

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Eric Howard: Two Poems

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Eric Howard is a magazine editor who lives in Los Angeles. He has appeared in the anthologies *Wide Awake: Poets of Los Angeles and Beyond*, *Eating Her Wedding Dress: A Collection of Clothing Poems*, and *Revolutionary Poets Brigade*. His poems have appeared in *Black Heart Magazine*, *Blinders Literary Journal*, *Hartskill Review*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Caveat Lector*, *Conduit*, *Gulf Stream Magazine*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *Plainsong*, and *The Sun*.

Redhead Venus

I.

She was the suicide vest
he strapped to his chest that made
his eyeballs fly across the market.

II.

She read him *Comus* in bed
then turned the boom box up
so Dylan could sing his sorrows
and lamentations so loud
that the bum in the alley
rolling an empty 40 under his palm
couldn't hear them. The smell
from the bakery filled the room.

III.

At the market he buys challah
and puts the bag to his face like a huffer
but it doesn't bring back her closet
where he smelled her clothes,
a disloyal dog,
for three winters and four summers.

IV.

She read, "Being smeared with grease
brimstone, and gunpowder, they cried,

‘Salt on, salt on this sinful and rotten flesh.’
 Their tongues were cut out,
 and they were afterward committed to the flames,
 which soon consumed them”
 while he made potatoes au gratin.
 They licked their plates in the old kitchen
 painted so many times the drawers were sticky.

V.

He pressed her against the stove, and she told him
 when he made her come she felt
 like a gangster staggered by machine gun fire.

VI.

Past the shimmering magazine rack,
 into the alley off Fairfax
 he’d call up for her to let him in
 and share fresh challah from the bakery
 across the alley, allies for a time.

VII.

The fire, making the appearance of a vault,
 like the sail of a vessel filled by the wind,
 made a wall around the body of the martyr
 not like flesh burning, but like a loaf in the oven.

VIII.

He said he was sorry, but nothing fixed it,
 Not the time he got before sunrise
 to watch her surfing in her wetsuit
 by the pier, when he wanted coffee,
 his brain burning, shoes filling up with sand.

IX.

How could he ever not want her
 redheadedly wanting him?
 He sees the women at the market but remembers her.

*

Heart-Shaped Ring

I want you more than a quarter.
 You make me spin
 chrome wheels and gears.
 I could own this grocery store
 but die without you,
 shiny purple anodized
 baby in a plastic bubble
 that opens with a pop.

Your unpolished seam
scrapes my finger lovingly.
Do you know how far you'll travel,
from house to house,
lost between cushions,
found in nightstands?
Rolling in my palm,
you circle the world.
You hardly weigh a thing.

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