

Bucket List Item Number 38: Visit an Ex in Jail

I press my ear to the slits
of the window to hear. We
don't even have a telephone
like in the movies. I struggle
with your words, feel the sick
in your court-ordered clothes.
We are far away as if looking
through a giant magnifying jar.
Our hearts have Coke bottles
for eyes. That 's the problem.
You are behind glass, and still
unsafe. I hear the words, *This
is not a mirror*, in my head. *It is
a window*. Robbed of the clichéd
telephone, we act out the only
other one we know: your palm
pressed tight to the glass like
a trapped butterfly. Suddenly
I am ten, doing the trick where I
push my fingertips together, in
and out, in and out, in and out,
like an accordion. If you do it
right, you should feel a phantom
pane of glass where there is
only air. It feels like magic, like
something solid is really there.

Ransom Note to You

*Their relationship consisted
in discussing if it existed.*

-Thom Gunn

This is a gunshot into the eye
of a tornado, during the drunk
of high noon. This is you
telling me no, the muted
milk-tit moon climbing to meet
the sky's mouth. This is me
selling you the dumb self-
centered sun screaming
its bald head off, forehead smashed
against the ceiling of forever
and nowhere. This is me tugging at
me, desperate with *They are both*.
We have another drink under,
remember, an already-drunk-
by-now moon. Because you are
comfortable despite the uncomfortable
way we must sit straight in these
chairs. Only little bits of this
will hurt. These letters are laced
with big plans. But can you
believe I could not find one *Y*
in a great big magazine of big
cut out ideas?

Hard Knot Dream

I opened my mouth to scream. But no words came, only pain like opening a stubborn jar too early in the morning, a slippery that isn't slippery at all. I forced the words out like wind knocked from a person's guts. "You don't care if I ever find the maple donuts!" Is what I wanted, *needed* to say. But I felt like bowling looks when you pick a ball that is too heavy. "You don't..." My chest caged the words, and the words caged my breath until I was a nesting doll of unsaid, holding a sad so big. If it were surgically removed, it would be you after all this time, hurting like a hard knot against my raw fingers and making me want to forget it was ever anything else.

Zero Degrees Latitude
Quito, Ecuador

They stack their pastel homes
against the mountainside,
flat roofed for building up.
Red and blue buses, shoe boxes
full of pictures, pass blindly
at sharp curves. Dogs own
the streets, unleashed. I wonder
how it feels to never belong
to anyone. As a child herds
his goat, rope in one hand
and fistful of *chicles* for sale
in the other, I pretend I am
a compass straining to touch
the stiff peaks of fog, but daylight
doesn't need saving. Like nuns
over hurried hands that scribble,
the sun sends a fevered shiver.
There are other myths too late
to test: *are people really lighter here?*
I ask the colors in the woven skirts
and feathered fedoras. They exit
the subway as pressed
flowers falling from a book.

St. James

*She entered from the back
end of broken, you write.
Who shattered first?*

She wore you like a jacket. Was it
a raincoat or more like a blazer,
smart with elbow patches?

I ask what is true in this poem
although that matters as much
as elbow patches do.

I entered you as a fluke, dollar bill
allured by jukebox: successful
despite my rips and crinkles. I took

to you: satisfying *thunk* of eight-ball
in pocket. No one uses their elbows
that much, I say, especially

not teachers. No metaphor exists
for the type of sad we are
in this dark bar

so in love. The tonic whispers
excitedly to the lime. I listen hard
to what I should say.

Design

for David and Mandi

It can mean many things: a bad metaphor,
for example, the future, a perfect paragraph.
The sample of perfume I rubbed against

my wrists to remember you. What a stupid way
to simulate suicide. It is quiet eating breakfast
in this house that is not mine. Only a pot of white

corn pops one kernel at a time, mimicking
my heart when no one laughs at me, but this
is an attempt at being literal. A half realized

kernel escapes the lid ajar. And I wish to put on
your gloves and turn the pages of all the books
I will never read, unless a mind reader

is riveted by the words in those books. Then,
I might slide on my own pair or read them
ungloved and think perhaps it too means this.