The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

William Carlos Williams
The Red Wheelbarrow

Spring 2006

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What Happens When You Disrespect an Entertainer

The man hands the monkey a two-dollar bill
to "eeks" of thanks.
The music, the tango, fills the room
like darkness fills a telescope's eye.
The monkey begins his dance,
smacks his incisors into the hand that just paid him
as the man turns away.
The room, the musicians, stop, everyone dumbstruck.
The echo of one wine glass shattering remains
for only that second masquerading as an hour.
Regularity resumes after the alarm
of a jackpot on the sole slot machine in the corner,
spitting up quarters into the owner's worn plastic cup,
heard over the unified cheers of the dispersed crowd.

Elizabeth Anne Moss

Thanks to Mr. Mike Delp and Ms. Anne-Marie Oomen,
An even BIGGER thanks to Therese Zielinski,
And a Special Thanks to Kara Krewer and Kat Reece for all their veteran insights.
Jim Morrison Revisited

The evening is scattered on dawn’s highway bleeding. In the parking lot of a roadhouse somewhere in Nebraska he walks up, his shirt open. I can see the skin stretched over every one of his ribs, like saran wrap over guitar strings. He says he’s back from La Père Lachaise looking to go home to his LA woman. “It’s been thirty-five years, Jim” I say, “she’s moved on. LA is a whore. She doesn’t want you anymore.” He puffs up, makes himself look big takes a drag from his cigarette, says “I am the lizard king. I can do anything.” He climbs through the window into shotgun graceful as a crane, his cigarette burns orange in the sticky heat of the car.

He admits his death was a suicide, not a hoax, not an accident. Mr. Mojo Risin’ tells me he put a toaster in his bathtub, “Death was only going to happen once, I didn’t want to miss it.” I have to admit this makes sense, but a fucking toaster, Jim?
"I was stoned," he offers in his defense, "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

Outside Denver he tells me that love cannot save me from my own fate. He has dark glasses on, and I know he can't see a goddamned thing, not the look on my face, not the storm brewing in his own words. "Why are you going back to LA, Morrison? It can't save you."

"I'm interested in any activity that appears to have no meaning. That's the gateway to freedom."

I wonder if he thinks drinking is freedom. I remember hearing him hiccup on "Five To One," wonder now if that was him rebelling. "So, what does that say about your poetry? Doesn't that have no meaning."

"Listen, listen, real poetry doesn't say anything; it just ticks off the possibilities. Opens all doors. You can walk through anyone that suits you."

He leans forward, smiles with a mouth full of gleaming Indian skulls.
“There are too many ghosts crowding your mind. Let me drive,” he demands. Navajo shamans bleed from his mouth, his breath stinks of peyote. I pull over, he takes the wheel, chants his poems over and over and we drive through mountains because it suits us.

Chase Ian Yurga-Bell

metal shards from the plane, or maybe, a couple holding hands, plummeting.
We got greedy with sharp scissors, cut the strings that took a summer of phone calls to sew. There is still an urge in me to sweep up the accumulated gunpowder from our arguments, pour it into a black urn and drop a lit match inside.

I know that I want to ride our wave 'till it breaks because you make me feel like killing a man and dancing on a car, which is exactly what a lover and a poem should do.

James Joseph Wah Mohn
I say no to a shadow
but don't push it off.
My father throws a fat book on my lap-
the Kama Sutra,
almost heavy enough to wake me up.
Although I am as unromantic as an
orange prison jumpsuit,
please understand you turn me on like an electric chair,
pump the ink of inspiration through my veins.
I haven't loved or hated anyone more than you.

You are why
there are three gaping holes
in the white wooden walls of my room.
Two of them are there because I don't hit women.
The other because of the happiness I felt
when I intimidated the other teenager
who wanted to take you.

Like 9/11 you interrupted my life.
As a boy I watched the large gray cloud
grow and blossom
from the distance of my elementary school.
I saw only specks falling,
couldn't tell if they were
chunks of a building.
On Dancing

Most fools forget about other people's dreams. Yes I
got what I wanted in life, a husband, a son, but at times I
wonder where I lost my life and if I could get it back some-
how by asking at every street corner, desperate with age,
_Have you seen it? _Like a madwoman might ask, I suppose.
But let's say you're not a fool and that you know of
dreams and that you might understand how a woman
would love to dance, would love to feel the pulse of sound
in her spine strengthening the fire shot by her brain, hit-
ting bone and muscle like a mallet—step. Step. Step.

And let's say you would allow that that woman is
me, that I am that woman and that once in my life, before I
got gray and started to tie other lives to my waist, I wanted
to be a dancer. It's nothing you would know about if you
hadn't been listening, and listening to gestures and half-
thoughts is a dead art these days, has been ever since be-
fore I was born. I don't blame you, or anyone if they
missed this, but if someone would tell me today, _Rosealee
I've seen how you dance _I might just marry them, Orin for-
give me and all, seeing as he never knew. The fool went
right off to fight and I stayed here, rooted to the ground, a
tree getting thicker every day, drawing water from the
earth like a dying man in a desert, wanting nothing more
than to move.

So many complications
and dead baby jokes.
I'm sorry that I'm unable to tell you why
the spaces between our bodies under the covers
are empty phantoms.
When you slept on my chest
I imagined sex as only the act of whispering.
Thought of how hard-core pornography would consist of
five guys all trying to softly whisper
into a young woman's pretty ears as she laughed
and smiled
and laughed.

At home the old men try to explain love.
"Blood or passion."
My grandfather winks at me,
raises his glass of red wine.
"A woman is either blood or passion to a man."
I sneer and take a swig of cheap beer
"Yeah, what about gay guys?"

Drunk and dozing on the couch in the dark,
I'm dreaming of you rolling on top of me,
kissing my neck,
and whispering please.
Ride the Wave 'till it Breaks

The first time we rolled the dice
I said Yellow
and you said
blue, red, green.
Little did we know
it would be all color from then on.

You talk of wanting
to be baptized in those nights we shared.
I agree with you,
and still spend time alone in my bed
just plunging into the gallons of gorgeous memories.
Then, like the restlessness of saturday nights
the fear itches me¾
fear that when time casts you
far away from me, we
will be left drowning.
Without you I would become my father¾
a shiny silver ball
constantly ricocheting
in a pinball machine made of women.

Sometimes I regret going farther
than finding that hidden quarter within you.

And I buried myself in my work and my home and
God forgive me if I broke my child’s heart with sadness but
I gave him all he can ask for, a woman to feed and clothe
and bathe and care for him, and isn’t that love? I know
there are different loves, the love of a man and child of an
instinct in your blood asking you to move, something no
one understood when I was younger and certainly some-
ting I’ve been pretending I don’t understand for the last
twenty years. I’ve been waiting, patient like I’m supposed
to be and like I don’t mind being but every so often I want
to run, want to get a fool of a man like I did before and say
Drive to a city, drive somewhere, anywhere like I’m some God
damn kid who doesn’t know anything of the world yet,
some kid who thinks life is today and that’s the truth but
it’s tomorrow too and I know it now, so there is no running,
no dancing, no cities or fools, though fools are hard to be rid
of in this life.

I dream sometimes of that city, of a dress that rustles
like the wrapping paper on new clothes, of shoes that clack
delightfully on the dance floor. Forget the lies of preachers
saying dancing leads to sin, or dancing is sin, it’s just a want
in your stomach that holds control over you like some peo-
ple say drink does or lust does or even the search for an an-
swer might.
And I love it like others love drink or sex or their divine, rhetoric questions, love it for the feeling of the earth finally holding still for just a minute, letting me catch my bearings when nothing else will.

Anastasia Mimina Lugo Mendez

And when that howl quiets you will wish you had someone else’s hand to hold, other your own. These hands have seemed so small as to slip through their own fingers like slashes of light. But these hands, too, can surprise you. They will sing their own song, gaining speed and color, rising out of the palm.

Taya Alexandra Kitaysky
The Song You've Been Waiting For

We were promised that dragons would rise from our bodies, that the monkeys would leap from us and cover the eyes of those we love, and that a golden fish of hope would charge out from the sewers in our stomachs.

But lately only this slinky black cat leaps straight out of my heart, a cheat cutting corners, trying to spring past this body and onto a balcony where a cup of milk balances on the railing, and stars fly past without warning.

The last light of day hangs loose and exposed down building walls like skinned carcasses in a butcher shop. Everyone's mouth is lodged with a stone, and we want too much. Time crawls and does not yawn for anyone.

Tonight, when you go outside to sit on your lawn, your mind droops down on its stalk like a rose. Let the night-insects come and drink. Sadness can only howl from the blue hill for so long.

The Fibonacci Sequence Poem

Stats
Rocks
Quartiles
Intervals
Deviations, too
Nearly always significant

Mr. David Miller Early

A Fibonacci Response

You are
too cool
to make statistic deviations.
Invent romantic intervals.

Ms. Anne-Marie Oomen
Because I needed to believe
in the relativity of all things
I made a clone of myself at the age of 17
and sent it on a spacecraft
traveling at the speed of light.

Naïve, maybe.
All I can say is that
20 years passed and one day
in October when I was feeling
particularly low and disappointed with my life
I opened the front door to find my other self returned
waiting patiently beside the morning paper.
She could not have been a day over 18.

By this time technology had made it’s advances
and I knew automatically that this was
nothing short of a divine gift from the heavens.
I embraced her, and immediately
set out to do what I had been planning
for all the long arduous years.

Better to be indoors, where it just glazes
the window-glass, to simply imagine the slow
embroidery of lace and beadwork across the lake’s
breast. Nothing tames a person more completely
than magic—isn’t that what the folktales
teach? Watch, then: the stubborn birds
are dressing themselves in the light, cold fabric
of the storm and the bear rambles the city,
white as this draped shawl of whitest snow.

Karin Marie Gottshal
Blizzard

This is the snow you've read about in stories, where the magic bear emerges from the wood to carry the girl on his broad back. Gossamer, you might call the blizzard, hung in air like a rack of gowns, only gossamer means "goose of summer," and this is midwinter and the only thing stitching its way through these clouds-come-to-ground is a trio of crows—the wind pushing them higher than their course. Tulle, then, in bolts and bolts, veils in tight arrangement upon the crocuses that needled up during last week's thaw, against the foreheads of the peaked Victorians across the street; think of the dresses they wore, stiff white satin tight at the bodice, the circle of pearls—the trees wear that now.

I had us both put under by a friend of mine, a pioneer in modern neurology, and the minds extracted from our two persons, exchanged and reconnected in the new bodies without the slightest bit of harm done and very little pain.

When I awoke—how can I explain this—I felt I was more myself than ever before, happy for what may have been the first time, having received the thing I very most desired. I can say with confidence that the other self shared in my elation, remembering an age when I would have gone to any lengths to manipulate space and time.

Anne Kathleen Reece
Plea From Pavlov’s Dog To His Master

Do you have no pity for your subject?
I am dreaming when you come in,
awakened to a bell, drool on
jowls and fur.

You don’t understand desire
for what it is,
something as brittle
and empty
as a ribcage.

You see it as a golden bell
ringing out over the crowds,
their heads turning up and
expecting, exactly
as you taught them,
the rewards they might receive.

If you could watch me
anytime other than dinnertime,
you would see that it is really when
fifty sparrows fly past
not sleeping for weeks and passing themselves off
as anorexic, worried about you in their spare time.
thought about calling ambulances and doctors
as you lay passed out in the shower.

Gina, I still see you in memory—
the exact way those shadows hit your face and fell,
spiraling into the curls of your hair. I was, to say the least,
tipsy, the effects of stolen red-bull and cheap vodka.
For the first time in weeks I was amiable and laughing
with you, a complete stranger until that night on the bench
outside.
Surrounded by campers, we were loud and obnoxious.
There was no reason to care because the alcohol that night
was the closest thing to food I’d come into contact with
in three days—the last being
the cherry popsicle that made me sick to my stomach.
You commended me on the way my bones
had stuck out on either side of my sternum.
When I said simply, “I’m not anorexic,”
you nodded, patting me on the arm.
No, no— I know what it’s like. You don’t have to lie to me.

Tove Karine Danovich
An Excerpt from The Queen of This Summer Hotel

Late August,
I speed through the antiseptic tunnel
where the moving dead still talk
of pushing their lines against the thrust
of cure. And I am queen of this summer hotel
or the laughing bee on a stalk
of death.
—Anne Sexton, “You, Doctor Martin”

I.
I watched their knee socks walk around us
in the dark—color coded according to grade.
Wearing a tank top and low rise jeans, I
made fun of their drops of summer sweat,
their ugly uniforms.
We were both drunk and I was supposed to be
“keeping an eye on you” because
you couldn’t handle your liquor
which is to say, you handled
more alcohol than the rest of us:
you, Gina, couldn’t handle yourself.
Camp, still a week away from ending and you,
almost drunk into a permanent stupor.
Even the speed freaks with bursting veins—
your window, and I want to run
under their shadows,
each wing cut sharp
with light, down
to the fields where
you can have the darkness
made by flight slide
up your back, past
the city’s twisted spires
and thatched countryside
to rest in the pine-tops
that I can make out while
you lean over your notebooks
here in the dark.

Kara Lee Krewer
Death Drinks Bacardi

Nobody could figure out how Death got drunk without a bloodstream to carry alcohol to his non-existent brain; or even how he managed to swallow it with no stomach; but the fact remained that it was dark, and Death was drunk, and we were staggering through late-night streets asking him in our own drunken voices where he lived, and should we call a cab, and was he going to share those cigarillos or should we leave him there on the pavement all night?

One long bony finger flicked a cheap lighter once, twice, then we sat on a curb, Death and all of us together, and he told us in a slurred voice how he really honestly believed he had originally just been a joke, an enormous joke on somebody but he couldn't remember who.

He felt really bad about it, he mumbled, since killing people turned out not to be so funny after all, and we murmured sorry sorts of phrases and finally managed to bundle him into a taxi
"Your name," she said, that amusement back in her expression.
"Welcome to the revolution, Kyle," she said, and lit another cigarette.

Victoria Elizabeth Hartmann Wegerski

and send him off before the driver remembered to ask, Where to?
So he became someone else's problem, or idea of a joke and left us laughing, and not believing we'd drink with him again.

Elinor McCarthy Stone
My Year Underground with the Zombie Rebellion

I heard the wiper snap against the windshield, and looked up from the newspaper to see the zombie trying to shove it off with her squeegee brush. "Hey!" I yelled, but she kept bashing at it. I threw open my car door and said, "Quit it, that's an important part."

The zombie grunted but complied, and went back to running her brush over the headlights. I unbuckled myself and headed into the gas station. The bell overhead jingled and Purnima looked up from her paperback grocery-store thriller, then swung her legs off the counter and stood up. "Oh, hey, what's --"

I jerked my thumb over my shoulder, out towards the lot. "New help?"

"Is she giving you problems?"

"You just might want to tell her that windshield wipers are kind of a necessary part of a car, not dirt she needs to scrub off. Or rip off." I leaned my hip against the counter and looked out at the lot, where I could see the zombie kneeling on the ground and rubbing her sponge on the side-view mirror.

Purnima shoved her hands into the pockets of her pants. "I'll let her know. She's been pretty easy to train so far. I just point-and-grunt, that kind of thing."

"Guess he's not such a nut," she said. "There was a time on there. Friday, I think? Are you going, or have you got plans?"

"I don't know," I lied. "I guess it depends on what this actually is."

"A zombie rebellion," she said, and dropped her cigarette to the sidewalk. "Get your backs against the wall, boys, a revolution's coming. Rah rah yankee doodle. I guess." She looked kind of amused at herself, like she was pulling the wool over my eyes and enjoying every second. I figured I could play along. "So the spirit of America lives on ... in the zombies?"

"Who better than us?" She grinned at me again and I smiled back helplessly, then caught myself and coughed into my hand to cover.

"So you remember all this, that you were a pianist and stuff. Do you remember your name?" I looked down at my hand and saw that my own cigarette had gone out, had probably been out for a while. I flicked it away.

"Of course. Andrea." She held her hand out to me and I shook it automatically. Her skin felt strange, but not unpleasant. Sort of like silicone, and almost warm. "You?"

"Huh?" I looked up from where I'd been staring at our joined hands.
"The resident conspiracy nut at my office gave it to me. After you talked to me this morning, I went to work and wound up mentioning it. I was kind of freaked out and wanted to make sure I wasn’t losing it, I guess. I didn’t know what to think when Markham told me about this, though, because he’s a little..." I twirled my finger around my ear in the universal symbol for ‘crazy,’ and she gave me a wan grin.

"What happened to the old one?"

"He got in a fight with a Hummer and lost." She pulled a face and I almost did the same, my imagination supplying me with a technicolor-bright image of what exactly the result of an SUV-versus-zombie collision looked like. "That’s the problem with them, no sense of self-preservation."

"I think you need to have, you know, a self, in order to have a sense of --"

"Oh, please, Kyle, don’t even, they beat that horse to death fifty years ago." She shoved her hair back out of her eyes so that I could see her rolling them at me. "I think she’s done. Gas, wash, anything else you want?" She started ringing me up and I reached into my coat pocket for my wallet.

"Yeah, grab me a pack of Marlboros." I tossed a twenty onto the counter and picked up the pack she passed to me.

"I thought you said you were quitting."

"Don’t start with me. I got this shit often enough when we dated." She bared her teeth at me in a feral grin, gleaming white in that tanned, pretty face. "You’re the one that keeps coming back for more."

"Eh, how could I stay away. True enough -- Purnima was a sweetheart, and I liked the rhythm of the banter we fell into whenever we talked."
I tucked the change she handed me into my wallet, then double-checked the contents and twisted my mouth to one side. Cutting up those Visas and AmExes might’ve done wonders for my credit rating, but it made keeping myself in cigarettes and gas and food a hell of a lot harder.

"As for quitting, I was. Then I missed breakfast this morning." I flapped the pack between my fingers. "Breakfast of champions, don’t you know."

"That fiberglass is going to kill you someday soon," she said.

"Only if the zombies don’t," I said, and she rolled her eyes at the old joke. I brushed my fingers over my forehead like I was doffing an invisible hat at her and strolled outside, tapping a cigarette out of the pack as I went.

The zombie backed away from my car and stood next to the gas pump as I opened the door and swung into the driver’s seat. I turned on the ignition and was rummaging around in the cup holders for matches or a lighter, the unlit cigarette dangling from between my lips, when I heard a tap on the window. I looked up and into the ashen eyes of the zombie, who was leaning close to my car. As I watched, she made a "roll it down" motion with her finger and my hand moved automatically to comply, pushing at the crank of my manual window.

"Tip?" she said. Her voice sounded perfectly normal. But I had never heard one speak before, so they might all sound perfectly normal.

"Yeah, I guess. I know a guy who used to be a professor of theoretical quantum physics at Syracuse University. He’s doing cable repair now. And down the road, at Wegmans?" She nodded her head at the street. "There’s a grocery-bagger who says he used to be the weatherman on Channel Five."

"Shit, I knew he looked familiar."

She let out a stuttering little laugh, then looked surprised at herself for a split second before her expression returned to studied blankness. "But, yeah. It’s not just me. There are a lot of us. Most of us." She took a drag from her cigarette and the cherry flared bright and red, the color alarming, contrasted against her pasty skin. I stuck my hand in my pocket and pulled out the scrap of paper Markham had given me. It was crumpled and the pencil had smeared, but I could still make out an address. "Are you a part of -- do you know about this?" I handed her the paper and she squinted at it.

"I recognize the street name," she said, brushing her hair out of her eyes with the hand that held her cigarette. Her eyes were the same cloudy grey as the eyes of every other zombie I’d seen. "I think Ben Mason -- the weather guy -- he’s mentioned it before." She handed the paper back to me and I shoved it into my pocket. "Where did you get it?"
"I'm more run-of-the-mill than you think." She stood up and stabbed her cigarette out against the wall, then produced another one from her shirt pocket and lit it up. "I don't actually inhale," she said, almost apologetically, gesturing with the hand holding the cigarette. "It just gives me something to do with my hands. I was a pianist, I get nervous when my hands aren't moving."

"You do remember?"

She squinted at me. "You're awfully nosey."

"I'm a reporter," I said, like that excused everything. She didn't have to know that I sat in on school board meetings more often than I wrote scathing exposes on the evils of the fish hatcheries or whatever. "Call it natural curiosity."

She shrugged again, skinny shoulders poking up underneath her shirt, and said, "Eh. Okay. I guess...I didn't, not for a while, and then it was just." She snapped her fingers. "You know? Suddenly I was like, 'wait a minute, what is this shit? Why am I pumping gas? Where's my piano? And I guess I'm not the only one."

I fought the urge to smack my forehead. It figured. Markham's little paranoia party had some basis in fact after all. Just what he needed, reinforcement of his whacked conspiracy theories. "So what you're saying is, there are lots of zombies who -- they just remember everything? Like they're still alive?"

My mouth dropped open and the cigarette fell into my lap. Good thing it's not lit, I thought, because my brain hadn't entirely caught up to the fact that a zombie was talking.

"What?" I managed.

She thrust out her hand, the rubbery flesh coming close to my face. I jerked away.

"Aren't you going to tip me?"

"For what?" I said blankly. "You don't get paid."

"It's polite," she said.

"Fuck you," I said, and slammed my foot down on the gas.

"I've got a question for you guys," I yelled. Heads popped up over cubicle walls like the prairie dogs or gophers or whatever those nasty little rodents are that you whack on the head with a foam mallet in that arcade game. "Since when do zombies talk?"

"They don't," shouted thirteen voices in unison. I shoved my finger into my ear. "Well, they're not supposed to, someone called from the back of the room."

I squinted to see over the sea of washed-out, fluorescent-lit faces. A migraine started to spread out over my skull. Fucking artificial light. "Markham?"

"Yo."

Everybody in the room was hanging over the tops of
their cubicles now, our conversation obviously far more interesting than whatever grunt-work they'd been doing previously.

No wonder we never got the paper to press on time; we all had attention deficit disorder whenever something entertaining came around. I dug my thumb against the corner of my eye. Oh yeah. Definitely a migraine. "Are you telling me they can talk, they're just not supposed to --"

"That doesn't sound like reporting! Where the fuck is today's copy?" A plastic hockey stick slammed against a plexiglass window and everyone dropped back down like a shot had been fired over their heads. I ducked between two rows of carpeted faux-wall and shed my coat, flinging it into my own square as I scuttled past so that if the boss came out, he wouldn't see me still wearing my coat and know that I'd been late getting in again.

Markham had rolled his chair to the opening of his cubicle and was tipping it back, his head hanging almost upside down. I pushed my foot against the chair's base and sent him rolling back into the partitions, then followed him in.

"One of them seriously talked to you?" His eyes darted from side to side. Maybe more like a hamster than a prairie dog. A fat hamster with a broken exercise wheel.

"Yeah, a new girl at my favorite gas station." I patted my shirt pocket, then grimaced when I realized the cigarettes were still in my coat.

The shirt looked exactly like the one Purnima wore, except hers had Purnima embroidered in white thread over the Mobil logo. There wasn't any kind of name tag on the zombie's shirt, and suddenly I was extremely curious about everything. "What's your name?" I asked.

She raised both eyebrows at me this time. "What makes you think I remember?"

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"I didn’t think zombies breathed," I said, tucking my hands into the pockets of my jacket and rocking back on my heels. She raised an eyebrow at me and flicked the ash off her cigarette. "Didn’t think they talked, either, but I guess you proved that one wrong."

The zombie shrugged, and it was such a human movement that for a moment I forgot that she wasn’t actually alive. Christ, it was like seeing a statue I’d walked past every day in the park suddenly start giving the St. Crispin’s Day speech. "It’s not like there’s anything worth talking about," she said lazily, leaning her head against the concrete wall. I’d half-expected her voice to sound rusty, unused, but there wasn’t anything odd about it. "It’s not like we care about politics or gas prices or the weather."

"Good point." Smelling the smoke from her cigarette kick-started a nicotine craving that jumped up and down on my nerve endings, and I yanked a Marlboro out of the pack I’d bought that morning. It was already more than half-empty. So much for quitting.

The zombie watched me as I flicked my lighter, and I couldn’t get over how normal she seemed. She kind of looked like a science teacher I’d had back in middle school, probably not even thirty years old, all dark hair and lanky arms and legs and a skinny torso that her Mobil uniform shirt hung on awkwardly.
"Oh, wow!" His face split apart in a grin and he shoved his hair back out of his eyes. "That's incredible, we've been hoping more of them would come forward --"

I held up my hand. "We," I said. "Who the hell is we?"

He didn't answer, just spun around in his chair and started scribbling something down on a piece of paper. "Markham," I said, but he held up one finger and I closed my mouth. Markham was one of those little turds that seemed to be at every job I'd ever held. He wasn't overweight, exactly, but he was some kind of shape that didn't really occur in nature -- kind of looked like a triangle, actually, with shoulders like a linebacker, but a little girly waist and legs that wouldn't be out of place on a prima ballerina.

"Here." He shoved a scrap of paper into my hand and closed my fingers around it, his palms leaving a clammy residue on my skin. I tried hard not to make a face. "I can't talk about it here," he said hoarsely. "But come to the place at the time and you'll see what I mean by 'we.'"

"The place at the -- what the hell are you talking about?"

He pressed a finger to his glistening lips and flicked his eyes toward the ceiling. "The cubicles have ears," he hissed.

I stepped backwards, holding my hands up in front of me. "Whatever, Markham. See you at ... the place at the time."

"It'll be good to have you," he said, and went back to his computer.

===

I tried not to give Markham any more thought. He was the kind of reporter who probably would've done better at The Weekly World News instead of The Syracuse Post-Standard. He had a nodding acquaintance with factual information, but that was about as close as his relationship with reality got. In conversations with him, it was a good idea to remember that he carried a fuzzy picture of Big Foot in his wallet.

I ducked out of work early and drove north out of the city, bored but not eager to go home. My cable had gone out the night before and when I'd called the company the automated voice on the other end had assured me that they would send a zombie to repair it 'in the next four to six days'. I suddenly found myself with no social life to speak of, short of harassing Purnima, so I drove to her Mobil station. There weren't any cars at the pumps and the zombie was squatting against the side of the building, and when I got out of my car I saw she was smoking a cigarette.
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their cubicles now, our conversation obviously far more interesting than whatever grunt-work they'd been doing previously.

No wonder we never got the paper to press on time; we all had attention deficit disorder whenever something entertaining came around. I dug my thumb against the corner of my eye. Oh yeah. Definitely a migraine. "Are you telling me they can talk, they're just not supposed to --"

"That doesn't sound like reporting! Where the fuck is today's copy?" A plastic hockey stick slammed against a plexiglass window and everyone dropped back down like a shot had been fired over their heads. I ducked between two rows of carpeted faux-wall and shed my coat, flinging it into my own square as I scuttled past so that if the boss came out, he wouldn't see me still wearing my coat and know that I'd been late getting in again.

Markham had rolled his chair to the opening of his cubicle and was tipping it back, his head hanging almost upside down. I pushed my foot against the chair's base and sent him rolling back into the partitions, then followed him in.

"One of them seriously talked to you?" His eyes darted from side to side. Maybe more like a hamster than a prairie dog. A fat hamster with a broken exercise wheel.

"Yeah, a new girl at my favorite gas station." I patted my shirt pocket, then grimaced when I realized the cigarettes were still in my coat.

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"I'm more run-of-the-mill than you think." She stood up and stabbed her cigarette out against the wall, then produced another one from her shirt pocket and lit it up. "I don't actually inhale," she said, almost apologetically, gesturing with the hand holding the cigarette. "It just gives me something to do with my hands. I was a pianist, I get nervous when my hands aren't moving."

"You do remember?"

She squinted at me. "You're awfully nosey."

"I'm a reporter," I said, like that excused everything. She didn't have to know that I sat in on school board meetings more often than I wrote scathing exposés on the evils of the fish hatcheries or whatever. "Call it natural curiosity."

She shrugged again, skinny shoulders poking up underneath her shirt, and said, "Eh. Okay. I guess...I didn't, not for a while, and then it was just." She snapped her fingers. "You know? Suddenly I was like, 'wait a minute, what is this shit? Why am I pumping gas? Where's my piano?' And I guess I'm not the only one."

I fought the urge to smack my forehead. It figured. Markham's little paranoia party had some basis in fact after all. Just what he needed, reinforcement of his whacked conspiracy theories. "So what you're saying is, there are lots of zombies who -- they just remember everything? Like they're still alive?"

My mouth dropped open and the cigarette fell into my lap. Good thing it's not lit, I thought, because my brain hadn't entirely caught up to the fact that a zombie was talking.

"What?" I managed.

She thrust out her hand, the rubbery flesh coming close to my face. I jerked away.

"Aren't you going to tip me?"

"For what?" I said blankly. "You don't get paid."

"It's polite," she said.

"Fuck you," I said, and slammed my foot down on the gas.

"I've got a question for you guys," I yelled. Heads popped up over cubicle walls like the prairie dogs or gophers or whatever those nasty little rodents are that you whack on the head with a foam mallet in that arcade game. "Since when do zombies talk?"

"They don't," shouted thirteen voices in unison. I shoved my finger into my ear. "Well, they're not supposed to," someone called from the back of the room.

I squinted to see over the sea of washed-out, fluorescent-lit faces. A migraine started to spread out over my skull. Fucking artificial light. "Markham?"

"Yo."

Everybody in the room was hanging over the tops of
I tucked the change she handed me into my wallet, then double-checked the contents and twisted my mouth to one side. Cutting up those Visas and AmExes might’ve done wonders for my credit rating, but it made keeping myself in cigarettes and gas and food a hell of a lot harder.

"As for quitting, I was. Then I missed breakfast this morning." I flapped the pack between my fingers. "Breakfast of champions, don’t you know."

"That fiberglass is going to kill you someday soon," she said.

"Only if the zombies don't," I said, and she rolled her eyes at the old joke. I brushed my fingers over my forehead like I was doffing an invisible hat at her and strolled outside, tapping a cigarette out of the pack as I went.

The zombie backed away from my car and stood next to the gas pump as I opened the door and swung into the driver’s seat. I turned on the ignition and was rummaging around in the cup holders for matches or a lighter, the unlit cigarette dangling from between my lips, when I heard a tap on the window. I looked up and into the ashen eyes of the zombie, who was leaning close to my car. As I watched, she made a ‘roll it down’ motion with her finger and my hand moved automatically to comply, pushing at the crank of my manual window.

"Tip?" she said. Her voice sounded perfectly normal. But I had never heard one speak before, so they might all sound perfectly normal.

"Yeah, I guess. I know a guy who used to be to be a professor of theoretical quantum physics at Syracuse University. He’s doing cable repair now. And down the road, at Wegmans?" She nodded her head at the street. "There’s a grocery-bagger who says he used to be the weatherman on Channel Five."

"Shit, I knew he looked familiar."

She let out a stuttering little laugh, then looked surprised at herself for a split second before her expression returned to studied blankness. "But, yeah. It’s not just me. There are a lot of us. Most of us." She took a drag from her cigarette and the cherry flared bright and red, the color alarming, contrasted against her pasty skin. I stuck my hand in my pocket and pulled out the scrap of paper Markham had given me. It was crumpled and the pencil had smeared, but I could still make out an address. "Are you a part of -- do you know about this?" I handed her the paper and she squinted at it.

"I recognize the street name," she said, brushing her hair out of her eyes with the hand that held her cigarette. Her eyes were the same cloudy grey as the eyes of every other zombie I’d seen. "I think Ben Mason -- the weather guy -- he’s mentioned it before." She handed the paper back to me and I shoved it into my pocket. "Where did you get it?"
"The resident conspiracy nut at my office gave it to me. After you talked to me this morning, I went to work and wound up mentioning it. I was kind of freaked out and wanted to make sure I wasn't losing it, I guess. I didn't know what to think when Markham told me about this, though, because he's a little..." I twirled my finger around my ear in the universal symbol for 'crazy,' and she gave me a wan grin.

"What happened to the old one?"
"He got in a fight with a Hummer and lost." She pulled a face and I almost did the same, my imagination supplying me with a technicolor-bright image of what exactly the result of an SUV-versus-zombie collision looked like. "That's the problem with them, no sense of self-preservation."
"I think you need to have, you know, a self, in order to have a sense of --"
"Oh, please, Kyle, don't even, they beat that horse to death fifty years ago." She shoved her hair back out of her eyes so that I could see her rolling them at me. "I think she's done. Gas, wash, anything else you want?" She started ringing me up and I reached into my coat pocket for my wallet.

"Yeah, grab me a pack of Marlboros." I tossed a twenty onto the counter and picked up the pack she passed to me.
"I thought you said you were quitting."
"Don't start with me. I got this shit often enough when we dated."
She bared her teeth at me in a feral grin, gleaming white in that tanned, pretty face. "You're the one that keeps coming back for more."
"Eh, how could I stay away." True enough -- Purnima was a sweetheart, and I liked the rhythm of the banter we fell into whenever we talked.
My Year Underground with the Zombie Rebellion

I heard the wiper snap against the windshield, and looked up from the newspaper to see the zombie trying to shove it off with her squeegee brush. "Hey!" I yelled, but she kept bashing at it. I threw open my car door and said, "Quit it, that's an important part."

The zombie grunted but complied, and went back to running her brush over the headlites. I unbuckled myself and headed into the gas station. The bell overhead jingled and Purnima looked up from her paperback grocery-store thriller, then swung her legs off the counter and stood up. "Oh, hey, what's --"

I jerked my thumb over my shoulder, out towards the lot. "New help?"

"You just might want to tell her that windshield wipers are kind of a necessary part of a car, not dirt she needs to scrub off. Or rip off." I leaned my hip against the counter and looked out at the lot, where I could see the zombie kneeling on the ground and rubbing her sponge on the side-view mirror.

Purnima shoved her hands into the pockets of her pants. "I'll let her know. She's been pretty easy to train so far. I just point-and-grunt, that kind of thing."

"Guess he's not such a nut," she said. "There was a time on there. Friday, I think? Are you going, or have you got plans?"

"I don't know," I lied. "I guess it depends on what this actually is."

"A zombie rebellion," she said, and dropped her cigarette to the sidewalk. "Get your backs against the wall, boys, a revolution's coming. Rah rah yankee doodle. I guess." She looked kind of amused at herself, like she was pulling the wool over my eyes and enjoying every second.

I figured I could play along. "So the spirit of America lives on ... in the zombies?"

"Who better than us?" She grinned at me again and I smiled back helplessly, then caught myself and coughed into my hand to cover.

"So you remember all this, that you were a pianist and stuff. Do you remember your name?" I looked down at my hand and saw that my own cigarette had gone out, had probably been out for a while. I flicked it away.

"Of course. Andrea." She held her hand out to me and I shook it automatically. Her skin felt strange, but not unpleasant. Sort of like silicone, and almost warm. "You?"

"Huh?" I looked up from where I'd been staring at our joined hands.
"Your name," she said, that amusement back in her expression.
"Welcome to the revolution, Kyle," she said, and lit another cigarette.

Victoria Elizabeth Hartmann Wegerski

and send him off before the driver remembered to ask, Where to?
So he became someone else's problem, or idea of a joke
and left us laughing,
and not believing we'd drink with him again.

Elinor McCarthy Stone
Death Drinks Bacardi

Nobody could figure out how Death got drunk without a bloodstream to carry alcohol to his non-existent brain; or even how he managed to swallow it with no stomach; but the fact remained that it was dark, and Death was drunk, and we were staggering through late-night streets asking him in our own drunken voices where he lived, and should we call a cab, and was he going to share those cigarillos or should we leave him there on the pavement all night? One long bony finger flicked a cheap lighter once, twice, then we sat on a curb, Death and all of us together, and he told us in a slurred voice how he really honestly believed he had originally just been a joke, an enormous joke on somebody but he couldn’t remember who. He felt really bad about it, he mumbled, since killing people turned out not to be so funny after all, and we murmured sorry sorts of phrases and finally managed to bundle him into a taxi
An Excerpt from *The Queen of This Summer Hotel*

Late August,
I speed through the antiseptic tunnel
where the moving dead still talk
of pushing their lines against the thrust
of cure. And I am queen of this summer hotel
or the laughing bee on a stalk
of death.
—Anne Sexton, "You, Doctor Martin"

I.
I watched their knee socks walk around us
in the dark—color coded according to grade.
Wearing a tank top and low rise jeans, I
made fun of their drops of summer sweat,
their ugly uniforms.
We were both drunk and I was supposed to be
"keeping an eye on you" because
you couldn’t handle your liquor
which is to say, you handled
more alcohol than the rest of us:
you, Gina, couldn’t handle yourself.
Camp, still a week away from ending and you,
almost drunk into a permanent stupor.
Even the speed freaks with bursting veins—
your window, and I want to run
under their shadows,
each wing cut sharp
with light, down
to the fields where
you can have the darkness
made by flight slide
up your back, past
the city’s twisted spires
and thatched countryside
to rest in the pine-tops
that I can make out while
you lean over your notebooks
here in the dark.

Kara Lee Krewer
Plea From Pavlov’s Dog To His Master

Do you have no pity for your subject? I am dreaming when you come in, awakened to a bell, drool on jowls and fur.

You don’t understand desire for what it is, something as brittle and empty as a ribcage.

You see it as a golden bell ringing out over the crowds, their heads turning up and expecting, exactly as you taught them, the rewards they might receive.

If you could watch me anytime other than dinnertime, you would see that it is really when fifty sparrows fly past not sleeping for weeks and passing themselves off as anorexic, worried about you in their spare time. thought about calling ambulances and doctors as you lay passed out in the shower.

Gina, I still see you in memory—the exact way those shadows hit your face and fell, spiraling into the curls of your hair. I was, to say the least, tipsy, the effects of stolen red-bull and cheap vodka. For the first time in weeks I was amiable and laughing with you, a complete stranger until that night on the bench outside. Surrounded by campers, we were loud and obnoxious. There was no reason to care because the alcohol that night was the closest thing to food I’d come into contact with in three days—the last being the cherry popsicle that made me sick to my stomach. You commended me on the way my bones had stuck out on either side of my sternum. When I said simply, “I’m not anorexic,” you nodded, patting me on the arm. No, no—I know what it’s like. You don’t have to lie to me.

Tove Karine Danovich
Blizzard

This is the snow you’ve read about in stories, where the magic bear emerges from the wood to carry the girl on his broad back. Gossamer,

you might call the blizzard, hung in air like a rack of gowns, only gossamer means “goose of summer,” and this is midwinter and the only thing stitching its way through these clouds-come-to-ground is a trio of crows—the wind pushing them higher than their course. Tulle, then, in bolts and bolts, veils in tight arrangement upon the crocuses that needled up during last week’s thaw, against the foreheads of the peaked Victorians

across the street; think of the dresses they wore, stiff white satin tight at the bodice, the circle of pearls—the trees wear that now.

I had us both put under by a friend of mine, a pioneer in modern neurology, and the minds extracted from our two persons, exchanged and reconnected in the new bodies without the slightest bit of harm done and very little pain.

When I awoke-- how can I explain this-- I felt I was more myself than ever before, happy for what may have been the first time, having received the thing I very most desired. I can say with confidence that the other self shared in my elation, remembering an age when I would have gone to any lengths to manipulate space and time.

Anne Kathleen Reece
Time Paradox

Because I needed to believe
in the relativity of all things
I made a clone of myself at the age of 17
and sent it on a spacecraft
traveling at the speed of light.

Naïve, maybe.
All I can say is that
20 years passed and one day
in October when I was feeling
particularly low and disappointed with my life
I opened the front door to find my other self returned
waiting patiently beside the morning paper.
She could not have been a day over 18.

By this time technology had made it’s advances
and I knew automatically that this was
nothing short of a divine gift from the heavens.
I embraced her, and immediately
set out to do what I had been planning
for all the long arduous years.

Better to be indoors, where it just glazes
the window-glass, to simply imagine the slow
embroidery of lace and beadwork across the lake’s
breast. Nothing tames a person more completely
than magic—isn’t that what the folktales
teach? Watch, then: the stubborn birds
are dressing themselves in the light, cold fabric
of the storm and the bear rambles the city,
white as this draped shawl of whitest snow.

Karin Marie Gottshal
The Song You've Been Waiting For

We were promised that dragons would rise from our bodies, that the monkeys would leap from us and cover the eyes of those we love, and that a golden fish of hope would charge out from the sewers in our stomachs.

But lately only this slinky black cat leaps straight out of my heart, a cheat cutting corners, trying to spring past this body and onto a balcony where a cup of milk balances on the railing, and stars fly past without warning.

The last light of day hangs loose and exposed down building walls like skinned carcasses in a butcher shop. Everyone's mouth is lodged with a stone, and we want too much. Time crawls and does not yawn for anyone.

Tonight, when you go outside to sit on your lawn, your mind droops down on its stalk like a rose. Let the night-insects come and drink. Sadness can only howl from the blue hill for so long.

The Fibonacci Sequence Poem

Stats
Rocks
Quartiles
Intervals
Deviations, too
Nearly always significant

Mr. David Miller Early

*

A Fibonacci Response

You are too cool to make statistic deviations. Invent romantic intervals.

Ms. Anne-Marie Oomen
And I love it like others love drink or sex or their divine, rhetoric questions, love it for the feeling of the earth finally holding still for just a minute, letting me catch my bearings when nothing else will.

Anastasia Mimina Lugo Mendez

And when that howl quiets you will wish you had someone else’s hand to hold, other your own. These hands have seemed so small as to slip through their own fingers like slashes of light. But these hands, too, can surprise you. They will sing their own song, gaining speed and color, rising out of the palm.

Taya Alexandra Kitaysky
Ride the Wave 'till it Breaks

The first time we rolled the dice
I said Yellow
and you said blue, red, green.
Little did we know it would be all color from then on.

You talk of wanting to be baptized in those nights we shared.
I agree with you,
and still spend time alone in my bed just plunging into the gallons of gorgeous memories.
Then, like the restlessness of saturday nights the fear itches me¾ fear that when time casts you far away from me, we will be left drowning.
Without you I would become my father¾ a shiny silver ball constantly ricocheting in a pinball machine made of women.

Sometimes I regret going farther than finding that hidden quarter within you.

And I buried myself in my work and my home and God forgive me if I broke my child’s heart with sadness but I gave him all he can ask for, a woman to feed and clothe and bathe and care for him, and isn’t that love? I know there are different loves, the love of a man and child of an instinct in your blood asking you to move, something no one understood when I was younger and certainly something I’ve been pretending I don’t understand for the last twenty years. I’ve been waiting, patient like I’m supposed to be and like I don’t mind being but every so often I want to run, want to get a fool of a man like I did before and say Drive to a city, drive somewhere, anywhere like I’m some God damn kid who doesn’t know anything of the world yet, some kid who thinks life is today and that’s the truth but it’s tomorrow too and I know it now, so there is no running, no dancing, no cities or fools, though fools are hard to be rid of in this life.

I dream sometimes of that city, of a dress that rustles like the wrapping paper on new clothes, of shoes that clack delightfully on the dance floor. Forget the lies of preachers saying dancing leads to sin, or dancing is sin, it’s just a want in your stomach that holds control over you like some people say drink does or lust does or even the search for an answer might.
On Dancing

Most fools forget about other people’s dreams. Yes I got what I wanted in life, a husband, a son, but at times I wonder where I lost my life and if I could get it back somehow by asking at every street corner, desperate with age, Have you seen it? Like a madwoman might ask, I suppose. But let’s say you’re not a fool and that you know of dreams and that you might understand how a woman would love to dance, would love to feel the pulse of sound in her spine strengthening the fire shot by her brain, hitting bone and muscle like a mallet—step. Step. Step.

And let’s say you would allow that that woman is me, that I am that woman and that once in my life, before I got gray and started to tie other lives to my waist, I wanted to be a dancer. It’s nothing you would know about if you hadn’t been listening, and listening to gestures and half-thoughts is a dead art these days, has been ever since before I was born. I don’t blame you, or anyone if they missed this, but if someone would tell me today, Rosealee I’ve seen how you dance I might just marry them, Orin forgive me and all, seeing as he never knew. The fool went right off to fight and I stayed here, rooted to the ground, a tree getting thicker every day, drawing water from the earth like a dying man in a desert, wanting nothing more than to move.

So many complications and dead baby jokes.
I’m sorry that I’m unable to tell you why the spaces between our bodies under the covers are empty phantoms.
When you slept on my chest I imagined sex as only the act of whispering.
Thought of how hard-core pornography would consist of five guys all trying to softly whisper into a young woman’s pretty ears as she laughed and smiled and laughed.

At home the old men try to explain love.
"Blood or passion."
My grandfather winks at me, raises his glass of red wine.
"A woman is either blood or passion to a man."
I sneer and take a swig of cheap beer "Yeah, what about gay guys?"

Drunk and dozing on the couch in the dark, I’m dreaming of you rolling on top of me, kissing my neck, and whispering please.
I say no to a shadow
but don't push it off.
My father throws a fat book on my lap-
the Kama Sutra,
almost heavy enough to wake me up.
Although I am as unromantic as an
orange prison jumpsuit,
please understand you turn me on like an electric chair,
pump the ink of inspiration through my veins.
I haven't loved or hated anyone more than you.

You are why
there are three gaping holes
in the white wooden walls of my room.
Two of them are there because I don't hit women.
The other because of the happiness I felt
when I intimidated the other teenager
who wanted to take you.

Like 9/11 you interrupted my life.
As a boy I watched the large gray cloud
grow and blossom
from the distance of my elementary school.
I saw only specks falling,
couldn't tell if they were
chunks of a building.
“There are too many ghosts crowding your mind.
Let me drive,” he demands. Navajo shamans
bleed from his mouth,
his breath stinks of peyote.
I pull over, he takes the wheel, chants
his poems over and over
and we drive through mountains
because it suits us.

Chase Ian Yurga-Bell

metal shards from the plane,
or maybe,
a couple holding hands,
plummeting.

We got greedy with sharp scissors,
cut the strings that took a summer of phone calls to sew.
There is still an urge in me to sweep up
the accumulated gunpowder from our arguments,
pour it into a black urn
and drop a lit match inside.

I know that I want to ride our wave 'till it breaks
because you make me feel like
killing a man
and dancing on a car,
which is exactly what
a lover
and a poem
should do.

James Joseph Wah Mohn
"I was stoned," he offers in his defense, 
"It seemed like a good idea at the time."

Outside Denver he tells me that love
cannot save me from my own fate. He has
dark glasses on, and I know he can’t see
a goddamned thing, not the look on my face,
not the storm brewing in his own words.
"Why are you going back to LA, Morrison?
It can’t save you."
"I’m interested in any activity that
appears to have no meaning.
That’s the gateway to freedom”
I wonder if he thinks drinking is freedom.
I remember hearing him hiccup on “Five To One,”
wonder now if that was him rebelling.
“So, what does that say about your poetry?
Doesn’t that have no meaning.”
“Listen, listen, real poetry doesn’t say anything;
it just ticks off the possibilities. Opens all doors.
You can walk through anyone that suits you.”
He leans forward, smiles with a mouth full of
gleaming Indian skulls.
Jim Morrison Revisited

The evening is scattered on dawn’s highway bleeding.
In the parking lot of a roadhouse somewhere in Nebraska
he walks up, his shirt open. I can see
the skin stretched over every one of his ribs,
like saran wrap over guitar strings. He says
he’s back from La Père Lachaise
looking to go home to his LA woman.
“It’s been thirty-five years, Jim” I say,
“she’s moved on. LA is a whore.
She doesn’t want you anymore.”
He puffs up, makes himself look big
takes a drag from his cigarette, says “I am the lizard king.
I can do anything.” He climbs through the window into
shotgun graceful as a crane, his cigarette burns orange
in the sticky heat of the car.

He admits his death was a suicide,
not a hoax, not an accident. Mr. Mojo Risin’
tells me he put a toaster in his bathtub,
“Death was only going to happen once,
I didn’t want to miss it.”
I have to admit this makes sense,
but a fucking toaster, Jim?
What Happens When You Disrespect an Entertainer

The man hands the monkey a two-dollar bill
to “eeks” of thanks.
The music, the tango, fills the room
like darkness fills a telescope’s eye.
The monkey begins his dance,
smacks his incisors into the hand that just paid him
as the man turns away.
The room, the musicians, stop, everyone dumbstruck.
The echo of one wine glass shattering remains
for only that second masquerading as an hour.
Regularity resumes after the alarm
of a jackpot on the sole slot machine in the corner,
spitting up quarters into the owner’s worn plastic cup,
heard over the unified cheers of the dispersed crowd.

Elizabeth Anne Moss

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The Red Wheelbarrow

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spring '06
The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens

William Carlos Williams