Two Poems

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Two Poems

Abstract
Two poems, "Other Lives" and "A Quivery Upper Lip."

Keywords
poetry, different lives, poem
Two Poems

by Charles Webb

OTHER LIVES

Not long after, in this life, I closed my guitar case for good, an A & R man from Arista—his plane to LA. delayed—drops into Seattle’s Embers for a drink. And stay, and stays . . .

Halfway through Practicum in Psychotherapy, I leap out of my beanbag chair. “We’re doing surgery with stream-rollers,” I scream, and head North, where I work as a fishing guide, court backwoods girls, but marry the Great Trout Stream . . .

A last growth-spurt takes me to 5’11”, 175—enough to make the college baseball team. I’m no Derek Jeter, no Pee Wee Reese, but I out-hustle everyone and, at shortstop, lead Houston’s Astros to their first World Series victory. . .

Of course I also have a life where my pipe-cleaner spine bends me into a side show . . . one where Linda’s boyfriend brings, besides his fists, his dad’s shotgun, and I don’t see 17 . . .
one where I torture kittens, drop out of 7th grade, and marry a 300-pound alcoholic lesbian.

In some lives, Julie has our child, and I work twelve-hour days for nothing but the pay . . . I strangle in the birth canal . . . I come back, paralyzed or missing limbs, from Vietnam, and wars where I’m not even American . . .

more lives than atoms in the stars over Baltimore on the October night (or was it too cloudy to see?) when an egg Emily Jewell had carried for thirty-six years was set upon by shoals of sperm: millions of vanished futures, plus one half of me.

* * *

A QUIVERY UPPER LIP

Just as the poem starts running on its own—just as I’m getting the feel of the reins, starting to flow with the rhythm, and enjoy the pounding in my spine, earth bounding by under my feet, wind whipping my hair as the crowd howls—just as I hope the poem will last forever, it turns a corner I hadn’t seen coming, and hammers into the home stretch. I feel its knees flex, haunches tensing for the leap that will carry it into history; and I grow heavy with regret. The dead weight of all my losses slows these lines I can’t prolong much more, even if I add a pearl mist breathing off an Alpine lake that mirrors stands of lodgepole pine. Even if—especially if—I add the love I’ve never ceased to miss. She knocks. I throw open my door, and step into the kiss

I’ve dreamed about, and finally feel now,
in this poem which, like the kiss, possesses a life of its own, and
a place in my life that will be over all too soon—this poem that has to end
(so long) right here. Right here and now. Good-bye. Good-bye. . .

Charles Harper Webb's latest book, Shadow Ball: New & Selected Poems, was published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in Fall 2009. Recipient of grants from the Whiting and Guggenheim foundations, Webb directs Creative Writing at California State University, Long Beach.