

diary of a dead eel boy

DEAN GESSIE

FIRST PLACE

at the wane of day my father and I would strike out small in tall rush and long shadow
greasy wellies and waders orange and blue through *kloo-ik kloo-ik* and *a-wick* and *a-wick*

my father and I would navigate fruiting bodies upright catkins and egg-shaped leaves
down to bat song air at crag point o' dark and the one twisted ash and succulent grasses

split the green curtain he did with his club-fingered hand and bid me break my slipping
gait with the sober refrain *care is the order* while hopping goat-like scree and rock chimney

at river's edge we left good altitude leaned one the other on sharp degrees waterward
and entered the lair of the eel down to the killing stone mucked with bone gut and gill

dark now darker on the face of father's eyes flint knives for sacrifice and organ dissection
he ran silence through nocturnal notes and brackish molecules blood spores in the nose

spillers he'd take and drive the stakes like a looney railman laying bed and ties into the sea
gather line and hook under foot and stab a worm fatway short to make show of the ends

out went the line and sinker straight points aft of entry and father and I bent crooked obtuse
and tautness in the hands that were the sign of a true lay or untold fears coal lorry black

behind him I stumbled hammering spare stakes tossing hooks and smelling and hearing blind
and always the *glup* of water and *kee-ik* of little owls and the dank of sulphur salt and nettle

through sand and heron shit we skittered palm-reading nylon and slack for hunger and urge
shoring up spillers and skirting carbon rust of hippo tusk and macaque jaw and dung beetle

and then he bade me do that thing that was holy of holies and life for life and seed for seed
but come the shot recoil and treadless boots come the slip fall and lumbar shock at sedge bar

*and bubbling ho! and breathless hee! and gasp and pee and neck and ice and skin and smart
and entropy and amber trilobite and salt shad and mud fart and snot jelly and black hole*

and father cursing the weight of the boy and sinkers of melted led and iron pipe and always
the hook and the mouth and the boy's leg for anchor and bloody minutes cut into his hands

until the earth gave way at the bottom of the world to the mud golem and the O-mouthed
oily thing wrapped long at his leg and father looking fire-eyed and hell-bent at eel and eel boy

and stomping spineless and clubbing paste-wise the jaw eyes and tooth plates in its ugly face
and returning next day with the sober refrain *care is the order* and spillers worms and hooks