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Three Poems

by Mark Petrie

The Dream Catcher

Too much, she said. Real
sheep's wool wound
through white doeskin,

with turkey vulture
feathers dangling, three
on each side. Jesus,

and the poor
bastard should have,
must have, known

what a summer
fling was. I mean,
an authentic dream

catcher on the second
date. I mean,
our first was more

of a sleepover slash
twister party, if you
know what I

mean. Jesus,
I said, what
a poor bastard.

Arcadia Palms

I think y'all going to like it here. I been here
just about my whole life and I like it fine

Last tenants? Well, they was the ones that lost their little one
to the pool. Not drowned, but clear as day, to the pool.

Young couple, Mexican I think, and he their only.
Ever notice how they carve them pool decks

into a thousand little canyons and plateaus?
Well, that's suppose to be perfect design

to keep a high-stepping four-year-old
from slipping and smacking his head

upside one of them ugly plastic chairs.
Never should've happened, but, you know,

who do you blame? Well, management 'pologized,
drained the water and dumped the dirt.

See, 'Cadia Palms here has a "two dead children" rule,
two within a ten-year window. Two down and the dirt

goes in. Guess they figured they had to set a standard
somewhere. But even when the time came, folks still complained

about the non-water technicality, said the second death in this pair
was "fish out of water," a little fish flapping, sure,

but not in the water. Damn stupid if you ask me,
sound like teenagers saying love but not in love.

It was only fair to this couple to fill it up. So they did
and folks shut up about it, for the most part. First one?

Well, the last one was in the water, older girl, maybe twelve
years past now, on drugs or something. She was tougher

for folks to deal with. Hell, they almost filled the pool then.
But if you ask me, they should've filled the son of a bitch

forty years ago. It shouldn't take more than one
child to change the way things are done.

After the Shot

I felt several small arms
from a twig pressing my elbow.

From the cold, forward facing
bolt, I felt my right thumb recoil. I felt

my shoulder quiver, dis-
engage from the wood stock. I felt

the once proud poise
of my left hand severed by the tender

kick from the .22 Caliber
Ruger. Rising, my boots rifled the forest

floor; a single slug lay
in the brittle leaves, and the mallard

fell from the impregnable sky.

Mark Petrie's poems have appeared in *Booth*, *WrittenRiver*, and several other journals. He is the 2012 recipient of the Academy of American Poets/Andrea Saunders Gereighty poetry award, and his most recent work is forthcoming in *Geist*.

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