

the Unrorean

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*With Difficulty the Morbidly Obese Can
and Sometimes Do Do It Too*

Or

The Compromised Reward of Morbidly Obese Sex

All those sweat-trapping rolls
of tiresome-to-wash flesh
between fat sweethearts
really slosh and slug it out
upon the mutual enablers' squashed short-lived mattress
when they work up a fuck.

Afterwards

the fitted sheet and mattress pad are soaked through with sweat
and bunched into the interior of the mattress's sunken top
as their elasticized corners have come loose
from under around the assaulted innerspring mount.
Pillow talk is delayed a long time
while the prostrate lovers recover
from their infrequent pursuit of flesh pleasure,
heaving to catch their runaway breaths,
enduring which now seems hardly to have been worth
the momentariness of orgasm.

—Stephen Stokes

Devin McGuire, Editor
Cynthia Brackett-Vincent, Founding Editor

MH370

However many thousand fathoms deep
They lie, as one, in attitudes unknown,
All sleeping that profoundest, deepest sleep
That all must, in their oneness, sleep alone;
However many thousand fathoms deep
In space they had so lately, highly flown,
Not knowing that not one was theirs to keep
—All this was something none(?) could have foreknown;
Nor yet how many thousand sorrows deep
In space as cold and dark they would descend,
Nor yet how deeply thousands more would weep,
Not knowing, in the dark, cold, of their end.
Not all the fathoms linked of sea and sky
As deep as that profound unfathomed *Why?*

—David Madison

**Editor's Pick*

*Without Getting into
Humane Sensibilities*

Hook and worm.
Sun as lazy as the shore.
All the work is in the water now.
In a pike's dazzled eye.
The gullibility
of a small-mouth bass.
I lost my girl,
Can't get the job I want.
And my parents
aren't talking to me.
On the river bank,
knife and creel await
the first sign of a bite.
Must a fish die
so I can start feeling good
about myself again?
It looks that way
from where I'm sitting.

—John Grey

it's amazing

how
quick
you come to accept

and
even love

smudge marks
on the windows...

toys
everywhere...

even
the poop in the yard.

that
part's easy...

it's
when
they're gone...

that's
really hard

—John Yamrus

the apartment

had
no heat,
no hot water
and no back door.

to
make it
interesting
two strippers
lived upstairs,

the problem was
they were nice girls.

broke,
just like us.

we ate
boiled noodles

and
very little else.

the
poems
came hard.

—John Yamrus

Love Poem

Notice how the eagle soars magnificent
on the hunt,

and the fox
who tore the hen limb to limb last night

is asleep now, soft as down

—Claire Hersom

*Person in New York
(after Lorca)*

What is it that holds up these stones?
What force drove so much
Old World desire down
these narrow sidewalks
and rain-soaked cement?
The gaunt women
wrapped in canvas and wind
who love their children
in three different languages.
The meat-red businessmen
hefting into taxis,
their stomachs primed
for steak, oil, and unlit cigars.
The city's breath of smoke
and wet garbage, the taste of metal
in it's blood. The tourists
clotting towards Ellis Island
like immigrants in reverse,
looking out to the water
for the point where harbor
becomes ocean.

—Mark Ramirez

Bites the Elixir

A shot
of
bourbon
fires
downward
past throat
and
blooming belly,
melting
a glacial
January night
into
fiery pits
of grizzled demons
bubbling
in my belly
like
Daniel
in the
lion's den.

—Steve Ausherman

Union

Chained by union:
Love
a glorious ruin

—Skylar Mallis

I enjoy a cool pillow, you?

The expression
fought the good fight
wiped me out
like turpentine
when dad seeped through my arms
I listened for herald trumpets
but heard WRKO
his tray crowded
spoon in tapioca
a banana peel
the last meal

I needed Harpo Marx
but got Ivan Denisovich
feeling crimped like barbed wire
I ached in deep places
like hammers and sickles
on rice paper
that April
a fly went
deep
way back
beyond the Green Monster.

—Steve Herring

winter chill—
living inside with trapped air,
I climb the walls.

—Michael Meinhoff

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People in Tough Situations

you met this woman upstairs in a bookshop.
she was older than you,
but not much older,
and you were both buying the same book
which had been hard to find
everywhere else
and you and the woman found yourselves then,
after you had both paid for the book,
walking in the same direction
and you began to talk a little
which of course eventually led to sex and some other things
as these stories tend to go
and the two of you spent several good years together
and had some
pretty good times.

sometimes you remember
you would be lying in bed
and she would be up
and moving around in the room
picking her tights up
and looking at her face in the mirror
near to the window
and the light would catch her like a leopard lying under the trees,
and slowly you each dropped all your other lovers
and you moved a few boxes of your own stuff
to her place in her little vauxhall estate,
and then there was all this detail,
this simple whine of milky music,
and the sun catching her hair sometimes,
and curling up beside each other watching television,
cooking shows or films about
people in tough situations,
and the way the bedroom smelled when she was sick

and her reaction when you forgot yourself
and chopped some garlic into her food
and for a while there
you felt pretty much satisfied
like the end of a novel or some stupid movie

but then of course
something happens...
a drunken accident at a bar while she's away visiting a relative
or just a mix up with the coffee
on your lunch break
where a girl comes over to exchange your coffee for hers
and says something about the book you are reading
(lets call it the same book, let's say that life is really that easily boxed up
and thrown away)
and you compliment her scarf
and say something that she finds to be witty
or exceptional
in ways the other woman does not,
not any more,
and eventually you are collecting even more boxes from the house
this time in a friend's bottle green nissan almera
and you try to remember how many times you have
felt this way,
how many women have left you
with the knife in your side
tapdancing with agony,
and you look at the trees going by
and an old man on the pavement pulling one of those carts full of groceries
and when you arrive at the new girl's house
she's waiting there
flushed bright with sunlight
and smiling when she sees you pulling in:
none of you
have learned anything.

—D.S. Maolalai

The One Left Behind

It was not the first bird to crash into our bay window.
That one was a downy woodpecker. He landed
in the pine needles, shook himself off then flew away,
leaving only a dust shadow of its outstretched wings,
like a faint angel on the window.

But this one, the mourning dove, did not shake itself off,
did not fly away or leave any sort of shadow.
I picked the bird up and carried it to the back corner
of my yard, beneath the magnolia, planning to bury it
later that day when I had a few minutes.

Walking back to the house, I saw another dove,
sitting on the birdbath with his chest puffed out,
scanning the backyard for his mate.

For the next two hours, while I cleaned the house,
whenever I passed the window I spotted the lonely dove at the birdbath.

And yes, I'm sentimental and yes it broke my heart to do
but when I could not take it anymore I ran outside,
screaming, my arms in the air, scaring away the one left behind.
I buried his mate in the middle of the yard,
hoping he would see me from up in some tree,
praying he would understand that this was over,
that he had no choice but to somehow get on with his life.

—Steve Cushman

The Nightmother

smells of powdered steel. With bastard
file, diamond stone,
whetstone, rasp, she
sharpens fragile
edges. Tying back the bindings,
she lays hot iron
against base, smokes
fragrant paraffin.
Wax shavings settle, clouds, around
her ankles. Day
break, we fasten
blades to our feet.

—Sonja Johanson

After the Kids Have All Grown Up

after divorce
after child support
you will lie in bed

relieved

thinking it's over.

it isn't.

—Devin McGuire

Three Sheets

Is really a way of not knowing
what to do, or where to go,
abandoned, riding the danger
of the jetty breakers, dreaming
of bonfires, musty shacks, oxbows.
It's most of your judgment loosened,
seduced by phosphorescent footsteps,
the sails making their own poor decisions.
After you've been unmoored by too
many shots of Malibu, driftwood
floating on the rollers, the tangerine
sun, a tambourine of spare change,
it's hard to let some sailor tie you down.

— Sonja Johanson

I How to Yes I Will Yes

How to yes I will yes
be most yes myself yes
in unknowing yes
of night and yes day's night
how to say yes I will yes
what yes means to know
no and yes to be yes
most myself yes what
ever my self is yes
to know no from yes
in unknowing yes
of day's night and night yes
what yes means to say
yes I will yes say yes

—Matthew Ulland

The Earth's Weight in Winter

We soaped our bodies in currents of steam
after feeling the dull pulse of pick-up trucks

throbbing through layers of frost and irrevocable curses;
empty ritual for all of us who must speak the word *house*

and face the wrath of mortgage papers wet with our names.
Basements flooded with freezing water

and electrical wires split like burnt hair as we singed our throats
and wondered long into the shaded hours whether our cracked skin

was with the furnace heat that kept the walls apart from ice.
We came to rest with the beer still on our lips,

still halfway between a sour glass capped with silicone caulk
and the vital organs that were seasons away from heavy sleep.

—Mark Ramirez