

Kitchen Table  
Zane Koss

**MODEL**

I wanted to write a poem

place me                      that would somehow

late night

kitchen table

stories

a campfire

All my sense

that

depends upon

.

the beer bottles  
mark time gathered around, telling new  
ones the old ones saying tell that one about the  
time you come down off mclean lake on the dirt  
bike uneven surface of the varnished wood where  
leaves have been added to expand the social body  
is the voices gathered around that table in the dark  
or what about that time jimmy flipped his truck out  
westside road this is all i ever wanted to (be  
gathered around the kitchen table it seems so  
small in the dark a voice and cascading  
laughter it was everything that ever needed to exist  
i want to delete facebook i don't want to  
delete facebook so i can send a pdf to mike  
ask him to send me his most recent poem to be  
back around that kitchen table ask  
jerry what's that one about that time or  
tell me that one about the strip mining of  
data from our lives about blowing up the creek  
with dynamite for gold panning about the buildings  
storing our photographs in data servers fragments  
of rock falling around their heads as they ran what about  
our lives have we lost what about that time  
you went out to ralph lake with tom tell me  
about the time you put all the rocks in his sleeping bag  
*oh fuck that bastard was mad as hell* i can only  
look at these places on google maps now can hardly  
write this poem without it spiralling into another and  
another and another place another story the palliser  
middle fork of the white diana lake these  
exist as words i can see on a screen not the frigid water  
where i got soaked to the thighs dragged up the trail  
by an orange loop of binder twine tied to my father or gathered  
the words i have been gathered around this kitchen table  
to hear these words

I think about performance

how to perform a poem how

reading these words to an audience

could replicate that social context

gathered round the kitchen table

telling the old stories, improvising

within a structure

“tell that one about

that time you and jerry

how to put that on the page

how the page could be that space

in which that social field is made

visible            improvising against each others'

"that's like this one time, we

how to make the page the space

where that happens

alone

the page the context in which improvisation could

driven by the difference only

only possible in otherness

to make the page a space of

confronting my own otherness to myself

the means of improvisation

cannot quite

am the subject delineated by that context

there was a patch of black ice there  
at the sixteen kilometer  
and one of the boys'd radio'd up  
a cow-moose had slipped on it  
was struggling

so i drove down  
and see her struggling to stand  
she's got her front legs up but can't  
get the back ones

so i get behind her  
tell her 'okay, take it easy, now' an act of trust  
and start trying to lift her up  
so she can get her legs under her intimacy,  
hands on her hips

and the boys are driving by, y'know  
looks like well and she's looking back at me  
and moaning  
she realizes i'm trying to help  
but it's clear her hip broke in the fall

he put

a bullet  
in the back of her head  
and dragged her body into the ditch

an act

of kindness

intimacy

even

what

are we to learn by this  
what gained in the telling

repeated?

that we are so close to death

the humour, too,

appearing to fuck a moose

while the boys drive by in loaded trucks

her moaning, that moment of

eye contact

is intimacy

we are within the animal world  
and must make kindness where  
we can

must take, not take, must

place our own bodies back into the earth

why keep telling

these

stories

why i would give anything

to hear them again

and

again

and

the shadow of an airplane passes over the apartment

i am in brooklyn

in a pandemic

Zane Koss is a poet, translator, teacher, and scholar from the East Kootenays, currently living in Brooklyn, NY. He is the author of *Harbour Grids* (Invisible, 2022) and co-translator of *Commonplace* by Hugo García Manríquez (Cardboard House, 2022), along with several poetry chapbooks.

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