

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Tony Gloeggler: Two Poems

Tony Gloeggler · Wednesday, July 8th, 2020

A GOOD MAN

At the end of our last phone call
my mom told me cousin Tom's
cancer came back. He's keeping
quiet about it, which everyone
appreciates since he tends
to tell the same stories over
and over. Besides, somebody
will just say what can you do.
Someone else, it is what it is
and everybody will nod, think
he's seventy-five, how long
does he want to live anyway.
I like his Brooklyn Dodger
stories: the Duke of Flatbush,
Carl Furillo's canon arm, Campy
Jackie, Pee Wee, Hodges and the way
his face would turn red, words
would spit out faster every time
my brother called them the biggest
chokers in baseball history, losing
all those world series to the Yankees.
Like smooth jazz, he'd flow into talking
about the Mets, his Polo Grounds
try out, throwing to Choo Choo
Coleman in the bullpen, the call
back that never came, or that Sunday
when I was twelve and he pulled me
out of Mass because his softball team
needed a ninth body to avoid
a forfeit. He'd always make fun
of the three pathetic, weak-ass
dribblers I hit before bringing up
my over the shoulder catch in shallow

right that turned into the game-ender
when I spun around and doubled
the game-tying runner off second.

My mother coughs, wonders about
his forty year old, never diagnosed,
slow son and who will take care
of him now, while I remember
the month after my transplant,
how he sat in his car outside
my building, motor running,
waiting for the sun to show
its face, waiting to take me
for my twice a week, follow up
appointments, smiling like him
and his son were heading out
for a day of fishing on his boat.
When my mom says he's a good
man, my mind moves to Christmas
dinners, stuffing my face, trying
not to pick up the Italian bread
and smack him across the mouth
as he ranted about his tours
at the Two Six Precinct in Harlem,
the niggers, the spics, the way
they lived like animals, how
he'd leave the country, years
later, if monkey-man Obama
got elected. When my mom
notices my silence, she says
Tom would do anything for you.
I say, *I know*, promise to call him
over the weekend, see if there's
something I can help him with.

*

AU REVOIR LES ENFANTS

After the movie
I said I would do
all I could

Hide you
under my bed
bring you
bread and wine

guide you
past guarded borders

I would do that
for you, for
anyone

But if black boots
kicked in the door, pressed
a gun to my temple,
said, *where's the Jew*
my mouth would open
point a finger

And I would breathe
deep, glad to be alive
for one more moment

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