
Dragonfly

After Elizabeth Povinelli's Geontologies

WESLEY BRUNSON

◦

The first birthday he is in my life
My stepdad gives me *the way things work*
An illustrated encyclopedia of technology.

Its entries read

airburst
orbital incline
sealed auger boring

On one page, a boy pushes a girl on a swing
As she moves across the page, she shifts
Greyscale to red.

◦

They write:

*this is not a reference book in
the ordinary sense. it has been
designed to give the layman an
understanding of how things
work, from the simplest
mechanical functions to the
most basic scientific principles
and complex industrial
processes that affect our well-
being—a graphic introduction
to the modern world of
technology.*

◦
I play hooky from school
And in my room start
To fill in all the encyclopedia's
Letters with ink, but finish
In frustration.

◦
He writes
*for a boy who likes to know
on his 10th Birthday.*

◦
He comes home late from work. i bury
My face in his coat.
It smells like road exhaust and salt.

◦
My first major work is a collection
Of bugs for 7th grade biology.

In the backyard i run around chasing
Bumblebees. the techniques for catching
Them i nail.

I crouch, holding a cup in each hand
And lunge forward, scooping up
Air and insects. i bring the cups
To kiss.

At dusk, a blue dragonfly is perched
On a Black-eyed Susan like a lake under the sun.
Soon my opaque jail
Amplifies his frantic buzzing.

I creep home. on the kitchen counter:
A glass jar, a bottle of nail polish remover,
And a cotton ball.

I pour dragonfly into the jar, my
Hand a temporary lid.

Dragonfly flies around and around,
Beating against my palm, nose and eyes burn.

I make a gap between my fingers,
Drop in some wet cotton,
and screw tight the brass lid.

At first, he flies up and down,
Streaking the air blue. then he falls
Asleep on his pillow.

o

After a few minutes, i unscrew the
Lid and pick him up by his tail. his
Wings are frozen motion.

I press a pin into his back,
He emits a crunch, and i place him
In a neat row on the Styrofoam.

monarch butterfly
danaus plexippus

earwig
forficula auricularia

blue dasher
pachydiplax longipennis

Mom says

looks like a rainbow graveyard

I finish two other classmates' collections
I can't remember if they asked me to,
But that year, we all got a's.

◦

That night, i awaken to a buzzing
And in the lamplight i see his corpse
Moving up and down
Along the pin.

◦

I watch them all escape,
One by one, my encyclopedia
Decomposing

Works Cited

Macauley, David, and Neil Ardley. *The Way Things Work*. Houghton Mifflin, 1988.
Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Duke UP, 2016.

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