
POETRY | FALL 2017

Falling

By Larry Oakner

The first fall I remember
a kid at a playground asked me if I wanted The Whip while I was hanging
from the swinging rings, grabbing my ankles he snapped my body
Trapezing me over the sandbox where I landed
upside down on my bent neck
He could have broken my spine.

Later I fell in front of Penn Station running for a train in the rain
My legs slid out from under me and I skidded on my shoulder
Along a slick wet grate while crowds passed around me
Checking my clothes for tears, my ribs for pain
A young Black guy stopped and asked, "Are you all right, Father?"

Last year while walking in Puerto Vallarta along the River Quale
A bunch of boys were knocking around a soccer ball that rolled in my path
Kicking it back to them my balance went off and I spun around, hit the ground
Just missing the little shop tables, rolling away with only a scratch
And I jumped up like a gymnast arms raised in victory.

My grandfather whom I never met moved West
Met with financial reversals that tipped him over to the dark side of his life
So he jumped off a building in downtown LA, falling three floors to the sidewalk
Head trauma the death certificate said
I wonder how it felt to fall on purpose?

Larry Oakner's poems have appeared recently in *Tricycle: Buddhist News*, *PROVOKR.com*, *The Shambhala Times*, *The Jewish Literary Review*, *Lost Coast Review*, *Home Planet News*, and *Mystic Nebula*. Earlier, his work appeared in *Mobius*, *Long Island Quarterly*, *CCAR Journal*, *Jewish Spectator*, *Kerem*, *SPSM&H*, and *MARILYN*. He is also the author of a chapbook, *Sitting Still*, and his essays on poets Jack Spicer and William Carlos Williams appeared in *Manroot* and *Thoth: Graduate Studies in English* (Syracuse University). Oakner has a Master's Degree in Creative Writing from UCLA, and works as a branding consultant in New York City.

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