

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Alexis Fancher Rhone: "Subterranean Lovesick Clues" & "Polaroid SX70 Land Camera"

Alexis Rhone Fancher · Thursday, October 25th, 2012

Find [Alexis Rhone Fancher](#)'s work in The MacGuffin, Rattle, Fjords Review, BoySlut, Le Zaporogue, Gutter Eloquence, Good Men Project, Bare Hands, Poetry Super Highway, Poeticdiversity, High Coupe, Little Raven, numerous anthologies, and elsewhere. Her photographs, published world-wide, include the covers of Witness and The Mas Tequila Review. Nominated for two Pushcart Prizes in 2013, she is poetry editor of Cultural Weekly.

Subterranean Lovesick Clues

1.

I remember listening
to Bob Dylan in Donna Melville's attic
bedroom, 3 a.m. We were
drinking her daddy's bourbon, playing
Subterranean Homesick Blues over and over,
memorizing it word by mumbled word.

Johnny's in the basement,
mixing up the medicine, I'm on the pavement, thinkin' 'bout
the government... Donna passed me the bottle. The bourbon made me sick but I took a swig
anyway. I didn't want her to think I was a lightweight. The word might get
around.

Maggie comes fleet foot, face full of black soot...
Donna took the bottle to her lips, her moon face flushed,
beautiful. She was my first Catholic and I was in
awe of the certainty of her faith, couldn't take my eyes off
the lucky gold crucifix that dangled between her breasts.

"What do you think *Freewheelin'* means?"
We were on the bed, pretending to study
the album cover, Dylan and some blond on
a New York street, looking happy. "I think it means fuck the
consequences, just do what you want," I said.
Drunk, reckless, soon I'm ready to do what I want –
let my hand slip from the
album jacket to Donna's left breast. Her sharp intake of breath. My tom-tom heart.

Look out kid, it's somethin' you did God knows when but you're doin' it again...

These were the moments I lived for at 13: the hot, disheveled solace
of Donna's attic room, her clueless family asleep below,
Dylan's growl on the stereo,
Donna in my arms, her lips on mine, her tongue down my throat,
Fingers fumbling with my
zipper.

2.

Get dressed get blessed try to be a success...

3.

Donna hits the Confessional.
"Father, forgive me for I have sinned."
I am that sin. I listen in.
"I kissed a girl," says my girl.
"You'll go to hell," says the desiccated
man in the box.

4.

light yourself a candle...
you can't afford the scandals...

5.

The Gospel According To St. Donna:
She is the innocent,
I am the sin.
I am the bad girl
That let the sin in.

6.

I remember listening
to Bob Dylan in Donna Melville's attic
bedroom, 3 a.m., the last time I drank
her daddy's bourbon, the last time we ever touched.
This was the moment I dreaded at 14: Afraid of
the spark, afraid of her own ignition –
Donna changed the rules.

Jesus had entered the bedroom.

"See ya," Donna said as she walked me
out of her life.
Soon? I asked. (A girl can dream, right?)
"Sure," she said.

7.

She didn't call.
I didn't call back.
You don't need a weather man to know which way the wind blows...

Polaroid SX70 Land Camera

There's a reckless streak in me I can't control. It makes me do dangerous things. I know it's wrong, but I always fail—no willpower at all. The thing about Wayne, I tried to keep my distance, but he was hot, sexy in a middle-aged sort of way. He reminded me of some of my father's friends.

I thought we were kindred spirits.

“I dream about you at night,” he said, his voice husky, low. His breath smelled like clove gum and cigarettes. “I dream you do everything I tell you.” He stepped into the small office in the back, came back with a Polaroid SX70, smiled and handed me the camera. “I want you to go into my office, pull down your panties, spread your legs and shoot a photo for me. You know what I want. Something really hot.”

The phone rang. He picked it up. “Wayne’s Volkswagen Repair.” He turned back to me, leering. “I’ll make it worth your while,” he said.

I sat on the cold metal stool at the counter, legs crossed, black skirt riding up my thighs. It was a long way from Shangri La. Fenders and transmissions littered the floor, tools hung on pegs nailed into the walls, and half-rebuilt engines balanced on benches and worktops. Every surface was covered with a layer of greasy dust that mingled with Wayne’s ever-present cigarette and made the air heavy and hard to breathe. What was it about these sleazy places? I felt sick. My stomach bottomed out with that familiar, crazy swirling. Sickening, but I still craved it. Bad girl with a bad habit. Very, very bad.

I clutched the camera, watched the dust particles swirl in the light shafts from the open door. I could leave, follow the light right out to Lakewood Blvd. Get away this time, before I got in past my depth. Instead I looked inside to where the light ended, where it spotlighted the Rigid Tool calendar with a naked “Miss July” hanging in the place of honor behind the cash register. Someone had given her a mustache. My head hurt from the loud banging, rhythmic, like a clock striking, going all the time. Wayne’s two Mexicans pounded metal out back, competing with 40 mph traffic on the street. The Golden Oldies station blared out the hits.

I couldn’t hear myself think except to think that Wayne was waiting for an answer. To think that I should get out now, be that lady my mother raised me to be. Cold hands. Cold heart. My mother. I could never tell her, she’d never understand about this. About why I do this. Over and over! About how crazy I get around the wrong kind of man, a man like Wayne, so crazy when he smoothed his black hair back from his face and wiped the sweat on his greasy jeans. Slumming, that’s what she’d call it.

But me, I never listened, I was too busy dreaming about how his blue work shirt was half unbuttoned. I could see the thick hair on his chest and the pocket of his shirt that said “Wayne” in big red letters. Crazy for his smell—his hands—big hands, calloused, black in the creases. I wondered what they’d feel like on my skin. I wondered what he meant by “I’ll make it worth your while.”

Wayne looked right at me as he hung up the phone. “Well,” he said. “What’s it gonna be?”

We are proud to publish Subterranean Lovesick Clues for the first time here. Polaroid SX70 Land Camera was originally published in Downer Magazine’s October, 2012 issue.

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