

Daddy

Michael Montlack

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Schroeder

Wasn't I like a wife in the wings willing
to stab her own eyeballs with toothpicks
then serve them as hors d'oeuvres
at another one of his opening nights?
Yes, like Lucy sprawled (sometimes
spreadeagled!) across his piano, begging
him to take a request—to include me
somewhere in the repertoire—to just
look up through his blonde bangs
and wink at my favorite part. But he
could only see through the porthole
of music, even when I jumped from
the plane I hired to skywrite his name,
those parachute chords catching my pits
so I'd descend with arms outstretched,
as if expecting a hug.

Ancient Aliens

While you're *Just doin' weekend chores* with your boyfriend (or is it fiancé now?), I'm gorging again on The History Channel, trying to convince myself I might meet someone at the gym if only I could levitate from my sofa with the same ease and grace Chinese Myths assigned to "flying dragons" some Ph.D. (with A Flock of Seagulls haircut) insists were aircraft awing naïve ancestors.

They just didn't have a name for it.

I didn't have a name for it either. The alien sensation that descended that afternoon your boyfriend—my long-time friend—finally introduced his *new beau*. A handshake charged like the jolt that same Ph.D. suggests was not the lightning of Zeus scalding humans from Mount Olympus (perhaps for a vice like coveting?) but a glowing beam, some otherworldly force from some bird-thing landing from beyond. The aliens suddenly all the men I believed I had loved. Dwarfed now from the top of a pyramid I couldn't recall climbing. Always falling short. Not enough. Not *it*.

Whatever *it* was.

I just never had a name for it. Until you offered yours. And I was struck dumb, a stargazing primitive willing to carve your likeness into cavern walls, learn your language, spend a whole lifetime flattening the earth into a landing pad in case you might visit again.

Toast

Once a woman who lost her mother
told me the story of a guru rushing
to satisfy his dying mentor's last wish.

For bread. "You see," the woman said,
"if he died with an unfulfilled desire,
big or small, he'd risk reincarnation."

She believed her mother's dementia—
an almost-infancy—had completed
such a cycle. Her mother, never truly
nurtured, finally cared for like a baby.

*

Later, my sister shared
my mother's last words: *Get Michael!*

I didn't make it in time.

For months I've dreamed of a curtain.
No window. Just the curtain. Hanging
in the center of an empty room. Heavy
velvet. Dark grey. Swaying in a breeze
I can see but not feel.

I think my reincarnation's inevitable.

At night I whisper: *Shall we be friends
next time? Cousins? How about sisters?*

Though I am certain: I will be her mother.

Ruth

1935—Amelia Earhart was the first
to fly solo from Honolulu to California.
The Dust Bowl rolled out record heat.
Where at 16 could you have flown or blown?

Surely not far from the family that took in
your baby girl. Like your biblical namesake:
Where you go I will go... Even buried
in the hometown that called you *hussy*.

No aprons or arthritis in my imaginary
portrait of you. Just a faceless silhouette.
A marble cameo laced tight as a noose
around the neck of a voiceless woman.

Ruth—Grandmother—you are a stitch
in the lining of an inside pocket, a vintage
jacket I have never worn. Hanging
in a dark locked wardrobe that smells
just like me.

Unceremonial

Leave my body untended.
Consider it less a wreck,
more a ruin, a slow recline
into the landscape, soft clay
ready for the cosmic kiln.

Just let my molecules be
inhaled by the planet, exhaled
during its next little sneeze,
my unremarkable particles,
tiny satellites dusting
the atmosphere.

Spare the niceties: Don't
bloat my casings with plastic,
over groom my beard, stuff me
into a designer suit finer
than anything I ever wore.

It's all packaging. Sugary
glaze on a stale donut. Like
selecting the perfect outfit
to wear to an orgy—no,
simply deliver me
the way I came in.