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The Introduction
Alan Catlin

After the initial exchange of names,
if she liked the way you looked,
she'd put her other hand, not shaking
yours, on your thigh, stare into
your eyes, move closer as she held
a look that suggested you could be
more intimate with her than anyone
else ever could, ever had been, might
move in closer still, briefly lick your
lips then step back and wait for your
next move; no matter what happened
next, it was going to be your fault.

Trigger Warning
Chris Butler

Warning,
this poem
may contain
language
and images
which may be
disturbing
to some
readers.
The words
featured
are performed
with the writing
of professionals
and should
not be attempted
at home
without adult
supervision.
Reader discretion
is advised.

[i am so depressed] ~ Johnny Scarlotti

my girlfriend is taking a nap
i pull up a porn site,
search :
tiniest, blind, retarded, mental patient, quad amputee, [redacted]
but nothing's doing it for me lately...
except
i pull up the deep dark web video again, a guy jerking off alone in a
dark room, giving a gun a blowjob, and as he's climaxing he pulls the
trigger
i donno y this turns me on so much, i'm 100% straight
anyways, i rain cum on myself
then forget about cleaning it up
i spend a while in the forums of a pro suicide website, just doin some
research for my novel
check to see if she's awake
nope
i buy a bunch of stuff with her credit card
i notice the cum has dried on my chest and stomach
it's crusty
i pick it out of the hairs
and put it on my desk
crush it up with her credit card
it looks like cheap cocaine
oh shit, she's awake,
watching me
she says wUt the fUck r u doing
what can i say...
i got us some cocaine, baby
she grabs a hundred dollar bill from her purse
rolls it up
and snorts a line
then gives me the bill
i snort a line
omg, i am so high, she says,
this is good shit
me too, i say,
i am so depressed

**Into the Sunset
Arthur Graham**

After all my years of struggle
after all the loss and pain

All my problems have been solved
All my foes have fallen slain

All the prisons I've been thrown in
and gulags of my own making

No one's stopping my escape
from this jail I'll soon be breaking

For miles I swim through seas
of shit and isles of broken glass

I emerge from underground
with not a stitch upon my ass

With the breeze upon my balls
and my dick in the wind

I ride off into the sunset
with a big shit-eating grin

Or is that just an atom bomb
on the horizon

Drifter ~ A. Lynn Blumer

We talked on the edge
of a cliff—somewhere
you & I had lived for
a long, long time.

Your eye held a knowing,
& although I wish I knew
what it was you said,
that look was the same as always.

Then you left the ledge.
I watched you seep into
a black shallow creek bed,
beneath lay the reflection
of the moon—fragmented
from all the small & large rocks.

You came into my life
at the perfect time & then
we kept each other for a while.

Thirteen times around now.
Thirteen rotations watching
each other grow & yet,
saw what never changed.

I have to go – I have to go
retrieve your body from
the bottom of the cliff.
I have to make a sled
out of sticks & drag you
somewhere I can dig—

& I'll dig, through rock & root,
multiple lifetimes of sediment,
under deep for a safe spot to
finally put down your bones.

**French Fry Etiquette
Judge Santiago Burdon**

She left me sitting alone in McDonalds
Didn't take a bite of her Big Mac
Or touch a single one of her french fries
She grabbed her Coke then walked away
And never even looked back
I thought about eating the fries
Although I had lost my appetite
It wasn't because I was hurt by the drama
She spreads ketchup on top of all of them
Instead of dipping each fry
I'm sure you know the type
When it comes to eating French fries
Her method doesn't follow proper etiquette
Even though it bothered me I never said a word
Because she gets pissed off so quickly
And becomes belligerent
I didn't understand what just happened
It left me totally confused
Why did she Super Size her order
If she wasn't going to eat the food
We had a date to go for dinner
I couldn't figure out why she got upset
I told her she looked gorgeous
But maybe a little overdressed
She looked surprised when we arrived
And said McDonalds you've got to be kidding
How insensitive of me to take her to McDonalds for dinner
Knowing her favorite hamburger joint is Burger King

Down at Turk and Taylor
William Taylor Jr.

You can still go to the Tenderloin
on a Saturday night and lose yourself

in the noise and the terror
of the dirty shining streets

the life and the death

swirling about in the lights
and the rain

you can evaporate into the cries
and the laughter of the broken
and the lost

buy a poet's heart
down at Turk & Taylor
no more damaged than the next

stop for a drink
in some little place

hip hop on the jukebox
pretty girls playing pool

try and get a few lines down
before they're gone

try and give a voice to this

to glean some kind of truth
from the lonely men at the bar

imagining the right word
the right line
will open a window
into something necessary

and trick another moment from the world
that has already forgotten your name.

In Places Like This
Damian Rucci

you can almost hear
the heartland love songs
the other night, someone's
baby daddy raced the devil
down route 28 and lost
his motorcycle bent into
an obelisk outside the supermarket
a monument to a moment
now eclipsed by sorrow

In places like this
the buffalo no longer roam
instead they circle the skies
as lingering white clouds
bringing rain down on the
brimmed hats of farmers
their children smoke marijuana
hunt for the cool glow
of urban rebellion, the distant
horns of longing fade in the foothills

In places like this
we dance along the gravel country roads
in the beds of pickup trucks
with the lights out so we can watch
the galaxy spin above our heads
watch the gods sway in celestial winds
cheap beer, our sacrament to nirvana
or whatever destination awaits us all
in the dark

In places like this
I am a ghost

Home Improvement
Adam Hazell

I want to build a cabin
with you
at the edge of the world
and your smile
will be the door
the floor every joke
one of us failed to get
and we'll flit
from room to room
fucking until the walls
come down
and we'll rebuild
stronger, better, more secure
just to fuck harder
all the while
watching re-runs of
Home Improvement
and
thrusting to Wilson
– the steadiest side character
you could ever
know

Last Call
Brenton Booth

In Downtown Los Angeles
I stayed in a cheap hotel.
The room was tiny and had
one small window with a
view of a brick wall. The
bed was hard and tap water
made me feel ill. At about 9
on my first night the phone
rang, I thought it must have
been the front desk complain-
ing about my visa credit
or something. "I need to see
you again Bruce," a desperate
sounding voice said.
"He's not here mate. I don't
even know who he is."
"Don't play games darling. I
need to see you."
"Who are you?"
"I am coming up. I am coming
up now."
"You have the wrong number
mate."
"You fucker! I am coming up!
he screamed into the phone
and hung up.

It was my first
night in Los Angeles and I
didn't know what to expect,
but surely this was some sort
of scam. I decided I'd be ready
though. I stood next to the door
waiting for it to be kicked in
and I'd pounce on whoever
it was. The phone rang a few
more times but I just ignored
it. I stood by the door for nearly
an hour then suddenly realized
the real problem: he wasn't
trying to scam me—he was
just lonely, which I understood
perfectly. The phone rang again
and I picked it up, put it on the
bedside table and laid down on
the bed. I could hear his voice
coming through the receiver, it
sounded like a whisper from
where I was. Over the next few
hours I listened to every tender
word he said, pretending like
him that I wasn't alone.

a mustache of cosmic proportions
Karl Koweski

the mustache
lounging across my upper lip
like a saucy sasquatch
reclining on a beach chair
on the edge of the sea
of serendipity
is only an accessory
to my grooviness.
it is not an entity
in and of itself as
it is totally subjugated
to my will.
it goes where I tell it to go.

now, there are those
for whom the mustache
dominates the conversation,
becomes the focal point
of a lame existence,
and what a weak group
of limp-wristed hipsters
they must be
to find themselves
so easily over-ruled
by a few thin wisps of hair
perched beneath their nostrils
like weathered tinsel.

over the years,
my mustache has been described
as “transgressive,” “Sam Elliotian,”
often times, “discombobulated.”
and because of its
vaunted position,
the mustache receives
more massages than any
other mustache that has
ever existed with
the possible exception
of “Bucky,”
the churlish mustache
which once belonged to
the legendary John Holmes.
but I can write here
with all the humility
a man with the perfect
mustache can muster,
my mustache is larger
and thicker than John
Holmes’ sleazy caterpillar
ever was which is all
that women have ever
really cared about anyway.

I write this now,
an ode to the old
Warsaw Wazoo,
the mustache which
defended my health
through the entire
Covid crisis.
I salute you even
as I refuse to
allow you to define
me any further
than as a subject
to one more epic poem.

Modern Lovers
Damon Hubbs

I'm a witchfinder general
you're my witch
then we switch it up
and you burn me at the stake
we're modern lovers
nihilism
and heartbreak,
you're an It Girl
a Chloë Sevigny
cherry red Doc Martens
and auteur anarchy
a queen of the night
a deb of the year
a door girl at the Mudd Club
who once cut Warhol's hair,
we're modern lovers
demonology
and Baudelaire,
you're hotrod
softblow
laudanum
scuzz
and when you
traded your spiked dog colla
for a French bulldog
the devil swept us away
and accused us of heresy.

to answer the call of any John
Casey Renee Kiser

She says she's leavin' me 'cause I can't be
bothered to live responsibly
Says I do things like stay home from work
to answer the call of any John

fucking Waters marathon.

I say, yeah but, what about my obsession
with turnin' off the lights *in succession*
What about my flashlight heart?
You'll miss my quirks and battery charge
and *letting you*

be in charge, *well,*

Counting up my flaws on your perfection log
Just go bitch, take your noisy lap dog
Don't forget your tacky sense
of trendy bullshit. I won't be bothered

to miss *any* of it. I am mothered

by the Moon; as always, I am comfortable
with the unknown and the uncomfortable,
the unravelling and the challenging –
I pack the lesson in my bag

lady, burnin' the white flag

'cause a free spirit
never
surrenders.

Shimmer
Mike Zone

The ecstasy of space

Robots on acid

Fuck me space-boy,

FUCK ME!

Bloody virgin on a bed of cosmic dust, we can plan an interplanetary
genocide or start a religion

But maybe it's all the same

in outer-space

The ecstasy of space

Robots on acid

Eating peyote

The perennial singularity

Phallus slammed in a closet door, waterlogged in microwave painting
with sound – can we break the brain of god this unknown source of
which we feed upon its corpse

My mind is glowing

Vulva shaped spaceship performing terrifying miracles of light as
darkness eats stars, wanton nebula jettisoned in birth reverse swirling
fabric of being and time

The ecstasy of space

Robots on acid

Astronauts in love

A carnal quasar pumping frenzy

Nameless

Recordless

no real living beings here

there are no cages but boundaries

without pasts an ever uncertain present and veiled future

dire transformation

distracted by skin and sin

the divine motive looking for that spark in primary colored space-
jockeys

switching sex organs, eyes and limbs

lies, fate, false memories

The ecstasy of space

Ocean of the void

Robots on acid

The singularity will be fragmented and unrecognizable

Troll
Harry Whitewolf

The off-his-trolley troll posted on my feed: 'I'm lonely.'

But it came out as: 'You're a poncey wog-loving fuckwit who deserves to have his spastic face bitten off by a rabid Rottweiler on cocaine.'

Then the off-his-trolley troll posted: 'I just need someone's attention.'

But it came out as: 'I hope your sister gets raped by a monkey.'

Then the off-his-trolley troll posted: 'All I want is to be loved.'

But it came out as: 'You're a fat and ugly cunt. Why don't you do us all a favour and kill yourself?'

So, I finally posted back: 'I love you',

And he posted back: 'Poofter.'

My Troubled Brain
Daniel S. Irwin

The doctors thought the solution
To my problems was just a matter
Of splitting my troubled brain.
But that only doubled my anxiety.
Now there're two moody Jekylls.
One says white, the other black.
Angry words, endless arguments,
One hand gouging at my eyes,
While the other hand chokes me.
Enough! I put a pistol to my head.
They wrestle over which half will
Get splattered across the room.
Escape is the only remedy and
I'm ready to board the plane but,
Damn it! My ticket's for the bus.

all part of the plan
J.J. Campbell

burning the candle at both ends again
those that don't know me are worried
they don't understand how the madness
the chaos, the apparent disorder is all
part of the plan
how the wax from the candle burns
the chest and that smell is called
desire
how the voices create a symphony
all i have to do is put the words
on the page
battling arthritis
depression
endless amounts of pain
a failing liver
and a liquor cabinet that doesn't
pay for itself

i know this isn't the lifestyle of
someone who wants to live forever
i never set my sights that far
week by week has been most
of my adult life
never had the money to think
about two or three years ahead
and trust me
scribbling down words at three
in the morning is proof that isn't
going to change anytime soon

Big Bad Terry
Jonathan S Baker

Back in my days
selling toilet paper
and television sets,
I would spend over an hour
at the end of the night
sitting out front smoking
not going home
watching the other people walk
out to their cars loading their stuff
I would wait
for something to happen

and then Big Bad Terry
who traded his Harley
for a floor scrubber,
whose thick mustache
framed his mouth
like mounted bull horns
would take his break,
sit next to me,
and begin to say
the most beautifully awful things
about women.

Burning a cigarette
staring off across the parking lot
at the end of shift nurses
and the waitresses in uniform
the mothers buying gift wrap.

“I would lick her turd cutter clean”
“I would eat her asshole pink”
“I would wear her like a diving helmet”

I would blush
He was such a sweetheart.

Smooth Jazz
Andrew Vuono

When radio was invented
there was already a
smooth jazz station
but can you hear my
transmission?
from a Super 8 motel
parts unknown
to all the easy riders
on the Missing in Action Highway
and the Lonely Hearts Club
at the Green Door
can you hear me?
there's Vaseline on the clock
time is slipping away
I've loved so very few
that have drifted through
the empty Kmart of my life
we all just pissed in the wind
and crossed streams
shared cigarettes to the filter
drove until there's no gas
stole change from unlocked cars
so we could take the bus home
then there's always a day
that the music died
and right now
the wind is blowing
the end is nigh
so meet me at
Friendship Park
on the swings
3am sharp
before my voice fades
the radio cracks
and it's nothing
but smooth jazz

Field of Daisies ~ Donna Dallas

When the first stray “borrowed”
my sterling silver belt buckle
along with my gold diamond pendant
I knew I was making this sacrifice
for *his* happiness and accepted this fate
knowing full well these precious items
would never return to me

What returned?

Stone cold eyes
seeking more valuables to pawn
vicious fists to prove the road to sobriety
was non-existent

He was broken to the point of leakage
and I was in love
with filling his cracks
I’d anoint the ooze
to stop his bleed
my endless gauzing and soaking
the bleed disguised
as an uncontrollable spigot

The battered path to hell is glorious
when hell is disguised as a sweet two room apartment
with a petite backyard
while stray number two lingered in the dark corridor
waiting to be saved
by yours truly

We were homeless by the following spring
I was prostituting to support our habits
I lovingly accepted this affliction
because A. I was never taught how to say no
and/or B. Not enough belief that I truly own
the right of refusal

Fast forward to my arrest
central booking
plead of insanity
I was escorted to B-block at the institution
and happily underwent rehab
I say happily as a complete lie
it was death over and over
I would have preferred to have been hit by an eighteen-wheeler

And yet the lessons lay like a field of daisies I refused to enter into

Anytime I felt hurt I would fuck someone
Later when wandering the streets
I ventured upon the next stray
who became my loving pimp
we engaged upon a merry-go-round of bandaging
plugging
shooting up and fixing

Shit... I fixed no one

I am so broken I’m a cracked piece
of some bigger thing that is shattered

So I’m trying to fix this last one
when I ain’t even found my missing parts

no glue or magical cement gonna work

I’ve accepted this...
I go to the bathroom
pull the band-aids out
of the wrecked and peeling medicine cabinet
salve his ooze
tell him it’s going to be ok
we will kick this
again