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POETRY OF DONAVON DAVIDSON

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There's Nothing Here

Were it not for the rain
I would pray for the storm
to pass over me.

I hear thunder,
a closet door sliding open
in my father's bedroom,
muffled wind chimes
delicately shattering
into tingling belt buckles.

I hear thunder
dragging its wooden body
across the ground,
footsteps
of an old man
dying one leg at a time.

I would pray for the storm
to pass over me,
but there is no time in the rain,
no measure of my father's height,
no distance for me to run.

Small as faces of clocks
without hands,
rain neither points away
nor towards.

Softly, it approaches –
footsteps from behind.
Always I turn to look,
always
there is no one.

Tonight,
I hear my father
complaining behind the mountains
to the west,
black as the sky,

standing above me,
as the rain
steadily draws back its tide –
an ocean
exposing empty shells
of crabs.

Rain falls,
my father whispering, see –
turning the lights on
after I wake
from a nightmare,
see,
there's nothing here.

Sleep without Shadows

At six o'clock in the evening
I tell my son it is time for bed.

Other parents, when I tell them this,
laugh and tell me I am crazy,

crazy for making him go to bed
so early in the evening,

but I know my son is too young
to forget where he has come from.

Before sunset, he sleeps,
and I go outside and wait for him.

High above me, the crows pass by.
Some say they sound furious,

screaming, and frightful.
Still, I know, it is the sound of night

coming together, the sound of
tiny shadows of children

turning into birds. I wait to see,
not so I can be seen,

but I wait and watch like a father,
making sure he is safe.

Slowly the crows fly away
gathering until the sky turns night.

Like all the young, my son sleeps
without a shadow,

without all the years he has walked away from,
following behind.

My son sleeps, for he needs to invent
a ladder no one can climb.

My son sleeps, because

he is afraid of heights.

Every night, I climb down
next to him.

I sleep
hoping to forget.

I sleep hoping
to forget.

My son, without shadow,
climbs higher, remembers

the night is just wings, crows
coming together.

My son sleeps, walking through
doorways that only face east.

He walks with people
he doesn't know.

He dreams the falling rain
is a hissing snake.

I sleep hearing crying mothers
holding black feathers.

I sleep watching burning boats
anchored in forgotten harbors.

I sleep knowing night
is always with us,

stretching its wings
beneath a lamp post,

silently watching from a branch,
gliding between trees,

trying to steal another's young.

I sleep, knowing I can't forget
what follows behind me.

Hanging From Wires

Outside a window,
in a field of winter wheat,
children face away –
arms raised in the air.

I can't stop what goes
missing from my life.

Shoes line up against my bedroom wall,
clothes hang behind a door,
or cast lifeless on a chair
I've never sat in.

Fields of grass wave in the wind
saying nothing.

A sea pulls them under,
washes them ashore.

And I am to recognize
the buttons of the sea
opening and closing
on itself,

it's scattered laces
tying and untying
the born and the dying.

I should call my mother
and tell her
this is not a cry for help,
even though my voice
is an anchor
crashing through water.

But I am waiting
to hear from my child,
to remind him
how he raised his arms
when I came near,
that when I carried him

I thought I was showing
the endless fields
I could rise above them,

how I was really teaching him
to hang from wires.

I know when he calls
he won't remember
how I used to shoulder
what was missing from my life,
as if I were a lone tree
in the middle of a field,

or a chair in the corner
of my bedroom.

He'll only call to say
I am drowning all by myself -

unbuttoning my years
of empty shirts hanging
behind a closed door.

I should call someone,
anyone, and say,
I am a tree
with so many arms
I can carry
even my own hunger,

although my voice
is a dandelion blowing away
in the wind.

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