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Three Poems

By Steven Ray Smith

Dialogues

At first, I liked their clapping when I clocked
in for the morning. If was if they soothsaid
right away, that the hours ahead
were destined to be successful, despite the deadlocked
dialogues that would soon ensue
over whose more boutonnièred notions
would triumph to become the axioms.
Those morning cheers filled in for the few
nods we got from those who worked upstairs.
Finally one came down and taught my own
words back to me as ex cathedra gnomes
and left a young fifth upon my chair.
At last one takes an obliging sip but quits
when no charade can say how smooth it is.

The house across the street

Today she packed up and moved
to the house across the street.

The house sat on the market three hundred days
while buyer after buyer walked through
and did not return. Most wanted it, though. She could tell.

Compared to hers, it was not larger, not a prettier yard, the view
of the street was just a mirror image— small
differences, unnoticeable to others.

Today, she finally packed up and moved.

Two small discoveries changed everything for history:
salt, which doubled our taste;
the mirror, which doubled our view.

Inside the Balloon

There inside the house with tall timbers
and an inch of zoysia
a walnut-skinned woman removed her slender pumps
for a meticulous man with a pale tubby.
It was not what she expected
for a living room, nor he a girl.

At the mailbox in the morning
the first guy with illegal lawn care
unrolled a Lotus to explain
the for-sale sign beside his cyads and quince.
One of his lessees is bouncing checks, he told:

He's going back to keep the old barn aerated.

I also tried to walk in where people say, that's him.
I served Appellation controlée and Wagyu,
Sunday morning tee times with Old Raj Gin.
Don't go, don't go don't go, I whispered from a dark porch
when I saw my friend nitpicking, nitpicking away —
as if that could make the woman stay.

Steven Ray Smith's poems have appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *grain*, *American Athenaeum*, *The Conium Review*, *The Cape Rock*, *Big Muddy*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, *The Broken Plate*, *Bayou*, *The Raintown Review*, *Garbanzo*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *Poetry South*, *Meat for Tea*, *Stepaway Magazine*, *Writer's Bloc*, *Dogs Singing - A Tribute Anthology*, and others. New work is forthcoming in *Puerto del Sol*, *The Lindenwood Review*, *Common Ground Review*, *Slant*, *riverrun* and *OccuPoetry*. He is the president of a culinary school and lives in Austin with his wife and children.

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