

Mac's Bookstore

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In May in Whitehorse
I sat in Mac's Bookstore,

huddled behind a little table and
a stack of books, ready for signing,

filled with just one aching question,
Who is going to walk into Mac's

on a warm Wednesday afternoon
seeking *Come-By-Chance*

about growing old in stories caught
between Atlantic and Pacific coasts?

And because I don't know what
I'm doing in Mac's Bookstore

I write in my journal,
notes for this poem perhaps:

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*The lonely poet sits alone
at a little table in Mac's Bookstore*

*exposed in Whitehorse
like a petty criminal*

*locked in the stock, laughing stock
for the public's gaze*

*surrounded by the ghosts of
Robert Service and Jack London.*

*I won't sell many, if any, books,
but J. K. Rowling is a billionaire.*

*I feel like a bear in a cage
at the zoo or the nature park.*

*Look, see the poet write.
See the poet pretend to write.*

*What is the poet writing?
A poem or a grocery list?*

*See the poet sad with so many
words nobody wants or needs.*

Behind the counter Talia tells me she has
more copies of my book in the back

like she anticipates I will need lots more,
or is perhaps stoking my dull desire.

I see the poet, dark and feral and furtive,
in the door of the Coca-Cola cooler,

while a grim old woman sits silently
on my shoulder, like she suspects poets.

A man with a huge mustache stops by,
So, you're from Newfoundland.

I knew a Newf once, he was funny.
Are you funny? Not really, I admit.

Then Charlie shows up, and tells me
he was once taught by a teacher

I once taught, and buys a book because
she asked him to, and we begin to talk

about George Herbert and Anglicanism
and African bishoprics and gay marriage

like those are angles we can handle
without poetry's angels glaring back.

And in the dusty sunlight I stroll back
to the Westmark Hotel, glad I sold a book.