

Corey D. Cook

Ompompanoosuc River (November 7, 2021)

I find myself on the sandy path
by the river the morning
after you died,
the path we frequented,
walked together just two days before.

I stare down at the wet stones
in the riverbed,
smooth as ancestral rosary beads.

Trees stand between me
and the moving water,
frost in their shadows,
green grass in the unobstructed light.

I approach our bench,
sit on my side,
the hole you dug with the heel
of your shoe still there,
the breadcrumbs you pulled
from your pocket and scattered...

gone.

I squint up at the sun,
that old and familiar face,
that steward of warmth
and wonder whose hand will slip inside
your coat pocket next,
whose fingertips will find
the rudimentary braille
of stale breadcrumbs,
if they will know all you left behind
for those of us still sitting on benches,
singing from treetops.

Corey D. Cook's sixth chapbook, *Junk Drawer*, will be published by Finishing Line Press in February of 2022. His work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *As It Ought To Be*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Freshwater Literary Journal*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Nixes Mate Review*, and *South Florida Poetry Journal*. He works at a hospital in New Hampshire and lives in East Thetford, Vermont.