

CROAKS & JOUSTS

How to Tell a Girl About a UFO

When telling a UFO story to a female of interest
Don't hold back...
Make the saucer
A Mothership, and
Don't worry,
Although she believes in aliens
More than she does not
And she was the one
Who brought up outer space
In the first place
The woman you are wooing
Will never actually believe you.
When describing the lights
Emitting from this "interstellar gondola"
Use deserving words like:
"Prismatic," "Glorious,"
and "Galactic-tactical"
Make your story an open book
Of your ulterior intentions:
"In this tale, the spaceship is the size of a football field."
"In this story, we [or vaguely referenced girlfriends]
are at this so-out-of-the-way vacation house."
"In this true tale, the conditions worsen quickly—
we think they were stealing all the oxygen within a 3-mile radius—
we went underground, to a small secluded shelter."

You know
Secretly
More than anything
She wants
To witness an event
Of the first kind
Of her very own
And she knows for sure
That you like her
Very much
And she was nearly
Curious about your private—
Abduction scars
Ones that strangely correlate

With a mishap untold:
The diving board trick
at French camp
Displayed long ago
For a brunette
Whose laughs were
Barely contained
Until you could say,
“I’m okay.”
Your current pursuit
Also knows
The most likely direction
Of all your stories
Will always include
The most extreme
Of any possible depictions.
For you and her
This final encounter will be
An experience of the last kind.

Request to a Cliché Acquaintance

I asked Dawn to be my friend
Without question, she is a superstar,
Her smile, in sunrise form,
makes you feel special
like the flash
of perfectly white teeth
displayed just for you.

One of these mornings
when no one else is awake, perhaps,
when everyone, but me, has missed
your rose wash
oozing over concrete alien herbage and
inspiring chirps of edgy hidden birds,
I could be a part of this secret party
a role in the underrated entertainment,
charred by criticisms,
a courtesy of mankind’s morning habits—
the long ago fatigue of colorless sedation
blurring into fresh minds’ ungrateful
efforts—lifting heavy arms

without first waving hello.

Maybe, you just need a break,
I could fill in
the channels between the leaves
with the slow brightness
in putty gray, then tap water blue,
behind the trees' sky patches
like you do
I could get really philosophical
about color theory,
map the first movements
of digging daredevils:
creatures most unaware
of evaporating silence
into heats of tree branch races.

Dawn hasn't been asked
to be a muse, lady, or much less,
a friend, in a long time,
she says this as she sets up
her 9 millionth morning
long ago forgetting the excitement
of her first one
barely able to relate to
the thought of her first few thousand
when she had the impatience
of a theatrical genius, now replaced
with the boredom of an old starlet.

She still impresses me with
how she fire-pops crepe myrtle blooms
with just a brush of pink and yellow
at the top,
how she sets no expectations,
and always greets with "good morning."

I still think she will be my pal
although we would only be able to play
for an hour or so each day
I don't know what she does after
her brightness is officially day:
every morning she is forgotten again,
always rushed off by eight o'clock fury.

I calculate how many chances I may have

to befriend her
I open my eyes with the nerve to tell her,
but like yesterday,
she moved west.

His Majesty the Toad Walrus

Our main toad--
the epicentric King,
We picture seated
on a pinwheel-shaped outpost
of shimmering green spurs.
In each direction
other toads, fanned
to compass points far from
his bounding belch,
defy him with return bursts
a melody of croaking jousts.

Is it really him that we hear
each time?
Full throat, bulldogged blap
pause
and bellowing,
or a potential friend?
We picture that it is he
sitting between
the flowering pots,
tough, brown,
amphibian skin matched to mulch,
His call blubbering
in every direction.

The regal toads:
North, South, East, and West,
claiming territories,
yet, seeking company
for each night,
when the new party begins...
at an undisclosed location.

He, King South Toad,
so loud, we claim him
as our bellowing ward
Louder than a sea mammal
Loudest over

the buzz of electronics
Yet, the croaking invasion
of these fair opponents inspires
my husband, as a loyal follower,
to proclaim with rigid formality
war against the foreign toads:
“They’re not getting access to our walrus!”

You Know Where You’re Going?

They used to tell me I was going to the Moon.
I trusted,
with enough intent,
they very well
may send me up.

I pictured an overly muscular arm
launching me with cartoon zest—
behind it, blue silver bursts
back its trails.

In its role as astro assistant,
I thought remnants of gravity
might catapult me the rest of the way
in transit
vacuuming the last gaps
of credible disbelief
into a mini black hole.

One of these days,
the great punt would begin
a real swift kick
(the punch was too silly an idea)
and I would become a human rocket
once a little girl, but mischievous enough
for all rational adults to agree
I should transform into metal,
blush tin at the final revelation
that for stealing olives from the table
I must leave the Earth.

I envisioned just arriving to the Moon—
smiling big as my new friend
said, “Cheese”

but I never pictured actually living on the Moon
foraging for food—
building solar domes—
jumping with grace
from crater to peak.
Long before I could land,
I would see the edges of my grandma's mouth
make the shape of a waxing crescent.

Blocking

A memory close to the ground
in block shape:
Stored in the cylindrical
Aluminum and paper container
Over the years the edges creased,
Folded, and appeared almost singed.
As new it was the picture
Of a seated toddler
In a blue corduroy jumper
Smiling next to his masterpiece
The placement of a half moon
On an orange rectangle
Then a yellow column
At the top of a green tower
Another child, maybe a sister
Approves
Both hands engaged in
The stacking
Blond in staged pigtails
In her hands,
The blocks that any child would want
Painted wood
Well worked
Just a bit nicked
Clacking, smooth
Toasty orange, muted
Red, moss, and evergreen.
My brothers built
Engineering superstructures
The handled blocks became
Colors darkened with use,
Unlike the picture,

to dusty-finger-burnt-red
to played-in-the-dirt-too-long-orange
to ripening-banana-yellow
The tip of the container
Turned up and became a stand
For the taller towers
How many times I started
Building the structures as seen
On the barrel's example
I was going to make something
Even more extraordinary,
I thought.
Then a hundred times
I remember the frustration
knocking, abruptly,
not always unaware,
my slipshod imitations
of staged blocking.