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
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
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.

### 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
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.

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.’
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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