

La Reata



Issue 1

Spring, 2004

La Reata

They were not Del Monte, those bananas. They had a sticker that read, Fyffes, below that it said, Belize. I put the sticker on my wallet. Then we left the store. The people in there annoyed us. It seemed like everyone was talking about their lives too openly, as if they really wanted us to hear. As if hearing us hearing them would do them any good.

Outside was black and quiet. Just two streets to walk but the silence made us aware of ourselves. This part of the City was never so quiet. I tried to think of something that happened that day. I was dumb. I couldn't think of anything real. I was too subdued. And I didn't care to be otherwise; so we walked on.

We encourage fiction and poetry,

Fiction max 5000 words

Poetry max 6 poems

SASE must accompany all submissions by post.

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Inquire by email for subscription information.

La Reata

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“...I shall have contributed, to the best of my ability, to the making of a scoundrel, one enemy the more for the hideous society which is bleeding us white.”

J.K. Huysmans

“Like most of you, I’ve had so many jobs that I feel as if I were gutted and my insides thrown to the winds.”

Charles Bukowski

“One speaks of man’s potential nature as though it were a contradiction of the one he reveals.”

Henry Miller

“How describe this hat? And why?”

Samuel Beckett

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The Flea

*Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deny'st me is;
It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.*

*Oh stay three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, we're met,
And cloistered in the living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.*

*Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
In what could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it suck'd from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thyself, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true, then learn how false, fears be;
Just so much honour, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.*

John Donne, 1633

Tom Blood

bernard

he is your neighbour who never left the monastery
he runs a bath when he is nervous or lonely

airships

thank god for the dirigibles
they are beautiful and inspiring

the electric third rail

let us not speak here at all
for this is only the world

let us not speak in significance,
but after the flesh, with sparrows

it is after all the phantom who seats us
in this world of incompletes and half-doorways

who also spreads the green table cloth,
he tucks the edges under the street
appearing ordered, everything disappearing

it is understandable to assume upon first inspection
that the world contains objects
and we realize with time
that this, like holding quicksilver cannot be true
that the ornate workings of a clock capture or symbolize time

in the evening when shapes are less defined
we might rise in starry form
skate in the phantom's birch bark
among the pliable reeds
over the green pond surface

why I don't explain things

for Billy Collins

there is a great water
of illusions and unsayables
mice disappear into the cupboards when mentioned

what is the first thing –
.. light crack snowman open

wires spin the factory
yellow wires pull the sun down

stitch the clothes
to the body of sean

sean an american hindi
loved the aquarium

cougar took uncle sean
chagrin, caribou

casket, open for visitation
Duluth, susan attending
white sand, endlessly nevadian

truck driver, 'headed to god'
robin ghost, glass casket
falling through the ice

the reconstruction of life in antarctica

all the research notes thrown in on the table, unfettered
allowed to bloom as mould is
and correspond by coincidence of contact

you don't mean to view me as a re-run movie is un-featured
at times, understandably, you prefer the bleak rime
to my impossible company

as a moth circles seeking refuge in light, so I
while the blood runs warm in my veins,
I search a refuge of light

that book you read with the prince and the masks, its derivative
the packed walls of this research facility

represent our togetherly
with time we have made understandings, this is not opposed
to the idea of knowledge without mutual experience
in the calamity, ice-blind, snowy jumpsuits, incommunicado

if more to fear our experience is unique
or that it is the same rests unanswered

identify the body

we have built great hospitals in texas
and still we forget our names
reacting in fear of death
and slaughtering our meals

we mistake photograph for fact
we say the wrong word for things and still,
helicopters flushed from the spring grass
the play of toads in the spring mud

fuck plato's rants of valuable intangibles
you will not tell me what snow is
we will rain into the vatican on angel carts
dare them to expose the spiritual noise

Jack Dauphine

The Old Desolation

She was
Nice enough
As good as she allowed herself to be
Considering who called
Considering who fucked her
In a bed and other places
Near other people

We were both trying to be strong
We were both amused
But afraid how things might turn
On one sour phrase
We were careful and chose our words
Tried to be natural
Succeeded
Failed
Became frightened with a self we had lived
Thought it all a terribly adult joke
The old desolation was being summoned
It came and we tried
To give it a different ring

She's always been difficult
A ship of a woman
The architecture behind her eyes
Too giant to comprehend

She must be lived in
And even then
After years
She has her secret rooms
Rooms which may never exist
For anyone
Except her

Section

I called her up and asked
Do you think I'm full of self pity
Yes
I once told a girl I thought she was full of hatred and self pity
Do you think I was talking about myself?
Yes

Fuck, Edna what am I gonna do?
I don't know
Am I doomed?
Yes
But what about all my good parts?
You don't have any
Do you think I'm evil?
Yes
Well I guess I already knew that. But it's a small evil.
No. It's a great evil
Christ.

Is this going to be my fault?
Yes

What have I done?
Everything

How long have I lived?
Only you know that. Jack-
What?
You don't trust yourself
I don't trust myself

What am I gonna do?
Quit asking me that

Edna?
What?
Nobody is going to understand.
No. Somebody will.
You think?
Yes.

Panchromatic

So many people have lost and yet
They live to gain and that
Is the point she said.
I don't like your point I said
It's missing something.
But we have no money she said
No we have no money

I can't remember when – I can't
Recall a time when I was pure I said
But yes you can she said

You said when you were three
You couldn't see a thing

So it was blindness then
That made me pure
And I can't be blind again
No- you have too many eyes
Yes- too many eyes

And if you try to stab one out
Like you did when you were nine
Three will open milky white
Yes three have opened milky white
And things are bright she said
So bright the lines are blurred I said

Alone

"Lonely but not alone" she said
"Strong wine" I said
what bothers you?
Almost everything
Come on – give me something
I don't know...maybe, people on the street
Yah they bother me too
She leaned back and crossed her legs
Tilted her head,
They suck the life outta me.
She looked at the ceiling.
Her eyes were getting wet
I tried to think of something

Arthur Derain

St. Therese

must I fight forever. when will
my lover arrive. the one, you know
I am beyond proud to hold
who revels in my violent jealousy
who believes I have an astonishing career and
regards my trash as fascinating
is that a real person
you'd be surprised at what we come up with.

One of my most beautiful women-
she mailed me a picture of
St. Therese
On the back was a prayer, called,
In Time of Suffering:
I hope in heaven to resemble you
and to see shining in my glorified
body the sacred stigmata
of your passion.

I've said it a few times

Now
I've fucked an old love
beyond recognition
she lives nine blocks away
and I avoid certain parts of the quarter

I imagine her with an army
of angry devil eyed gutter punks
and a council of upright
lesbian warriors
she has been scourged
and they are ready
to defend her holy pussy
They gather together in drunken mobs
to holler plans of action

I make plans too but
I am
mostly
alone

chaos
(a night in the Marigny)

i locked myself out again
i stabbed at my window with a pen
people were getting out of a taxi across the street
the glass came down
with an echo
i shoved the window aside
crawled in
put my keys in my pocket
and left again
i went to the bar
and an hour later
there I was
getting stoned and playing pool with

3 dykes and a vietnam vet
“goddamn i’m loaded” he said
“so am i”
after another hour
i knew where every scar came from
fragmentation grenade
6 inch knife
bullet
wooden stake
hatchet
i told him about the pills and whiskey
and 90 mph from reno to las vegas
he actually listened

the bar was closing
the sun was rising

what next

I smoked crack
with this gay man who wanted some action
first he thought I was the police
because I was at a house
the night before it got busted
and that paranoid crack head stripper
said, “man, I’m sure you were the one
who called the cops.”

hey
I could be
typing evidence

all my poetry will be submitted
as exhibit A
the judge will have to read all of it
he'll love it
and so will the papers

they'll absorb all the times
i used "FUCK"
so appropriately
they'll censure 50%
of my life
and I
will be
forgiven

people will ask me to bless America
because God hasn't produced
a decent piece of literature
in centuries

God will be smoking crack
in a room full of scared people
wondering why
he didn't think of it first

Ariel Beller

Advice

The man who knows where love began
Is a shit farmer in Wisconsin
I wrote him a letter saying:
I know this dame who thinks she's an artist
She's painted 9 bad paintings
And writes bad poetry
She says she's agnostic
And likes to drink and fuck a lot
Her every waking minute teeters
On crises and beauty
And when she finally refused to fuck me
I cried.
He replied:
Someone wrote me a very similar
Letter about you.

We Serve the Crises

I've killed the copies called opera,
 They wouldn't listen.
Nearly 13 hours of sunshine
 I saw you in the forest light
And wished I could speak.

The satellite picture showed you
Exceptionally wet in Poland.

This could be the end in my throat,
But I will continue to work
Until the bombs fall – they
Will fall – I will to the
Glass – the girls will be wide
Awake they will cling as
We vomit.

The white farmer
In the Northwest suffers-
The Philippine families are so
 Poor they live in graveyards
 The dead of Manila
Have company – Maria
Has a sentence – don't worry
 Her husband is asleep
With poverty and desperation
Among the dead.

We see the crippled baby
Working its way toward
The unity of pits

The swallow has been elected
He killed the vice president
His girls ate large amounts of corn in
The shacks

- They subscribe to our
Sex on the funeral pyre
Sati-shock – the blue realisation
The law is an invisible dot
We shake hands
Due to several dead sailors
In Bangkok. 87 women are
Serving time for drug offences
Asia today was an empty lung.

I curl up and retreat
Downstairs. To blow myself
Blind – to take up space – I die

I saw you string more allies to fail
The court decision on Monday
The Dow is down 835 points
45 Singapore's melted in my hand

We carried on with our ridiculous jazz – refused
To smile in our painting
Waited outside the arcade-
We speak in our national shrine

We saw the still figures in a state of emergency
UN-supervised phone tapping
During the escalated violence
The brown haze above China
We called Asia Brown

We saw we wrote
We prayed
Oh prayer

We live in gross hell
Won't you bring me my
Last commercial-
Life in prison
Abducted
On what grounds?

GM food and aid fears-
Masturbation in Africa that could be a
Major problem in Zambia – the economy
Displaced 40% in the sand.

Of beauty -in Russia we
Teased our hair and looked
In the mirror

50,000 people will move
the rainwater is home
now – the earth heaves
we must begin again
in a stomach
without the loss of human voices
purr purr
we serve the crises

Doris Dinghy

Medusa

They put pigeon spikes on Christ
No one went to see Him after that

I walked through the park
And kicked the dead birds
I saw old Jim,
“Still here uh.”
“I can’t sleep anywhere else.”

He showed me
A book that contained
All my faculties
In plain English:
He is compassionate
He is subtle
He was right
All along

He is a destroyer
A scoundrel
Our most loyal devil.

Maybe I could write a letter to plead my case

If I were found
To be the lowest of the low
Would I then quit
A fear based correspondence
With god?

Mardi Gras

Thousands were drawn
To the holy spires
And ugly gardens
To be given compensation
For everything that causes pain
A beautiful chair
And a member of the opposite sex
To love them

They came in pairs breathing parades
And as they marched they sang,
“I’m so glad to be drunk
and with my friends.
I’m no longer in high school
and I’ve become a formidable pool player,
don’t sober me with your coffee
and baby strollers.”

As stone angels turned their heads
To disappear saying,

We don't belong here
Anymore

Forrest Moon
Born Sept 19, 1930 New Mexico

“In one town 350 people died in
that tornado. Killed every one of em.
You seen it. A little bitty town. See?
That's what the Lord does. The
Devil wouldn't have saved one of em. He
was an angel in Heaven and the Lord
gave him a world of his own. He gave
him Hell.

“...and we played together, me and Roy
when we were kids. And I had a strychnine
potato – mama did it to kill the rabbits – got me
instead. And Roy said, You ate that potato?
I said, Yah, about 30 minutes ago.
He said, well you should be dead.
And I said, Maybe I am.
And I was in heaven and the Lord
said, Forrest, I can't use you here.
I said, Lord, I'm sorry your head fell off.
He said, I don't care. I'll send you back to earth
and you'll do my will not Man's will.
So I rented a room, me and Joey did.
And I took off because Jackie was
cussin' at me. Back to California.

Here, look at this letter she sent me,

Dear Forrest,

I hope you are well and doing OK. This is the second card I'm mailing to you. Today is a beautiful day complete with robins chirping- Petie would have enjoyed it. I have all the windows open and the newspapers flew all over the kitchen. Well I guess I'll have a cup of coffee with Bruno. Remember when the 3 of us used to drink coffee together?

Then he took the letter away.

"I'm just an innkeeper for the Lord,
that's all I am

John Blind

5am

I'll go to bed at 5am

Yes

I'll go to bed at 5am

I think I'll go to bed at 5am

I'll like it

5am

nobody looking at 5 am

but she will be in there

cosy

in bed

when I walk in there at 5 am

she'll hear me coming

in fresh from nothing

at 5am

my dear

rolling around and still

she'll be in there

at 5am

how rough it is

to be awake now

and drinking

with wonder

my wife
my wife
saying don't drink all the whisky
and I look at the clock it says
350 am

and I'm jobless
and still
I think

It was just a little bottle

I'll go to bed at 5am

After Work

Why are you so sad
Am I bothering you
I'm just waiting for my cab
I love short stories
What's wrong
Am I bothering you
I'll give you a dollar for a cigarette
I'll leave you alone
Don't you like meeting people
I love short stories
What's wrong
Why are you so sad
Am I bothering you
I'll leave you alone
What's your name

Where're you from
I'm from Chicago
Am I bothering you
I'm waiting for my cab
Don't you like meeting people
Why are you so sad
I'm done trying
What's wrong
I'm not hitting on you
I'm just waiting for my cab
What's wrong
Am I annoying you
Don't you like meeting people
I'm just waiting for my cab
My name's Christina
Why are you so sad
What's wrong
I'm just waiting for my cab
What's wrong
I'll leave
I'll finish this story and leave
Don't you like meeting people
I love short stories
What's wrong
Why are you so sad
Cheer up Charlie

The Ring

Apathetic mendacity threw a glistening ring of sludge about my feet

And I looked forward with vacant eyes,

“You cannot tell the truth because you don’t know it.”

I disagreed but then I thought,

Fuck it

I’m still alive

Matt Gale

Sweet Boy

There was a bleary wet smile on a boy
Who hadn’t yet learned to be shy of smiling

A bearing wet eye on the lips of a boy
With a giggle and grin
On the chin of his kin
Who hadn’t yet learned
To be shy of smiling

Propagate the Species

Sugary swollen in woollen sweaters
comfy with mugs of chocolate coffee
The better bet would have been hugs and kisses
I never expected her to take me completely
Wine-eyed party night winged and splattered
galloping gallantly plastered away
Shattered stint flashes of last nights drunken crashing antlers of the
young bucks who
fought over my dancers swollen labia
All plant anther and panther antics
Bending over and begging questions
She had a luscious chunk of puffy cunt I'd love to plunge my nose
into.
Caffeine, acetaminophen and large glasses of water to help clear
the lightning strikes of
head-strain
Thump, thump goes the pump of behind-eye capillary knives...

For all my faux philanthropic misgivings and ill-aimed jizums
(I'll buy you a loving jack and coke if you'll demonstrate for me
the rubbery elasticity
of your sought after calamari butthole)
I stingily desired to spat a blurb of cum inside her fertile womb
Can't even be properly turned on unless I visualize the
Awesome potentiality of conception
The thrill of intentionally reproducing
And so today I am happy
though other frights come to mind
like what else could have resulted from the unrubbered skin-diving
session of last nights
fuck, the risks we take
Memories flash in broken mirrors

shattered stints of Rurplemints
aching liver
quivering roaches
living on the floor
Cuts and gashes and memory flashes good lord fuck what have I
done
My cuts seep puss, yes abrasions, two, on my hands
The Christ in red jeans
feel like rubber mouth tastes like shit
blathering fathomsome of what's to come of my life
when will my overhang break...

Now sitting smugly, thick cocked, swollen hands, nice and slowly
gulping my slop
Mighty is the thrust of her sacral arch thus truss-like and wielding
some miraculous butt
Adjacent to me coyly perched upon her luscious rump plump
with pumped spunk she germinates my seeds
while smiling pretty
No bra thick nipples poke from inside see-through thread-bare
nighty
...sexy
 but she goes "good thing I'm on the pill!"
What? Ill
Oh well...
How did I find my way into this dancers gorgeous quarters?

wonder which foggy bus will carry me through the blinding
morning home.

Peggy Gould

What Will Matter

Ready or not, some day it will all come to an end.
There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.
All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten,
will pass to someone else.
Your wealth, fame and temporal power will shrivel to
irrelevance.
It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.
Your grudges, resentments, frustrations and jealousies will
finally disappear.
So too, your hopes, ambitions, plans and to-do lists will
expire.
The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade
away.
It won't matter where you came from or what side of the
tracks you lived on at the end.
It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant.
Even your gender and skin color will be irrelevant.
So what will matter? How will the value of your days be
measured?
What will matter is not what you bought, but what you built;
not what you got, but what you gave.
What will matter is not your success, but your significance.
What will matter is not what you learned, but what you taught.
What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion,
courage or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or
encouraged others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence, but your character.
What will matter is not how many people you knew, but how
many will feel a lasting loss when you're gone.
What will matter is not your memories, but the memories that
live in those who loved you.
What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by
whom and for what.
Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.
It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.
Choose to live a life that matters.

Jason Coyne

PRE

want to chasm I can
make this a sibyl's wishlist
for whim, for past Tuesdays

damn, cogs overran the wheels
no click click of function
just violence of
hold my palms out flat
press palms into gravity
the cicadas making song
like lilacs unzipping, if it was spring

let me make it better
I can make it better
like song into prayer
or vice versa, if it suits you
where goes the & *well*
here where it was a journal entry
an absorbed drop of water mothed inkwords into wings
I think its pretty, in an uncolorful way
there are repercussions to this act
that have nothing to do with the first place
frustration remains, fresh as evergreens
and as inedible
pine, fir, scent of clean
done with my hands
like the opposite of counting
target. zero. cipher
math bracelets for fingerstockings
she complete in she
she ever necklace after
she chasms
in where it began

Hyperglyphic

Speed my mind and feel decay
Speed as an unraveling of stillness
Acceleration, a sequence of dismantling space
And slowness, a sentience of language

The moon and stars outside again
Pinpricks in a field of shivering space

Shining or blasted out through oblivion
Sensation trapped in light's steady pulse
In acceleration it found flux and escape
Beams of light broken to splinters
Like slivers of paint stuck to the wind

To pace in a viscous swell
Slow down and decay feels me
Pacing without speed or slowness
A perimeter of isolation forms
Structured from the careful
Elimination of
Sentience
And
Decay

Intelligence speaks of the properties of celerity and indolence

(First however, the generation
Of Knowledge, reproducible
Binary virtue
First things first
After all)

Thoughts filling into neat places
Thoughts like hydrophobic termites
Vomiting pulp and residual intelligence
They multiply and grapple with each other
In grooves and cells
Forming monumental proteins
Celebrating victories
In unwinnable wars
Thoughts, ionized in their isolation

All of us without translation await conscription

Monuments

Centrifugal mechanisms of Knowledge

Memories culled from recreant ions

Preserved, they do not decay

They do not translate

Here language is uniform

Paced and unslowed

But, intelligence spoken now

Vital and vitriolic, craving translation

The moon sprayed its silvery halo through driftless clouds

At the intersection of celerity and indolence

Splinters of starlight shivered into my skin

All things stand to show life's formative capacity

Life, like mercury in its application

And water in its erosion

Annihilating termitic isolation

Molecular flow dismantling proteins

In shivers and splinters cleft to the mind

Life, furrowing through thoughts

Scrawling in dark caverns

Its burning ineffable glyphs

Anointed with the present

Shivering language to the blood

Secretions of infused time

All fluid translations

Cum, sweat, and tears

Proxies of a name

A name I have yet to speak

Nerves coded in combustion

My name sealed to their sparks

What original flame
Fused flesh and bone
Our souls burned into us
Charred in our ghostly synapses

In ventricles of decay and combustion
Cells can only grow so dry
And the heart so distilled of blood
Beams must burst to flame
Or be cut to kindling
And the heart must beat in time
Or break and shiver to dust

Jack Dauphine

The Phone Rang

The phone rang. I picked it up. I knew it was her and I could tell she was walking fast. She was outside and she had people with her, a couple perhaps. I listened but I didn't say anything.

“Jack?”

“Yah?”

“Hey listen I have a couple of people with me.”

“Oh yah?”

“Yah. Are you all right baby?”

“I'm fine.”

“Well listen I’m with a couple people from Grimm’s market and we’re going to the store for some beer.”

“*Really.*”

“Have you started making dinner yet?”

“Yes I have.”

“Oh shit is it almost ready?”

“Just about.”

“Oh baby. Well listen they aren’t hungry but I’ve invited them around for a couple drinks do you mind?”

“Of course I don’t mind.”

“All right then we’ll be there in about fifteen minutes.”

“Okay.”

She hung up.

People. I always got excited when people came around. Considering Jill’s taste in people it was always fun; usually. And who came around here anyway? Once a month the couple from Atlantis came over for dinner but their visits were typical. It was the language barrier – we spent all our time trying to make sense. I was tired of trying to make sense. I looked around the place. What a dump. God knows what she’s told them about me already. There were cassette tapes piled on the floor and laundry drying everywhere. I walked to the kitchen. Dishes smeared with ketchup. Overflowing trash can. Empty bottles, beer cans, onion and tomato butts decorating the counter. I stared at the mess and thought of my mother going slowly insane. There was a beer in the fridge. I cracked it and went back to the other room. I sat in my chair. I knew damn well what she was talking about last night. She thinks the world is coming to an end. She thinks people are conspiring against her. But Christ is her liberator. Listening to her makes my throat ache. Self-pity, dramatics, reality, what’s the difference? She’s gone to the other side. She said I didn’t cry when I came out. The doctor didn’t need to spank me to kick start my lungs. Apparently I just slipped out and stared at the hospital staff with milky eyes. I must have been a spooky infant. Aunt Jenny said I used lay back in my crib and prattle on in a

disconcertingly erudite baby language. It was the tone of my baby talk she said. Like I knew exactly what I was talking about.

I reached for my cigarettes and knocked the beer onto the floor. I was soaking it up with a purple towel when I heard the key in the door. That weird crunching sound and suddenly they were upon me. I was surrounded. A fine looking couple, walked out of a fashion magazine. Hello she said in dignified tone. Hello I said. Her partner had the typical look. He was sizing things up. He nodded and shook my hand. Lawrence he said. Nice to meet you, Lawrence. My name is Sonia she said and shook my hand. They sat down on the couch and began speaking a foreign tongue. Romanian, Polish? I couldn't tell. I stood up and went to the kitchen. Jill was taking off her coat. Jack I'm starving. This looks gorgeous. Go sit down I said, I'll bring it in. She left the kitchen with three cans of beer. I could hear a storm of laughter as I dressed our plates. I hated when everyone had a mutual understanding in my own home. I would have to go out there and chew my food and endure their form of living. I already felt shoved out. And I was sober as hell with the ring of my mothers' madness in my head. Fucking idiots I thought. They don't have to deal with kooky mothers over the phone. What do they have to deal with? The quality of their leisure. I'd show them. I'll go out there to play the symbol of anti-charm. Don't try to be clever in my house. I'm dealing with the far reaches of human sanity. Don't be fucking clever with me. I don't care who you are.

"Ah, here's the man."

"Here you go sweetheart."

I handed her the plate and sat down in my chair. Lawrence and Sonia had laid their coats on the arms of the couch. They were mumbling in their secret language. It made me uncomfortable. I sat my plate on the table. I wasn't hungry.

"So Jill tells me you're a writer?" he said in condescending English.

"No. She's mistaken. I sell black market kittens down at the harbour - five dollars for calicos."

He sniffed at this. To be sniffed at in my own home! Jill chewed her food half conscious of the energy. The couple mumbled in private, tilting their heads into each other. I tried to afford myself some space by ignoring everyone. I didn't like him at all.

"What is that pile of paper there?" said Sonia. "Do you keep that out to impress your guests?" She was quite cute about it. I gave her a second look and decided I liked her.

"Oh god, don't think I keep that on display. No one ever comes into this hole." And with that I flung the purple towel on the stack of paper. I didn't want it to be an issue. She looked confused.

"He's very prolific." said Jill.

They began mumbling in secret again; this time more sharply, almost angry it seemed. Why does she do this to me? Why did I marry this gregarious fool? I know she thinks these people are unique and worth her time. She thought they might be worth my time. Mother is making love with Christ while they babble and gesture and take stances so useless my face goes sullen. What am I supposed to feel if surrounded by the comfortable? What should I say?

"Have you ever squeezed your own shit between your fingers? I recommend it. It feels like nothing else."

"Jack!" said Jill and gave me the hard eye.

"I mean I did it once when I was stoned on pain killers. I fell in love with my own shit. Mind you, I'm being nostalgic because my shit isn't so solid these days."

Their faces washed over. They were both confused. There was a tension that I was just making fun but I was trying to get sincere. I didn't have much time.

"It was something I was told I did, though I don't remember. I took a good healthy shit and wiped my ass and when I looked in the bowl I was put in a trance. I don't have a fixation with my own shit really. Though when I was a kid I had chicken pox and went into a delirious fever and I had visions of castles made of shit. My

mother said I “went out of my head” with fever. I would wander into the bathroom and sit on the toilet for hours. Then some demonic form would start shoving my head between my legs and I’d scream Mom! Mom! Come! Come quick! They’re getting me! You see the shit castle was drawing me near and I didn’t want to go. I was only nine years old. The weird thing was the shit castle was benevolent. It had a soul and it wanted me for some good reason. But I didn’t want to go.”

I shut up right then because I thought they were tired of me. But everyone sat there in serious silence including myself. I wasn’t sure what I’d just been talking about. Only that I’d talked for a stretch.

“I apologize for my husband. He’s in a weird mood.”

They said it was alright and conceded little tinkling laughs. Jill stood up and went for the stereo. I imagined mother in this room. She had more nobility, more sanity than they had put together. They were trying to be sane and they were failing like a bunch of out-patients. I was surrounded by fucking nuts. I rose from my chair. Jill glared at me as she shoved a cassette in the player. The player squealed and groaned. The tape had been eaten.

“Oh, goddamn it all.” Jill said.

I left the room.

Aaron Despite

The Invisible Suicide Cage

The satellite shot moved down
Down into the trees and caught me in a state of masturbation
I looked up and cried
My delirious wish was ruined so standing up I ran forward
And stumbled over the gnarly root of a jungle tree
God I said
Which direction are you going

**“Dog Prison”
or
the toy soldier you buried in the backyard as a child**

No one wants to give the poet a fucking job
Too high risk
And they shouldn't, no they should not give the poet a job
Resign him to the role of the sacred parasite
Give him pity and contempt
Anything but a job

The poet is too sensitive too uppity
Too preoccupied too wrapped in his own mist to think straight
How can he possibly deliver your mail or serve your drink
Or garnish your plate

No, the poet is a gigolo, a limping dog,
A screaming child for every class
He will not put food in the fridge, he will not pay the rent
He will not improve your community

So then, let him die in the street
Heap him together with the rest of the trash
And let the civilized and sane get on with the program
We have seen how it works
I do not think we could survive anything different

Carousel

If one image could carry us through life
We would take it
Abandon chaos beauty and chance
To protect ourselves from the dismissive waves
Of those we called

If one dance replaced all others
We would revel in our movements
And disbelieve those who said
Try this one

If only one crises could fill our minds
We would rhapsodize
And see it to its end
While turning our backs on all others

If only one love could crush
We would take it and let it crush
If only one life could strip us down
We would dance naked and imagine
Any crisis moving, anything abandoned
Anyone beautiful, alone, ending
It would suffice to see anything dying
To see
Just one more

Notes on contributors

Jack Dauphine is a telephone repairman in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

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Tom Blood lives in Portland, Oregon.

Jason Coyne lives in Portland, Oregon.

Matt Gale lives Portland, Oregon.

Aaron Despite is a mollusk which lives in Sitka, Alaska

*It's long gone but
It may come back
It usually does
In fact
It's always there
Just
In another part of the world*

*It manages to breath down your
Neck
All the way from Africa*

*It has relatives
They inevitably sit
At the same table
They are unsure about death
So pack it in quick
Or leave it to burn*

*Paranoia
Will never cease to inspire
How hopeless are these hours
Yet chatting away
In the name
Of dreams*

Anonymous

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