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Missed Phone Calls

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Abstract

A poem about hope and reconnection.

Keywords

Missed Phone Calls, poem, Ben Sherbacow, Sherbacow, poetry, Gettysburg

Disciplines

English Language and Literature | Poetry

Comments

Received First Place for the 2017 Marion Zulauf Poetry Prize.

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Missed Phone Calls

Ben Sherbacow

My heart is beating through the phone lines,
Burning out & falling short somewhere on the Great Plains,
Trapped forever in the landlocked states.

Sputtered out and subsiding,
The engines are failing to fire
And I'm spinning out in the stratosphere,
Leaving contrails that you can just see out your bedroom window
Before I disappear into treetops.

Like a stone-circled bonfire in mid-November,
I'm shaking at the slightest breeze
And my bones are twigs that
You could snap between your forefingers
If you really wanted.

Expose me for the coward that I try to be.
Rip my ribs right out of my chest
And I'll spill my guts to you.

Like a plastic bag
Dancing on the side of the interstate,
I'm chasing semi-trailers and getting caught in their axles.
They can carry me up through Wichita
And drop me off at the corner of 5th and Lincoln
Where I gripped your arm and pulled you close
On the metallic steps behind the CVS
Sometime last Christmas.

Sharing Newport cigarettes and a common misdirection,
We withdrew from ourselves.
You became me and I saw myself staring back
Through the glass shards trampled underfoot.

Two years gone in the blink of an eye.
A paragraph exchanged through smoke signals over state lines
That the slightest northerly current might blow offcourse.

You're the cracked skin on my wind-dried lips.
You're the blinking red light on my phone at three in the morning.
You're the loose change that rattles the cupholders of my car.
You're the heavy-chested sigh of relief at the single line.
You're everything that I'm grateful for not being at nineteen.
You're the flame that heats my daggers in December.
You're the pieces of me that I've been trying to bury in the frozen earth.

