

C. K. Williams

I Shot a Frog I Shot a Bird

I shot a frog

It had been squatting apparently waiting for something
perhaps the end of the world I thought from its obstinate stillness
on a rock at the edge of a tiny pond
I'd say no more than a yard edge to edge

The frog was small too not one of those big bulls
that lurk in the reeds by a lake who can scare you
so solemn they are so sure of themselves their fat selves
with their down-turned mouths
and great oinks

I shot the frog
the very small frog
with a Winchester .22 caliber rifle
because there was nothing else to shoot there right then
or nothing but an inanimate target and how boring that had become
meaningless thwacks into wood
once or twice splinters and the thing was half blasted apart
so
so what?

Then there was the frog and my rifle lifted itself as though by itself
aimed as though by itself
fired as though by itself
and the frog

well

the frog vanished
not even a splash or sprinkle of blood
not even a cloud of blur the way computers do it these days for films
just gone disappeared vanished kaput

frog
no frog

I wasn't pleased
this was not as I'd planned it

I'd shot the frog
because I wanted to shoot the rifle again
someone had loaned me to amuse myself with

I'd already felt the subtle painless jolt in my shoulder each time it went off
that very benign but definite crack
in more than your ear

you sense it in the drum of your chest in the tangle even of your groin
nothing like pain
nothing really like pain
but a definite crack a definite

jolt

☪

I shot a bird

This was another year though the same rifle
the same person letting me use it

He was sick in bed nothing serious a slight fever
he just couldn't go out
I remember there was nothing to do
so we took the rifle out of the closet
and a bunch of those inconsequential appearing bullets
hardly half an inch long
and shot out the window first at a paper target I stuck on a tree
but that was boring

then he had a model plane he'd made as a kid
hanging from his ceiling of his bedroom
and I suggested what about that and he said
why not he was over that kid stuff

so I hung the plane some war plane a Messerschmitt maybe
from a branch in the tree and we were going to take turns
but on my first shot my bullet blew it apart
nothing was left but a string swaying
nothing to shoot but the string and who shoots at string?

Then a sparrow I think or a lark I can't bring it back quite
so long ago was it I only picture some common sparrow or lark
flittering down to the branch next to the one
the plane had hung from

and my rifle still in my arms
as they will as I've mentioned they will
lifted itself
aimed itself
for I had such incompetent aim
my hands would tremble
the sight-thing on the rifle's far-end would swing
back and forth and almost always I'd miss
except with that frog

And now this bird

Foolish thing to have stopped there right then
foolish thing to land there and stay there how long
half an instant on that branch
and the gun went off as they will and the jolt jolted my shoulder
and the bird fell

It didn't vanish though as had the frog
it didn't take itself out of the world
it just had no head any longer
it lay on the ground whole but headless

Do you believe me?
There was no head on that bird
only a body headless therefore frightening therefore repulsive

Broken clump in the dirt wings tucked into its body as though it still lived
flightless and broken in the dirt
almost the same color as dirt

Or so I remember
I'm not making it up
I swear everything else here is true
so why would I make up a bird?

Haven't I proved
I aimed a gun
shot a gun
had fun with a gun?

Had fun with a gun
with a gun?