Fall 1988

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Sometimes Life...

Sometimes life is such a trip
It shoots you down just like a crip
Sometimes life can be a joke
Make you drink and take a smoke
Sometimes life hallucinates
Then it seems to mediate
Oh, kiss my lips and touch my skin
force me into fatal sin
News at six
Sports at five
Bon Jovi dead
Jim Morrison alive
Come on baby light my fire
Send me Botha gun for hire
Through it all the fish head grows
through it all the mo'jo glows
Hold head high don't sniff no glue
Just hang def and get a clue

Krista Steinke

Daphne L. Pettaway
Fair Warning

Welcome child!
Child: The voice of the poet, soul covered in dust,
     Dreams of perciptation burnt by the sun.
Tell me, are you fond of the badlands?
The graves of 20 men before you?
The sight of the blind?

Do you see the open night sky?
The stolen rib of Madam Memorie,
     your torn desire?
Do you hear the sound of conformity and the wailing sirens of doubt?

O' child, don't look down.
     It is a long drop.

Andrew Troelsen
Contagious Dream

Helping you meant sharing your pain.
Fearing your reality almost made me stop
But you are the image of a human
Like me.
Something touches me
When you are squinting a smile
Or crying without sound.

Your body is not like others:
Glassy Mongol eyes behind thick frames,
Hearing aid falling out,
Slow, round tongue to express young thoughts.
The parts don’t work right.

It would be easier for me
To draw the sun myself
Than to pick up the yellow crayon for you
Again and again
But you demand each step a thousand times.
When I take your hand
You pull all of me in.

Your quiet laugh
The contagious dream
To be happy.

Meg Domroese

Joyce Jacobson
Asian Vacation

Short timer-old timer, long time ago.
Scenes appear nightly—can’t make ’em go.
Forget truth and justice,
    did’em America’s way.
Can’t understand ’em,
    just make ’em pay.
Tit for tat, and bombs are for Tet.
Much like the Alamo, but can’t forget
Making the Triangle with circles and squares;
Bombing the masses from forces in air.
Could break their backs, but never their movement.
World’s safe for democracy
    But not for the People
as the Khe Sahns go rolling along.

Jen Haertling
Green Forest

When speaking of old still shots,
ghosts.
she wept for a time that was cold.
A time she remembered for all of us.
Her face still endures the cold,
her eyes still see clean, young soldiers,
and her ears still hear the wind blowing away babies’ cries.
The beautiful Aryan babies were long gone by then,
stolen from their mothers by a master race.
Other infants were swung like axes against tall trees
in the woman’s forest.

Sometimes my ankles feel cold, imaginary hands
swing me at a tree-
It’s not unusual.

Andrew Paul Griffin
how lite our walk becomes and decisive each breath and step when there is not ritual routine or any sort of re-, just one verse with one melody line (so much direction lacking the polyphony of reflection) sight sung with cold coarse vocal chords, just a string of incongruities and unfamiliars and arcanities who stretch beauty mean and be as tenuous as a wad of fresh chewed gum that draws to a thread between the hand pulling from the kicking womb to the hand on the lid of our coffin daily closing

Mitch Hastings
emotional distance  
kept  
so i won't cry  
when i leave you  
because i'm too attached.  
and i want to cry  
anyway

David Charles Rivers

New

The alarm rings  
Crisp and stabbing  
A whitewashed ceiling  
Grabs at my face  
My muscles ache  
It is morning  
This is not my bed.

I wrestle with the sheets  
A peach cocoon  
Shrouds my body  
It is raining  
My legs dangle like dead branches  
Over the edge of the bed  
I hate cold floors  
The alarm screeches insanely.

The damp, unfamiliar cubicle  
This is not home  
A brisk wind knocks at the window  
Winter hinted in the chill  
My dreams collapse  
In the waking  
Bleep-bleep-bleep-click  
Silence.

Christy Rueter
Sundogs

The corn marched past in full parade
of midwest soildiers earthbound souls
But we climbed each hill into the sky
in every valley, lost our stomachs underground

Music moved our working wheels
but Sundogs curse a ceiling
hung over our heads thru windows
Sky should not be framed,
only center us
We chase the sun

Moved to the spreading of the horizon
Trees would fall away
The earth to open
slowly at the shore
God's hand throws the sun
warm into the water
Its path a burning yellow arc
We follow to its crimson hazy end

We lit a fire to its memory
Ashes in memories shifting sand
Time approaches in its swelling waves
Standing still.
We saw out ships of fate
Sailing on alone.

David Doering
A Stroll Across the Sky

The tree's brain throbbed
With no breeze to cool the pain
Its hazy hair engulfing the sky
Behind, entwined, floated the night eye.

And none escaped the opened eye
It probed the night outstretched wide
The path was cleared
Hands groped out and touched the sky.

The globe grew still and stared
Beyond to the other sphere
Unblinking, rising high.
And peace was there,

For a moment...

Richard T. Gosse
Icarus My Love

I never liked Brueghel’s version of Icarus, white legs flailing in the green sea, no one giving a damn. In my mind, he is frozen, falling and falling while his feet never touch the water. Caught between death and the sun, there is an awful loveliness to melting wax, flying-away feathers, real canvas scream.

Imagine a woman in this story. She is in love, she thinks maybe and he is struck by the way her thin fingers look, curled around a wineglass. They don’t quite mesh, these two, because she is too ready to believe and his hands are too white and she isn’t even a virgin. So he leaves. Terrified of entangling himself, the only alternative is light.

Remember, Icarus. I am the one who watches, knee deep in the thick water, with drops of (maybe) your last glimmering splash falling from my face. Remember I love you.

Celeste Duder
Ever Moving and Ever Still

I am the wave
Beating furiously
Returning each time a little different
But always at home

I am the candle
That burns for the Virgin
In the darkness of the cathedral
Ever moving and ever the same
Burning as in generations
And generations past
Ever moving and ever still

Ever moving I am
Never the same person that I was
When I wrote that last line
But changed by one line
Ever moving I am
Still abiding
Ever constant as I ebb and flow
Returning to flicker a while
In the darkness of the cathedral

Joyce Jacobsen
Whirling

Everchanging and traveling more
the beauty of soft curls ascend
heavenward as my prayer in the eve.
Colorless, yet beautiful, wing
weave it into intricate patterns and
wind plays it masterfully.
Charming and intimate, it dances
my eyes into a wonderful gaze
and tears escape as witness
to the sweet melody of smoke.

Stephen Williams
Ashdance

I.
I have energy, I am energy-
a nervous twitch moving between my skin-
pouncing on a flickering flame I call heart.
A black seed, 30 of them-
they take the dancers and remove them from thought,
into a world I never knew.
   Glorious 'spots' and their projecting spirits-
   hurled into existence-
carefully avoiding me-
and as the tears again falling happen-
I feel them rip as a meteor into the earth, past my brow-
run red river-
   run river, run.

II.
Soot. they know how to pray with ashes, I
pitch them into my inferno. They eat them for dinner.
They roll with the dust, breeze in their hair; thoughts-
whispering past them.
   I cough. I suck in the soot.
   I choke up lungs, and to my surprise-
an occasional dancer.

Andrew Troelsen
Michael Athmann glanced away from his television to get a view of the car parking on the street outside his kitchen window. He saw a relatively expensive, clean, dark blue, family station wagon with a bumper-sticker that read "What the scripture says holds true forever. (In 10:35).” The doors opened and two women stepped out, carrying boxes of literature. Mr. Athmann recognized the type; Bible Truthers. He had names for all of them—He’s A-Commin’ers, Fear the Lorders, and others not quite as polite. These were definitely Bible Truthers. And both of them women. He grunted to himself.

They knocked, but he waited a moment so they would think he’d been in another room reading or sleeping and they were causing him an inconvenience. When he did answer the door, he found two well-dressed women, one about four or five years older than he and the other about four or five years younger. The older woman wore small sensible earrings, a neutral color lipstick, and low black heels—as humbly dressed as a middle-class suburbanite woman can be. The younger woman dressed more elegantly and had long dark hair that parted around her collar to lay on her shoulders like two tiny wings. She was very attractive.

The older woman spoke first. “Hi. I’m Ellen Mund and this is my friend Shelly Lerner. We’re just going around doing some Christian work.” She paused, expecting to be invited inside, straining to maintain her forced smile. The temperature was below freezing.

Mr. Athmann took this opportunity to introduce himself, “Hi. I’m Micheal Athmann,” and gave them a well-rehearsed, perfectly timed, smug, natural little smile. He stood in the doorway, solid as the door itself, inviting no one in. Although, looking at Miss Lerner, he was tempted to.

“Well,” Ms. Mund recited, her breath puffing angelic clouds of steam with every word, “religion today is suffering some real problems, isn’t it? I’m sure you’ve seen on the news and on TV all the problems religion has been having. The reason for this is that they’re not teaching the real truth from the Bible, are they?” Her habit of ending every other sentence in a question suggested to him that she was a Sunday school teacher, and probably on the bazaar committee. So much the better. “Do you belong to a church, Mr. Athmann?” she asked.

“No.”

“Oh. Well, we have with us some literature on the truth of the Bible that we offer at the publishing price of twenty-five cents a copy.” She produced two small magazines, “Bible Truth in Today’s Religions” and “How the Bible Teaches Us.” Ms. Mund read a few passages from each and commented on them in what Mr. Athmann guessed was the most condescendingly polite voice that she could manage, as if to say “Do not be afraid, for I come with good tidings of a great joy” to a classroom of first-graders. He dug two quarters from his pocket and bought a copy of each magazine.

The women thanked him and turned back toward their car.

“Could I ask for a little more of your time?” wondered a suddenly friendly Mr. Athmann.

“Excuse me?” questioned Ms. Mund, turning back around.

“I just want to share something with you. Would you care to come inside?”

The two women, although somewhat confused by his request, obliged. Mr. Athmann placed his hand lightly on the younger woman’s back as he stepped across the threshold. He led them to the kitchen, had them sit down, served them each a cup of tea, and gingerly placed a piece of shortbread on each of the saucer edges.
Then, excusing himself, he went to his study and grabbed his Bible from the bookshelf. It had no special place there. It was alphabetized by title, like the rest of his books, occupying the space to the right of the Bhagavad-Gita. Returning to the kitchen, he placed it on the table in front of them, face down, so they wouldn’t be sure if it was a Bible or some other book. Face down, he thought, it was a concealed weapon, like a gun pointed through a coat pocket. He drummed his fingers on it while he sipped his tea. Setting down his cup, he stared blankly outside, as though doing difficult math in his head. He watched a sparrow fall vertically into the frame of the window, light on a bush, and nervously twitch its head from side to side.

“Sparrows,” he said to the women, “two for one penny or five for two pennies—depending on which gospel you shop.”

“Pardon me?” Ms. Mund asked.

"‘Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows.’ It’s in Matthew and Luke, but they charge different prices for their sparrows.” The two women looked back, bewildered.

He thought that this might be too easy. Looking back, he remembered a group he’d tagged “True Believers”, who had called him “Brother Mike.” They had come, nine of them, in their dirty tee shirts and faded blue jeans, travelling in a beat-up station wagon with “Jesus Saves” sloppily painted in large red letters across the side. They hadn’t even known much about the Bible, they had just kept professing their faith. Even with his most powerful Bible verses he couldn’t combat faith. The day had ended in a stalemate, but Brother Milke invited them back anytime. He’d enjoyed their company.

All at once, he flipped open the Bible, spun it around and pushed it toward Ms. Mund. He’d opened to a chapter in 1 Timothy. “Could you read this please?” he asked her. “Second chapter. Start with the eleventh verse.”

Ms. Mund glanced at her apprentice who was straining to see the text and realized that she had no choice.

“Women should learn in silence and all humility,’” she began. “I do not allow women to teach or to have authority over men; they must keep quiet—This is ridiculous!” Ms. Mund interrupted herself. “This was written thousands of years ago. It’s completely irrelevant today,” she complained.

Mr. Athmann sat silently and looked consolingly at Ms. Mund, who looked right now like she could use some consoling.

“How can you possibly think you know anything about religion?” she demanded. “You don’t even attend a church.”

“Exactly,” said Mr. Athmann, and grinned.

“Mr. Athmann, I’m going to go home and say a prayer for you.” Ms. Mund, close to tears, forced the words from her mouth. “I’m going to pray that you look in here.” She tapped the Bible with one finger. “I’m going to pray that you look in here and find the Truth. Because it’s in here Mr. Athmann.

“We’ll be going now,” Ms. Mund concluded. And with that both women made their way to the door, Ms. Mund in a flustered rush, the pretty Miss Lerner quietly following. Mr. Athmann suppressed his urge to watch the young woman from the back as she left the kitchen, choosing instead to stare out the window. The sparrow was gone.

Leaning forward in his chair, Micheal Athmann handed a signed check over to the Bible-salesman, a kid of about twenty-one, already balding, trying to earn his way through college by selling topical reference Bibles door-to-door. Mr. Athmann considered this practice one of Christianity’s most severe corruptions; these kids would never make enough to pay their tuition, they’d get abused at most households, and they really didn’t have any idea what they were selling. He knew he shouldn’t support it, but he could never let the starving students down.

“Thanks a lot,” the young man said, handling the check as though it were fragile, sacred. He carefully inserted it in a leather pouch and started for the door.

Mr. Athmann stood and offered his hand and the two men closed the deal. “You ever read
one of those?” Mr. Athmann asked, indicating the Bible.

“No,” the student chuckled. “But I can appreciate it. It’s paying my way through school.” Both smiled through the silence that followed, then the younger man added, “Thinking about God only makes me depressed.”

“Me too,” agreed Mr. Athmann. “But you should read it, you really should.”

At this, the student raised his eyebrows, wrinkling his forehead like one of the disciples in a Caravaggio painting.

After the student left, Mr. Athmann lifted his new Bible from the table and felt its weight. Paging through it, he read over his favorite passages to test the translation. He would put the new Bible in his car, he thought. He didn’t yet have one there.

Brian Jung
The Race

A bang springs
the tensions of my body straight
every muscle stretched
    meeting
    the water
slicing it
feeding my senses
for a split

second I don't know all of it
everything is moving
I hear the ringing in my ears
take a gulp of the crowd cheering
feel the pounding
pounding feet and hands on water
my mind races
as fast as my body
faster
ringing voices pounding colors

my body gasps
pulling from the deepest
resource of my brain
slams to the wall

Meg Domroese
the moment has arrived and it is now there it went.

to know is to be.
and of understanding...?
well that is something entirely different.

progress
go
produce
do
achieve
consume
progress
achieve
move
produce
consume
go
the
blindfolds
sheeping
efficiently
with
utility
flying
quickly
successfully
from
womb
to
tomb

(past the patches and plots bearing the beauty of still and between and unmoving motion)
a love cerebral
contrived and
fitting neatly in a package
is a live benign and
its happiness
a glorified degree of
masking aching emptiness which,
atop a mountain of props is safe
from the wave's fingernails
scabbering away the feet
of its clay pedastal,

for a while.

see the hobo walking
no where walking
back alley scruffy squacking
all day walking
brown-bag-purple-red juice talking

"no place to go"
yes no place to go
" 'cept inside"
yes, in there
"away the ache"
the pain the here
"inside"
yes yes, inside away the here
just away,
please just a way away

Mitch Hastings
Almost Sunrise

Amazing how it ends, finally.
After all of what has passed between them, she is simply too tired. Not merely tired but so empty that it takes the last strength in her body to fall alone into bed. It's almost sunrise and they've been sitting in his car for years or maybe it was just a couple of hours. He insists on love while she thinks how nice it would be to feel him around her, lights shining through his baby smooth skin. It's so very complicated she can't think anymore and even though she wants desperately to love him there is only the emptiness.

They've had too much to drink tonight, anyway, so it all comes down to the fact that she would prefer to walk up the stairs, unlock her room, and fall into bed now this instant rather than driving to his place, undressing together and kissing him before falling asleep. It's easier this way and the evening ends sooner. She holds him briefly in the car as if to say I'm sorry you had to know this.

Celeste Ouder
any day now, any day now...

got to wonder why there was no goodbye scene this year; location, sense, and testing spaces, walls like, kept that play today from going on and on.
a thousand miles rest between blueprint points, dissection reaction, letting go towards faces, coming to live inside a life of seeing ghosts and questions, stuff we never think of happening to each other.

so wonder why there you were a ghost a block away staring from the leaves in my old front yard; there never was a goodbye scene played out then, even for the bones of friendship. now they’re cracked and burned away, ashes swirling through still green leaves that bring back your face like a hi-beam over the hill bouncing off nighttime median yellow. don’t pass on too fast, even when imagination fails stay awhile and shake hands through my mind’s eye to remember summers years ago wasted in a second.
sadness is gone, buried with a child’s heart and a cold box in June, there is no aching part inside, no emptiness needs to be filled, I just wonder why I saw your face after so much time has wound around my eyes.
Trip

Maybe it was the incense.
What did he call it?
At once exhilarating and tranquil,
a trace tickled my mind
rousing my Spirit. Yes
it was the scent I felt first.
Or the music.
Melodies weaving into my dreams,
Harmony flowing into my soul.
“Remind me to borrow that tape.“
Very Indian, or was it Oriental?
Anyway, elaborately simple,
it stole my concentration.
Rationality gone, Fantasy was mine.
I lived imagination.
Maybe for the first time.

Maybe sleeping with her.
Embracing her carnality.
Or walking with her
close to me
and feeling her human touch
-more human than people.
(She is the world, yet not at all worldly.)
She affected me, elemental.
I felt substantial.
Maybe for the first time.

Maybe the pinkorangepurple sky of the sunset
-once I’d opened my eyes-
over the greengrayblue mountains...
Or the bright whitening moon
full and rising fast behind us.
The aethereal revealed,
I knew divinity.
Maybe for the first time.

He said we were
Beautiful
as we slept.
Being watched without knowing is
Rare.
Must have been deep.
Didn’t know I could sleep through these things.
Didn’t know a lot.
I was happy.
Maybe for the first time.

Suzanne Albinson
A Passing Car Grunts
and Rolls Up Its Windows

The rain waves down on the six
and seven and eight year-old boys and they
turn their head up and laugh and the drops run
into their open mouths and they drink and laugh and spin
because their mothers can’t see them.
And a passing car grunts and rolls
up its windows.

The youngest of them
spots a puddle and charges.
Each bounding step destroys
the rain’s tiny water ways,
each step anticipates the demise
of the great lake at the end
of his sprint. He leaps, soars, raises
his feet and crashes them down.
From his shoes splashes the water
of childhood, dripping with the love
of rain, with the love of mud.

Yes,
I would love to play in the rain.
I would love to play in the rain if it
weren’t for the dribbles that crawl down
my nose or light upon my lips
like pesky flies.

Brian Jung
Arkansas Joan

rain falls in and out of light,
silent choruses glinting across glass
expanse; car beams spear my head,
all around, the cold winding vines into my bones
while soft fog whispers soak my shoes.

she walks quick through this nod I’m on,
almost carved in nighttime black and bruise,
there’s a smell of tears around her,
a high lonesome sound of loss and dark rooms
salt and empty bottles.
Arkansas Joan—twisting life out the hole in her
tooth, a last chance dive through troubled sleep.
telling me about Janis Joplin, and St. Paul the apostle,
the time she got bounced from a country bar,
combing out my hair with memories of children
left behind. crazy twenty years or more.

her leather soft skin slips beneath
the sheets breathing sighs from smiles
so safe from death. wrapped in the night
a kiss tastes the scream in her teeth;
my fingers smell of cocaine melting
ice scars across her belly, but the mirror’s
in her eyes as she twists away from me.
I catch the glint of metal and go out to check the knives,
thinking of bus stations and the beats
of highway lives rapping amphetamine—
she sits away, a hundred miles, rocking clutched hands,
cackling to country radio dreams.
life isn’t always clean, friend.
life isn’t always clean.

Fritz Eifrig
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