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**Gabriel Bates
What Stays**

I wear each shitty tattoo
like a badge of honor.

The black panther,
the pinup girl,
the red rose,
the pair of dice.

I still don't regret
a single one of them.

That wouldn't do
any good anyway.

Because regret is like ink—
it never goes away either.

**Willie Smith
Rainbow Yellow**

Cello-mellow when Rainbow Yellow takes the cake,
and the recluse unpacks her violin,
while the widow keeps, on her hourglass, time.
That night the trio played the Neptune Blues,
Satan sat in – pitchfork open tuned;
black satin cowboy shirt, striped pants tight zipped.
Yellow blew her sax, like a whore in the black,
prostitute, for once, to toot her own horn,
alone with her love,
enough dollies the life to change.
Yellow's love – in real life – stripped,
down at the Reality Club,
Mister Satan in perpetuity owned.
Gail crossed over the line one night,
let a good Christian boy huff her soiled rag;
boy held near to Second Coming
unholy tokens of bloody smoke.
And once the Christian glimpsed God,
he shot poor Gail dead.
Since God told him do it,
the good old boy walked, charges dropped.
Nothing more hazardous than a Baptist
smoking a bloody clout,
specially if with God he got clout.
Yellow blew her heart out
those Neptune blues. Satan Himself
held back his customary sneer,
eyes bright with brimstone tears,
cleavage of his hooves
showing through his Jesus shoes.

Eric Robert Nolan
Confession

Poetry is
pornography for the heart,
lust in the lexicon.
It is ever The Nude Girl.

At its best,
it renders white pages into flesh tones and dark downy darts
between legs.
It renders text
into sex.
Mouthing the round words curved by assonance
renders them as breasts.
The firmer consonants
slide against the tongue like areola.

And I like it like that – it should be lewd and low.
It should be stuffed under mattresses, hidden in pockets,
and, at first, glimpsed furtively
when no one is looking.
Part of me will never want
to show poems to my mother.

Catholic school nuns
Persuade their victims by rote:
“Our Father, Who Art in Heaven,
“Hallowed be Thy Name,”
but vulgar little boys like me
hallowed the sounds of vowels
and clutched at consonants privately.

The Sisters were moving towers —
black masts sailing
up and down between the desks.
Their paddles fell like falling spires
against the inattentive.
“Jesus loves me, this I know.
“The grownups hurt my knuckles, though.”
Curious boys will always
eye the girls in the even rows.

I, low,
nursed my favorite heresies in whispers —
paganism in the pages —
and easily adopted other Gods.
I, a secret Heathen,
Took Poe’s “Raven”
as my inner golden calf.

And poetry
nurses the Sin of Wrath.
At my desk I told myself
in inner ceremonies
I privately hoped
I’d someday pick the perfect words
To finally tell God
I never loved him either.

**Donna Dallas
Sherri**

Of the many opening lines
desperate lovers long to hear
a clinking of glass to glass
is offered up like the eucharist
while a dead song plays
barely audible
over the din of laughter and
lack there of

You see that bright light
to the left of the bartender – it says
last exit
as in get out now
it's not a neon sign for shits and gigs
it's a warning sign
your signals crossed
you thought someone sent a code with
the Chin don of yours and his
Seven and Seven's
you don't hear the angels screaming
your name?

Some juggler of hearts
hovers above the long mahogany
of anyone's bar
peers into your crazy eyes that could and will
lie

You're quiet now
judge all men's ties for a price-tag that affords you
with all your baggage piled around
the bar stool you stopped sitting on
decided to stand
accent your height
draw attention to legs
that no one pays attention to

The eyes
the dead song
you're a sitting duck
offering slick lips to mother Hope
a day late and so many dollars short
from a wild ride
you stepped off of
to cozy down
into fuzzy nights filled with
no vacancy

Charles Rammelkamp
Perspective

When my friend Rodney
showed me a poem
about excruciating anal itch
at the age of five, his mother,
fearing pinworms, those small,
parasitic roundworms that
infect intestines, sticking
her finger into his anus
the poem ending, “pretending
I didn’t like it,”

I vividly remembered
my own daughter,
same age, scratching
at her own buttohole,
making the same complaint,
me doing my parental duty,
and my immediate reaction,
I could be arrested for this!

I only learned later
Rodney’d been fourteen at the time –
another fresh perspective.

Salvatore Difalco
Nature Is High, Man

Too high to climb the pine tree
with the skinned trunk,
my ears latch on to the buzzing
of the forest dark,
a million stabs and suicides—
murder has many voices
and many choices
and we wear the plaid shirts
and Kodiak boots not
just for kicks.

An ample bear commits
no wrong by slamming through
the brush pursuing a moose.

The moose might differ,
but the forest exists for every
thing and now and then a bear
must eat a moose
to feel alive, to feel bear-like.
The moose would argue
that its life means more to it
than dinner for a brute.

But Nature differs.
Nature is too high to give
a shit what kills or doesn’t kill.
Things have to eat. Things
have to die and sometimes
these things coincide.
Meanwhile Nature chills.

**William Taylor Jr. ~ Another Fucking Poem
about Drinking at Vesuvio**

for Hugh Blanton

The North Beach poets sit at the bar
and drink at all hours
in their funny hats and coats,
as if there were nothing else in the world
that ever needed doing.

The Anarchist girl sits alone at a table
drinking dark beer and reading a book
about the rise of techno fascism.

And me, I'm forever on the run
from death and her henchmen,
with a glass of wine at my favorite
table in the back corner of the balcony.

I tear my little poems from the jagged
teeth of the dark the best I can,

as the pretty girls in Kerouac Alley
sit at little round tables smoking
cigarettes and drinking beer.

I gaze down upon them
and pretend I am in Paris.

I've never been to Paris
and It's looking like I might
not ever make it,
even though I'd like to.

Some people do things like go to Paris
and others muddle through life
one moment to the next

and I figure that's just the way
it is and there's no sense in getting
upset.

There's still some poetry to be mined here
despite what the years have taken.

I lean back and bask in the feel of it,
thinking of all those suckers in Paris
who will never get the chance.

Dmitriy Kogan
Published on Pornhub

I told this girl at a bar that
I got a poem published
in a journal
and she said
'that's nothing
'I'm published on Pornhub'

and at first
I thought
that's not art
but I went home
and looked her
up on
Pornhub
and admitted
to myself
damn
that's talent

Damon Hubbs
Another Nail in the Coffin

What am I going to do about the girl
from the wrong side of the tracks
What am I going to do about her night moves
She wants to open a little nail salon
She wants to start a podcast
pull up to the bumper
double nickels on the dime
She wants a wedding at a chapel on The Strip
What am I going to do about the girl
whose father fixes matches
down at Gloves & Glory
who has a collection
of Nazi memorabilia
and a wife who slips the tongue
when we say goodbye
after Sunday dinner
What am I going to do
when the walls close in
and Hell's conductor comes calling
I'm going to marry that girl
and buy a plot of land
and give her some money
for that little nail salon.

Daniel de Culla
Together With You as Evening Fell

-Cleopatra, announcing my erection
You remember the coming of your love.
You didn't demand anything from me to marry
Neither gold nor silver
Only my glorious penis
Hanging like a pole
Over your bleeding cunt.
Like a good Samaritan
You took me into your life
You saved me from putting my head
On the train tracks
At Atocha Station
That goes from Madrid to Paris
Because I was desperate
From not finding a job
And even less able to buy a house
Where to build our love nest.
Also, because of your unsettling question:
-Antonio, where is your manhood?
Like a ragged beggar
Who wore secondhand clothes
Bought at the flea market
You redeemed me forever
Because I sang to your pussy
I adored it and composed verses for it
In the Saint John of the Cross' style.

Thanks to your money
We were able to rent an attic apartment
On Prado Street
Across from the Ateneo de Madrid
From where we could see its roof
Through a small window.
To the small attic
We had to enter on our knees
You first
Me saying to your ass:
-I adore you, I bless you.
Once inside
We could stand up
Going straight to the bedroom
Passing through the kitchen
With a bathroom included
Leaving our clothes there.
Our two sexes united
We sang glories and praises
To the cock.
-My love for you has no end, I would tell you
Trying to touch with my penis
The uvula of your throat.
-Give me seven orgasms
So I can father a child, you would tell me.
When we finished, we would do 69
And with our tongues we would clean
You my penis, me your cunt
Always together with you
As evening fell.

James Callan
Toxophilite

The bowman's shot is true
though his intentions might be false
Robin hoodwinked me out of my trousers
painting a bullseye between my babycakes
At 180 lbf, he plucks his string assiduously
plucking my heartstrings, ass hideously
a target puckered in concentric rings
G.string twang
flying in a gentle arc
pitilessly splitting my arrow.

The bowman's shot is deft
like Eros, unerring
he aims with the fidelity of a surgeon
Open-heart incision
slaughter of the senses
bypassing dinner, the drinks
the dancing and the heavy petting
Folds of denim pooling at my feet
kicking knickers straight to the heart
Cupid claiming my soul.

The bowman's shot is swift
swift as an arrow
swift as a fox
swift like the fox named Swift in *David the Gnome*
Swift as the wind
blowing on my ear
The thrust of the fletcher
hard against the bowyer's back
notched and tightly strung
recurved and resplendent.

The bowman's shot is fatal
and it's just my fate
a fatal attraction
Love is a fate worse than death
love is eternal, they say
they say to him "You wrecked him"
Wait, did you say *rectum*?
Brown eye bullseye
sliding into French third base
The bowman's made his mark.

Casey Renee Kiser
I'll Take Disco Inferno for \$500

Remember when you pushed me off a cliff?
I do. I survived
and thrived. And even came back
to thank you

I waited a while by your coffin. I waited
for you to get over your fear
of coming out:
showing your TRUE FORM

And when you finally stuck out
a rotted arm to test
the safety of the moon; the star sass,
the bat-friendly atmosphere, wondering
if you could grab a quick BLOOD BEER
(....creak....) is it late enough???

I slammed the last nail right in!
And I would've pushed you
in that coffin
off that same cliff. But I was kinda done
with giving FREE RIDES

Mother, won't you listen
to my bedtime story, since you're
LOCKED IN FOR THE NIGHT

That burn box you sent me–
I return the flames to sender! Surely,
you remember popping me out
Year of The Dragon. If you wanna talk
fire,
I'm your girl. I'll even GET OUT
the disco ball.

M.P. Powers
chop suey joint

it must be a qin or mandolin
or something
weaving its delicate soul around the Red Dragon
Cafe. keen shadows creep
up distressed brick walls. a circle of people
mingle around the flaming
fireplace. in the corner, a sawed-off
hitman is awash
in neon, the misshapen skull
of his restless yes-man huffing Lucky Strikes.
I take a sip of my Tsingtao. next to me
there is a Turk who doesn't bother hiding
the side of his face that's melting
or his eyes jumping like amoebas
as The Bellflower Lady descends
the staircase; she is wearing
saffron sequins and a see-through dress, rogue tongues
of color licking the heavy
curves of her supple breasts; a fang of gold
flickering between them
as she wanders past the window.
behind her snow
is dazzling
and the people are frozen.
but in here there is fire and ghosts that are alive.

Deck of Muses
Andy Seven

There's a whiny voice shrieking from the jukebox
some high pitched wail
"If you leave me I'll just die"
in that case

i've died a thousand deaths

They leave you for a jerk with drugs
they leave you for a jerk with money
they leave you for a jerk with friends

But, but butt butt...

i have no drugs
i have no money
i have no friends

What do i have
i've got edgar allen poe's muse

i've got delia derbyshire's muse
i've got rahsaan roland kirk's muse

I've got a pack of muses
i've got a full house
chips stacked sky high on the table
i'll never fold

sagittarius
John Yohe

I was just starting to see
this young woman
(I was a young man)
she had bought an astrology book
something like
the sex lives of men
based on their astrology sign
how a whole book
could be gotten out of that
I dont know
but nevertheless)
she looked me up
got a kind of surprised weird look
on her face

I said what does it say?

she said it says sagittariuses
make good lovers
but watch out
theyll go for your ass

which was true
at least the last part
tho most men would have—
she had a nice one

Wolfgang Carstens
Waiting

My father died of Cancer.
His mother, my grandmother,
died of Cancer.

I will die of Cancer.

They suffered horrible deaths.
I will suffer a horrible death.
I've come to terms with this.

I've contemplated suicide—
as I'm sure they must've as well.

Both had nothing to live for
except alcohol, cigarettes, family, friends—
life itself.

I live for these things too—
but also for my philosophy,
the written word—
the chance to exist unhindered—
an unborn audience—

to live dead forever
with Nietzsche, Plato,
Alexander the fucking great.

But that's stupid.
Pointless.

The human animal
isn't worth saving.

Yet,
still I go on.

Ronan Barbour
user

on my little & big screens I watch her
naked body
clapping with mine

at good angles I hit pause, and admire
her beautiful parts
and when her mouth opens wide and
eyebrows arch, I try to wrap my arms
around this memory on the screen as I say
I love you so much

I will continue to make one-sided love to
her in the screen
for many years to come yet, I expect
because

she trusted me

Ben Newell
All Sales Final

My coworker
says drinking and the Internet
are a match made in hell, says
he got up late Sunday morning
to see all of the expensive items
he bought while wasted; of course,
he promptly cancelled the orders
before they shipped. Lucky bastard.
I, too, got drunk Saturday night
and awoke late Sunday morning
feeling much regret, feeling like
a total fool, but there was nothing
I could do, the damage done, all
sales final as what I bought had
already walked out the door
in a short skirt and a pair of
Air Jordans.

Taryn Allan
Minimal Dark

Street lights aren't orange any more
So we've lost that dreamy haze
That pumpkin-coloured glow
Which made every night feel
Like a nostalgic flashback in a movie
Impermanent and eternal
In equal measure

Beneath that light
Every spilled liquid
Beer
Blood
The urine-soaked in-between
Took on the fathomless depths of the night sky
Blackly boundless like a patch of dream
The sleeping mind had yet to fill in

Now the street lights are perfectly white
Shining pristinely
Like the sterile oppression of a dental surgery
A bleak illumination of every part of
The diorama of the city night
No longer a dream
But a painful waking to the reality
That this is all there really is

I made a romance of my night walks once
Now there's only the minimalism
Of one foot following another
Going nowhere in particular.

Arthur Graham
The Fool

Never did put too much stock
in the planets and the stars,
crystals, tarot cards
and all that jazz.

Like most other people,
I won't invoke my sign
unless I need to justify
my bad behavior.

I know why I'm this way,
but whether Pluto was involved
is perhaps a better question
for my ex.

Read my fortune if you'd like,
here's my palm with all its lines,
but we both know there's
only one way that this ends.

I truly do believe that
all things happen for a reason,
but sometimes the reason's that
you're just a fool.

Todd Cirillo ~ All the People in the World Right Now

In the bar,
the dark-haired girl
with large brimmed white hat yells,
Girl, I'm not drunk
and falls off her chair.

The men in polo shirts
with eerily similar manscaped beards
pass a phone around each looking at a pic
where one shouts,
I'm blacked out drunk here!

and orders tequila shots for the table.
A birthday boy with sash that reads,
I'm not gay
kisses his boyfriend.

The bartender states to a table
of cigar smoking dudes in loafers and Jimmy Buffet style shirts
Does this look like a place that makes Mojitos?

An old couple who have always loved one another
begin to slow dance to Sam Cooke.

A tour guide trying hard to pass himself off
as a vampire from the 1700s
looks bored and checks his Apple watch.

The uptown girl sways at the ATM yelling,
Let me have my money. Where is my money!

The blonde-haired couple
wearing the same white with black striped Adidas
try to go into the bathroom together
but there is no lock on the door.

A Frida Kahlo looking girl
in a bright colored summer skirt
pushes through the crowd shouting,
Sheila! Sheila!

Under the beer signs
the poet sips his drink
next to the glow of the jukebox
and says, *What's next?*