

## **Sophia's dream**

My baby Sophia still smiles before sunrise,  
on a day mundane as any other,  
before the minutes in the hour have exhausted  
every single attempt to cope.

Dreaming softly under twirling butterflies,  
the cradle lullaby carries her away  
to a far off land of baby rattles and pacifiers;  
bumbo seats and rocking chairs  
and toy blocks ideal for crawling to a red horizon,

where missing & exploited children don't cry anymore;  
their once freezing fingers are now kept warm,  
nestled deep inside the fur of Teddy Ruxpin himself.

And beyond that a field of daffodils—  
row after row of golden thimbles  
in the middle of pinwheels painted ivory,  
feet above a hundred bunnies  
made of plush except for their hearts,  
beating forever beside a gracious sun  
serenading along mommy's voice.

And past the shimmering saffron meadow,  
my Sophia awakes with ocean blue eyes  
given to her by her mother's mother, who's now an angel  
because a very bad man decided to shoot her with a gun  
and she died in real life. Now she's side by side  
with the Patron Saints of children and wisdom,  
guarding the pinkest of barriers and patiently waiting  
for my daughter's next nap so they can once again  
let loose the childproof gates and gladly rejoin  
my beautiful baby to her beautiful village  
of make believe and play pretend.

## Philandering in a Honda

Planes draw lines in the welkin;  
the sun's exhaustion has taken notice.  
She rubs her cricket-legs unfastened—  
my driver who is sure to speed  
this skid road the whole way down,  
where the heaven sent careen hell bound  
in the brink of the devil's fang.  
The fire burns inside our crotches.

And she never wanted to sleep  
like a baby but more like her husband,  
who's undoubting eyes always stay shut  
through the tapping then the pounding  
of the credit card numbers that bear the cost  
of the sex toys he'll never deem handy.

But what do I care about her husband  
sleeping at home, blind to the fact?  
So what if he wakes up to his neck in debt,  
finds his family ripped in half  
like the marriage license his wife and I  
tossed into the rip of the St. Joseph River,  
before a night much like this very own.

Dimming street lamps barely detect us.  
It seems they have all focused their attention  
toward the sex shop on Western Avenue.  
And I can't stop thinking of when  
my brother would scare me  
by shining a flashlight under his chin. I'd scream,  
then he'd call me a faggot, but unbeknownst to him  
I have just purchased the *Couples Cock Ring*,  
and it's specifically made with her in mind.

And gladly I'll place it around myself  
only to revel in the deepest of holes,  
where friction is the first phase—feeling  
the warmth of each other's rhythm,  
our biological stopwatches tick,  
timing the nerves passing the endorphins  
their batons in our own molecular relay race,  
amidst the windshield touching hot breath  
resembling a London fog.

The car is smeared with filth and tapestry  
as we sit, parked, peaking off lover's speed.  
I tell her to let loose and swallow;  
I tell her "*some advice can kill  
two birds with one stone.*"  
She tells me she loves giving head,  
then takes advantage of her own plasticity  
freeing herself from the buckling clasp.  
Inclined to me, for a moment our eyes meet—  
the pit of my stomach in sour pink knots,  
my penis unraveling like a black snake firework,  
preceding the first time ever  
my orgasm didn't end with sticky Kleenex  
and a porno on pause.

I suddenly feel like it's high school again  
and I'm in the utility room of my girlfriend's basement,  
where eventually I came in her mouth  
the same way a sprinkler might wet the lawn.  
The walls dripped with albatross.

But luckily my current concubine doesn't require  
a laundry tub to spit in; she's grown fond  
to swallowing the infamous taste, the feel—  
slimy like a slug, salty as a runny nose.

## Tenacity

is lost over time. Our fingers won't always be able to accommodate precious metals such as tungsten bound to white gold destined to disappear around 65 miles east of Cleveland in a double-bedded room at the Fairfield Inn.

I take kindly to the subtle mustard glow of the wall lamps, permitting light from top to bottom inside the superficiality of room 216, where The Holy Bible imprints itself among a dense layer of dust hidden in the bottom drawer of a soft maple nightstand. And pardon my transgression when I say this, but 2,000 year old literature doesn't stand a chance against a 40" HD television with complimentary HBO and Showtime.

Neither does my wife Stephanie in her black Chantilly lace bra painted over her boring palely white boobs and all I can think about is one of those black & white inkblot tests.

I try not to look much longer considering my wife's breasts will morph together like puddles of mercury, forming an almost perfect symmetrical image revealing to me my persecution. Crocodile heads will rise out the wings of a female moth.

And with hopeless romance redundant as it is, my wife will never grow tired of Bonnie Tyler on Pandora Radio. She will always ask me to massage her shoulders, whisper in her ear tiny soft convulsions that no hormone can resist.

Stephanie lives for those little bursts of happiness; the ones you get when the sun is peering through

glass at just the right angle, as she's laying next to me on a hotel faded comforter and she's under the notion that she's in love, and that in return I love the same, but only the same as two thumbprints are alike.

Half-callused and embedded with germs, our fingers are drenched in zest. For the last 20 minutes we've been eating from the bottom of a bag of wasabi flavored almonds. The spiciness flares our nostrils much like when we argue over money, over lack of money, over the sacks of marijuana I keep purchasing from this Jamaican guy named Glenford, who refers to his enemies as "*bumbaclots*" and never fails to call me a "*rude bwoy*."

The hotel bathroom reeks of burnt pot. The smell reminds me of the giant tomato plants that used to flourish in my granny's garden.

My wife doesn't like drugs. I try to persuade her by explaining that it's human nature to tamper with our own realities. As children, we spin on merry-go-rounds to feel dizzy, collapsing onto the ground like a bunch of marionettes. I used to laugh so hard, my teeth would tingle as if they were going numb.

Stephanie says I can't cope with life. For the sake of solitude, I stare at myself in the hotel mirror, wishing I was transparent, hoping that maybe tonight, this familiar rush of resentment will pass right through me, like the rancid flatulence in my belly because I can't stop overindulging with Adderall and diet pop. I've grown too fond of feeling sorry for myself, realizing that not just anyone can endure a sad

childhood. And sometimes, it's the very own thoughts in a human mind that can manifest into a darkness much scarier than those infamous back alleys of America; the ones where "land of the brave" doesn't apply.

