

***Rick Campbell***

## **Waiting for Everyman**

God him come and gone  
and no man tricked  
the one-eyed brute. Then

that guy, big man, washed  
up on the beach. Folk  
called him Esteban.

Mayan,  
maybe Guatemalan, woman  
today stood at the post office

window and pulled  
wrinkled dollars from a baggie,  
bought a money order.

One story.  
Where is it going? I stare  
at the map, imagining

or remembering  
someplace different. Dental hygienist  
told me I had a sympathetic

tongue and cheek,  
tried to protect me from cold  
water's pain. I think yes

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my tongue's known sympathy  
and desire, my tongue's  
danced in Rio and sleeps

too far from home. I am  
waiting. No one knows  
but you.

## What I Might Want Today

“I suppose I would like more beauty”

Kristen B, (reading contest manuscripts)

Yes, that and more freedom, love, wisdom,  
generosity. More fish when I fish. More  
runs for the Pirates, less for the other team.  
More luck for my friends. More discipline  
for me. Perhaps, in its way, more beauty  
would accomplish all of this. Beauty,  
as in elegance, grace — *there's a hole  
in daddy's arm where all the money goes /  
Jesus Christ died for nothing I suppose.*  
All of this being, as they say, in the eye  
of the beholder. If I lived dedicated  
to the pursuit of beauty what old roads would I walk,  
how parallel the roads to truth? Could I get  
there from here, in this little poem, yes,  
because nothing is given?

## Peacocks Christmas Eve

When the peacocks sing, night's  
not silent anymore. Off key  
caterwauling, drunks caroling

who can't sing sober. Maybe  
it's the dark moon, not the Savior's  
birth, that panics them this winter night.

Why am I listening? These wailing  
fowl are my prophets. I can't  
avoid this ineluctable personification

though I know it's me who's desperate tonight.  
Maybe the peacocks are just hungry or lost.  
There's a coyote out there somewhere

following a star; the peacocks move  
in a troop, safety in numbers, and even  
the drunken hunters are home tonight.

Silent Night. Holy Night.  
Let nothing I dismay.

## Reckoning

The morning moon,  
one white beech, nine shining branches spreading  
like a candelabra. Hawk, rooster, crow,  
six song birds. Four squirrels, one traversing  
tree tops, leaping from the frail end of one branch  
to the frail beginning of another. Back  
and forth, three times in my counting; he seems  
to be searching, crying out now and then —we can't  
claim that a squirrel sings. I call him urgent, desperate,  
not a lightweight swinger of birches, but a jumper  
of loblolly and a rasper of sweet gum and oak.

I am remembering the last day  
I woke happy, distracting myself by listing —what  
I did not do last night compared to what I did. What kept  
me up till 1:30 since I graded no papers and wrote no poems.  
The Tigers lost and with that my slim chance of going  
to the World Series lost too. Oregon, in their ugly uniforms,  
beat Arizona in the middle of the night and I did not care.  
I note the hawk again, its nest dark in morning shadow.  
I measure the pain in my back against the rooted weeds  
still to stoop and pull and come to favoring tools—the hoe,  
the shovel's long handle keeping me from another day  
on my hands and knees.

Believe me, I would be a pilgrim  
and crawl through medieval streets to you, but the distance  
between us  
isn't time or miles, not dust and toil, but torn rags of duty and  
promise.