

K. D. Rose

## Immovable Pieces

Poets don't die,  
they are murdered in their sleep,  
running with their glass of grief,  
foaming at the mouth.  
Their voices speak directly to God,  
like Longfellow's arrow,  
quivering in a tree,  
expanding to every  
body,  
unfettered,  
Whitman's electric dance,  
wheels rolling away from our self,  
to all our selves.

## Just Shy of Eighty

Two months shy of eighty,  
already attached to a walker,  
my father fell and broke his hip.  
Broke his elbow too,  
reaching for the phone.

While he was in the hospital  
so doped up on morphine the family couldn't wake him,  
I dreamt I found him in the dark of the woods,  
within a deep pit.

I was only with him a minute.  
In the dream, a nurse called his name on a cell phone.  
We both heard it and I popped awake.

I think dad decided not to give up.

Lucky in many ways, I have a porch to sit on,  
watch the birds my husband and I encourage  
with oiled seed and by waving squirrels away.  
We adopted the Cardinals.  
They built a nest and hatched their young in our tree.  
After that we felt paternal.

The Cardinals are cautious.  
They lilt above the tree midline,  
one feeding, while the others watch from nearby limbs.  
I can hear their tweets.  
It's the small things.  
Things my dad hasn't had for a while.  
He was always one for the squirrels.

Going out for a smoke makes my father happy.  
He sits and thinks. Like a meditation.  
I know, because my husband does this.  
A preacher with a Ph.D. in Psychology,  
helping others still makes dad feel good.  
He gets confused now sometimes.  
Gets taken advantage of.  
Then fights back.

Right now he's fighting for the care of doctors  
in a rehabilitation center as understaffed,  
dreary, and pricey as you would imagine.  
We're not the 1% .  
We're in the "social worker finds you a place  
social security and medicare can afford" group.

The Blue Jays are more militarized than the Cardinals.  
They come and execute alternating drops in tight formation.  
We are a short show for the Blue Jays but the Cardinals have made us their home.

The Crows—they come in armies. Consider the entire neighborhood their territory.  
Call to each other from the tip-top of trees. Take care of each other.  
Have to. No neighborhood wants them.

I stop all this at the sound of a plane overhead.  
We lie direct under its flight path. The Cardinals,  
Blue Jays, squirrels, even the Crows.  
Jagged. We all live jagged lives.  
Overshadowed without notice.

My age was my father in his prime. Still  
moving worlds, juggling people,  
feeling aliveness in his orchestration.  
I went from my prime to something very much else.  
Real fucking fast. That's how it happens sometimes.  
I have pieces of paper too. Just like my father.

Cardinals can live up to fifteen years.  
My husband says soon we'll start naming them.  
I don't know if we can afford that luxury.  
Though on my porch I sit and reach for the sky,  
what if Cardinal Bob didn't show up one day?

Dad has alarms on his wheelchair now.  
He tried to sneak out and smoke.  
I think, at eighty, you should be able to go have a smoke if you want.  
I think, at fifty, life shouldn't feel like it's going downhill.  
I tell dad to get strong, get out of there. What he wants most.

Back in his apartment where he can still orchestrate  
a small string of people to help him do what he needs.  
Not enough.  
Just enough.  
He is indelible.

I still hear tweets of Cardinals.  
The bird overhead, the steel one, flies so much higher.  
I think my desire for flight was murdered.  
I think there is degeneration and there is eradication.  
Neither is preferable.  
Like a flower in the shade,  
I am to be content now with only wind.

Long ago, I had a dream that my father drove all of us,  
his group of related and unrelated children, in a large  
Humvee through rough terrain, dense forests, and wildness,  
still getting us all back safe.  
I praise him for fighting with his doctors.  
I will give my bits of sinew strength to keep that Humvee in drive.

Soon the frogs of summer will roll in.  
I will listen for their throaty hum.