

M u d L u s c i o u s I s s u e E i g h t

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from All the Messiahs by Rauan Klassnik

(1)

Smoke's billowing up all around us watching how far we can fly. An old man with bright orange hair. An old man with no hair. Horses in a field specked with bright pink flowers. Like a man tortured for weeks. One's gold-orange, another purple, another white—all rising up in dazzling, muscled color. Under blue-gray mountains, a couple's walking. Snow falling.

(2)

She went to the shelter and got a dog. Sat with it and begged and made a lot because people like dogs. She gave it a name. "I've had him since I was a girl," she'd say—and on the coldest night in over three hundred years, she sliced it open and slept with her hands in it. And, then, her arms and head.

(3)

The sound of a truck starting's a gray snake unfurling. Voices in the street: gray leaves, ash. A car turning: leaves rolling, rats. Like you against me. A ball of snakes. Huge. Seething. Livid. Uncertain. Gray. Your breath's gray brightening.

(4)

I downed beers and poured them all over us and smashed them against the sides of the chair, the dentist's chair, we fucked in. You let me bite you, kiss you, and carry you down into the water where we lay together on our backs staring up at the stars. You kissed me. Smiled at me. Climbed back on to me in raw moonlight.

(5)

Out of the cold, soaking up all this stone and gold, a room full of believers, crescendoing music—we're rising up into God and all his angels stretched out on a jungle beach. Parrots are singing. Water dripping. The sun's against the rocks.

Last Exit in New Jersey by Eirik Gumeny

Tell me a story about the queen at the edge of the world. Of a woman with a gilded heart and skin of silk, who reigned with fire and ferocity, a woman who tasted like cigarettes and sugar.

Make me believe she could raise the moon through sheer force of will, blank the stars with a whisper. Tell me she could kiss a man under an autumn night and walk away.

Tell me a story about the peasant in the court of the queen, with ink on his hands and the cosmos in his head. Of a man who measured the sky and saw beauty in the cogs of a clock tower.

Make me believe he would trek a thousand miles of asphalt, through snow and ice and spring, simply because she asked. Tell me it was him beneath that autumn moon.

Tell me about the vengeance of the peasant, that a queen could be bested by sweet words and a swollen heart. Say she was beautiful beneath the neon. Say she was scared. Make me believe in the magic of a rain-slick parking lot.

Tell me about a skyline of silver, cottages of plywood and seawater. Say there was rapture, and romance, castles and couches and swimsuits and scarves. Say there were desktop gardens and splintered headboards, slammed doors and salt-stained sheets. Tell me about the fallen king.

Tell me about the reflection in dark-lit barroom glass, the magic mirror that knew no lies.

Tell me a story about a queen on the edge and the peasant who watched. Of a woman haunted by her own humanity, and a man with a heart of folded paper.

Tell me how that story ends.

12th April 19— by Tomas Weber

Today I have been mostly with the Hole, sitting on the floor and leaning against the wall it's in. Today, it's true, I have mostly sat. Today I have been using a telescope as a long pole to open and close the window. Today I have been using the telescope as a microscope to look at various objects in the room, none of which will fit inside the Hole. Today I have been growing my hair and slowly acquiring diabetes. Today I know for sure that my eyes are brown. Today I want a wife but I can't get to know anybody properly. I want there to be a wife already prepared, waiting for me, in the Hole, with some family, singing hymns. No, I don't, she is nothing like me, though she pretends. I want to have lots of people pretend they are like me in solidarity, like when that class of kids shaved their heads when one of them had cancer. Today I have been looking into the hole with the telescope. Today I have been looking at the hole with the telescope for so long I have forgotten that there is something other than darkness. Today I have been looking at the hole with the telescope that is a potential murder weapon. Today the instruction manual for the telescope has been warning me that if I look at a naked flame with the telescope I will burn the cells in my eyes. Will there be a flame when my eyes burn. Ask O. this tomorrow. Today I want to watch eye cells burn. I cannot do this alone. I want to have a wife so I can watch her eyes burn. I will watch the eyes of O. burn tomorrow. Tomorrow I will watch the eyes of O. burn with a microscope that I will tell him to bring so I don't have to burn my eyes all the time with the telescope. Tomorrow I will ask O. whether there are more things in outer-space than in my cells. Today it worries me that I cannot picture the eyes of O., what colour they are, etc.

Killer Time by Psycho Kanev

I have problems with my head
I have problems with the world
I have problems with all these empty bottles
of Beck's all around me
I have problems with my lonely nights
with my lonely erections-
useless and trivial

I have problems with all dead loves
and the dead babies and the dead armies and the dead

empires and the dead gods

and long time ago I saw the death in Spain-
bullfights
and I think the bull was proud and ready to die
I think he was in love with the spear

and at the exact moment
I looked deep in his eyes and I saw
the glimpse the flash the reflection
in the big eye

but nothing was wasted

he just entered some other place
created for something that not belongs
to this shitty world.

all the faces around me was happy
and everybody was clapping
praising their own
stupidity.

Tension by Joseph Goosey

There are several outlets in which I would blush if given the chance to insert my appendage. You are one of them. Playing pool, he and I discussed what it meant to be open to the possibility of complete dismantlement. Then she came out of the bathroom, a strutting stork of overt and gleaming sexual tension, gliding on the air of blue heels and asylum pupils. Our index fingers combined to make a small person filled with excitement while we smoked cigarettes and a blonde chubby man took our photo with his expensive aperture. He handed us his "card" and we thanked him kindly. The next day I talked to her at shining length about her father's bad leg and the genre of literary self-help. The day after that there was no answer at her castle. Today I am concerned to the point of a final implosion.

At Night by Lisa Ciccarello

every night the thin layers of night fold themselves each minute, bending into the shape of crows. They do this ceaselessly but the crows clump together, recreating night in its entirety, spreading to fill the graves of each uncovered cup. It swarms the tiny beds love makes of bridges & barns & mirrors & nests on the smoke that branches from the sheets. Even the charm of this buckles.

A jade warbler is placed among the rest, without hunger, & when they sleep it is hard to remember which is stone. Every bird makes a map in its eye, but only this one shines matchlit. For eggs it lays tiny pearl buttons the children steal & give as love-favours. Keep asking me if this is the little pretty I want: no. No not unless it's a bird with an arrow axis, no not unless it's a second in the air unheld.

when she can not sleep she turns to her sister & whispers: farther out than you can see is lies a feather; this feather is the boat of a spirit who put her face in the river to quiet her cry; farther than that is a baby buried in a teapot; farther than that a snake slow from waking is swarmed over with suitors who mate with her as she tries to move & this will be you.

Weather Reports by Chris Wilson & Hoa Ngo

It's snowing here again. Heavy offerings from the lake effect, produced when arctic winds move across large expanses of warm lake water. Those ancient winds absorb the water's vital energy and vapor, finally dumping their excess on the lee shores of creation. I was digging out my car today, shoveling through layers and layers of an old and frozen story. Buried in the snow was a mysterious yet familiar tale of youth, excess, age, wisdom, and excess again. It was our story, our faces frozen in the ice.

The wind, a western constant, and too much for polyester, especially green. And the sun. Lost sailors know the burn it brings. So the man, ashamed, and almost divorced, solved the riddle of time. And since the beginning, there have been those who could, but didn't. They chose plan b or z. And over the fence, the world is beginning again. See the bright glow. That's not the sun, but something just as beautiful.

Once, the man was so thirsty he ate snow. Scooped from the mountain, grown out of water from the sky. Now, he makes his way onto the rocky shore. A glassy green wave sweeps through the channel. The stones gather sun and offer the quiet burn of solitude. He stands and confesses. He waits for the watery wall of absolution.

And in the end it was like the beginning. The world was, of course, hot, not unlike baptist sermons of hell, and in the thin shade of a telephone pole, one who once was, reclined and bobbed his head to see the sound of whirling gears and chains passing by. And if I was the salt in another man's wounds then perhaps my sandwich will suffice for forgiveness. Underneath the wind, that hot unbelievable breath, there is a language faintly spoken. And in those words I hear the whispers of forever.

Smooth Ride by Robert Scotellaro

He awakes to find his prayers returned to him—scattered throughout the house. Even the meager ones (wishes really) beside the middle-of-the-nighters—squat and clunky with operatic heft. He drags them off to his garage—builds the car he's always wanted. Hops in and beeps the freckled widow next door. "Cool," she says, admiring the shiny hood ornament, squinting a bit to make it out. They breeze off down the coast.

"Smooth ride," she tells him, lowering the visor to freshen her lipstick, but it falls off in her lap; an unhinged slab of hungry whispers. He reaches over and tosses it in the back. Turns up the radio when Born on the Bayou rattles the door speakers—screeches along as she bangs the dash. And the chassis rocks.

On the way home the sky buckles bleak and he prays it doesn't rain. Pulls over and finds that small beseechment in the trunk; screws it on just below the shield glass—her head on his shoulder the whole way back. The only music: the blade's relentless swipes, a little squeaky, and the rain.

The Final Feast by Ethel Rohan

At the end of the beginning of love is the first broken heart. Man's heart. Ambitious woman commanded love's first cracks, its shattering of one into two, its falling asunder.

Yes, the seed to the end of the beginning of love was woman; insatiable, ravenous, powerful, and unconscionable woman. She turned man's heart green, spirit black, and rusted his soul.

At the end of the beginning of love lies the origin of man's inferior spirit, his shriveled heart, violent longing. I know it. I know it and don't think I can contain the conviction of it inside my skin. No, the truth of the end of the beginning of love must get outside me in the same way that babies must get outside their mothers.

At the end of the beginning of love is the beginning of the end of love: woman will consume man and look around for more.

Firefly, Light Me Up Inside by Heather Anastasiu

I catch a fire-fly in a jar. He was fast but I was faster. I cap him up, lid-lipped tight. I walk further in the woods as he buzz-knocks around the jar, end lighting up in fury or fear, I can't tell which. My heart flutters, in terror and glee at the beauty I have captured.

When he is not lit up, he looks like an ugly little bug. Normal and fuzzy-bodied. But then comes the magic fire, from nowhere and somewhere. And the thing inside me lights up too. I think it is called, Joy.

His light blinks out again, and I hear the other noises of the night. Bugs and movement and wind in the leaves. So much life outside my body. And none of it cares for me, or knows that I am here other than the shadow I make, and that is only because of the moon. I am good for only what I can project, a reflection of a reflection, a bouncing of light and molecules, tumbling around my brain in chemical synapses.

I take a step forward on the moon-full night, darker under the branches where my firefly flies brighter. My jar is a lantern, like a hundred years ago. Girl in the woods with her capped up light, shivering because things go bump and boo in the dark, the dark that does not care for her, except as a something to consume.

Consuming and chomping, this is the nature of living things. We eat each other up in hugs, usurping energy transfer. As one lifts, the other deflates. Because nothing can ever be created or destroyed. It is a law of the universe. We merely pass energy back and forth between ourselves like the tipping weight on a see-saw.

I trip on a rotten log and the glass jar breaks. I do not know if the firefly is free or if it caught the edge of a glass shard death. By the time I wipe off my mud-splotched knees, all the lights have blinked away. And the happy thing growing inside me withers like a summer weed, souring, all the worse because of the beauty that came before.

My jar is humpty-dumptyed and the little ant soldiers will never put it back together again. And I am down on the ground in the decaying dark leaves, the death-weight of gravity tugging on its due, mortal flesh, heaved down by time stomping forward, squeezing my lungs and sloughing off my skin until I stop being reborn every day.

a daybeforeyesterday crowd by Brian Edward Bahr

a daybeforeyesterday crowd
where the sistersofmen gather
without even turning from the asheyed city
to discuss the because of a happened

they find a many a why
and the hows of myriad
but they need the had been of was
to color this simple concrete

they talk of a girl they all know
to discover the why of her is

and it isn't until the words have tumbled
that they see the steppedontoe
and a sisterandmotheranddaughterandlover
exasperates:
comments form better mirrors than lenses

We Grew Pianos by Russell Thorburn

Round notes made whole
with the backyard, the roto-tilled garden

beside the short, squat plum tree
as the piano bench accompanied

our dreams into the shrubbery
where the old ladies poisoned dogs

who fouled their lawn, and whenever
we played the piano we grew younger

than twenty-five, shaking plum leaves
off the structure of limbs

holding their part of the sky
from the earth, their brother.

And that piano dreamed
beneath our fingers; the earth breathed

back music, and desire clung to my wife's
womb forming a child each time

in a slightly minor key. Instead of gardening
we played the piano side by side,

following as the sun hung there
on our bare heads and our shoulders burned.

The upright seemed to have been
cultivated from the ground;

its smiling keyboard urged
our hands toward song,

not lag behind but catch up
with the trees in their maple leaf rag.

If it rained, we'd cover the piano
with a tarpaulin, listen to that ripeness

in each droplet roll off like notes
we could never catch with our fingers.

Brother by Mike Meginnis

The MRI is like a picture of the moon. Everything inside me is dead. Gray. I am vast again, like I was. I am a landscape.

There are strange things inside me. I thought it was water. Doctors say he might be a tumor. Some years ago there was a baby with a penis on his back, they say it was his brother's. Mine has a penis too.

So small inside me.

He is curled up on his side. The position. I am not like the moon, I am like a beach. The tide is out. There are shelled creatures and baby turtle corpses and dead jellyfish scattered around him in the gray sand of me. My organs I guess. He is dead on the beach, or sleeping. He is waiting for the tide. There is nothing more lonely than to have a person inside you.

This is how I dream it.

I was a giant. Vast, a universe, enough to fill everything.

I was nearly numb. I did not know that I was nearly numb. I was blind. I did not know.

I could feel the pressure of the membrane at the edge of it all, faint variations in warmth, flecks of mucus, flesh confetti. This was before the cleavage, thirst, time. I ran my great fat hands over my body, the giant. I had a dome stomach like the night sky. Ribs like mountain range. I had a penis, expansive, a sun at the center of my universe. I had great blasted thighs. My hands felt each other and I felt them feeling each other, I grasped my feet, curling up like a snail's shell. I understood I was a mirror of myself, I could be cut in half. In equal, identical parts.

Two giant halves. A corridor, a haunted house. My bustling tripe, my soft undifferentiated spine, all jammed up against the glass as if to stare back, like weird eyes.

I was a giant expanding. The pressure at the edge of the universe always growing.

There was a hardness and a warmth against my back. I began to turn. So did he. After a bronze age, a silver time, a golden era, our revolutions were complete. He was the same as I, but smaller. Lesser giant.

Our legs tangled, suns touched. We clutched our arms to ourselves and felt our faint faces, faces like faces beneath sheets, elbows out like tusks. Our heads were close relative their mass, miles apart relative the universe.

I knew then that I was not alone, I knew I had been. How could I have never known. How terrible. To be alone.

What was that feeling. Like worship or pity. I reached for him. He curled up more tightly. My arms like rivers wrapped around him, they pulled him against me. Imagine that head like a god on your breast, the soft cheek and the squeezed shut eyes.

He opened his mouth. We did not have our teeth then. I held my lesser giant like a mother. Everything was ours and equal. I would share it.

I was still growing. My arms swelled up around my brother. My thighs like rubber trees consumed his hips. My sun burned bright against his belly. We had no teeth then. Only the hard things inside our gums, waiting to emerge. I crushed his hands against his face, pushed them through the cheeks and into the soft still-forming.

My stomach an ocean. Did he find me cold. He was so warm to me.

Did he hate me. If so for how long.

He became a dwarf in my arms. My expanding bulk forced his knees against him, through his gut and into the soft still-forming. His elbows through his thighs until they made the skins tent on the other sides.

His hands through his soft still-forming, his fingers out the other side.

His ribs fused. They were like a pill bug is like underneath.

I pushed his heels inside his buttocks, through the soft still-forming. I would not let go. Could not. The edge of the universe as hot as the sun, the terrible friction, the unyielding pressure. They dashed him inexorably against me. He was a pearl of heat inside me. I glowed from within and without.

I loved him so much. I was glad to grow around him. To be his universe. My belly his starry night, my sun his sun, my hands the laws. Brother, his giant.

The surgeon said they could have shaken hands. Him and my brother. The surgeon says it's best to think of him as a tumor. That's one of the theories. You know there are capsules in some people with whole fingers and teeth inside them. There was a baby girl with a head on her head, a kind of little body on its bottom end.

This other head was alive. It wanted things. The mother said it cried, smiled. Tried to suckle.

You know one in eighty births is twins.

You know one in eight conceptions is twins. Where are the rest of them.

Where do our twins go.

They took mine to the furnace. He had very little bone mass. Burnt away to nothing. They give me the ashes. They let me take the MRIs. They have a video, a reel of film, every layer of his body and me around him. It's like a flipbook.

Watch us grow from the darkness, brothers blooming. The tide comes in and takes him away. That's my fat. That's my gut. I am the landscape. I am like the moon.

Intersect by Tia Prouhet

The relationship between
our two bodies,
right-angled,
can best be defined
by hard edges:

Elbow. Shin. Teeth.

We never could master
how skin should be.
We never learned to bend.

So we leave each other now,
jerk ing and snap ing
our way to other beds
full of flesh and hands

that will teach us
how to curl.

the little lame balloonman by Crispin Best

the balloonman is overcautious when he rattles down the mineshaft still holding his balloons. there is no
scream or fuss, just the balloonman, his balloons rattling still. the landing.

the balloonman can look up at a dull shining cataract. though he doesn't. he is heartlapsed here, lame at the
bottom and his eyes have since been closed open.

he will decrease , he realises, here, hopebroken and . but above him his balloons : held there (the strings) by
his body — them swaying so now again the cataract will blink.

now this whistlesinging.

a whistlesinging that comes far-off down the coaldark shaft, the balloonman quiet lying.

in and underneath him, heavyness and, still, he is decreasing. his eyes won't move yet.

he is not a chandelier

he does not look like a sculpture

the little lame balloonman

a whistlesinging calmly rising slowgentle, and then a moodswung harp, a smell of bracken and tar, smooth
pebble coldness, whirring. and mountains and a mountain. and a hand that reaches into the ribs of
mountains, is unafraid, and comes back out now breathing