

In the Park

John Minser

She is still sitting on the park bench
a little peeling, green, with brass handles,
and her feet swing in the cool summer night
like twin pendulums. She, indeed, is keeping time,
waiting for a boy who is not coming.
She does not know, in this twilight time
between abandonment and realization,
how she will feel tomorrow or how her friends
will exchange *I told you so* glances. Tonight,
her hands are keeping her forearms warm.
She thinks this discomfort is buying
future arms, future warmth, future moments
in which boys and girls reward each other.
Do not imagine her beautiful; if she were
then she would not have been forgotten.
Imagine her instead like a ladybug
trapped in a soap bubble: she shivers,
not knowing if she is flying or drowning.

Dreaming of Wheat

John Minser

As the fire grows small and more distant
the cold summer darkness settles on my shoulders.
The stars are bright, the pampas grass
sways in the spray of embers.
I wonder when it will catch. Ten years from now,
I will have a dream of you.
We are in love again. You've brought me
to the library where you work. We are married
or soon to be. The books are blurry,
but you carry them easily. They are like shadows
bundled in your arms, like harvest
collected, this time, when it is ripe, and not after.

Bread

John Minser

I baked when no one was hiring
and flour was cheaper than bought.
Things turn up when you sift:
Legos and BBs; once, an eight-track
like a sacrifice from some village
where parents grind by day
and, by firelight, bring the bags
from house to house, collecting.
I never got tired of the gifts,
even when the checks stopped coming
and the focaccia wouldn't rise.
Once, a pair of dice with no eyes.
Later, a pair of dead bees.

Death by Misadventure

John Minser

I picture it obvious from the start,
knights throwing eyes between slit metal:
we're dragon food. Spells going topsy
with every twisted syllable. We should know
how the *mis* gets there, how a couple
of halflings out for a stroll devolves
into something written on a death certificate.
But we never do. Somehow we think
it's *this* castle the princess hides in,
this is the life we don't lose.

Glass Dog

John Minser

He's taking it, slow and even, from the pillow
and handing it to the girl. She's been in line
with Mom for fifteen minutes, eyes bright
with smashing. Little hand-carved face, glass-blob
Dachshund, midwag. She'll throw it out a window
driving home or stamp it to a shimmer
alone in her playroom. She'll say
Mom loves it more than her. She's learning
the crystal-sharp pleasure of breaking.