

Sparks 21



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Sparks

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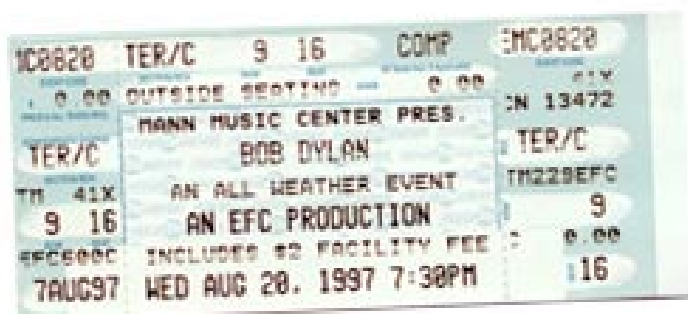
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Contents

Amy Zug	5
All We Can Tell You	5
It	6
Garbage Night	7
Sick Poem	7
Backing Out	8
Daniel A. Kelin, II	10
The Very Darkness Calls	10
Holly Day	13
In 30 Years	13
C.E. Chaffin	14
Before Work	14
David Schneer	15
Monsters	15
Stacy Tartar	35
Revisitation	35
Ernest Slyman	36
Saint Patrick's Cathedral	36
Christopher Stolle	37
Look	37
Phil Gibbons	38
Sad State of Affairs	38
Contributors	39

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Amy Zug

All We Can Tell You

It's Friday the 13th, and it's been raining
in short crazy violent bursts
all day, and yesterday too.

I listen to the news. The anchor says:
"A baby girl
drowned last night
when the rains
flooded the cellar
where she'd been sleeping
in her crib."

They interview a woman about the rain. She says:
"The drops
were the size
of EYEBALLS!
I walked
from my car
to the house
with my laundry,
and I
was
SOPPED!"

The forecaster says:
"It could rain anywhere, anytime. That's really all
we can tell you."

It

he was examining cigars. through the not locked glass box.
one of them later on the uncomfortable roof as in lawn chairs
side by side they sat he smoked and she was saying everything
disgusts me considering if it was too loud. lemme try it
she said and sucked tentatively the spitsoaked end looking
somewhat similar to a spasticated hormonally unbalanced junkie
fish. it was all so fantastically boring they decided to count
to six thousand. after that they were at a loss. why they
didn't just count to seven or eight thousand remains unknown.
at this time they are experiencing dusk and lung diseases,
tattered peanut butter scented hands, separation anxiety,
whispering in your ear as you feebly attempt to dance to come
on Eileen, oh I swear (unintelligible), at this moment
it begins to fall to pieces of something of which
you remain unable to think, you mean everything to me.

Garbage Night

Tuesday 10:04 and a glass-on-metal symphony
down below. bloated supermarket carts cruise this dark calm
world like pirate ships. a-nickel-a-pop still means something
to somebody. to loot the blue plastic chests, to consider
their green and brown jewels. the Tuesday booty
sparkles: the play of dim streetlamps
on warm undrunk beer.

Sick Poem

today there is no place you would rather be. the radio dial
is never in the right. again and again crashes
the revelation of the static of pebbles
with a wave retreating and your left thumb
shakes irretrievably above the space
bar thinking of the end
of the line you have yet to cross
that particular t.
on an elevator you are asked, what do you need?
ten, you reply, and this you will remember
for a long time to come.

Backing Out

the car, the car, the car and the car, and the road.
this guy one night tells his X: let's go back out
again. she says OK, sure. few minutes more
she's got a knee on his hand, and she throws it
into reverse. all the time after that his eyes
fix on the glowing R, remembering:
what had it been like to watch someone
reading about horses, lying on a bed between two
windows in June. it starts with poetry, stops perhaps
as an airplane drones away at the bottom of a plain
and particular day. but perhaps that is only a sentence.
perhaps this is only a sentence. perhaps this
is only a sentence is only a sentence.
very softly now, with nothing but no sound left:
will he land on the road, will he land
in the car, will he start this or that tired
wreck up again

and again and again and again, as is the way,
she has been told that, well, that she has been told.
a certain degree of symmetry is of course involved
in the act of folding
oneself away within the eyelash of the beloved.
one might even say beauty, one might even say cruelty,
luxury, pain. one might even say any number of things.
any number of things. see? a certain degree.
but why should it not be the fingernail?
and why not the fingernail moon? this is random, that's all,

I think: horses, horses and the eternal process of standing
on the exact center of the particular random fingernail room
which at any, at all moments could become your wildest,
your most small and folded dream

come true, standing centered thinking of one lost thought
you know you had this June, you know you had ten years
past. if you wait hard enough, it will land in your lap.
perhaps.

Daniel A. Kelin, II

The Very Darkness Calls

It's very dark in the electrically starved part of the island where we are gathered, waiting for the surprise party to begin. We're standing in puddles and waiting. We're always waiting. But in the waiting comes story. This is the story this time.

"My jima, grandfather, told me of my father's birth. Jima always went fishing, like all the men of his island. Not like the others, though, a noniep once appeared to him. The noniep gave him food and fish. Each day following the noniep appeared to him. Each day following, more fish and food. He took lots home every day."

The growl of an overused engine momentarily covers the sounds of the ocean, interrupting the telling. Two eyes stare out of the very darkness; headlights of the car creeping along, avoiding the potholes hiding in the dark.

"The noniep told jima that his wife would have a baby. It wouldn't be the wife's baby. It would be the baby of jima and the noniep; a son. But the wife would birth it."

Rain pours down, just briefly. We hide inside a rental truck, avoiding the seats that drip with the night's previous momentary storms.

" 'My wife's not pregnant.' That's what jima said. 'Will be soon,' and the noniep gives more food and fish to make bubu, my grandmother, and the unconceived boy healthy."

We crawl out of the bed of the truck. A beam of light sweeps overhead. The electric company is searching for the fault; a man standing in the back of a truck sweeping an industrial flashlight along the tangle of wires.

"The men of the island got suspicious. They kept asking jima how he got all that food. 'I just go to the end of the island.' The men didn't believe that, because he always came back with so much more food than any of them. More food than you can find on a tiny island."

Out of the darkness others have appeared to hear the telling.

"The men followed jima one day. They hid in the thicket and watched as the noniep appeared."

Someone interrupts and says that she had a noniep. "But if you talk about it," says another, "you lose the noniep." Everyone laughs. But in the story...

"The men didn't laugh. They were jealous. Those men stepped out of the woods, ready to collect all that food, too. The noniep, and the food, disappeared."

The sky flashes and my teller friend, she tells me to look at the flashlight. Someone laughs, "That's not a flashlight."

"Four months later my bubu gave birth to a boy. That little boy was very healthy."

My friends try to figure out the English word for the 'flash light'.

"That baby boy was my father."

"So your the granddaughter of a noniep?" I asked.

My friend laughs, "No, no."

"Lightning!" someone blurts out, "That's the word. Lightning." The music starts. It's time for the surprise to begin.

MARSHALLESE VOCABULARY

Jima - grandfather

Bubu - grandmother

Noniep - generous, but private, spirit

Holly Day

In 30 Years

If I lose you I'll just
become another crazy old
woman talking to myself
at the piano as visiting
school children pass out
flowers for extra credit.

C.E. Chaffin

Before Work

Before going to work
the first thing I do
is grab my watch from the nightstand
and manacle my left wrist.
Then I grab some coffee, a muffin,
check the mirror for particles
between my teeth,
shower, shave, comb my hair
and hunt for respectable clothes:
a maroon tie, gray slacks,
maybe a navy blazer.
The last five minutes
I find ways to delay- a sip of coffee,
another cigarette, the sports page.
I look at the furniture, the television,
the view out my window,
and try to remember what home looks like
in case I never return.
Some people don't,
I've heard stories about it.
Someday I may wake up
with my watch on.

David Schneer

Monsters

"I should go," Malcolm says pushing himself up off of the floor and onto his numbed legs.

He takes his empty wineglass, walks into the kitchen and puts it into her sink.

When he returns, Kim is flipping through one of her large kaleidoscopic books detailing the works of an artist of recent attraction. Frida Kahlo this time - the motif is Latin America. Unconsciously, she traces her finger along one of the slats of the blinds.

Malcolm remains standing uneasily, and then returns to the kitchen for no other reason than to capture her attention upon his reentrance.

"Hey," she says suddenly looking up with a half smile, and he notices for the first time how faint her eyes look, a blue that seems to have been diluted, drained. "Have you ever heard Paco Lara?"

"No."

She livens, stands and crosses the worn floor to the stereo. There is a rugged attractiveness about her, an effortless allure. He has never seen her in make-up, or even in clothes that didn't look haphazardly chosen.

"He's great," she says thumbing through her CDs. "I don't remember exactly where he's from; I think Nicaragua. He plays guitar and he's got this amazing percussion accompanying him. I got this from my

ex-boyfriend. He loved him." She slips the CD into the player and tucks her styleless, bobbed blond hair, behind her ears.

Heavy, complicated rhythms fill the room.

"Won't this bother your neighbors?"

"Nobody ever hears," she says and returns to the couch.

He assumes this is an indication she wants him to stay and resumes his position on the floor.

"Every time I hear this I feel like there are a hundred people in the room. It is so rich. The harmonies are so powerful. It has such strength."

"I like it," he says not sure if he really does. "Where did you find this?"

"Anthony turned me on to it."

"Your ex-boyfriend?"

"Boy - fiend," she laughs to herself. She folds her legs, and pulls her left foot onto her left thigh. "Strange how people always have something redeeming."

"What do you mean?"

"I think sometimes it would just be easier if there were absolutes. If someone is fucked-up and mean then they should listen to fucked-up, mean music. It's cruelly unfair that some people know what beauty is."

"I think I know what you mean. How long were you together?"

"A long time. Too long." Kim sips from her wineglass and searches his face. "Nah, you don't won't hear. Just thorns in the pages of my history. Besides, I don't know you well enough. It's complicated."

"You know me well enough to bring me back to your place."

"That doesn't mean anything."

"Thanks."

"I don't mean it like that. I didn't 'bring you back.' That makes it sound,

I don't know, like you're a puppy or something," she pauses. "It's just that I went through a lot with him."

"You don't have to tell me."

Kim looks at him warmly.

"Anyway, I'm glad we did this," Malcolm continues. "We've worked together for so long, it's kind of a shame we never had a chance to talk."

"I know. I feel the same way. It's kind of hard, I guess, to talk when you're trying to bring people food and booze."

Malcolm wants to tell her more about why he likes being with her, about how he's heard wisps and strands about her former life and how he wants to know more, but she stops him before he starts.

"Anyway, I've got the early shift tomorrow. It's late I better kick you out."

"I thought you wanted me to hear Paquito something."

"Paco Lara," she jokingly scolds. Motioning to the CD player she says, "Well, what do you think?"

"It's nice."

"OK, you heard it. Now, you have to go."

Malcolm stands.

She walks him to the door. "I'm glad we got to do this," he says again just because it feels good saying.

"Me too. It feels comfortable. It's nice." She says lightly.

"Just a minute ago, you didn't trust me completely."

"I know," she responds.

He pulls her to him and hugs her. She holds him loosely.

A couple of days later, he calls her and leaves a message. Nothing serious, just something to let her know he has been thinking of her. Days pass filled with work, and after-work hours at late night bars with other waiters, waitresses and bartenders not ready yet return to the singledom of their apartments and duplexes.

Kim remains pointedly away, and Malcolm learns that she has recently

changed her work schedule so as to accommodate her continuing classes at the university.

The sun is out every day this time of year - just enough to make sitting outside feel lazy. But, Malcolm passes most of these hours asleep in a bedroom with windows foiled to block out the sun, reviving from the late nights.

It's on one of these days, a day off, that he rises in the unfamiliar hours of the late morning unable to return to sleep again thinking of Kim, picturing himself stepping out of his empty apartment and into the warmth of hers. The thought fills him with pleasure.

Light filters in through what gaps in the windows that have been neglected, pricking the dark grayness and forming puddles of sun like lazy yellow cats.

It had been Sabrina's idea to apply the foil to the glass.

"When I was 16, I did the same thing to my room - foiled the windows," she had told him laying in bed after work one night.

He knew that this was a precarious offering. There had been a large portion of her former life that she had left untouched, which had left both uncomfortable during the rituals of pre-commitment story exchanges.

She had freely given him the overview of recent boyfriends, sex and future plans. But somehow she always managed to convert the past into the future. Questions about experience would be answered with what was intended for the future.

So, when she started in about her distant past existence, he also chose the safety of silence; without a word, he turned to face her, propped his head up on his hand and waited for her to continue.

When she told him in an unfaltering monotone of how she had been ritualistically obsessed with her adolescent homeliness, she spoke with the confidence of somebody not talking about herself.

"It wasn't my mother's fault," she had said behind a defensive gaze. "All the therapists wanted me to say it was because of my mom, that she had done it to me, that she had made me so concerned with being beautiful. But, it wasn't her fault. She never wanted me to be a model like her. She didn't want me to have the same kind of pressure. But, the pressure was there still, I guess. The photographs in the house and her friends in 'the business' always bugging me about starting a career.

"I became popular and I thought it was a sick joke. I thought everyone was just making fun of me - that they all new I was ugly but just wanted to toy with me."

He listened and she talked. She talked of shunned mirrors and avoided photographs and the weariness of living with herself. She spoke of years of imagined mockery and the burden of feeling invisible amidst constant attention. She spoke of being ignored, and expectations and being molded into those expectations.

The bedroom gradually lost a shade of blackness and the morning wore on as Sabrina recounted episode after episode.

"And then one day, in my senior year, I knew I couldn't do it any longer - wouldn't do it. I knew that morning what I wanted to do, and I spent the whole day at school working it out and working up courage."

She had looked at him seriously, and without blinking said in one breath, "after school, I came home, got the razor from my mother's bathroom, went into the bathroom and bled myself into the tub."

Malcolm remembers how Sabrina's choice of words had struck at him, and he honestly didn't know how to react, afraid of creating another gap. But, she had diffused the tension. "Ahhhhhhhhh, you're in bed with a suicidal maniac," she had croaked, spreading her arms out across the bed, closing her eyes, and sticking her tongue out in a pretense of dying.

"I don't think you're a maniac," he said as soothingly as he could.

"You should see the inside of my head someday."

He never did. When the relationship ended some months later, both felt no small degree of relief. His devoted concern for her past soon had given way to a protectiveness. His protectiveness gave license to her insecurities. He had responded to her insecurities with a perpetual acquiescence. She lost respect for him and he found a new part of himself. The affair had become a ridiculous, spinning cycle of pathos.

* * * * *

The cafe is almost empty, save for a couple in the corner eating in churchly silence, when Malcolm enters. Jen is the only visible waitress.

"Hey Malcolm . . . Jesus Christ, what happened to your neck?"

"Hey Jen . . ."

"Your neck," she says pointing.

"Yeah," he says disinterestedly, touching the infliction of the morning.

"Have you been hanging out with vampires?"

"Nah, just shaving."

"Did you learn how to shave from your blender?"

"It's not that bad. It'll go away. . . Hey, is Kim around?"

"Nope, she hasn't come in. We can't get a hold of her. That's why I am here." She pulls a set of silverware wrapped in a napkin from her apron to demonstrate and walks to a nearby table. Malcolm follows.

"That sucks."

"It's all right," she shrugs. "I need the money."

"Well, I better go then."

"Hey, wait. Would you give something to Kim for me?" She disappears momentarily into the kitchen and returns holding a cassette tape in her hand. But, before she reaches Malcolm, it slips from her hands, bounces once on the concrete floor causing the cassette tape tucked inside the case to fly out.

"Oh no!" Jen cries. She picks up the case and examines it. "The case is all right . . . How's the tape?"

Crouched over the tape on the floor, Malcolm looks up at Jen sympathetically. "It's in critical condition."

She bends down next to him and looks at the damage.

"It's broken up," he says and begins collecting the pieces.

"That's Kim's tape."

"Well you've successfully killed it."

"Damn it!"

"What was it?"

"Kim's new find," she says.

"Let me guess, Paco something."

"Lara. Yeah. How did you know?"

"Kim played it for me the other night."

"Yeah, that's right," Jen smiles coyly. "She told me about that."

They both stand up.

"About what?"

"That you liked Paco."

"To be honest, I don't really remember the music," he says looking at the fragmented cassette. "Sort of romantic love songs, right?"

"Actually, it is more upbeat."

"Anyway, how did you know we had a date?"

"I didn't. She told me she played Paco for you."

"Where has she been?"

"I don't know. I just saw her last night. But, she's kind of erratic. She gave me this thing that was once a tape," she says rolling her eyes. "It's pretty cool, real fun, you know? I am so tired of overly serious music."

"I think I can fix this. Do you have any glue in the back?"

"Let me see." Jen once again disappears into the kitchen. Malcolm sits at a table and tries to reassemble the damage.

Jen returns and sits down opposite him and hands him a small tube of super glue. "What do you think?"

"I think I can revive it."

She watches him work.

"So, she's been around, huh?" he says without looking up. "She hasn't returned any of my calls. I was beginning to get worried."

"About what?"

"I don't know. I thought maybe her ex-boyfriend showed up again."

"I worry about that too," Jen says seriously.

"Who was this guy?"

"What did she tell you?"

He looks up at Jen. "What, do you work for the CIA? I'm just interested, that's all."

"Well, I don't know much, to be honest. But, she was real secretive about him."

She was with him for over a year and I just think he was a monster."

"What makes you say that?" he says returning to the tape and delicately applying the glue.

"You just know one when you see one."

"There, that should work," he says holding the tape together with both hands while the glue dries. "I don't understand how Kim could get entangled in something like that."

"I don't think Kim understands either, but I think she is trying to work her way out of it. She needs to talk. The girl doesn't talk much, about herself, I mean. Everything is always cool with her, you know. She can charm anybody. Half the time she doesn't show up for work, she doesn't get yelled at. It's hard to get pissed at her. But," Jen pauses, "there is something going on with her."

"It would be nice for once to meet someone who didn't have a monster under their bed."

Jen squints and looks at him curiously. "What do you mean?"

"It just seems like every woman I meet has problems. Did you ever meet Sabrina?"

"Yeah, once or twice."

"She was all fucked-up."

"She seemed okay to me."

"She seemed that way. But, really her past controlled her."

"So you've met people with monsters," she says matter-of-factly.
"Everyone knows somebody, Malcolm. But, there's plenty of people too who've had lives that were more stable."

"I keep hearing this rumor . . ."

"I come from a pretty normal background, you know. I never had to deal with any major shit."

"Yeah, that's why you're so boring," he teases.

"Maybe," she shrugs. "But I also know people who went through some pretty painful routes, but managed to recover."

"How'd they do it, oh positive one?"

"Desire."

"Well, I desire to give this tape to Kim. I think it should work." He stands and heads for the door.

"Watch yourself," she calls after him.

But, walking out of the cafe, looking into the sky, Malcolm feels his obstinate desire to see Kim suddenly draining from him. He actually stops, awash in sunlight, and considers returning home, or perhaps ringing up one of his friends and spending the day in the park. But, as quickly as Kim's image fades, it returns, and he decides that if there is anyone he wants to spend the day with, it would be her.

He drives to her place, spots her car, and quickly rehearses what he will say. Climbing the stairs of her building, he notices her windows wide open. She is home. Kim finally opens the door. He tries to smile, but loses confidence. She regards him with the faintest trace of suspicion.

"Hi. What are you doing here?" She looks at him and rubs her eyes.

"Did I wake you?"

"No, it's okay."

"Hey, um. You want to go to the park?" he says and immediately regrets his brashness.

"Why?"

"Why? It is such a beautiful day. It'd be nice to be outside."

"Yeah," she says and looks past Malcolm like it is the first time she has seen the outside. "What time is it?"

"About 4:00."

"I gotta hang around. I'm meeting someone. Why don't you come in for a while."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah."

He follows her into her apartment, and notices again how immaculate everything is. She walks into the kitchen languidly. She returns drinking a glass of water and sits on the floor.

"Are you sure you're okay?" he asks skeptically.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sorry, just a little tired that's all."

"Hey, I have something that might wake you up." He walks to her stereo and puts on the Paco Lara cassette.

"Where'd you get that?"

"From Jen. I was up at work, and she told me to give it back to you."

"Thanks. So what are you up to today?"

"Nothing. Just out in the sun." He pauses. "Is everything all right?"

"Of course. Why do you keep asking me?"

"Can I be honest?"

Her eyes focus on his. "Yeah, of course," she says dubiously.

"I've been worried. I called you several times, but you never called me back."

"Sorry about that. I got your messages . . ."

"No, no, don't apologize," he interjects. "I was just worried that's all."

"That's sweet," she says as if its not sweet at all.

"Maybe, I should go . . ."

"No, no, look, I'm sorry. It's just been kind of harsh lately. I get so absorbed in my head, I forget about the world outside of me. I'm picking up pieces, you know?

"Pieces from what?"

"It's crazy. You don't want to know."

"But, I do. Maybe, I'd be more understanding than you think."

"Why would you want to understand? Christ, Malcolm, I don't understand."

"I care, I guess."

Her face softens.

"Most people don't understand," he continues. "Maybe they can't. I want you to know that you're not the only one. I want to understand."

Whatever he did to you . . ."

"I did it to myself. Besides, I never said he did anything."

"I . . ." Malcolm stops himself and considers the possibility of being mistaken in his assumptions. "You said he was cruel to you . . ."

"No, I said he was a mean person."

Malcolm looks at Kim sitting opposite from him, and tries to read her face for a sign of mockery, but there is none. She looks down at her hands passively and plays with the carpet bathed in a swatch of sunlight. "What do you see in me, Malcolm?"

"I am not sure anymore."

"That's the thing, isn't it. We get ourselves involved with people who turn out to be nothing that we make them out to be. You look at a person and think, 'That's a wonderful person. They're colorful and full of life.' And you get with them and find that really, inside they're just a mess - making mistakes that they don't believe they are making."

Malcolm gets up from the couch and sits beside Kim on the floor.

She looks at him briefly, and then returns her gaze to her hands. "When you think you know someone, you start convincing yourself you know how they will behave, how they will think, what they will say. But, the fucked-up truth is that you never know because everyone is a mess inside and they are unpredictable. The safest stages in a relationship are when you have to set a mental cop after your words and thoughts because you don't know how the other person will act. But, I want to believe I know a person - that it's possible. I am not a strong person. I

know that. Men can see it and exploit it. Anthony saw it"

"Not all men," he says softly.

She looks at Malcolm oddly. "I think you like weakness too, Malcolm."

He looks at her blankly.

"From what you told me about your past, you seem to like a particular type of woman. Maybe you and Anthony are both drawn to the same thing. Maybe your both just a different breed of the same kind of creature."

"That's a fucked-up thing to say. I don't get off on being mean to others. And to be honest, I'm tired of women who can't get past their past." Malcolm looks at the door.

"There's always meanness in love, there's always destruction. The object may change . . . " she pauses. "Anyway, I let Anthony destroy me," she says distantly.

"He hit you, didn't he?"

She doesn't look at him. "Everything changed for us so slowly, I didn't even have time to notice."

"Kim . . ."

"In the beginning, I wished he'd hit me rather than say the things he did.

And then," she pauses, "he started hitting me . . ."

"I never knew."

"Nobody did. He'd stop once there was blood. The blood was what got to him. Usually it wasn't a big deal, you know. My teeth would cut my lip or my cheek. And then he would start crying and tell me how evil he was and that I should leave him. And that he hated himself. La, la, la. And we'd always end up making love. It's kind of funny that I left him for something so minor. He pinched me so hard on a crowded bus because of something I said one day. It left a bruise that still hasn't gone away. I left him the next day"

"He deserves to have the same thing done to him."

"Maybe he has. Maybe he is already doing it to himself. It's like one of those 'Where's Waldo?' games. Whose the bad guy, him or me?"

"He is, of course."

"The difference, Malcolm, is that I know. Anthony never learned. He never learned how to control himself."

"I still think he deserves the same."

"People are complex, you know? There was another side to him. Did I tell you he took me to Paris?"

"No."

"He did. Paid for the whole trip. That was last summer. It was incredible, and not once during the trip did he touch me. Well, you know what I mean. You see that's just it. He is also so giving and so

attentive that it makes his other side so easy to ignore.

He could be so gentle and loving. He just doesn't know how to cope." Kim glances over at Malcolm who is watching her with concern. She laughs.

"Don't look so serious, Malcolm."

Malcolm tries to pass a complacent smile. "I am just thinking . . .he could have killed you . . ."

"He could never kill me," she says patronizingly.

"You don't know that. How could you even understand how he thinks?"

"I don't know, but I do. I can't really explain it. I just see Anthony as a big child. When he did , you know, hit me, which wasn't all the time, okay, so don't misunderstand me, but, when he did, it was out of love and . . .

"Jesus Kim," Malcolm bursts out. "Listen to yourself."

She ignores him. "He was just like a child. Think about a kid who doesn't get what he wants from his mother and throws a temper tantrum. The kid is completely dependent on his mother, completely devoted to her. But, when she fails to satisfy his every whim, he sees her as not being the absolute idea of love that he envisions her as. So, he rages."

"That doesn't sound like love to me."

"That was his idea of love. And, believe it or not, he really needed me.

He depended on me. He'd call me at work and moan about how much he missed me. He couldn't stand it without me. It was pathetic. But, he needed me."

Malcolm starts to speak but decides not to. A foggy silence hangs heavily in the room. Finally, Kim stands up, and looks at her watch.

"That's it. This is what you asked me about. Those are the pieces. I've got someone coming over soon."

"Yeah, okay."

"Sorry if I said anything that upset you."

"No, no. I just worry about you."

"Well, I'm okay. There are more important people for you to worry about, I'm sure."

Again, she walks him to the door. They stand facing each other in obvious awkwardness. Again, she offers him the same relaxed embrace. However, this time, before she pulls away completely, in an impetuous move, Malcolm kisses her lightly on the mouth.

She doesn't kiss him back.

When he gets home, he walks to the mirror and examines his reflection. He looks away, splashes water onto his face. The cut is not deep. Suddenly disgusted, he scratches fiercely at the wound, smearing his neck crimson. And then, just as quickly, he stops and stares.

Stacy Tartar

Revisitation

Long-suffering shadow
In gray cloak stalking
Forever behind and before me
Still-life, stillborn

In gray cloak stalking
Happiest wrapped in sun
Still-life, stillborn
Murdering

Happiest wrapped in sun
Dead in the long, warm night
Murdering battalions
Haunting still

Ernest Slyman

Saint Patrick's Cathedral

Sunday morning, 11AM,
How graceful the chimes tumble along the hour,
The silver bell in the cathedral tower
Sings of timeless things---
Such as a hundred generations have achieved,
Calling the glorious names of the bereaved.

I think I hear my father's name said.
And oftentimes the chimes
As they tumble gracefully along the hour
Loosen some queer thought in my head.

I wonder when his life broke
What glorious thing awoke and fled,
What long-fought revolution
Won him over at last before he sped
So merrily off into the past.

Christopher Stolle

Look

look toward the sun
see what you have done
look toward the sky
see how time passes by
keep talking to shadows
keep talking to shadows

look toward the open street
see them in the dying heat
look toward open plains
see them as we ride the trains
keep talking to shadows
keep talking to shadows

look toward glossy faces
see how the beggar paces
look toward the divine wrath
see what is in your path
keep talking to shadows
keep talking to shadows

Oct. 10, 1996

Phil Gibbons

Sad State of Affairs

I got into an
arguement with this
guy at work
about capitalism

He asked
"whatever happened
to the entrepreneurial spirit
of americans?"

And I flashed back
to a stormy night
on the black seattle
streets
when i walked out of a
porn shop
and a tall skinny pimp
asked if i wanted
to party
"i got drugs, gals, whatever man!"
he nodded back to a
whore in the corner
she seemed helpless

i don't know
but i think the entrepreneurial spirit
is alive and well

Contributors

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