

May 2019 Poetry

### **The Millhouse**

The millhouse reels with hidden traffic.  
Spook and find your sheen on this  
Of all the gray slated days, lately.  
All the gin requests regret from you,  
Honestly and with its bark like  
Splinters as you

Conceive of me breathing and  
Lose face--something you warned  
Would make the last late boom-  
Town's upside seem right.  
Side walls and footsteps crumble  
In the millhouse:

Fissures erasing listerine lights  
And bowties. A century ago  
June and Gordie danced like  
Lives wires and walked past,  
Quiet not to

Wake anybody special as  
They necked and dawdled,  
Waiting for a season they  
Could sink their teeth into.  
Lay-down children

In a sweet place, bitterly  
On parole from this hall of  
Redstone dry-dreams with  
Tiny orange pennies  
On their graves.

May 2019 Poetry

### **Late March**

Forever self-ousted, I'm a riot  
Hiding smartly in the jungle  
I've constructed: nameless  
Notes and papers and  
Envelopes.

Unopened mail will be  
Burned, I tell everyone who  
Sleeps in my bed at night.  
She seems unfazed, and  
Yodels in her dreams.

Sometimes, she's forever  
Busy-minded, busy-bodied:  
All business. Other times  
She leaves the door open  
On the fridge.

These rainy days for our fathers  
Must have meant keeping  
Reading glasses cleaned  
And eating jello meatloaf,  
Or something:

The simple gifts of an era  
That bombed itself dry,  
And later mourned its losses.  
And here we are cheering on  
The couch.

Discount vouchers are a sign  
Of senility, and I refuse to save  
Them, dear. Put the magazine down;  
The scissors too. And please  
Close the fridge.

May 2019 Poetry

### **The Clove Cigarette**

As the sun melts up, splendid rays jutting over alabaster birds, you think on a thousand dropped phone calls. That must be the number, at least. You've got no service on the beach save what's paid to you in stares and clicks of the tongue. Haphazardly you wave the phone around for bars, like they would in a commercial.

It is mid-April, like always, and the sand renders wet sometimes, or viscous with a bedraggled crab surviving.

You feel the tempest-spray like it's the first and last when you're on the beach, like your body needs it: like it's food. No little one, you say to your mind's infant (preparative, fatherly), don't eat the foam. Yes, it looks tasty, like a cloud on land; but have you ever climbed a mountain?

Walking on the shore is ignorance like a child's: expansive and unquestioning and dignified. Forget your flip-flops--shoot, you could forget your brain and the sea wouldn't care. You suppose without either you would be a sea creature, and closer to what a holiday is in the first place. You forget for example that you've got no cell service.

A leathery woman smokes a clove cigarette with alacrity.

It seems like forever ago when you were young, when the young people around you were young, still. They talk about pictures only they see, but describe them with such precision; they cut words right in half, stitch them into figments of imagery and laugh and laugh. You laugh too, but it can be a chore to keep up.

What is the ocean to a young person? Is it that Japanese painting of the wave, waiting for a caption? To you it was chasing plovers, whose little platted footsteps made for a quick parade; it was salt in a cut knee.

Walking by the pier, its truss barnacles stick out like nature's formalwear, and they drip something silly. What if a dropped call is like a drop of water, the event's crescendo welling up and letting go? The relief is the fact that you must face the situation yourself, without input and without hesitation.

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### **The Bad Parade**

Forgiveness is the sound of doused raincoats,  
and two animals shuffling  
to avoid the drops.

Maybe the paper is in his hand,  
and a paper cup in hers.

Maybe worry hangs heavy on their heads,  
judged by some other and yet soaked still  
right through. The rain makes things tense,  
past pressing and damp;  
it makes for a bad parade.

Maybe the pouring reminds them  
of the lore their mothers whispered,  
rope-swing mishaps and the first verse  
of any song from the nineties.  
Reaching home they smile,

hunkered down with goosebumps.  
A disquiet tucks them in.

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### **The Scoundrel**

Precious echo, lastly:  
your nest is free from me  
and the burns of sickly stutters.  
Free from its lease on last year's peonies--  
wine for my father.  
Ultimately, like brown moss burned,  
the neighbors will hear you  
barking at the dog's breath  
on your pillow.

My father (her father):  
it was his dog, anyway.  
The way he limped and yelped  
after shoveling snow  
and held his hands in such high esteem.  
A retort of collective sighing  
makes my red blood seethe.  
The rug reeks with tea he never drank,  
the scoundrel.