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Twin Cities Poetry Workshop

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Poems on the Effects of 21st Century Populism

Jason David Peterson, *Twin Cities Poetry Workshop*

Three poems exploring the toxic effects that today's populism is having on families, society, and the environment. The selection includes "How We Got Here," "Beyond the Ticket Booth," and "The End of Conversation." Keywords: poetry, family, environment, society.

How We Got Here

We ate everything in the house. The yard picked clean— nothing even that any
starving memory could hold out for. We ate our anger and soon our love
and the patience of others.
We ate our hunger and moaned as it grew heavier inside us.
We ate the world raw and the bitter green
and salty blue and endless black on black went down in a flush of burn and clay.
We ate the future before it limped away.
We ate the rules
of all of this, and now it has no meaning.
As if nothing was ever made or eaten—
an infinite nothingness that won't digest, and so there is only us.

Beyond the Ticket Booth

Held waters dislodge in a rage oceans rash, pale as salted grass and caverns cave, the sky's
grey head pinned to the valley by the cold boot of rotation forced to take all of this in.

I am watching a spring of summers buried under the fall of winters
a furious sun towing the black sheet faster than the chariot could ever pull her

an ashen rain we'll soon gather and weather.

Think of them all—

the incredible things we've done to fuck things up—

I want this to be the end

we paid for, some ragged stub to let us know we got our dollars' worth of show.

The End of Conversation

Anyone can scream.
They're doing it in rounds
—overworked throats and played-out phrases decoupage our city
in pith and spittle, so how can I tell you
of outrage? A whisper carefully delayed,
a currency in flames, an act of kindness?

There's no wrong answer but we all still lose, gasping in the crowded air.

If I were dying now of that very violence, it would kill me faster having to explain.
So I lie in silence, wave my arms making logic angels in the massacre
of words, and wait for a new sound to articulate.