

The Small Work

This morning
the monarchs were busy,
floating from bloom to bloom,
like scraps of stained glass
set loose from the cathedral sky.

Only weeks ago
one of them
was a striped caterpillar
clinging to milkweed,
asking little of the world
except enough leaves
and enough time.

Now
it lifts itself
from bergamot to bergamot,
where a Canadian Tiger Swallowtail,
dressed in its yellow finery,
meets it
in a slow circling dance.

They seem to vie
for the same blossoms,
yet always
one yields,
one lingers,
one moves on.

Neither owns the morning.

There are flowers enough
for both.

Below them,
the harebells nod
in the smallest of breezes,
blue bells ringing
without sound,
keeping time
with all the wings
passing overhead.



Beside them,
the black-eyed Susans stand
golden-faced and unafraid,
little suns
rooted in the earth,
remembering
how to return.

The bees
had found the bergamot too.

Busy,
yes,
but in the old way.

The way a creek is busy
finding the sea.

I stood still long enough
to realize
none of this required me.

Not my praise.

Not my permission.

Only my willingness
to stop getting in the way.

The bergamot offered itself.

The bees accepted.

The butterflies
needed no treaty,
no referee,
only the quiet confidence
that there would be enough.

Perhaps this
is what repair looks like.

Not headlines.



Not monuments.

Just wings returning
to places
that still know their names.

It seems
that becoming
has always known
what we humans
keep having to learn.

The earth,
after all,
has never asked us
to be heroes.

Only good neighbours.

Plant the flowers.

Leave a little wild.

Trust that somewhere
a monarch,
fresh from milkweed,
and a Tiger Swallowtail
will meet
over a stand of bergamot,
while harebells keep watch,
each believing,
correctly,
that there is room enough
to linger.

And the bees,
already knowing,
will simply go on
with the small work
of holding the world together.

~ Tim Hogue

