POEMS BY JAMES THORNTON
THE FEYNMAN CHALLENGE

A PIONEERING COLLECTION, IN WHICH POETRY EXPLORES THE SCIENTIFIC REALM.

‘In this unusual and exceptionally interesting work, James Thornton speaks as both a poet who has colonized science and a scientist who speaks a poetic tongue.’
— E. O. Wilson

‘A generous book, happy to serve the curiosity, the wonder and humility of science, happening here and there in words that simply send a shudder through our sense of time and space.’
— Philip Gross, winner of the T.S. Eliot Prize

‘A brilliant introduction to the endless wonders of our universe, from quantum levels to the cosmos. It opened my eyes to many marvels and oddities.’
— Eberhard Fetz, Professor of Physiology & Biophysics, University of Washington.

PORTLAND $17.95 ISBN: 9781909954298
MY FATHER'S A LIAR. Ask him any question and he looks at you blankly while searching his brain for the best horseshit he can muster. Then he starts right in on you.

Take this Sunday morning in the townhouse where I grew up on a side street not far from Congress Street. I'm folding freshly laundered clothes and packing them in a bag to throw in the car. I have to get back to college in Boston for a meeting. Feeling hungry, I call out to my father through the doorway to the living room, asking if he's eaten at the new diner on the corner.

My father thinks that because he's a fiction writer, lying is his prerogative. I suppose he considers it literary practice. If you ask a painter a question, would you be okay with her licking the tip of a brush, dipping it in paint, and smearing her answer on a canvas? If you ask a guitarist a question, would you think it acceptable for him to grab his six string and pick away at you?

Through the doorway I see my father put down his magazine, see the distant look in his eyes, and I cringe. He inhales through his nose. "Charlie Hawkins opened that diner. I respect him. When he had the hot dog cart on Exchange Street twenty years ago, he was almost totally responsible for keeping the dogman's pack of dogs alive."

"Dad. The diner. That's all. The diner."

"It's all connected," my father says, "Nine brown long-legged dogs the size of young fawns would come down our street at dawn circling the dogman as he screamed at them. They wanted only food and affection, but he screamed like a veneful murderer at the dogs that barked and yelped and scuttled away from his kicks in pitiful self-defense. You'd go to the window and watch the dogs pass by below. They made you sad and there was an expression on your face watching them. I saw it--a fierceness."

I say, with a touch of tone, venting some, "He was waking your child up. Why didn't you do something about it?"

"It was a phenomenon," my father says. "The dogman lunged and screamed at the sweet sad dogs all day in a trauma inducing performance that we Portlanders seemed to believe we deserved somehow. This tyrant. This fascist, showing us something, but what?"

"I have to go soon," I say. "There'll be traffic."

"Bankers shared their avocado sandwiches with the starving dogs. Old ladies doddering out of morning Mass petted the dogs until the dogman snarled at them. When the pack crossed a busy street, stopping cars for blocks, no one honked. Think of it, a pack of nine dogs in downtown Portland all day, every day. It was the young Charlie Hawkins who fed the dogs, got organized about it. He set out piles of dry dog food in a wide circle around his hot dog cart, so each dog had a chance to find a bit to eat. And bowls of cool water. It was Charlie Hawkins who kept those dogs alive."

My father pauses, waiting for his cue, and I provide it quickly, because my father will wait silently for his cue until you provide it. I say, "What happened to the dogman and his pack of dogs?"
The dogman disappeared suddenly and his dogs were dispersed into loving homes in town. You can see their descendants in the city parks today. You know this yourself. You grew up with a fascination for these deer-like dogs with their look of furrowed gratitude. As a toddler you would go out of your way to pet one. And you know what? When you did there was that expression on your face again, that fierceness."

“I have no memory of this.”

“It almost seems,” my father says, “that the original pack of nine dogs became the origin of a breed of Portland dog. Gentle, worried, grateful, and street-wise. I wonder if it is possible that these future generations of the original nine dogs remember the pain their mothers and fathers felt from the boot of the dogman. I wonder if the dogman is the devil who haunts their dog dreams.”

The drop in his tone tells me it’s over. No twist in his ending. A lie below his usual standards.

“Not one of your best,” I say. “More of an epilogue leaning on Christian imagery. And you never answered the central question: the diner, is it any good?”

My father says, “I haven’t eaten there, yet. I believe that a man who went to the trouble to set small piles of puppy chow around his hot dog cart and bowls of water will serve no-nonsense food in generous portions.”

“Maybe,” I say, “but you don’t really know. Only speculation.”

My father’s gray eyebrows move upward. He rises from his chair and walks toward me, smiling. Uh oh. We’re still in the lie.

He says, “My scientific son, my biology doctorate candidate, what is it that you specialize in, the field of study?”

“You know what I study,” I say.

He waits.

I give up. “Epigenetics.”

“It’s a fascinating topic,” he said, “the way our genes are influenced by what happens to us. The way something we see from our window as a child might have future ramifications.”

“Jesus, Dad,” I say. “You went to a lot of trouble to drag me personally into this one.”

“No trouble at all,” my father says. “Let’s go get pancakes.”
Historic | Coastal | Scenic

Host an Adventurous & Unforgettable Experience on our Private Island in the center of Casco Bay.

Historic | Coastal | Scenic

Contact our event planners and start realizing your dream event today!

Casco Bay | Portland | Maine

207-536-8950

WWW.HOUSEISLANDEVENTS.COM
HAPPY HOUR
MONDAY-FRIDAY
5PM-7PM

CONGRESS SQUARED
RESTAURANT & BAR

WWW.CONGRESSSQUARED.COM
157 HIGH ST. • PORTLAND, ME
DO YOU OR ANGEL ACCREDITED INVESTORS YOU KNOW HAVE $1.775M OR MORE TO INVEST AND/OR JOINT VENTURE?

Clear Vision Clear Path is looking for investors for entertainment projects, live music concert productions with A list Artist, and film productions with A List talent attached. **Invest for 60 days to 6 months and receive a potential return of 100% or higher plus equity.**

Joseph@clearvisionclearpath.com • 404-791-4475 • www.ClearVisionClearPath.com

**THIS IS NOT A SECURITIES OFFERING. SECURITIES WILL ONLY BE OFFERED BY EXEMPTION OR REGISTRATION. ANY REFERENCE TO OTHER TYPES OF INVESTMENTS IS FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES ONLY. ANY SECURITY OFFERING MADE BY OUR COMPANY UNDER EXEMPTION OR REGISTRATION IS LIKELY TO PERFORM DIFFERENTLY FROM SUCH TYPES OF INVESTMENT AND WILL NOT HAVE ANY INSURANCE OR GUARANTEE. BIG EQUITY VENTURES LLC IS REGISTERED WITH THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION (SEC) AND CAN ADVERTISE BOTH LOCALLY AND NATIONWIDE, AND ACCEPT FUNDS FROM ACCREDITED INVESTORS. TO VIEW OUR REGISTRATION, POTENTIAL INVESTORS SHOULD VISIT: HTTPS://WWW.SEC.GOV/EDGAR/SEARCHEDGAR/COMPANYSEARCH.HTML ENTER “BIG EQUITY VENTURES” INTO THE “COMPANY NAME” BOX ON THE PAGE AND CLICK “SEARCH”. ALL OF OUR POTENTIAL INVESTORS CAN LOCATE A COPY OF OUR COMPANY’S FORM D AND BE ASSURED THAT BIG EQUITY VENTURES LLC IS IN GOOD STANDING AND HAS REGISTERED WITH THE SEC.**
Visit Once. Stay Forever.

Stay at our luxurious waterfront resort and enjoy exclusive membership benefits at Boothbay Harbor Country Club. Play Golf on our world-renowned championship course. Experience our new fitness pavilion, pool, and tennis courts. Explore the coastline on one of our private yacht charters. Kayak, paddleboard, or walk across the historic footbridge to shops. Kick back, relax and enjoy majestic sunsets from our heated deck.