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Show Time
Andrew Vuono

the parking lot lights
cut pale skin and
black jeans
outside hotels waiting
for a fix, a cure, a remedy
to that disease called regret
please stranger just fuck me
with no eyes, no love, no hope
it doesn't matter
it means nothing
I've got a death wish
a sex drive
a self injury
so when your hands
are around my throat
your grip is never too tight
if I am still breathing

Isis in Sweatpants
Karl Koweski

from where I lay across
the mattress altar,
nude as a sacrifice
trussed in bed sheets,
I bear witness to my
Isis in sweatpants
dancing before her
full length mirror,
this propped portal
to an inverse world
of realized possibilities.
two frenzied goddesses
match motions
to the furious beats
of playlist natives.
her whipping black hair
creases reality.
the reflection of her
chameleon eyes
mesmerizes me,
inspires rigid worship.
her hips bend my will
to her contours.
her pores soak in
my adoration
until her skin glows
with sweaty divinity.
her moves send
ripples of resurrection
through my flesh,
seducing my nerve endings
with the desire to break
my Egyptian cotton bonds
and dance beside her.

Circumstance

Jay Simpson

Slashed wrists fiery heroine billowing lover's trance
broken pieces shallow furor eyes close circumstance
naked bodies poison ivy archaic realms stifling heat
fear project hungry beasts abstracted humanoids recant
scraps of metal alleyways artists scramble for the gate
poets fly through broken windows cat's shit on hot tin roofs
bywords fall across the page books burn at the stake
platitudes ballast ignorance turmoil delivers sordid joy

Retribution

Dawn Pisturino

She backed up the car
excited
when she heard the thud of metal against his flesh.
She pulled the car forward
nearly coming in her pants
when it lurched over his prostrate body.
Throwing the car in reverse
she flattened him again
giddy at the release of pent-up rage
simmering inside like a smoldering volcano.
When the police came
she held out her arms to receive the cuffs
glowing for the gathered crowd.
And when photographers eagerly asked her to hold that pose
she beamed like a young bride on her wedding day.

The Orgy
Damon Hubbs

Struthonian, from the Latin
struthio (ostrich), to bury one's head in the ground
or in our case that Valencian girl's pussy;
Jim the Painter was there, and the girls we called the Old Roses
The Poet, The Banker, the girl from Liège
obsessed with the architecture in Rohmer films,
Sebastian and Violet, that girl who looked
like Eva Green, the Lorca scholar whose father
owned a vineyard in Portugal, that guy who looked like Eva Green,
the guy we nicknamed Gregor —after Samsa
social climbing like a surrealist, leg over leg over limb
over labia, Paul with the continental philosophy degree
parading unabated and half-shirted
reading Tennessee Williams' "Sweet Bird of Youth,"
The German, The Confectioner, Gretchen
who peeled off her bikini on *Playa de Las Arenas*
and said, "How do you know when cantaloupes are ripe?"
Lupé and the hash dealer, the Wild One who made tiger nut
drinks at the cafe in Alboraya —Elaina, Jen, Erin, Joel, Lisa
Kristin opening like an 18th century floral journal,
the red-haired girl we called the fainting countess,
that guy with the cock as big as the Ritz, peacocks, doves,
swans, skylarks, all of us burying in the fullness of delight—
youth, now, a simple foreignness
like a payphone or cigarette machine
selling oranges.

Oranges
Catfish McDaris

The antique jar contains shards
of pottery from the "ones that
came before" near the Puya
Cliffs in northern New Mexico

I stare and wonder if I can continue,
my robot mail throwing elbow is
worn out, surgery and cortisone no
longer work, drugs help, but not
when mixed with alcohol

I failed at suicide three times,
trying to make it look accidental,
so my lady and kid could collect

Robins are pulling worms from
the ground, winos are pissing in
doorways, cardinals are all red
on telephone lines, they all have
more freedom than me

Perhaps a spectacular car crash
into a river or lake, deciding to
continue and laugh at the orange,
that spreads its legs all juicy
like an excited woman

All tomorrows seem like yesterday,
but, I will live at least for today.

my sleepless brain, idle mind, and other bitchings and moanings
Dan Flore III

I don't know what to do with myself
I'm tired like a bed comforter
but I can't sleep

I get up to smoke
see if the hot neighbor
makes an appearance

her beauty fragrant
as a dream of honey
whenever I see her
I fall to rose bushes
get cut my on wife's thorns (scorn)

I go back to the couch
study others writers
their typewriters
paper, pencils
the vitality of the written word
it's here pulsing through
the vein on the side of my head
popping onto the page like a zit

my soul has been thrown
in the dirty clothes hamper
and I'm trying to do the wash

I go outside again
try to refresh
the sky is all light blue
totally bleh
like a bad photograph

I spot the moon
and say what the hell are you doing out here
it replies by asking me the same question

Three Way
John Tustin

I had a dream –
I was in a three way with Sylvia Plath
and Anne Sexton.
Nirvana played on the radio.
Ernest Hemingway stood in the darkest corner
of the room.
He was holding a camera
but he was filming himself and not us.
The camera was shaped like a shotgun.

Sylvia fondled me
as Anne stroked the hair
on my head and on my chest.
I sat there on the bed with my hands at my sides,
too afraid to touch them.
I closed my eyes as Sylvia blew into my left ear,
Anne my right.
I was as hard as a rock.
My body was tensely still.

Then,
in unison, their four lovely lips whispered to me,
“What are you waiting for?”

A List of Things Stolen from, or Just Never Returned to, Ex-Lovers

Jessie Lynn McMains

Mostly I'm thinking of the two things I half-stole from Paolo. The book and the knife. I didn't really steal them. I mean the book, he let me borrow it, and when I broke things off he didn't ask for it back, so I figured it was mine to keep. The knife is another story. Let me start by saying: I don't know why I was with him. Our whatever-it-was lasted less than a month and that was a month too long. Let me start by saying: it was a time in my life when I flung myself at anyone and everyone who'd have me, hoping something would stick, to distract myself from the feelings I had for this guy I was in love with, like, angel chorus, slam pit, no amount of whiskey in the world could get me past this, I want to have 10,000 of his babies, oh God I think he's The One, in love with, because I was too scared to tell him or even admit the truth of it to myself. Enough excuses. Back to Paolo. He was a jealous macho jerk wrapped in the body of a scrawny, swoopy-banged emo kid. He was an asshole, and also a total dumbass. One example: soon after our first date, he tried to impress me by saying he 'used to be in Yellowcard, before they got famous.' Which was a. a total lie, I checked, and b. dude, if you're gonna lie and say you were in a band to try and impress me, at least pick a band I like. He could've said he was in Black Flag and I might've half-believed him—everyone was in Black Flag. Another example: the time I went to the Kwik Mart across the street from my apartment to buy a 40 oz. of Icehouse.

I was gone all of ten minutes and in that ten minutes Paolo called me fifteen times and when I returned his call and told him where I'd been he accused me of fucking the Kwik Mart clerk. (You're right, dude, I totally fucked him! And when I left, he said: "Thank you! Cum again!") Two weeks in and I already wanted to cut and run, I mean we'd only been on a few dates and had only fucked like twice; we hadn't labeled our relationship and I was still seeing several other people, and speaking of cutting, we're getting to the knife now—One night Paolo was lying on my bed, holding his knife. Not a true switchblade, but it had a release button which you'd press down then flick your wrist and snap! The silver blade—half-serrated, half-not—would pop out from the shiny black sheath-handle. Then you'd push it down and click it back in again. So he's lying there, idly playing with his knife, and, flick! "You know," he said. Snap! "If you ever cheat on me?" Click. "I'll kill the person you cheat with," flick. "Then," snap! "I'll kill myself." Click. Flick, snap! He traced the blade across the veins of his skinny little wrist, lightly, not drawing blood, but. What the shit, dude? For me to cheat on you we'd have to be exclusive, which we are not, and if you think we are, you gotta get out of my bed and my life, like, yesterday. Is what I should have said. Or: "Oh, you wanna slit your wrists? Be sure to go down the road, not across the street. Make it count!" But I didn't because, look, I was drunk and yeah, he was scraggy and pathetic and I could beat him at arm wrestling but it's kinda scary when someone threatens you with murder-suicide.

So I just made some noncommittal
hmmm sound and pretended I hadn't really
heard him. Did I mention his dick game
was weak as hell? And he was a fucking
whiner. Constantly woe is me I can't find
a job I'm always broke you'd rather spend time
with your friends than me I'm so lonely the
world is out to get me, blah blah blah, poor
lil' hipster whiteboy, meanwhile if I said
anything about something shitty in my life
he'd brush it off as so much nothing compared
to what he was going through. About a week
after he'd made those threats he lost
his knife, and that became his newest proof
that the world had it out for him. Yeah.
Paolo was a veritable god damn carnival
of red flags. I finally broke things off about
a week later—because he'd read my
fucking diary and had the nerve to get angry
with me over what he'd read there. Less
than a month after that when I was packing
up my shit, getting ready to leave that
apartment and hit the road, I found his knife
under my bed. And I still had that book
he'd let me borrow. I guess I could've called
him but I had less than zero desire to ever
see him again so the book and the knife
went on the road with me. The knife became
my traveling companion; my reward for
having to tolerate that shitface, Paolo.
The book, which was Rocky Horror related
though I can't remember how exactly, I sold
to a bookstore for store credit, which I spent
on a stack of postcards and an anthology
of stories about Pittsburgh.

Signs **Daniel S. Irwin**

Some people are
Fanatics about it
But I never go by
Zodiac signs.
I've always been
An exception to
What traits are
Ascribed to mine.
Even my days go
Contrary to
Daily predictions.
Apparently,
In my case, my
Destiny is not
Written in the stars.
It's more like a
Matter of what's
Scratched out
In the dirt with
Coal being my
Gem stone.
Maybe, that makes
Earth my planet.
My spirit animal
Has always been
The maguey worm
At the bottom of
A bottle of mezcal.

Middleman
Paul Grant

Christ knows why
But after hearing
You're back with him
I'm remembering
How you told me
He always tried
To fuck you
In the arse
And how sometimes,
Unwilling
You let him

And I ain't saying
It's nice to do so
But as I think of him
Hammering away,

I can't tell if it's
You
Or me
Who's in
More pain.

dark humor
J.J. Campbell

i do love myself
some dark humor

sitting in a rehab
place for the elderly
and they turn up
staying alive by
the bee gee's on
the radio

now, that is some
dark humor

of course, i'm the
only one in the
waiting room
chuckling

i think everyone
else is recalling
some pussy chasing
from their thirties

next song that
came on was
dust in the wind
by kansas

quite the different
reaction

Black Mass of the Scarlet Whore
Alex S. Johnson

The bitch is unmerciful, raking
the bodies of her victims
their wings she clipped them
chopping off their arms to
add to her whirling array

A garland of skulls she's proud to display

With steely knife point fingernails
she makes them drink from her
unholy chalice

Menstrual flow choked down
as her devotees please her
every diseased desire

Pressing the faces of her
prey to the font

She'll never stop till she gets what
she wants

And all she ever wanted was everything
to degrade and possess the May Queen
squeezing screams of degradation
delighting in every shocking sensation

Raking virgin breasts and
tasting orifices like candy
she's overly demanding
of their tears
pushing them past the worst of their fears

She's the baddest bitch in black
use you like a hatrack
write her delirious lyrics on your ass
like the Divine Marquis
a past master at debauchery

She'll take the primmest virgin
and like a decadent surgeon
rip their faces off, stuff their breasts into

Packed suitcases, take off for points across
the globe

Black mass of the Illuminati hotties
evil embodied

Raking sigils into the cosmic heart
till death depart the system of her mission
to spread the Gospel of Chaos

With hot emissions milked from humbled men
cooks their balls like venison
ball-gagged and tied to the rack, she whips them
takes the smirk off their faces until they submit

To her every pleasure, she'll bind them with leather
and make them swallow her 12
inches of joy

Lady of the House
George Gad Economou

“so, boys, you looking for a good time, eh? Huh?”
she asked, prodding my ribs with her elbow.
“my girl’s best in the block, I promise.”
“we’ll see,” my friend muttered, keeping his hands crossed together.
“we’re just looking,” he added.
“oh, you see, my girl’s best. you see. want a drink?”
“no, thank you,” he said, shaking his head.
“what you’ve got? and how much does it cost?” I asked.
“vodka? with some sprite? it’s free.”
“okay, sure. are you having one, too?”
“yes, yes,” she nodded and leaped to her feet.
she was in her mid-sixties yet walked with the elegance
of a young stripper. she brought two plastic cups to the table
and poured the vodka sprite in front of me. same bottle for both cups.
either she had high tolerance to tainted booze or it was real vodka.
well vodka but I didn’t care. she made it strong,
just how I like my cocktails.
we drank, and lit cigarettes.
“ah, here’s Natasha,” she exclaimed when a door creaked.
a hunched olive-skinned man that couldn’t have been older than 18
clambered to the exit, avoiding our gazes, followed by a short, thin,
and super busty tanned girl of perhaps twenty years of age
wearing silver booty shorts and a silver sports bra.
her black platform heels looked more like a medieval torture device
than shoes.
“so, what you think?” the old woman asked.
“okay, I’ll go in,” my friend said with a hungry glisten in his eyes.
“twenty for half an hour. thirty if you want anal. wear condom.”
“okay,” he said and paid twenty. the dumb cheapskate.
I leaned back on the wooden chair and had a good gulp
of the drink just to numb my ass enough so I’d be comfortable.
I exhaled a plume of blue smoke. “so, are you next?”
“no,” I shook my head. “I’m just accompanying him;
he’s the horny one.”
“you no horny? you no want to fuck?”
“I do all right.”

“okay, okay. what do you do?”
“I drink. occasionally, I write, too.”
“ah, what you write?”
“life in the gutter. booze, drugs, whores, dancers, bums.”
“uh-hum,” she nodded, and kept quiet.
I might have seen my fair share of the gutter, slept there a time or two,
but she had a lifetime of experiences. I wanted to prod her mind,
get some valuable answers to questions that hadn’t yet formed
in my mind but I was still too sober.
I drank and moved around in the chair,
trying to get rid of the annoying pain in my tailbone.
“you write from experience?” she asked.
“yes, some,” I nodded. “you’ve done this a long time?”
“all my life, yes,” she said, and her lips twitched into a smirk
as her accent vanished. “came down to the city when I turned fifteen,
looking to escape the village I grew up in.
thought I’d make something of myself,
you know? well, I was penniless and jobless,
and had quit school when I was twelve.
ended up in a brothel, not unlike this one. the money was decent,
the woman running the place was kind, and most men were kind.
did this for almost thirty-five years. Eventually,
I decided I was too old to keep doing it.
running a brothel made more sense than trying to find another job;
what would I put on my resume, after all?” she chuckled,
then paused just long enough to refill our empty cups
and light another cigarette.
“it’s not an easy life but it pays the bills
and keeps me out of sleeping next to dumpsters.
gotta admit, never saw anyone like you, though.”
“what do you mean?” I asked with a groan.
“well, your friend looks rich, and desperate. you...I can’t read you.
you’re dressed all fine, you have manners,
but you drink faster than most alcoholics
I’ve met and obviously have no intention of paying for sex.”
“well, I have outdrunk bums,” I said, raised the cup, and chugged it.
“still free?”
“yes,” she rolled her eyes and filled my cup, half half.
“I was impressed with how you questioned the quality of the vodka.”

“not my first time in a whorehouse,
I know what they usually serve to customers.”
“it’s what you would have gotten, too,
if you hadn’t shown you had smarts.”
“figured. so, never thought of getting out of this?”
“thought of? many fucking times. never tried it.”
“you are offering a service to the world.
making sure some weird guys get
to blow a nut here instead of going on a rampage out there.”
by the time my drink was drained, the door creaked.
my friend ambled out of the room,
his face glowing and with a moronic grin twitching his mouth.
“you done?” I asked.
“yes. shall we go?”
“how about a drink here?”
“um, no, I...let’s go to a bar, huh?”
“sure,” I succumbed, mostly because I was living at his place.
“nice to meet you,” I said to the old woman.
the prostitute had sat on a chair on the other side of the room,
looking at her phone.
my friend had certainly not rocked her world;
I wondered if anyone had while she’d been working there.
“you, too,” the old woman said. “do come by again,
if you want a drink.”
“sure thing,” I said.
I ordered a gin and tonic at the crowded bar;
my friend got a glass of Bailey’s on the rocks—basically, spiked milk.
as we sat at our table on the sidewalk,
next to the flood of people
walking up and down the street next to the edge of the sea,
I saw no one
as inspiring as that old woman that had been
in the prostitution business since she was fifteen.
all I could see were dull people hoping that a few drinks
on an island would spike up their meaningless existences.
I drank up, ordered another.

the wrong apple **Preacher Allgood**

things are looking bad
for the planet
for the people
for the future
but maybe all we need is each other
and a rat trap old jeep
to ferry us into the desert
where the air hangs hot and still
with the weight of isolation and decay
and the endless sands burn
with the fires of dead civilizations

we’ll strip naked
and we’ll crawl back to what’s left of the garden
and ask the snake
where in the hell did we get it wrong?
did we screw up the translation?
did we eat the wrong apple?
or did we just let god bully us
out of the garden
because we couldn’t see through
his phony bluster?

and if we can’t find the snake
or the snake refuses to talk
we’ll fuck our brains out
in the shade of an ironwood tree

When We Hit Bottom
Donna Dallas

We always found someone worse than us
Dave found that homeless hippie camp
when he stumbled along I-95
that summer
a good 85 degrees
he had been lying by the side of the road
since dusk
he tried to shoot up in the only car
that stopped for him
the driver freaked when Dave jabbed
his abdomen with the needle
shoved him out the minute he could pull off the road

Homeless hippie camp had collected rainwater
a good stock of needles
dropped off by the First Baptist Church
a mattress that gave us lice
an abundant supply of acid
the one night we took it
we ran through the forest
smacked into vines
branches whipped us
we rested inside a rotted tree stump
woke covered with chiggers
Dave tried to burn them off
his skin blistered up
bloomed into an infected
yellow volcano of pus
with constant ooze

We ventured into the emergency room ripe
hungrily scanned for any drug we could snatch
the hospital staff watched us in disgust
as the nurse injected Dave's oozy bubbles
with antibiotics and salved his track sores
I covered my arms in shame

Halfway through the long walk
back to the camp
a pickup truck pulled over
offered a ride
Dave put me in the passenger seat
and watched beady eyed from back seat
as I coaxed the fat old truck driver
for twenty bucks
he pulled over a mile before our stop
and said *nothin comes for free, toots*
as he unzipped his fly

We walked the mile
and Dave snatched that twenty from me
with a cold sneer that put a chill through me
he said whores don't get to keep their money
then disappeared into the dark

I coasted along I-95 for a few months rail-thin
ready to tear apart like an old sheet of newspaper
a torrential rainstorm hit
I ran under a bridge to keep dry
found Dave huddled in a worn
dirt trodden blanket
shaking and mumbling
sores layered over his face and hands

I walked back out into that rain
half-dead
four miles to the same ER
collapsed in front

Paris Hotel
M.P. Powers

Drunk at noon in the city
of Baudelaire, I am back at my hotel, deprived
of sleep,
here for an afternoon nap.

I yank the curtains shut, lie down on the bed,
think about all the ghosts
who've occupied
this space
before me. Ghosts.

I can almost see them gliding
across the carpet, laughing, arguing,
making love in the milky
maundering moonlit
hours.

This hotel is ancient. It's at least 200
years old.
I can hear a strange occasional
clicking
inside the walls. I can hear the floors
groaning.

I can feel the heavy rumble
of the metro
as it passes
underneath the building.

I fold the pillow around my
skull, throw the duvet
over me.

But after about 10 minutes,
it becomes clear – I'm too wired to sleep.

How can you sleep in bright liquid
August
in the city
of Picasso, Hemingway, Cendrars?

I ponder the question for a bit,
though I know the answer. So,
I climb out of bed – I too
am a ghost
in this hotel's memory – pulling
up
my trousers, lacing my shoes.

I grab my wallet off the dresser
and,
remembering
I am in the city of that big-souled thief
Villon, remove bank card
licenses Deutschland Ticket
everything
but €30
and head up to Montmartre.

Candy Necklace
Casey Renee Kiser

Little corpses stuck
to my glossed-up lips

Pretty dead boy;
hands on my lively hips

Unspoken words
unravel mummy loon

Gravedigger fell in;
Can't fool a full moon

Wanna push me 'cause
can't see what I see

They love me hard-high
on their own darkness

String them together;
Boy-candy necklace

Wanna choke me; shut
up a fantasy?

Laugh at the rope burn
and call it tough love

Dream on boys,
I'm what nightmares are made of...

I wear them well
and eat them one by one...

Sour and breakable
...then there were none.

Forget the Rest
Arthur Graham

It's just love, spread it round
spread it thick and spread it wide
get your heart broke several times
come back for more

It's just money, spend that shit
give a beggar five whole bucks
let them buy their booze
they need it more than you

It's just time, run it down
doing something that you love
or better yet, run it down
doing someone

It's just paper, use it up
like the years of your life
fill the pages, burn up half
forget the rest