

# 25 TRUMBULLS ROAD

---

CHRISTOPHER LOCKE



Black  
Lawrence  
Press



Black  
Lawrence  
Press

[www.blacklawrence.com](http://www.blacklawrence.com)

Executive Editor: Diane Goettel

Chapbook Editor: Kit Frick

Book and Cover Design: Amy Freels

Copyright © Christopher Locke 2020

ISBN: 978-1-62557-715-3

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher: [editors@blacklawrencepress.com](mailto:editors@blacklawrencepress.com)

Published 2020 by Black Lawrence Press.

Printed in the United States.

# Contents

CASE 3 ( <i>August 2000</i> )	I
CASE 8 ( <i>April 2005</i> )	4
CASE 22 ( <i>July 2006</i> )	8
CASE 34 ( <i>September 2013</i> )	11
CASE 56 ( <i>June 2018</i> )	17

## CASE 3

*(August 2000)*

**EXHIBIT #1** The first night in our new house, I had a dream about a woman who lived under the floor. She smelled raw and cried as she pulled her body between the wide pine planks. I wanted to help her but felt that would be rude somehow. She quieted when she took me outside the house, which miraculously looked exactly like the one we just moved into; our real cars were in the driveway, my real cat was silhouetted in the upstairs window, licking its paw. She brought me into the nearby woods and seated me atop a stump. I watched as she shuffled around a great, gnarled apple tree, humming, dragging her damaged feet. She stopped abruptly and turned toward me, opening her mouth wide. When I woke up, I felt unusual, almost heartsick. The morning was glorious, and my daughter Sophie asked me to join her outside after breakfast to explore our new neighborhood. We went into the woods, discovered an abandoned doll house with three little beds, each bed holding only the head of a doll, nothing more. We kept going, pushing at brambles and dead pine, until we happened upon an apple tree. Around the base of the tree was a muddy, worn path. I felt the blood leave my face, and I could hear music not far off.

**EXHIBIT #4** The woman who lives under the floor came back last night. She was standing in my bedroom doorway, resplendent in a bright

wedding gown. But it also seemed like she'd been crying, and when I looked closer, I could tell that she was rain-soaked, several brown oak leaves matted against her hem. I followed her downstairs, and each time she stepped forward all the doors in the house slammed. When she lifted her foot, they opened. I was close enough behind to see her shoulder blades pushing softly up through the lace. She smelled like coal dust and cardamom. She brought me to the kitchen. Everything, again, was as clear as it is in the normal world: the little microwave clock glowed 3:03 a.m.; the dishtowel embroidered with a purple lilac hung on the oven door handle exactly as I placed it before going to bed. I asked her to go outside, away from this house. She turned around and stepped toward me. SLAM went the doors. I stepped back. She raised her naked foot, and the doors opened, like taking a breath. She stepped down. SLAM. She opened her mouth, and I could hear night clicking around me like an insect. That's when I woke up. My left foot was aching; deep cramp. I sat up slowly, grimacing, letting the comforter fall to the floor. Outside, the wind was rapacious; a pile of dead leaves geysered up from the yard, and a row of little plum trees bowed like the condemned before they're led away.

**EXHIBIT #5** *Redacted.*

**EXHIBIT #7** Planting bulbs, Sophie and my husband work their way around the house to the south side. There, under about five inches of black soil, they discover the bodies of three antique dolls, the kind that can shatter if dropped. All three are missing their heads. The dolls are each dressed in what look like silk gowns, white, and appear to not have been buried long. We have no idea why these are here or who put them underground. "There they are," says Sophie. "There are what," my husband wants to know. "My doll shoes. They went missing after we moved in." Sure enough, each headless little body is wearing a pair of patent leather shoes from Sophie's extensive collection. My husband looks at me funny, and I can tell he's afraid. That night, I get up out of bed and

crouch on the floor. I put my hands on the wide pine boards. That's when I can smell her; all that wetness. She lumbers toward me through the oiled dark, breathing hard, and all I can think is: I wonder how we'll look when they find us.

# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the editors of the following magazines where some of these stories first appeared:

*Barrelhouse*

*Flash Fiction Magazine*

*SmokeLong Quarterly*

and the Authors League Fund, for much needed financial assistance during the completion of this book.



Photo: © Sophie Locke

Christopher Locke's writing has appeared in such magazines as *The North American Review*, *The Rumpus*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The Sun*, *Poetry East*, *Verse Daily*, *Southwest Review*, *Slice*, *The Literary Review*, *West Branch*, *Gargoyle*, *The Nervous Breakdown*, and *Saranac Review*, as well as on NPR's Morning Edition and Ireland's Radio One. Locke's most recent book is *Ordinary Gods* (Salmon Poetry, 2017), a collection of poems & essays detailing his twenty-five years of travel throughout Latin America, and his first post-punk/spoken word album, *Late Lights*, was recently released by Burst & Bloom Records. Locke has received over a dozen grants, fellowships, and awards for his writing including the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Award, state grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, and Poetry Fellowships from Fundacion Valparaiso (Spain) and PARMA (Mexico). He teaches creative writing online at The Poetry Barn and in person at North Country Community College in the Adirondacks.