

TIN MAN

Everything dies, someone once whispered to you,
while you stood motionless. You wished for death, then.

You have picked out the place you want to be buried,
a scar in the earth.

And what will they say of you? That you didn't die
on the side of a mountain, dawn on your rusted face;

that you once loved a woman, and she loved you;
that you wasted away to nothing?

You tried to recall your mother's voice
as lightning made your metal glisten blue.

You never walked under a covered bridge, called it bad luck,
you left that to those made of bone and blood.

And they would never have understood
why you still find yourself shaking in the corner,

wishing for those decades-gone days when you'd wake in a ditch
on a sunny morning, desire echoing through your hollow chest.

You sit alone in an apartment, looking out the window,
and tug on the line connecting you to all the places you have been.

And of all the places you want to visit, why this one?
The trees are turning their backs on autumn, and the bridge

is remembered for what it was, a starling, in a nearby nest of trees,
its hollow bones thundering into the window outside your room.

And for one instant the bird was perfect, complete.
You remember washing blood off the glass. You dug a grave.

Rain fell on your shoulders as you placed the bird in the pit,
patted the dirt down with an axe handle.

Everyone you have loved is dead.
They didn't have the patience of a tin man.

For a tin man, there is no life after this one.
There is only today, then tomorrow, and the next day.

Your world changed when a girl approached with an oil can.
If your lips could have formed one word it would have been *no*.

Don't wake me, you wanted to say, but couldn't.
Everyone you have known is dead.

You remember seeing your reflection in the shed window,
knowing some part of him was more real than you—

you knew this, because, all that time ago, years before the girl,
you briefly raised your axe, and he waved his axe in return.

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