



Lafayette Wattles

Unknown Reasons For My Divorce

by Lafayette Wattles

You'd think they would have learned,
would have known better.

It was them after all who told me
when I was six that if I ever did a thing
that was wrong, but told the truth,
they'd stand by me, no matter what,
and he used that example,
say you break someone's window,
which unleashed the curse.

Could they have forgotten
how, two days later, blood stained
the living room carpet, the game of tag
gone wrong, my being it and pushing in
one of nine small panes on the door
that opened out instead, my wrist
a constellation of scars to this day?
Did they forget the week after that,
the baseball incident? Missing
the old foundation with my pitch,
how I hurled the ball into the basement,
nearly struck her on the head
as she folded his worn work slacks.

Did they forget, less than a month
went by, when the man came
to fix the eaves? How

he backed in the driveway while I shot
hoops. How the rebound went
over my head, took out the rear window
on his truck. They were partly responsible.
So, how could they tell me
over the years, *if you find yourself
struggling in school . . . if you ever
lose your job . . . if you
get mixed up with any bad girls . . .*
Why wouldn't they just say,
if you find the perfect career,
perfect someone, perfect life,
we'll be there to savor it
with you to the end?

Winter

by Lafayette Wattles

I remember when
rise and shine was the sun
too far away
take the bedding with you
need a hot shower to make it
to the hot shower
cold, when breakfast was
three-layer long-sleeved
will I ever warm up sausage and eggs,
when the best sounds were invisible
snow-day radio voices
and red-bladed sleds and stop-stop
you got some down my back squeals
and the crystal crunch
of a world chewing boots,
when thawing was chocolate-scented
marshmallow can't wait
to get back out there good,
when lunch was leave the mittens on
soup, when fun was as much about falling
down as getting up
and friends were runny noses
and the only roses in bloom were on cheeks,
when dark switched on
hours before you were ready to unplug
from the day and night was sweat

pants sweat shirts wool socks
wrap around the shoulder throws,
when sleep was thick with ice and dreams
were slow and the space between
chilled to the bone and just right was there
in your bed around you
inside you as only life can be.

But Then Nothing Would Remind Me of My Own Bones

– from *"Dead Critics Society"* by Mike Dockins

Summers at Thorn Street, you were always working the high dive,
turning heads, so even the mom's adored you,
with your high-noon smile, pure heat and radiance even then,
and your leanness, which for some might have seemed a certain less-than quality,
but with you every movement was exactly as it should be,
as if there were no other way to climb, to stride out to the very edge,
to fling oneself into the eye of the world,
twisting, turning, plunging through all those held breaths,
while I spent equal time at the back fence,
fingers poking the in-between,
and you gave up trying to lure me into the depths of all that splashy living,
for you knew I needed to find my own way,
that I was afraid, if I followed you, I would forget myself
among the gasps, the sighs, trying to be that glistening boy
that no one could be for long,
the impact we all face in the end too much for flesh and bone,
like with her and the sudden fall back to earth,
which is why I would gaze across the field of headstones,
which is why I took those hours every afternoon to remember.