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H S H O W W H N H E R 2 0 2 6

Wednesday's Child
Ryan Quinn Flanagan

She put the butcher block knife
to his throat
and asked him to tell her which
child was full of woe.

Do I get a phone a friend?

I'm not Alexander Graham Bell,
she shot back.

It was true.
Those ripped stockings
were like a cutter's paradise.

But he had never been good
when put on the spot.

Can I ask the audience?
he played for time.

She looked around
the otherwise empty kitchen
and repeated her demand.

And to think he had found this one
on a popular dating site.
Claiming a rigorous vetting process
which he now doubted
with the blade dug so deep into
his panicked jugular.

What, no 50:50 eliminator?

Do I look like Regis Fucking Philbin
to you?

She kind of did,
that silver fox pompadour
and face like a stretched condom.
But he wasn't going to say that
with the knife still in
her hand.

Dinosaur Story
Misti Rainwater-Lites

a million years ago
when mommy & daddy began
we'd go home to my studio apartment
on lunch break from T-Mobile
I'd stick a Tony's pizza
in the oven
tell him
"okay, you've got 15 minutes to make me cum"
and I'd waltz back into the call center
glowing, giddy
reeking of Victoria's Secret vanilla body wash
and on Friday nights
you bet your ass
we blessed the crowd at the best karaoke bar in town
with our renditions of "Whole Lotta Rosie"
and "Brand New Key"
but now we are dry and ancient
getting excited about xmas tree decorations
and the best deep dish pizza in Toledo
we don't fuck
but we don't hate each other
and for that
I am certain
we win some kind
of prize

I Arrive In My Voice
Salvatore Difalco

Hello, my dear.
You look like cut glass tonight.
You smell like gasoline.
I love it when you smell like gasoline.

Hello, baby.
Are we still married
to our own self-destructive
self-regard?

Hello, child,
can we still talk on occasion
without starting a five
alarm fire?

Hello, precious.
Tell me you're tired
of being admired
for being a liar.

Hello, my dear,
I find you simply
irresistible when you're
combustible as this.

Hello, future blaze.
You remind me of Corvettes
and Tab and glossy magazines
Love it when you smell like gasoline.

emotional intimacy
John Yohe

the pic I clicked on
showed her
amazing ass
so I clicked on
her profile
where the first sentence
stated
how much she valued
emotional intimacy—
I thought
or hoped
she was seeking
emotional intimacy w/her ass
which I was more than willing to give
but immediately after
she informed me
which strip club in Portland
she danced exotically at—
she also gave the url
of her onlyfans page
for money
one could watch videos
of her
performing sex acts
alone
or possibly
with someone
with which
she shared
emotional
intimacy

Dead Boyz Took Me to Church
Casey Renee Kiser

The stale-scene shadowplay
is just too much to take
on a fucking Tuesday

Laughter from far away...
So careful not to break
from whispers on Wednesday

The beast I always slay;
The devil inside- shake
my hips on a Friday

Things you wouldn't dare say
Bore me to death and fake
yours again on Sunday

Don't believe anymore...
Monday and Thursday's whore
burning right out the door

Lifetime Achievement
Ivan Jenson

First you take sixty odd years
of muddling through the foliage
like someone half your age
with twice the gusto
and three times
the misplaced ambition
and add the elements
like hot, cold and sub-zero luck
and the unlikelihood
that lightning might strike
twice in your lifetime
as it did when you were
all wet under the nose and ears
during those sordid solid gold years
when everything fell into place
right in front of your face
with its expression
of bewilderment at best
and you pounded your chest
like a Tarzan in your “can do” days
it was all work and all play
under the hot rays of
fun-for-fun’s-sake sun

give or take
some unbearable sorrows
and fears that one day you’d
have to live in the down-and-out
up-and-coming tomorrows
which have now
finally come to pass
so congratulations on making
it this far into your personal story
where you played the hero
and the antagonist to the hilt
no need to feel
imposter syndrome guilt
for you are one hundred percent
the genuine real thing—
a frenetic, pathetic
and yet somehow
still a terrific
human being

Out There in the Crumbling Day
William Taylor Jr.

The world was never ours
and getting less so all the time,

but we never much cared
for it anyway.

Leave us our little room,
some music and booze,

we'll be okay.

The other losers out there in the crumbling day
are no longer our concern,

just leave us our little bit of scrapheap beauty,

our little makeshift world
and an eternity to fuck around inside of it.

It's not much to ask,
we're not hurting anyone.

Outside there's fire and the endings of things

but we're good as we turn the record over
and open another bottle,

laughing about something
you wouldn't understand.

There's a War on, You Know
Jeff Weddle

There are armies all around
and they are searching
for you.

They wish to kill you
and your family,
after first raping your wife,
your children.

Everyone will be tortured, of course.
They will slaughter your pets for food,
burn your books,
shit on great works of art.

They don't give a fuck.

There are soldiers in the shadows
and in plain sight.

Each one has it in for you, personally,
though you could be anyone.

They want your mind,
if they can get it.

Obedience and true belief
can buy you time.

You might get used to it
and fall in love with the terror.

Feel free to do nothing, of course.
That is your right.

Feel free to watch television
and cook hamburgers in your yard.

The armies are often slow
and might not even get to you
before cancer or heart attack.

Grab a beer or master a weapon.
It's up to you.

Talk it over with your loved ones.

Make the bargains your soul can bear.

What I Saw In the Rabbit Pen
Daniel de Culla

In Torregalindo, Burgos
With a half-ruined castle
There lived an honest family
With two daughters
Both young and of marriageable age
Who looked after the chickens
The pigs and the rabbits
As was necessary.
They sold the animals
Not long after they were born
To the people of the village and other places
Cheaper than in the shops.
One day, a friend of my brother-in-law
Who was courting the youngest daughter
Encouraged me to go visit them
Because he wanted to buy a rabbit
Since her mother was asking for one
As a whim being newly pregnant.
We went to their beautiful village house
We greeted her parents and daughters
And the youngest took us to the rabbit hutch
And just as we were about to pick up the most prized rabbit
She bent down and showed us her privates
For she wasn't wearing panties.
My friend, since she was his girlfriend
didn't even flinch
Didn't say a word.
But I was stunned
Because I'd never seen such a thing.

Since the few times I'd had sex
I did it in the dark, not knowing if it was white or black
Or what the creature looked like.
But the worst part was—what cruelty!
When the young woman grabbed the rabbit by the neck
So it couldn't breathe or scream
Not before hanging it by its hind legs
On a crossbar in the hutch.
And, alive as it was
With a kitchen knife she gouged out its eyes
Because she says that way the rabbit bleeds better
And stays more tender for cooking.
-Take this rabbit, the tenderest one in the hutch
the girlfriend told him.
You'll pay me when I come to your house
To say hello to my future mother-in-law.
And when they go to sleep
I'll make you a delicious dinner with mine's.
When we left the village
He very happy, and me very hurt
Because of the death his girlfriend had inflicted on the rabbit
As we walked towards the next village
Moradillo de Roa, five kilometers away
I kept telling him:
-Be careful, friend, when you have sex with her
Because when you're in the sweetest part of orgasm
Begging for her sweetest kisses
She'll gouge your eyes out
While you're biting her lips, shouting:
-I don't want a rabbit for the wedding anymore!

Zerotica
Nathan Bas

Zeros hit my cock
ring and I bulge
feel all faint too
sweaty my heart skips

Pixelated tips and piss
ran dry on Wall
Street burning for hits
I'm rope tied up

Someone echoes dark light
licks lips flips switch
moaning into no thing
locks key endless repeat

Mechanical buzzing
whirring ding light up
going in out gasp
bank big no asphyxia

Walking Girl
Donna Dallas

Transients in the yellow pickup
barrel down the rickety road along the bay
hoot like desperate cowboys
the bay is a desolate cemetery at sundown
she enjoys their hollers and whistles
as she walks over the dead thing
that could have been a seagull
but is mangled now beyond recognition
she shares a familiar sentiment
with the dead thing and its ravaged feathers
forming a trail to nowhere
that she follows obediently
at dusk
while those boys hoot away
her shorts
clipped enough to bare
her ass cheeks
as she strolls along the devils run
at dusk
for no real reason
if just to hear them call her name

Blind Black Jackie
Luz Aida Rodriguez

blind black jackie,
christmas diamond, christmas star
I'm drinking and sloshing molasses moonshine,
and there is no time left here
to go to hell or dream of me
both are the same, both remain quiet
for musings of my love
In the voids, in the people you discard.

but if you were like me,
maybe you could be more free,
as is divinity.
divinity is my pleasure,
divinity is my place of greed.

Am I divine? Or do my eyes deceive me?
Poisonously poised and awake to shine
with pretty fragile hearts
gashing in the idle heavens.
taking all of my lovers but seven.

all that you gave to me,
now withering away in an estate sale,
with sunshine blisters growing on your face,
waiting for the day you become old and unfuckable.
but i'll stay here, full of fuck, full of rot,
in the snow deadlier as tomorrow

so visible, so alone
destroy me as i destroy you.
and i'm not a fucking HACK-HAG
I'm not old just yet
I'm not old enough for this
I'm only twenty one

and I bet she's so grateful to belong to you,
with that ring on her dead molten finger.
Is she as pretty as the day you met her?
oh bitchless, I fall again
FORGET HER

Four O'clock in Quebec
Daniel S. Irwin

It's four o'clock in Quebec
Which means nothing in
Any place in Oklahoma.
I've been to Oklahoma.
Never been to Quebec.
Oklahoma is said to be
Full of steers and queers.
I thought that was Texas.
Quebec ain't got no steers.
Or was that Montreal?
Hell, I don't know. I never
Go lookin' for either one.
Steers or queers, that is.
Yeah, that don't mean shit.
Just like this freaky poem.
Yup, it might be four o'clock
In Quebec. What do I know.

Fame & Fancy Literature
Todd Cirillo

I am sitting in Harry's Corner Bar
listening to the din
of people talking loudly
in the summertime heat
of New Orleans.
I am on a two-day bender
out celebrating something
I really don't know
and cannot name.
I am pushing myself too hard
trying for something,
for anything to spark.
A middle-aged woman
with silver streaked hair
puts a five into the old jukebox
and plays,
Luckenbach, Texas by Waylon Jennings.
She doesn't know that I wrote a poem
about that very song.
In fact, the poem is called,
Luckenbach, Texas!
It is in my book, *Disposable Darlings*
whose cover was photographed
right here in this same bar,
blowup dolls and all.

If I had the book with me
or the poem memorized
I'd recite it for her
under the purple neon Abita beer sign
but she has since moved on
to Garth Brooks
and that is just not conducive
to respectable literature.

Soft Launch
Paige Johnson

Before my first inhale of 8-bit Heaven,
I've only known ketamine to be
what Publix butchers palm-pass
in fun-size bags, some spikey
space dust bought off single
mothers as kids squish soggy
fries into their backseat carpet.

I only know it has something
to do with nailing roommates
to lumpy couches. Wall-eyed
meditation among sunrise weeds.
What blacks out embarrassment
after Kraken oil Rum rummaging
past midnight that leads to thrown
phones and punched houseplants.

But in your bedroom, in the tufted
quail-blue office chair, K sounds
safer, kinder, described as LSD lite,
sedating like BNW Soma, short-lived,
not life-consuming or -threatening.
It looks like cocaine, an icier snowfall.
We cut pale worms on a paper plate.

In the minute before ignition, I paint
smiling snails and obese bumblebees,
put on a gravelly podcast that makes
the apocalypse sound like a nuclear field day.

Last Call
Brian Rosenberger

The cold and distant Moon, an observer.
The Moon offers neither forgiveness nor condemnation,
Never one to suggest advice.
It's just the Moon after all.
Just an observer, a witness, for what comes next.
Lest you forget, the Moon controls the tides,
Influences some people's moods
And reflects the Sun.
Disrespect the Moon at your peril.
The bar's patrons stagger and stumble.
Last call is last call after all.
And while the Moon remains cold and distant,
The Reaper's night is just getting started.
Let's keep this party going, his smile bone-white.
Where to next, He whispers.
His Scythe points the way.
The Moon lights the path.

late night litmus test at the grab-a-granny inn
Karl Koweski

I was wretchedly drunk
so it was difficult
for me to gauge
the woman's beauty.

the fact she claimed
she found me attractive
should have put her
desirability into doubt.

there were my
wolverine sideburns to consider,
muttonchops descending
my jawline so staggering,
so impressive,
I could have led a
Civil War regiment
by follicle strength alone.

but it's been well-established
in this society
women don't react well
to facial hair that
fell out of fashion
two centuries ago.

also, she made her move
after I karaoked
"I Love the Dead"
Alice Cooper's sinister
ode to the joys
of necrophilia
which might have led her
to believe
I was free and nondiscerning
with my charms.

sitting in the shadows
in the back corner
of the lounge
with our arms draped
around each other
as some jackass on stage
flubbed his way
through "Ice, Ice Baby"
she admitted
I wasn't her primary choice.

but the first guy
lost out when she
discovered his utter
lack of teeth.
she put her tongue in his mouth
and felt that solitary tooth
jutting crookedly like
a tombstone knocked askew.

she picked up a shot
of Cuervo gold,
raised the glass, said
"it only takes three
or four of these babies
to get me naked,"
and I smacked that
shot glass right out
of her fucking hand.

there was no telling
how many she had
before I sat down
beside her.

glowing green ~ Ronan Barbour

I still wander looking for EXIT signs
down the long hallway
of old Hollywood hotel
wood shiny and rotting from use
smelling of mint roach disinfectant

I want to haunt and live
the best two hours of my movie this year
as I say at the dawn of every
still here

I remember the fire I felt
on the long journey here
young and determined and excited

I remember the fires that started out there
and came home with me
raging in my mind over my shoulder as I
envisioned leaving
the great burning city behind
but I always turned back
to the apocalyptic tune
wielding my glowing soul grenade launcher
not quite done yet

my fire is now more dream than starlight
New Kid Arrived; I tell you
you may hear me in the late choked night
you might dread me on the walls
you will find parts of me in the corners
overlooked
you will love here, you will lose here, you
will dream even more here, you might die
here, you might need to escape here or
you might just continue and fade out here

for my part, I still envision the fire

**Past My Prime
Arthur Graham**

When you're young it's so important
to tell the world what's on your mind
and it takes some years to see how
full of shit you really were

When you're old that gets reversed
and you shut up for a while
until one day you've some
wisdom to impart

All the poems I wrote
when I thought that I was dying
and all the poems I'll never write
when one day I really am

There's a certain comfort
to be taken in the knowledge
you've more years behind
than what you have ahead

I think it's safe to say I'm not
the man I used to be but
I think perhaps that's not
such a bad thing

David Estringel
Shadow Cat, 2004

After Richard Hambleton (1952-2017)

Shadow cat
p r o w l
Low'r
East Village
silky
sidewalk
slink
lookin' *high*
lookin'
low
'round lampposts n'
alleyway
piss puddles
for
a tasty
trick
or treat.

Oil slick
tangles—
blacktarsexy
sheen—
brown sugar
smile
n' puncture claw hunger
jonesin'
for the exhale
of a hypodermic
pounce.

Fat rat's
'round the corner
throwing bones
sniffin' bacon
playing
its fat rat
games
ripe
for the pickin'
to plop
on the doorstep—
eight lives
d
o
w
n—
on this ol' city
street
for a thump
(n' a thump
n' a thump thump thump)
n'
its lil baggies
o' cheese.

Toast
Dana Jerman

Blame the Veuve Clicquot & get ready to not be able
to concentrate on anything, because your girlfriend
is super horny for you she just rubbed two out.

Blame doctor Dom Perignon, tumbling naked
wishes you were here wrecking her hair and covering her with kisses.
Deep mouth open sucking messy gorgeous unstoppable kissing,
jilling her off a third one Oh—

She's straight... outta the shower, undressed,
and doesn't identify as monogamous for fucking fuckery's sake,
she identifies as lightning, as wanting. As a sexual longing machine—
desirable destined for your arms.

As fuckable and functioning and ready and awake, hungry in love.
As mad and wild and ravishing and human and feminine.
As much yours as anything could ever be.
Deep as a sword could be plunged into a heart.

Blame the perfume in the starry cascade.
The spark back in sparkling. The light back in nightlights.

Blame the Moet for hot pulses coursing
like a train toward high times in this low life.
Cristal too for Laying lying lacking lunging for
lustful reasons for here she is, refulgent.

Never mourn nor pine for what's right in front of you—
Come in haste like bubbles poured out to waste
this beautiful goddamned golden day
in this magic bed with her.