

Sixfold /Poetry Submission

Jesus Christ Toast

Fireflies court disaster, in the pitch black, and roiling smoke.
People see too much in a windshield, it's enough PTSD for a platoon,
for a battalion, I say, and then it re-arranges ...
should be turning
into something
new, the break a day has been longing for, a brow, appearing gradually
in chrome, elongated, old super goon, really, silly putty...
and yet Savior, I'm afraid; what ever has stuck around for the worst,
cold and clear as mountain spring, that could not be muddied, stabbed
in the back, by a shiv of tree roots, gnarled in a garden called Gethsemane?
get some, hissed the serpents, they knew which side
was winning, and which bloodied ... carrion birds have no crosses
to bear, screaming gulls in the ever-shifting mist, and see?
how to make palimpsests last, Lord, what erasure? Will you take another
crack, another tracer, a bite at the apple? Are you coming
back? No hurry,
now that Prince has died, I know my time
as inconceivable, incorporeal, first David
Bowie, then Merle Haggard, and now Prince ... can I tell you
what I've seen, in the interstices of trees? these faces,
spectral but ever green, crowding their way, and turning
as the clouds will, a new key, always, for the lonely and insane.
Is that what brought you? There was a power line, came tumbling

down in an ice storm, writhed and
danced, spit blood orange ingots, a demented blacksmith
said *get some, take a chance*, from a hot spot there; won't say
I grabbed it, but did, sure, and enough PTSD inside me, to last
a few hundred other lives; you knew before the
garden, a thousand days of amber and ochre, of verdigris,
and mist, some shroud, to coalesce, saying *this*, my body, rejoice
and jam, cut by smoke, the snake bit what it could not choke
down, morphing into Rorschach on sourdough, yours
they say left the scent of a burning rose,
bearded one on the Zig Zag cigarette rolling paper
licked and sparked, by Lazarus in extremis, parked
in some pantheon or median of quicksand, center-cut
constellation that cannot be withstood, understand? Oh, I could go
on, this way for eons. How a trillion lilies lie, as one with the sun,
but why? Strangled notes in a field, motes, or souls, I suppose
in a cloud, trying to light, on the first clue of you.
I must change, I must change, I must
change, I must change.

Four Times Untitled

Legend has it the Irish saint
who drove the snakes
into the sea, makes a heady appeal
to most credulity; and yet, at bars galore
come the happy hour,
there's at least three
bound for the floor, who will make
their lives
unrecognizable
to their hearts, as a walking stick
takes the measure of a tree.
Don't get me
started on the stew, --
the cabbage, carrots, pearls
of onion like hospital food,
or a childhood memory
that perhaps didn't
happen, after all, as if there had never
been snake one
in Ireland, since forever;
any mantra is what you say
to yourself, while waiting
out an addiction, *get me through this
next second, hiss of a single day, Lord
I'll toss my crutch...*
Hard for me to talk about
the nurses, and their ethereal laughter
down empty corridors of sickness
cum death, the stilted, stifled
burial laughter:
because what I'd say
is the stuff Saint Pat
waved away,
some blazing cape he wore
on a late winter's day,
dotted with shamrocks,
and he sort of roared
under his breath, hauled that walking stick
up, with two hands like jackhammer,
he fainted left,
and all those snakes

formed, with the movement
of a sea sway, he whipped it back,
tail gunner with smoking bandolier,
those snakes careening
the other way,
an S-curve over-shot
or whip crack, headlong
beyond the cliff they dropped
as lemmings, so many bad Irish
habits, the copperheads and
cotton mouths made surf hiss,
which is the last ruined orgasm, or the third day
of kicking dope: God get me through this, a stiff
breeze in high grasses, susurrus, catalyst:
a hundred million plasma screens
in the dive bars going
under, and a quote
from one Philip Lynott, about drinking
seltzer water before the bed spins come,
and you stop breathing, strangle
on your bile.
Enough being
what, in other words, Pat did, *enough*
and thousands of thanks at that, he went
eye-to-eye with those fangs on a late
winter's day, cape blazing bright
with shamrock, any pulsing
good heart, all saint-like and Gaelic, garlic
stuffed into the brows of vampires...
This is the legend I tell
to myself, in trouble
or perhaps coming through, I say he saved
an Ireland from a sea
of snakes, and I see
him, as he sways a bit yet, in high grasses; sucks
the base of his wrist to elbow, before nodding
and ducking back down
under his hood: hums
the Thin Lizzy song that always
comes, up to a point that no spirit
can live without, and neither
understand. this good,
good legend saint Pat:
most holy, poison
spitting man.

Blues for Atticus Lish

Jamaica Queens, I hit the Jack high flush
full of diamonds
on the river; I shoved my whole life's stack,
smack into the middle, where
a full boat
had lain in wait, since before
the flop, since before
the deal, since before they cut up
the first deck, with some fancy farm implement
from 1863, multi-pronged
solid silver potato peeler, opens wine bottles
on the side, crushes
walnuts, dreams into slush,
known mainly to the Amish, singing delivery men doubling in
circumcision, ship captains and card sharks, all...
the kind of player
who wins, and wins, and will
not much care, who's too good looking,
a Boy Scout who's prepared, who's prepared for
another life, who writes
best-selling literary fiction
from Long Island on the side, who makes Queens
the undoing, Jamaica, when cards
are wired, in the hole,
when he seeks to check, in the dark, maddeningly
precise, erudite, and won't fold until he writes
another Pulitzer Prize winner,
about brothers, separated, living
equidistant lives: and beginning
at the top of every hour, the new deal, a loser going all in
on the button, with Ace - Eight suited, smoke halos, a string
of smirks amongst the remainder
of a table: they have seen it all
before, tragedies dotting the peripheries: Jamaica
the man only took from me, mostly everything and did not
blink, nor care. "How much is there, you figure?" he said,
with one glance, no game of chance for him, and almost
yawned, turning askance, winking at another he said,
"I guess we can cover that, if you're short..."
It's what they're renowned for, these pretty
precocious novel writers, low heeled

sharks on the side,
three steps ahead and one league above
contrarian, hearts made of adrenaline
and liquid copper, the shape
of cigarette boats...Oh Jamaica, the stacks fell
in one direction of friction, the awful cracks
in the felt, a green wonder most tables don't simply
combust, all prefigured endings as Zen, as fiction,
what a dozen others see coming: the shrugging, and the
winning again, winning with a pair of tens, or with nothing
at all; a good bluff never pretends to portend; he rises
from the table, when you're busted,
"for some air," he says behind designer shades, leaving
the way they all came, on top of this, and every other
Jamaica, they say that, too
shall pass, but King of Prussia has been
kicking my ass: I hate to lose, it's like kissing
a garden serpent, placing the word
called blues in a silly pamphlet about birds,
but won't I be alright? I'll panhandle
to Transit Authority, maybe work my way
down the shore; from there, who knows, for sure?
But I won't play cards in New York anymore,
a man ought not gamble, if he's an easy
read, if he cares
a lot, or especially a little: Why, Jamaica,
why, do I have to push it
to the middle? Wish to God I know
then, what will escape me, again
and again, and again, namely
the future, it's so
very rarely
fair.

The Hit Man Clips His Lawn

Because a yard
is a thousand bucks, is a green and living
thing, I clip it

as sprinklers must twist, and hiss

and spit,

at night, they make a sound

like the last breaths of a lush,

like this, like this, like this, like this,

a sound we're not aware of

until it stops;

look, I take care of my lists,
to swab a barrel is one thing, but tending

to the green,
and the living? I clip it
going away, remembering
a hundred jobs
on Saber Lake, keel haul
in a row boat rocked by wakes;
brick necklaces for weight;
ropes of dirty nylon,
the gagging,
sobbing, bobbing and
dragging, much
of what sprinklers must
miss, by night, I'm sorry,
they were simply
another list – silhouettes
in oil slick
rainbows, they cried
like babies when
they know;

I tipped them over
the side,
and the moon
only lit up
the end.

Think of mastery,
or intimacy, monasteries
with complicated systems
of a down,
bamboo flutes, spouts,
tricky spirals, ice cold spring water
bending, unending... the fine
vine gears
mesh, reflecting
ions arranged
as clauses in a contract:

air so thick it's
underwater,
and every stall
is just a longing
for more time.

Shouldn't we stop now?
to stand in the sprinkler hiss, I'm sorry,
but you should have tipped
your slickest skull

back to it, in concert
with the birds, they break

our hearts, dipping innocent beaks
to the shoots, stripping

Hell exactly in half,
the glow worms' issue: a cosine, time
from glistening roots: And what thing
a beautiful woman sees, before sucking
her last draught of air?
more often than not, it was me,
taking her there, clutch
of bone digits, nylon cord
windpipe-tight, spike heels smashing
through a windshield; I'm sorry,
sorry, but that last part

of blades
and my lists, it's only
payback, in stacks
of green upon
the desk, under the hood,
arteries of adultery thrumming
neon, and denial: and what we
imagine as mercy, is only

the here,
now, a little lime
quickenning, raked,
immaculate
verdant tresses
lying clean and still
in a glade:
as all things grow,
they must be mowed
down in rows,
blades I've come
to love

like the birds,
a little time,

and they fall.

It's been a living,
Lord, as any other
misgiving.

JIMMY THE BAKER'S PENULTIMATE FACEBOOK POEM

Song Sparrow, you don't care, I know,
come skidding by, on the fly, into the banks
of my meditation, faster
than a man can blink, with quite a whistling trill,
really a nifty a song you've got there. Do you think
the melody will echo - locate a mate? My belief is approximately
ineluctable, and luck unending, the stillness, and carrying on
when I'm gone; I would leap up there, to place a kiss
on your sweet thrumming pate, but I know
you can't wait that long; to say how a birdie told, stranger
prayers, and delectable bread crusts in the cold April
morn; things of late, little Sparrow, becoming
upwards of insensate: I envy you, as much as the crows do,
give them a wide berth; they are the most knowing
things on the earth, and stranger yet; poor beings looking
ungainly, moon-sick as they duck-walk, and famished
all of the time, all of the time; mostly
they covet your singing, because they cannot: I know
of a murder, come a morning, they listen
begrudging, perched as if to hug for dear life a porch rail,
clothes line, cock their beaks, and failing utterly, out of
time, out of time, start to trash-talk before
departing: *caw ! caw ! caw ! caw !*
they shiver, and shrug
their awful wings.