

David Ruekberg

The Questions

Come to think of it, I like the questions better than the answers. A question brings an opening, as after a week of cloudy days a patch of blue

fresh in the east. Why does one squirrel chase another in arabesques around the hostas and yellow cypress? Is it a territorial dispute?

A courtship contest? Maybe they're just playing. Why arabesques? How do the chipmunks know winter is coming, scurrying here and there,

their cheeks puffed like Santa's great bag? How do they remember where they hid their cache, when day after day they return to the rat traps

set for them, licking off the peanut butter and foiling the hammer most days but one? Where do their souls go after their pretty bodies

David Ruekberg

are dropped onto the leaf pile?
Do they even have souls? Do we?
Some questions open out like that, you see?

Cloudy and mysterious, but all the same irresistible, the kind that give rise to religion and government and all that hegemony. What

is a man? What is the proper role of a husband, of a wife? When is the best time to fish or cut bait? Leaning back in a red plastic Adirondack-style

lawn chair on a hazy August night, waiting for the remnants of comets to trace a sky already glowing with the amber of streetlight pollution,

these are the things I wonder. The mind wants to clamp down and give answers. It's not that I deny science. The best science, you know

only offers answers that beget bigger questions: If the universe is expanding, what's it expanding *into*? If God is dead, to what do we keep praying? If the law

of tooth and claw is how we got here, why do we love surrender just a little more than good sex? Even the easy questions have uncertain answers.

The Questions

What time will you be home? What should I have gotten you for the twenty-fifth annular return of our first and final betrothal? Do I really

remind you of your father? Yes or no answers are the worst, in a way, because under each syllable lies a story that might never

be told, and meanwhile we go off in our wobbly, separate orbits, approaching perihelion, but still missing, the most important messages

blown aside by the breezes of our passing. What do you see when you look in the greens of my eyes? How have we come all this way,

and still remained strangers? Maybe I can help you with that? Maybe you could hold this for me?