

Peter Bethanis

My Smell

My ex says it's like a hickory fire.
A lover claims it's more sea and whiskey.
Sometimes it's lime or wintergreen
the wrong spice of deodorant stick
in a time when nothing goes right.

But mostly it's tobacco or softy burning wood, a faint
chimney smoke
in a season with little change. The bitter dusky smell
of places left dormant in winter.
Clean sweat with maple when I split wood.

I shave in the late afternoon and smell of lime again.
The brief sweetness of my being.
I rarely think about death that smell like wood rot.
Or damp leaves on wet road.
Or the wounded deer that ran into the thicket
And was never found.

Route 69

I am calling to you here from Somewhere, Indiana,
a place I find impossible to love, miles of fields
flat as empty bed sheets far as the eye can see.
And at fifty doing seventy, it's hard to revive
passion, to stir the pot of a thousand lies
that lead to these wincing truths~divorce, my daughter
maybe dancing for tips, my own life a gray ghost
of little transparent wants, I call to you stranger,
passing by me on this thread of road, the municipal dump
a silver thimble I pass every day as I sew together a
bitter thing,
yes, bitter, and now that I'm wise
enough to finally live and know it, to finally get it
right, the sun, the sky,
the earth turning everything for a moment to eye level,
stranger, pass by, pass by.

Peter Bethanis has published poems in *Poetry*, *Cape Rock Review*,
Lullwater Review, and elsewhere. His book of poems, *American Future*, is
available from Entasis Press. He lives in Indianapolis.