

In Praise of the Inexorable

Linda Crosfield

*If I didn't have a dime
And I didn't take the time
To play the jukebox... **

In El Rosario monarch butterflies
return to high-altitude forests of oyamel firs.
Monarchs weigh less than a gram,
make their way from one continent to another
to the sacred firs, *Abies religiosa*,
where they cluster for warmth
in the hundreds of thousands,
wait for the sun to wake their stained-glass wings
so they can fly, find a mate
and their lineage can continue.
Takes longer than it used to
to travel such a distance —
trees cut down,
great swaths of land consumed by wildfires.
For these tiny creatures to take to the air,
silence is key.



Alan pops up on FaceTime —
I decline the call
text I'm at a writing retreat
where silence is also key.
Look who I found he writes,
sends a picture of him with Pegi
who he just encountered on a sidewalk in Cambridge.
I write back *Now?* and he says *Yes*
so I go outside and we connect,
a brief blurring of distance,
friends like these who don't see each other often
cannot be put on hold life's too short
we're all getting old and Pegi has PSP.



*While the records turn and turn,
We danced and learned
Our hearts had yearned for this...**

Met them in Toronto in the seventies,
dancing with Alan at The Quest with all the gay boys,
poppers and muscles alive alive oh,
not a care for anything but the next party next lover,
the last hurrah before AIDS.

Dining with Pegi, everything from cookiegrams to crickets,
tasting a dozen different pies from the church ladies of Masefield,
pies filled with anything that's ever wanted to be in one,
pies so good people lined up for an hour to get in the door.



PSP — Progressive Supranuclear Palsy,
similar to Parkinson's
but different.
People with PSP fall backwards,
Parkinson's, forward.
PSP causes problems with vision;
Parkinson's has the tremors,
doesn't progress as quickly.
Both steal speech and swallowing,
deterioration of mid-brain nerve cells a symptom
as is the overlap of tripping and falling.



*'Neath the moon we walked
and walked and talked
of love...**

I've fallen and I can't get up calls my Parkinson's husband
and we laugh a little
spend twenty minutes getting him off the ground.

When I lick this thing said my Parkinson's father
 attempting and failing
 some task that used to be simple.

Fuck it! says my PSP friend
 whose mover/shaker photo was on a billboard in Toronto,
 who speaks in shorter sentences than before.



*Love songs that they sing
 Wouldn't mean a single thing
 Even though you're standing there
 Ruby lips and golden hair...**

In Mexico everything is about colour —
 primavera trees pelt torrents of golden petals onto dusty streets,
 the ocean teases a washing machine of greens and blues together,
 lights up the nights with phosphorescence
 you can pour through your fingers like honey,
 bougainvillea in a paintbox of colours,
 green parrots vermilion flycatchers yellow-winged caciques,
 white egrets perch atop slate-grey crocodiles in the mangrove
 and a butterfly lands on a marker in the graveyard,
 the soul perhaps of someone who was loved.



One thing leads to another to another to another
 a walk a dance a kiss
 earned bliss that spins a web of time and place
 forgotten song familiar face.

* song lyrics from "If I Didn't Have a Dime" written by Bert Russell and Phil Medley and performed by Gene Pitney