



DAVID McLIMAS

A SONG OF PUBLIC SAFETY

(con tremore)

I was nervous and alarmed--
Felt naked and unarmed--
To muggers I was bait--
Eternal victimhood my fate.

But--

(con spirito)

Now I have a friend
To soothe me and defend,
Who can help me cope with any danger-scene;
Well-oiled and well-blued,
A balanced, polished dude
With a custom-fitted 12-shot magazine.

It perches on my place-mat when I eat;
When I drive it's in a pocket 'neath my seat;
At work I wear it in my shoulder holster.
When I bathe it's in a baggie on the floor;
When I crap I hold it pointed at the door;
It nestles every night beneath my bolster.

Car-jackers never faze me;
Drive-by shooters barely graze me;
Bullet-holes make burglars lots less bold.
With my fist around my piece,
I've no need of the police--
Who wants to spend an hour stuck on Hold?

My answer to bad guys from Van Nuys to Moscow:
My Roscow!

(con reverenza)

No one can harm me now;
No one can disarm me now.
Sure as guns created our great nation,
My pistol is my rock and my sal-va-a-tion!

-PETER LARSON

PROMISED

Jim Dott & Peter Larson are Astoria residents. •

Dark currents twisting coldly
through the course of my soul
murmuring Death,
plying their trade on the tired
skin of my dreams.

Careful steps beneath the crush of destiny
through the crowd of lies,
tethered to secret Hope
enfolded in moments when
I glimpsed your face.

-MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Michael Alexander is a newly arrived resident of
Astoria.



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WARD OFF THE DARK

Birds of the summer.
Birds of the sun.
Hummingbirds flash bright iridescent
red gorgets, green glittering backs;
Tiny servants to flowering plants,
hooked on their nectar,
spreading their pollen,
forever humming from flower to flower.
To sustain one thousand heart beats in
a minute nectar becomes your life.

Here in the North it is winter:
Low pressure systems, heavy frost,
cold fronts, grey skies, and rain,
rain, rain.
The hummingbirds have long since
flown south with the sun.
It will be months before they return.

Meanwhile, we decorate with brilliant reds,
strong greens and light candles, burn fires
to ward off the dark,
to remind us of the miraculous,
to remember the sun.
Hummingbirds hover before blossoms,
pull back, dip, fly upside down,
spin 'round to feed from another;
perch for an instant on bending grass blade
then blur back to the blossoms.
They snatch small insects when and where ever
they can.
Try to stay clear of cats and kestrels.
Males make fast-flying, high looping
courtship displays.
Females lay their eggs and raise the
hatchlings in hidden nests.
They fight in fierce fun over
the best nectaries
and feed and feed.
Sunlight comes to life.
Flowers in flight.
Ward off the dark.
Remember:
birds of the summer,
birds of the sun.



CHRISTOPHE VORLET

WATCHING BIRDS

The pre-dawn quiet's cut
By the caws of crows crowding
into an alder from all directions.
They converse loudly and then fly off,
glinting black chips of obsidian,
calling sharply one to another,
together to the sun.

These days it's easy
to fill your head with division,
with us versus them:
Remembrances of the horrors of the holocaust,
broken cease-fires in civil wars,
drive-by shootings on the news

A single swan swims
with a goose flock,
white neck curved
above dark, wind-ripped waters.

Easy to wonder if
progress is really the course of history.
Or have we just progressed our weapons,
fabricated new enemies,
and dressed up our hatred
in latest fashion.

A kingfisher flits from piling to piling
rising and dipping, rising and dipping.
It calls once
then flies into the fog,
quickly vanishing over open water.

Easy to see truth in lies
you'd love to believe,
easy to find righteousness
in your anger,
easy to argue without listening.
And turn your back
on friends.

A lone loon sits in the slough,
the last orange-red light mirrored
on water polished smooth
by rare lack of wind.

But within the us
is also what it takes
to heal the split,
the will to open minds
and hearts and arms
to them.

Just at dusk a flock of redwing blackbirds
whirls above the near-bare willow
then drops to roost for a moment
in its branches.
Red wing bars faded
to a rusty brown
but voices, still bright, tumbling together
like clear water over rounded stones.

(Thanksgiving '93)