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The Tick

by Stephen Geric

I.

The tick would like its muteness personified in a form not jealous of what we discover in its suck and drool. We have found nothing new, nor any scheme of organization. Yet there are ways of understanding the taut mind of a tick.

Satellites move endlessly in the airy territory of ticks and with the same determination and power to irritate. The next one I find will be given a name, after the most beautiful woman in the world I met that day. The tick will dream of my radiant blood, and I of its angular disk, its hard back, patterned to defy whatever crawls through space.

II.

This one got under my skin. Biting is a dream of life, a cold coffee embrace that lasts longer than you ever imagined love could. We hold and falter.

If all the lakes I have ever fished were to dry up, marking the world with a great stink of all that refused my lures, I would consider it an act of absolute terror intending a double erasure: effort and dream. I will never fish that great Russian lake, so deep, deep to blue, past green, past the brilliance of waves over deep water. But there is no drying. We wet ourselves as we age. My typical observation: sidewalks soaked at dawn dry quickly. There has never been enough blood to go around.



III.

Ticks, so that there is something to fear in the woods. I have decided to limit the number of times I scare myself. I will tally according to the seasons. In summer I will scare the least, even though I sleep in a wide blueberry patch thick with the humid breath of bears. In winter I will scare often, for then there is much to fear living with the wind, and the daily cracking of flesh and trees. Though I take some heart the oldest trees do not sway and creak so much (all shaken with the joy of storms), they smooth themselves, sigh a bit, protect their rotting innards from the fearful incursion of weather. The logic of wind, like that of the tick, is to pull and pull.

IV.

Toward evening, we know to see both sides of this shortest night of the year.

There is a soft crossing, a shallow rise and dip. Is it blood I hear, ear pressed, or a strong river far below sand and rock? Or is it my own heart's pounding?

Prey love always comes matched by loss. The tick waits almost lifeless, terrible, infectious, and impossible to resist. There are infections that dispel infections, attendant to dreams that survive the tenderness, still joy, and endless deferrals of love. Prey love always comes armed with loss.

The tick is only what it cannot resist:
the feeling of flesh,
the joy of blood,
the complex of love.

