

every town needs a poet
by Morvern McNie

the old hall is hopping
festooned with loops of paper crepe
bargain balloons to blow and break.
the Fiddler and his befuddled
taking tickets at the door
roasted rump with gravy and mash.
cups of this and cups of that
crank and croon of Fish What You Lure
an ironic mix of salty and sweet
songs from the coast to tempt
the water ghosts from your inland ears

everyone you ever want to see
and everyone you don't want to see
and those in between

there's Harold
tumbling his thoughts
by the washroom door
his hints of conversation
precious stones in a tangled net

Ella and Eleanor in their pleasing polka dots
running their fingers along Jake's tattooed wings
trying to feather his interest with all they know
who's been caught in the long river grass
what is dirty but not obscene
and how some people think that Wilde's Salome
and her dance of the seven veils
is the origin of the striptease

but it's Genevieve
in her red-rimmed specs
dipping her hand into her back pocket
to take out her mini moleskin
to add a few words

she took a bus
from the city of saints
to visit Aunt Heloise
who plays her squeezebox
under her wistful willow tree

Genevieve
Jake wants to know

he hid behind the big oak in the park
listened
as she peeled the skin of words
with her teeth
listened
to her speak her poems to the night air
his heart beating a new rhythm
into the bark of the big oak.

Genevieve he wants to hold

frees himself from the grasp
of the giggling girls
to ask for this last dance
so he can remember
when she has left town
to listen for her echo
and write it all down

"every town needs a poet" was first published in *Fish What You Lure*, published by Vocamus Press (2020).