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# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Suzanne Lummis: "The Perfect Man" & Three More Poems

Suzanne Lummis · Thursday, May 23rd, 2013

Suzanne Lummis has poems forthcoming in the debut issue of an ambitious new literary magazine edited by Christopher Buckley, *Miramar*, in *Solo Novo* published by Glenna Luschei, and a defining essay and special feature on the Poem Noir for New Mexico's *Malpais Review*, for which she is the California correspondent.

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### The Perfect Man

(A Nursery Story)

For the men who've asked me,

*Why isn't there a perfect man  
in any of your plays?*

He's lonely.

There is only one of him.

He's like the last-of-its-kind  
someone captured  
and shipped back to the zoo.

Except he  
has never been captured, only  
by the mirror that captures  
his image, speaks  
the same reassurance:  
*you are the fairest . . .*

He sighs and, from habit,  
straightens his tie, though  
already it marks the shortest  
possible  
distance between two points.

It's terrible being a myth.

Why can't he do goofy  
ordinary things—  
cruise down boulevards,  
be in a play?

He moves  
through his rooms,

those spaces clean  
 as deep space but stuffed  
 with pure light.  
 Why can't he be bad?  
 He fires a cigarette, lets it droop  
 from his lips with a roguish  
 nonchalance. No ash  
 falls from its tip.  
 No smoke rises.  
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## Fruital

Two men wheeling their stuff pull  
 past and I catch *I've given up trying  
 with her, it's fruital*. The airport hums  
 with frustration—ice-rimmed,  
 delayed and grounded planes.  
 It's like when all the thwarted  
 ambitions of our lives sprout fruit, aromatic,  
 thick, and—Shoot!—we're back  
 in the Garden of so-called Eden again,  
 this time at the Tree of  
*You Ain't Goin' Anywhere*.  
 We devour the syrupy, noggin  
 shapes—smack! Now we're crammed  
 with those sugars and stuffed  
 in our windowless seats—sticky  
 and fat. But how can a plane lift  
 from the runway with us in its hull? It'll  
 quit trying. We're stuck and it's fruital.  
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## Femme Fatale

It's a crime story she's in:  
 betrayal and larceny, few clues.  
 Someone stole what she lived for,  
 made off like a thief in the night  
 or high noon. What shall she do?  
 This: slide a heel on each foot  
 and set out, snapping at each step.  
 The man she loves smiles  
 from the drug store's rack  
 of magazines, just in.  
 Looks like he's wrapped his move,  
 dropped his wife on a Frisian Island  
 and is flying his girlfriend to St. Tropez.  
 The men who love her finger coins

in the stale linings of their front pockets,  
 and whimper What's your name?  
 The job she wanted went  
 to the man who tells the truth  
 from one side of his mouth, lies  
 from the other: a bilingual.  
 The job she got lets her answer  
 the questioning phone all day.  
 Her disappointment has appetite,  
 gravity. Fall in, you'll be crunched,  
 stretched thin as Fettuccine. Watch  
 out for her, this woman,  
 there is more than one. That woman  
 with you, for instance,  
 checking herself in the mirror  
 to see where she stands—  
 she's innocent so far, but someone  
 will disappoint her.  
 Even now you're beginning to.  
 Even now you're in danger.  
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## Hurrying Toward the Present

“No past tense permitted”  
 – Kay Boyle from *A Poem for Samuel Beckett*  
 Darlings, this may be the only  
 great escape we ever make:  
 start dropping your past  
 behind you—seeds, kernels  
 to be pecked up by scavengers.  
 You won't find your way back.  
 Or try this: package it,  
 mark it Was. Leave it in a locker  
 at the Greyhound Bus station.  
 Leave the door ajar. Let  
 a thief inherit it. You can bet  
 it'll dog him like it dogged you.  
 Step smack-flat into  
 the blasting present,  
 your heart asserting Now-Now.  
 You feel neither the pain  
 left behind, nor what waits  
 tapping its hard foot  
 up ahead.  
 And now, stand up the future!  
 Let it go on pacing and cursing  
 as it peers towards your whereabouts,  
 and the cat's eye gleam

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of its watch calculates  
the lateness of the hour.

*Cultural Weekly is proud to premiere this version of 'The Perfect Man' (an earlier version appeared in Solo) and 'Fruital.' 'Femme Fatale' first appeared in Solo, and 'Hurrying Toward The Present' first appeared in The Cider Press Review.*

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