

4 Poems by Niilo E. Koponen

Alaskan Suomalaiset

Asumme täällä
Revontulien alla
Pakkasen kotimaalla
Ison karhun lapset
Tansimme, lumessa leikimme
Kaverit kylmässä leikkii

Children of the Great Bear - the Polar Star
we live here
under the aurora's fox tail sweep,
in the home of the winter frost
snow dancers, playing,
comrades of the cold, all.

Tock

the sound echoes
thru the dark, dry, cold air.
Forty below
and splitting wood.
The axe cleaves birch
easily when it's this cold.
Ice fog below,
clear on the ridge,
as if we were above some cotton sea.
Sound carries well in cold,
yet, as I arch myself
for another blow,
I pause
and listen
and only silence answers.

School Man

This desk, papers piled high,
Notes scrawled on the blotter
Like worms that crawl at night
(I swear they move and squirm and multiply
they writhe like scorpions, I know,
reminding one of countless, petty, must-be-dones)
This desk, at which I sit, so tired, lost
- and yet there are moments that it's
all worth while - decisions made and children helped
I guess we cannot always choose
the battles we will fight.
We choose the front on which
we serve -
and take it as it comes
and do our best
This desk - a strange and cluttered
sentry-post, indeed.

--Non Biodegradable plastic

jars and cans.
bereft of bleach and talcum powder
hang from gaunt,
lonely, Yukon River willows
where little else survives.

Metal
rusts, and,
in a generation,
disappears.

Is this our immortality?

What conclusion
does our future archeologist,
compulsively statistical,
find
in this distribution?