

MARCUS McCANN

HEAD INJURIES IN HOCKEY

Under the floods, under a thu-thinking shoulder
check, I turned a mix of mean and happy,
chucked my helmet. Under my head flaps, cold
licked my locks. I grabbed great gobs

of jersey and wound up like the slinky arm
of a pinball machine. This was Junior A,
so vicious. If I have one regret, it's that I didn't land
that punch—some wood finger found the collapse

button behind my knees. There's speed,
then there's this: the clock stopped.
On the ice, some braintube turned inside
out, I heard a zwupping pulse, like a sung

voice rewinding, blade marks swooped
like a negative laser screen saver.
It roared louder than victory. I was seasick
on the liquids from my face.

Hey buzzer! I'm a sound wave, gamma rays,
steam, a swarm of fruit flies—inexact,
darting spots that bend magnification
out of 1:1. All the light was there,

but it was out of order. Buzzer again. Pause.
I saw the chilled air as it was: chemical, macho,
jelly. I was covered in it, thick
as olive oil, no, caramel, no, peanut butter.

FRYPAN, PEPSI, BURNT OUT HOUSE

Cold rolled vacation car cradled
us like a picnic, hurtling through swatches
of night-knit panic. A radar in my child

self zinged. The K-Car's fur pet me, my eyes
pitched over the door's plastic forearm,
staring at a list of road. Tracheal tube

into a throat of forest, machine-assisted artery
to the rural, ur-commuter, cottager—it nearly
orphaned me. In the gesture of pine, the scudded

shuffle overhummed collisions vague but piling up
of teens caught in each other's teeth.
It waits. Every stump, every boulder

a jerky lurker under a frypan-Pepsi-
burnt-out-house sky. The forest's grin I dimly
understood but shrank from. A kidnapper's

pillowcase we booted through like we were chased
by dogs—every minute a roulette
of steel chambers. Click, nothing. Click, nothing.

This, from inside. From the shoulder,
we were smoke, a raft on rubber rapids,
a gated cage of tissue wind-wrapped, barely

a walk-on part, headlights and sedan's gawky
cough a hump rising, falling, and, at last, blinking out.

Marcus McCann is a poet and journalist. He is the managing editor of *Xtra* and *Capital Xtra*, gay and lesbian newspapers serving Toronto and Ottawa. *Soft Where* (Chaudiere Books) is his first full-length collection.