

Five Poems

LORNA CROZIER



Lorna Crozier has delighted lovers of poetry since her first collection, *Inside in the Sky*, was published in 1976. In the intervening years, she has published fourteen collections, including *The Garden Going on Without Us*, which showed us a different view of the humble carrot and pea, and *Inventing the Hawk*, for which she won the 1992 Governor-General's Award. Her most recent collection is *The Blue Hour of the Day, Selected Poems*, 2007.

Room is delighted to introduce you to these poems. Savour them, visit www.lornacrozier.ca to see if you've missed any gems, and if so, head straight to your bookstore.

Dostoevsky

LORNA CROZIER

He was a man unconvinced by pancakes.
He said that as she licked the syrup off her fingertips,
Funny, it happened all the time, though she never touched
The pancakes, syrup seemed to travel up her fork and make
Her fingers stick. She wondered if the rich ate this victual
With thin white gloves a maid would pull off after.
She would have called this man a boy but she was trying
Not to see others from the perspective of her longevity.
She'd grown old since her mother died two years ago.
Was that common stuff? You aged instantly even as a child
Upon a mother's death? Took on the look of children
In those old Italian paintings, stern adult heads stuck on
Little bodies padded with velvets and brocade.
The man uninspired by pancakes had the face of a monk.
A monk had told him that and it made him wonder
If he should join the order. He needed a letter of reference
From an employer but he was out of work, merely
A doctoral student on a grant. She noticed he had nice ankles.
They would show beneath a robe. What did it mean
To look like a monk? The ones she knew were old, shrunken
To the size of a child, their skin transparent. When they bathed,
Could you see their hearts breaking through, their fingers
Tacky with blood? She wondered if this aspirant
knew Dostoevsky's *So much grief, and then pancakes after*.
Of course he did. They all read the Russians now and deconstructed them.
Break down a pancake and it wasn't much: flour, baking powder, an egg,
What had she forgotten? There must be sugar, at least half a cup.
There must be salt. So much grief would add the tears.

The End of Marriage

LORNA CROZIER

When snow is falling it's possible
you'll feel listless. Snow, after all,
smothers everything, street signs, garden
lanterns, the sad hump of the dog buried in the yard
three years ago, what you can and cannot see.
Snow makes you ask, what's the use?
It takes away tomorrow. Every destination
becomes the point of your departure, the word
or moment you knew you had to leave
now heavy with white and cold
like boughs of cedar, bearing down.
There's no end to lassitude;
the guilt, the good intentions drift
higher than the windowsills, bury the bike
one of you left against the fence all winter.
Unlike rain, you wear snow like a fabric,
lace or tulle. Your mouth fills with it,
your lashes finely feather. Easy to imagine
when you move your arms you're growing wings,
marvellous and lit, and as you sink, you fly.

Before Memory

LORNA CROZIER

My father's out riding in a field at dusk
on a grey horse called Tony he moves
towards my mother's house. She is crossing
the stubble in her older sister's shoes,
holding the hem of her dress above the dust.
This is long before I am born, but I have spread
a blanket where the wild grass meets
the furrows. My father's favourite things
sit upon it, white chicken on white bread,
a Pilsner Old-Fashioned, a wedge of rhubarb pie
though the boyhood hunger he loved to brag about
is gone. How close they are to meeting!
The horse smells her now. It flicks its ears
at the rustle of her dress against her legs,
the crackle of her borrowed shoes on stubble.
Does the rider see her? He seems to look right through me.
For her, he's on a grey horse soon abreast,
and he's reaching down. For me, he slides
from the saddle, sits on the blanket and tips his beer.
I can feel its coolness in his mouth.

The Hour of Snow

LORNA CROZIER

Everything quiets,
everything moves hesitant
and slow, even the boneless
pup flops down, drops his head
between his paws, and in his dream
there's no running after anything.

Outside, the fields pull cold and brightness
over them, those wind-washed sheets.
Time to consider snow's sophistry,
its mortar and mend,
before the fields resume their job,
laying down the path to heaven.

You walk into your breath—
its wings of frost hovering
in front of you—and breathe it in,
brief memento of who you were
a heartbeat past. Snow gives you
this hour to say goodbye to everything
that makes you weep,
your hair, the thick and thin of it,
gone white with grief.

The First Day of the Year

LORNA CROZIER

The new writer sucks her fingers
in her crib. There is nothing
to distinguish her—like the extra toe

on Hemingway's
literary cats—from all the other
babies down the block.

She is dreaming ink
though she hasn't seen it
in this world yet

and no one knows,
least of all her parents,
she loves nothing

better than the blank
flat whiteness
of the bottom sheet

when she's laid damp
from her morning bath,
upon it.