

Cultural Daily

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Victoria Lynne McCoy: Three Poems

Victoria Lynne McCoy · Wednesday, July 11th, 2018

SONNENIZIO ON A LINE FROM NERUDA

Girl with the feet of the needy, accustomed to stones,
 girl with the thirst of a river, canyon-deep,
 troublesome, the way, it seems, only a girl can be.
 I grow drunk on my need to call something beautiful
 until I believe it. I have not been a good girl. I have kissed
 my way up to the glass casing of my inevitability. A wall
 of palms, pressed and paling against what hunger
 they cannot claim. I have not been a good girl. I don't care
 what ire fattens the stones. I risk fragmentation,
 girl with graves dancing at her feet. Let me not be afraid
 of sweetness when it crawls to me with my name in its teeth,
 needy little thing. I have only ever been a good girl
 if good means freckled with pleasure, means taking
 the world in my mouth, and swallowing what I must to keep it.

*

THE HEROINE KNOWS A FORESHADOW WHEN SHE SEES IT

Halfway through the second date,
 he explains how I ooze sexuality.
 He explains how I should just be
 myself instead of quiet
 and when I tell him quiet *is* me,
 he explains how he can *fix it* with a shot
 of whiskey. He waits
 until the blaze in my throat settles
 into smoke before he takes aim
 at its delicate slope, a skilled hunter—
 I know the kind, churning liquor into a blind.
 He leans across the barstool, bites down,
 his breath lead-quick
 as he explains just what he could do to me
 in bed, explains that's *just how he is*. He is

an echo chamber and I am the sound
 rattling around which he mistakes for his own
 name. Two-thirds of the way through
 the second date he explains how he embraced
 his rape fantasy—well no, not his, this time,
 this one always someone else's and isn't he
kind to oblige. All this from the muzzle
 that minutes ago pressed to my neck
 to convince my body of his body,
 its wet ring a scorch mark, a round burning
 room with no exit. The verb *to chamber*
 is to put the bullet in. Is this why
 in some other contortion chamber serves
 as another word for bedroom?
 He explains he had to take a shot at it
 as I verb every way I can away from him.
 My body is done being chambered
 at the end of dates that then never end
 for me, not fully. I bullet into the early night air
 before the third act can circle back to the rifle
 on the wall, before another man's hands
 fulfill the promise of a trigger.

*

50 WAYS TO SAY GOODBYE

Driving home along the coastline
 the catchy song comes on the radio:
 the man's been left by his love
 and, pride-stung, devises elaborate lies
 to tell his friends instead how she died.
 The water on my right is blue as a body
 and pierced through with restless bouts
 of light. The song pricks my skin
 even after I've changed the station
 and I'm left in a deathlike silence
 to concentrate on getting home safely
 where someone no longer waits for me
 because right now, in cars across the county,
 countless people are singing cheerily along
 to the commonplace refrain: it's more acceptable
 for a man to kill off a woman
 than be rejected by one.

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