

Home

Autumn/Winter  
2011

Summer 2010

Spring 2010

Winter 2010

Autumn 2009

Summer 2009

Spring 2009

Autumn 2008

Summer 2008

Spring/Summer  
2008

Winter/Spring  
2008

Editor's Note

Guidelines

Contact

## Three Poems

by Jack Powers

### Questions at the Funeral

*Are his golf clubs in here?* My brother asks  
as the full weight of my father's casket buckles our knees.  
We try to be strong for our teenage sons behind us,  
for the horseshoe of crowd around the grave.

The full weight of my father's casket buckles our knees.  
I stumble, gather myself, and head  
for the horseshoe of crowd around the grave.  
The priest begins his incantations.

I stumble, gather myself and head  
down mumble *Our Fathers* and *Amens*.  
The priest continues his incantations  
and I want to believe these time-smoothed words.

Head down, I mumble *Our Fathers*, *Amens*,  
but they float away into pale June sky.  
I want to believe these rituals, these well-tilled words  
but they've never taken root and I know the truth:

We float away into pale-mooned sky.  
He's gone. The horizon squints at me like an old farmer  
and I've never taken root. I know the truth:  
I need to get out of myself – my self-circling meanders.

He's gone. And the horizon winks at me like an old farmer.  
For the first time I feel the earth spinning on beneath me.  
Weak-kneed, I dig out of the self-grief circling me under.  
We lower the dark-grained box into the dirt-dark hole.

The earth spins on beneath me.  
We try to be strong for our sons behind us.  
as the dark-grained box settles into the dirt-dark hole.  
*We should have put his clubs in there*, I whisper.

### Bed Head

Some days it's just a few dried cowlicks in the mirror,  
a frizzing mold of near-dead sleep, excess plaster  
from the cast for *Face Planted in Pillow*.  
But some mornings show a marathon of rolling and writhing,  
chasing after shadowy figures or being chased  
(cows licking furiously in an alarm still echoing in my achy muscles),  
searching for lost children, or worse, unable to remember  
what I've lost. Each frazzled strand stands like a scream  
shouted into black night, frozen, stricken still.  
This morning I run fingers through the storm field  
and try to recall the fear or humiliation from minutes ago.  
But whatever socket of panic I plugged myself into  
is more than I want to remember. I step into the shower

and wash away the night.

## Sonogram

Welcome chit chat fades to commands: *Shift to four. Hold.*  
Doc and nurse synchronize. *Dial up. Stop.* Then  
just breathing, squish of wand on goo and belly. Carl realizes  
he's clamped his wife's hand, unclenches, exhales, avoids her gaze.

Dee prefers the pain of squeezing, stares past his cheek, tries not to think  
of his *Shhh, it's okay.* No need to look at this flickering screen.  
She knew. She knew. She knew. She knew. Dee closes her eyes.

Carl's learned to read these grainy images: ribs, clavicle,  
hint of lungs – smooth pale stones beneath rippled current  
reminding him of numbing water, sharp ice line thigh-high,  
*Cast there.* He balanced on wobbly stones. *Tug and release.*

Doctor and nurse slow and stop. *Don't say it* Dee begs. *Not out loud.*  
No words she must repeat to every prying fool. Her womb still  
echoes with his kicks and morning stretch. She wills her mind clean.

*Cast farther now...near the edge.* Bending the pole back,  
he flicked. Silver line unfurled, glitter swirl in sunlight. *I'm sorry.*  
Doc offers his gloved hand. Nurse cleans, straightens,  
bowed to task. *Click.* The monitor darkens to centered white star,

then black. Was it trout? Thin-lipped mouth open, perfect O reaching,  
engulfing hook and lure? And with a wiggle diving deep. *Shhhh.*

Carl doesn't know he's speaking. He guides her off the table,  
shakes out her folded jeans and sweater, leads her to the door.  
*Shhhh.* She lets him steer. *Swrrr* of running reel. Then snap. Slack.

---

**Jack Powers** teaches at Joel Barlow High School in Redding, Connecticut and lives in Fairfield, CT with his wife and three children. He's had poems in *Atlanta Review, The Ledge, Inkwell, The Cortland Review, Fourteen Magazine* and elsewhere.

---

**Copyright 2011, Jack Powers.** © This work is protected under the U.S. copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the expressed written permission of the author.