

Mark Frutkin

Badminton Net

I stand at night in the suburban backyard
squared by fences and hedges
and look at the stars and marvel
not at their distance
not at their number --
 their number depleted to a handful,
 ten million stars erased
 by each neighbourhood streetlight --
no, I marvel at a world that can be
at once both intimate and cosmic,
dust of starry imagination
and the snow cold on my feet
a world that can hold
both a gas barbecue on the deck
and the planets in their traces,
both the lit kitchen through the window
and Venus high across a sagging badminton net.

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A Walk in the Quebec Countryside

Shocked and frightened by the smell of cut grass,
in the pool of shade she asks, Is it a poplar?

Quaking aspen.

I go on alone, turn around twice
to look at her shrinking away.

Later, I use an alder switch
to flick flies away
like a medieval penitent
as I walk the gravel road.

See a jumbo jet descend the vast flattened
afternoon sky into Mirabel,
slow and unavoidable as fate.

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Spark

Morning fields of crumpled unfolding
gold
and the woodpile exact and silver-grey.
Wind scrubbing the sky blue.
A single diaphanous cloud floats by.
Three white butterflies
ecstatic and undecided
flicker in tandem over the garden.
Field mallows mauve
and exquisitely feminine.
A few books in full
sunlight on the picnic table.
Black crickets, white birch.
A spark, a goldfinch,
alights in a dead tree.

