friend  
called & told me.  
Said he struggled  
with addiction  
& depression  
for some time.  
I haven't seen him

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since 8th grade.  
I guess somewhere  
along those 19 years  
he picked up  
something  
he couldn't put down.

We never did blow  
a smoke ring. But  
we were high as hell  
we were kings.

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## After a Party at a Friend of a Friend's

I woke & he was there,  
staring,  
close.  
His empty eyes  
mirrored  
the daybreak,  
frozen  
in a state  
of unknowing.

I counted  
the points—  
there were 12.  
His rack,  
like an oak  
looking down  
on its leaves.

I pictured him  
bent over,  
chewing,  
thinking of only  
his next bite,

while someone else  
thought  
of  
theirs.

My stomach spoke  
& I thought  
of mine.

I sat up on the couch  
to face death,

tied my laces,  
& left  
the beast staring into

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a sun it no longer needed.

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## Pair of Eyes

'That pair there'—I point. She follows the line  
of my finger, then grabs the sunglasses,  
& sits them on top of the display case. I pick  
them up, sandwiching the 2 temples  
between thumb & index, resting them  
on nose & ears. 'Nah, not these,' I say, looking  
in the mirror. 'Let me try those.' She reaches in,  
& pulls out another pair—they're mirrored.  
I put them on, & look again. This time,  
into a world robbed of infinity  
only by its own absorbance. I stare  
at myself staring at myself. My existence,  
like a Russian nesting doll. I hand back the glasses,  
& thank her for her time. When I get in the car,  
I turn the ignition, & apply the brake.  
I pull down the visor, & catch a glimpse of myself  
in the mirror. This time, there is just one face,  
one pair of eyes—green, with lids that open & close.

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## Silence in March

Smoke piped from the exhaust  
of the old Volks. Dad popped  
the latch to the front hood  
as I neared the car. I opened it, threw  
my backpack in, & slammed it shut.  
When I got in the car, the radio  
was set on 107.7 Oldies Rock—  
"Uncle John's Band" playing.  
I'd almost fallen back asleep when  
Hendrix's version of "Watchtower"  
woke me up. The last solo faded,  
& the DJ came on—said he was sad  
to say that Charles Bukowski,  
after a year-long battle with leukemia,  
had died. 'Who is he?' I asked.  
'He was a poet.'  
A sound bite from Buk's last  
reading in Redondo Beach played  
as we pulled up to the curb.  
I reached out to open the door,  
but stopped when I saw the tear.  
I held the handle, suspended  
in language. The poem ended,  
& the DJ returned. He said,  
'For the voice of generations, let us  
please pause for a moment of silence.'

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**Will Walton** is thirty-two years old, and currently lives in Georgia. He has a BA in Creative Writing/Poetry from Valdosta State University. Most recently, his poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poetry Quarterly*, *Lost Coast Review*, *Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream*, *Common Ground Review*, *IthacaLit*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *The Oddville Press*, and others.

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