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Four Poems

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Voyeur

She came to bathe and drink
from the slim run of fresh water
that cleaves the beach in two.
A grey gull no doubt not far from
last evening's roost.

My perch that fog-shrouded morning,
the trunk of a fallen tree, let me heed
her regimen unobserved—the wild whip
of wings to cleanse herself, the fervor of her
beak stabs to quell her thirst.

I felt no shame for my breach of her privacy.
Nature makes no judgment of those that cherish its charms.

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A Salmon's Journey

Dorsals jutting above the murmuring current
tell of that most punishing passage,
trading salt for urge, then the run,
on up river or creek to brave wild torrents,
waterfalls, otter's teeth, eagle's talons,
or maw of waiting bear.

And ill-prepared to meet the final challenge,
starved and scarred, their once sleek bodies
discolored, deformed, backs humped,
jaws hooked and fanged.

Few will make it to their goal.
Losers litter the bed of the flow.
“Winners,” spent after the fights
and rites of courtship, die, fragment,
and wash away.

Thus does pitiless Nature exact Its price,
when a kinder game plan would suffice.

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Fox in a Hurry

Mid-throttle, we mount a busy two-lane rise,
sundry Sunday drivers minding our missions.
Enter left from timber, a sudden running fox,
then his exit road right into the facing forest,
both lanes crossed, safe and sound.

Tribute to the species’ legendary smarts,
wily fox weaves a way between the cars,
or blow to the red clan’s celebrated status,
brainless beast leaves life and limb to luck?

Our takes depend on our bounded minds,
some more open, some more closed.
What the fox believes, no one knows.

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Vertebrae

It caught my eye one May morning,
on the beach a distance ahead.
As I came closer, I could name it,
backbone shard, stippled with sand,
sheltered once by blubber and skin.

Its size said neither sea lion nor
dolphin could have been its owner,
only the largest of Pacific dwellers,
gray or blue or humpback.

Scan of my find set me dreaming.
To ply the azure ocean's depths,
survey all its murky canyons,
count its contents, all those
that swim, or scuttle, or grow,
sing long songs futile to resist,
transfix a mate and school a calf,
feast on crab and krill, then sleep.

But after, redeploy and *breach*,
as if to quit the sea for sky,
disclose desire for further worlds,
not brought at last to bones.

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