

# The Poet and the Poem

April 18, 2019

Poem by Chelsea Coupal from *Sedley* (Coteau Books/Indigo), selected by the author for a “Poem Talk” with the Saskatchewan Poet Laureate.

## We Knew

not to fear the night that held us  
to itself, hummed us to sleep  
with the crickets.

We knew David’s dad drank too much –  
not in a mean way, just in a soft, lost way.  
Every night alone in the cold concrete

of his detached garage, clinging to a bottle  
of draft one hand, cigarette in the other  
to cast himself out of there.

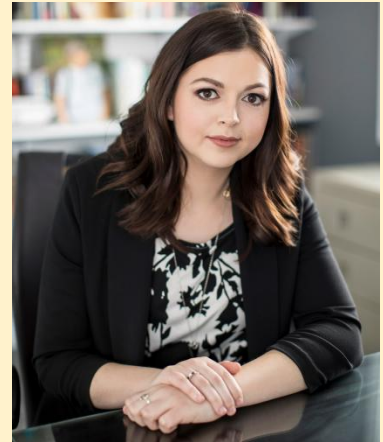
We knew when we saw storm clouds,  
swirl of sky over canola,  
we were really seeing something.

We knew in the end we’d forgive ourselves  
for the torture, times we told the whole school  
Angie got her period in class, Jay put cover-up

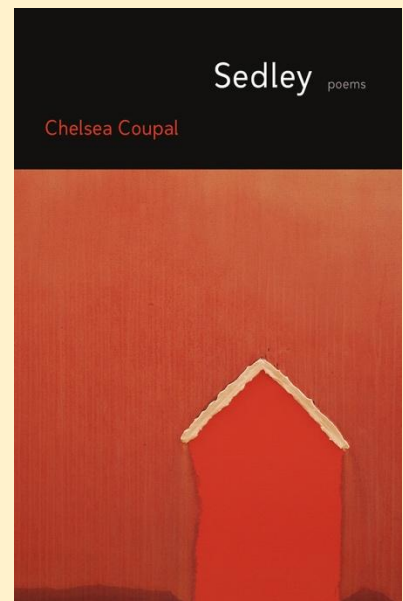
on his acne, I looked like a rodent, all cheeks and teeth.  
We knew about winter, that if you tried  
to walk home full of rye and lay down – hush

of snow sending sleep, under a sparkling ceiling  
of two trillion stars – you wouldn’t get frostbite,  
you’d die. We knew Brandon’s brother went organic,

not because he cared about being green, eating clean  
or anything. He couldn’t pay his chemical bill anymore,  
couldn’t pull in big yields, couldn’t keep up.



Chelsea Coupal



[Sedley by Chelsea Coupal  
from Coteau Books](#)

We knew prairie could pin you  
down to the ground like a graveyard cross,  
so some of us couldn't leave, even if we wanted to.

Knew sometimes, we loved being 13 kids  
living 13 years together, that knowing  
left unsaid. We began to see that death

walks steadily forward, doesn't rush or get tired,  
just walks endlessly, calmly. And when it eventually  
heads right toward you, most are too scared to look.

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**In the Morning**

*by Chelsea Coupal*

We live in lines now, on pages  
Snow falls slow and steady

as sleep, softly as crane feathers.  
Softly as crane feathers, snow falls slow

from a midnight-ink sky I could dip  
the tip of my pen in, write whichever ending

I choose from the last two years. Yours  
were a cold shade of pasture in the morning mist.

A cold shade in mist. I learn this  
Is how you write a poem: run your tongue over it

10,000 times. Relentless. An open wound,  
Chipped Tooth. Something almost senseless.

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