

## John Grey

### **Animalisms**

A creature  
sits atop my voice,  
ever alert,  
but smiling,  
its legs curled  
around my tonsils.

It knows what's at stake.  
though animals can't distinguish  
between their own needs  
and those of the one  
they inhabit.

If I whisper, "I love you,"  
it will growl, "Please honey,  
Spend the night."

### **I'm Drenched...So What?**

Sky grey and low,  
my shoulders holding it up,  
as I stand on this corner,  
waiting for you.

Being alone  
I can't move on.  
Loving you,  
I can't let the clouds  
crush me.

Finally, drizzle,  
and then heavier,  
and at last downpour  
and everyone under cover  
but me.

Water through my hair,  
down my cheeks,  
dripping from my chin,  
soaking my clothes...

You're here at last.  
And I'll do anything  
to be in a poem with you.

## **Dog Bite**

### *Page One*

Dave had the dog for many years.  
It only ever bit him once.

People said he was never the man his father was.  
The older was tough and hard  
as a tractor hulk.  
Dave hit the books.  
Who knows what Dave senior hit.

Fact is, Dave did better than his father,  
made loads more money,  
name in the papers,  
even was a talking head on TV  
more than once.  
Dave senior was a mineworker,

every day toiling at the coal-face.

The dog growled at his father,  
like it did to anyone it didn't care for.  
The time it bit Dave, it was dark,  
and the parlor shadows  
must have brought out the father in the son.  
The dog was confused  
and snapped teeth around his leg.  
It felt remorse later  
as only dogs can.  
It licked the wound and sobbed.

Dave Senior was a man that a dog  
could take a dislike to.  
Maybe it was his own snarl,  
born of working all day in the airless dark.  
Or his short temper. His cough.  
Grizzled eyes. The stoop. The limp.  
Dave was none of these things  
and yet, when he turned his head a certain way,  
the resemblance was stark.  
Enough to fool a dog at any rate.

## **Dog Bite**

*Page Two*

Plenty arguments between the two.  
Senior calling Junior soft.  
Junior muttering something  
about wanting a better life.  
It sure put the dog on edge.

Lung cancer was the verdict.  
For the longest time,

it seemed like it was the goal.  
The old man knew the risks.  
It made him work and cuss  
and swing his fists all the harder.

The old man was two years gone  
when the dog bit.  
Trust a dog to keep a track of these things.

### **Out of My Element**

I'm driving someplace in the middle of Michigan,  
well off the highway  
and, with twilight rolling in,  
well off the brightness of day.  
The landscape is fenced fields mostly.  
Lots of cows who do everything but come out to greet me  
as I pass by them  
at the meager speeds these twisting lanes allow.

I pull over anyhow.  
How often does a city boy  
get to see, up close,  
bovines with their heads bent down,  
chewing their cud,  
shunting the results  
through three hungry stomachs.  
Their brown backs ripple  
but that just breeze, not my presence.  
Indifference is their default,  
to me, to each other.

It's time to move on.  
I have a destination to reach  
and my high beams are eager to get going.

I'm on my way  
to a cabin by a lake,  
some friends already in residence,  
my fishing tackle in the backseat  
eager to make a show of outdoorsmanship.

I may not catch a thing,  
never learn exactly where that next fish meal  
is coming from.  
But the milk supply is in good hands,  
even if the cows have hoofs.  
And my respite from work  
will cast itself gently on the waters,  
even if there's nothing biting.

### **About the Poet**

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Orbis, Dalhousie Review and the Round Table. Latest books, "Leaves On Pages" and "Memory Outside The Head" are available through Amazon.