

THE FESTIVAL REVIEW

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poetry • fiction • nonfiction • translation

THE FESTIVAL REVIEW

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What You Do with the Light

BY BETHANY REID

Winter Solstice, 2020

Walker of forest and clouds,
sure-footed wanderer, creek-jumper—

alone, wild, even in clamor of crowds,
searcher, skeptic, acolyte,

lover of birdsong. Each day
you find your shoes, keep faith

with that girl you were,
join your breath to winter air,

believe in wonder as much as sorrow,
break your words as one

breaks bread, into light.

Birthday

BY SANDRA MARCHETTI

after AS

The boatman
was a bus driver
who brought us
down from Anacapri

to the beach
when we said
we had no interest
in touring the Blue Grotto.

We changed
at a bodega
next to the corner
of sand and swam off.

It was cool, near
October, and you
retired early
to watch.

I fixed my goggles
to see yellow
angels escape
me, a crown

swirling to account
for itself.

I touched water
the color of Windex.

Locked in the changing
room—laughing with
shame—we may have
buoyed the sky.

Four Poems

BY PATRICK MORAN

Medea: Momma Drama-Rama

[From the beginning] [before we could call it] [anything]
[before we could interpret] [her gaze]
[before we could sense it] [in her touch]
[her tenderness seemed] [qualified] [by some unspoken rule] [or law]
[prescribed] [if you will] [by an unseen hand]
[pulling her away] [replacing one impulse]
[with another] [foreign & feigned] & [because] [it was all we ever knew]
[all we ever felt] [we believed it] [to be the norm]
[understood her long silences] [learned to never call her name]
[lived among those formal] [arrangements]
[like one] [who learns] [to live among wolves]
& [she rewarded our obedience] & [our behaviors]
[by sitting soundlessly] [in our presences]
[a royal mother] [a statuette carved] & [concise]
[if she did not seem to notice] [if she seemed] [consumed]
[by the events] [whispered cautiously]
[in the shadow] [of our walls/cisterns/porticos]
[we taught ourselves] [to love her]
[despite the distance] [perhaps] [in spite of her resistance]
& [so] [when she appeared] [rigid lioness]
[our cries/pleas/screams seemed] [not that]
[of innocent victims] [but fragments]
[not unlike her own ghastly task] [to be performed]
[beyond the blood] & [bounty of time]

Waiting for the Guagua

BY PENNELL SOMSEN

For the third time, Maritza pulled her watch out of her bag. It wasn't just her imagination; she'd been in the bus line for more than forty-five minutes. She regretted not using the bathroom in Cine Yara, but the ones without water were revolting and she'd calculated that she could wait until she got home. She put the watch away.

Her neighbor had offered to fix the strap without charging but she was used to keeping it in her bag. Sometimes it was better not to see how the minutes, hours, years marched on. The watch still told the time, she just couldn't wear it on her wrist. For a moment she thought about going to Hotel Habana Libre to use the bathroom there. If her friend was working now, he'd give her the key, but she was afraid the *guagua* would come while she was in the hotel.

To make things worse, she was hungry. Not hungry like during the Special Period, but she was uncomfortable. She thought of the beans and rice at home. There was still half an onion and a tomato — that is, if her husband hadn't eaten them. No matter, at least there'd be rice and beans. And water, but she shouldn't drink more liquid, or even think of it. How was it possible to need to pee and be thirsty at the same time? There were now more than fifty people behind her and not a sign of the *guagua*. Maritza didn't think they'd all fit in the bus when it arrived, but she was second in line. She'd be able to enter.

A young foreigner, American or Canadian, approached a woman dressed all in white, *la última* in line for Coppelia, the famous ice cream emporium, who then silently pointed to the tourist entrance. The young woman shook her head, and the woman in white indicated a skinny smoker leaning against the fence. The foreigner approached

The Greatest Little Rolling Stones Tribute Band the Desert Has Ever Seen

BY KP VOGELL

The desert circuit. I've talked to people in the business, in LA, and they always look at me funny, like we're crazy. It's long drives in the middle of the night, and heat, and dive bars, I tell them, but we're the only Rolling Stones tribute band that does San Bernardino and 29 Palms and Palmdale and Mojave and Ridgecrest. The folks appreciate us out there. They're good desert people. We drink beers with them after sets and get free work done on our tour van.

I've been in the band for five years, since a year after I dropped out of College of the Canyons and moved into a shitty house in the lower Sierras, east of Bakersfield, with Saul and Ory. Ory was my old friend from high school, and Saul was this dude from Oildale, a meth head. Ory and I just smoked a lot of pot, although we once took peyote in the old pioneer graveyard at the bottom of the hill. We were renting the house for dirt cheap, but it had its downfalls, such as the enormous local population of kissing bugs. One killed Saul one night when he crashed out in the meadow behind the house after a two-day spin. Our dog Bluejay found him. It was shocking at the time, the first time I'd seen a dead person.

My Mother's Tapestry

BY ANGELA WEI

In the hotel restaurant, my mother and I have talked about everything already. School, my brother, college. I've made a crane, then a dog, then a fish out of my cloth napkin, which now sits discarded in my lap. She squints at her phone from above her glasses, perusing her thousand unread messages, the bags she is eyeing to purchase, the headlines and markets of the day. My eyes wander toward the swath of velvet curtains, my reflection in the window, a sliver of city visible through the glass. The silence is unassuming and unbearable.

I drum my fingers on the table, stop.

Finally, I ask, "How did you meet dad?"

She puts down her phone and looks at me. "In college. Why?"

"I'm just curious. I want to know," I said, shrugging. We rarely talk about this kind of thing. We are Chinese and therefore stoic.

"It was a long time ago," she says. She takes off her reading glasses, runs her hands through her hair, the gray roots peeking out from beneath the purple-red. She chuckles to herself. "He liked me, a lot."

I lean in.

That was the first dinner of many, where I could catch a glimpse of the tapestry of my parents' love, riddled with holes and fortune and resentment. Each time, my questions snagged on a scrap of fabric, and with those pieces, I sewed together the story of two immigrants working their way from poor, rural China toward the American

Flying Lessons

BY SHAWNA GREEN

We dreamed we could fly, worked to make it happen. To this day, when I'm once again gathered with my two brothers and my sister on the concrete slab, poured and worked by our father decades ago, lumpy section by lumpy section, we point our fingers at the tree and we remember the day Clery, my younger brother, jumped from the tree with two boards and an old sheet strapped to his arms.

And he flew.

We see it still, and we grin and chatter and ignore all that presses in. We forget our father's sagging face and drooping arm in those final years after a devastating stroke. We forget the screeching and uncertain sound of his wheelchair lifting and tugging against the buckling cement. We forget our mother's arthritic and knotted back, made worse by all the lifting and tugging. We forget the yard and the eaves and all that insists we resist one another, and, together, we see possibility all over again, as ongoing and lasting as memory itself. Or, maybe, we see it just once more because we need it. And this simply must sustain us, like helium does a balloon, brief but beautiful.

Clery climbs the tree, shaking all over, teeth chattering despite the summer heat, nervous smile pulling at his lips. He has inched his way across the thickest branch, the one we'd selected earlier that day as the launch pad. Knees bent. Back hunched. Arms extended wide. He looks down at us, terrified but committed. Our best effort, ever. Each of us — Michael, the eldest; myself; and our little sister, Brenda, chomping on a pacifier, diaper wet and sagging — squinted up at him.

“This time we were really going to do it,” we said.

Art

BY SEAN LEMOINE



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