

JESSE FERGUSON
OPTIMIST PARK

In the inner sanctum of the Cornwall Public Library,
the city's archives record how in those golden days
of lightly enforced or nonexistent laws
and scarcity of bleeding hearts, the sage
city councillors saw it expedient to backfill
the dump in their collective backyard,
its garbage piled higher than a man's head.
And into the bargain they added barrel upon barrel
of liquid mustard gas, surplus from the recent War
and manufactured just across town. Buried it all
under choice topsoil and luxurious bluegrass.
Out of their sight, out of their minds.

Snapshot of the Mayor looking the other way
as he snips the red ribbon for the park's opening,
winking at nearby homes, with their soon-to-be
glow-in-the-dark vegetable gardens.

As kids, we'd convene at Optimist, the irony
of its name lost on us looking down
from its pristine soccer pitch onto Cornwall,
city at the foot of the hill. And sometimes,
I recall, on a moth-muggy summer night
on that floodlit plateau, a kid chasing the ball
would forget the field's steep banks and drop
from our sight into darkness, as off the edge of the world.