

# Three Poems

by Tyrone Jaeger

## Perhaps the Dam Will Hold

I'm drying out like a late Raymond Carver  
story but these Arkansas rains . . .  
Leaks trickle in the kitchen and living room.  
Drips pop in pails and tupperware. Water above,  
water below. My APRN assures me the pain  
and blood only internal hemorrhoids. Breached pipes.  
Ruptures abound. I survey the storm  
from a window and behold the sill,  
carved in child scrawl it is okay.  
I might rage. The child denies—and later  
tosses my way a wadded paper confession  
I did it. :( :( x2 please do not be madx2  
I might cry but instead close my eyes and whisper  
it is okay. it is okay. it is okay.

## Another Wet Winter, Arkansas

Dock submerged in flood brown  
I paddle up the lake's narrowing roots  
two creeks, Beaverfork and Pickles Gap.  
The gathering of fog disperses,  
ascends, a sect awaiting worshipers  
and three corn-fed bucks climb the slope  
and stop, peer down at the water drifter, me.  
Winter-wiped trees and greenbrier lay bare  
the wooded shoreline. I marvel at the awful  
flotsam—basketball, bicycle helmet, lures  
and bobbers, styrofoam cups and bits—tossed  
from boats and cars, washed off lawns, draining  
down the ditch—and one prostrate, dead forever  
goose, head immersed as if in shame or prayer.



## Lost in the Forest of Unaware

You at fourteen, a sapling with spooked brown eyes,  
careful through the hallways, where the bathroom toughs  
wait at the stair top, lookout bored with no teacher on  
the way to bust smokers. You are fresh meat to be grabbed  
and taunted. They smell your fear through the pine-scented  
deodorant your mother said you should start wearing,  
but she is nowhere and does not exist in this thicket  
of bodies and threats. Inside that bathroom they suck  
on cigarettes and you imagine murder on their minds.  
I promise that someday you'll see that they were just  
fucking with you. Still, you have teary sleepless nights  
and want mothering, but your parents watch St. Elsewhere  
and where exactly are your words? Years later, you will  
be the boy who walks in the bathroom to smoke a pinner  
and will see your tweaker cousin has, miraculously unaided,  
tied to the stall frame a nerdy classmate upside-down  
by his shoelaces. Let 'em down, you'll say.  
Your tweaker cousin will laugh and fire his lighter.  
The boy falls, head-smacked on the tile. He mutters  
thanks as he exits the door, and you'll stand at the window  
uncertain why you entered in the first place.



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