

A dark, textured, horn-like object, possibly a piece of wood or bone, is shown against a light blue background. The object has a sharp, pointed tip and a rough, weathered surface. It is positioned diagonally, with the tip pointing towards the top left. The lighting creates strong shadows, emphasizing its three-dimensional form and texture.

Satanic Canticles

Andreas Gripp

Satanic Canticles

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Satanic Canticles

Andreas Gripp

Beliveau Books

Satanic Canticles

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NOTES

bar-ba-loots: Dr. Seuss' bear-like creatures

truffula: fruit from Dr. Seuss' truffula trees

Sheol: Hebrew realm of the dead

Selene: Greek goddess of the moon

Artemis: goddess of the hunt & moon

Shtreimel: Ashkenazi Jewish fur hat

timpani: a kettledrum

Sola: variant of Sol, the Sun

Grok: generative AI chatbot

Theravada: a branch of Buddhism

koan: a paradox to be contemplated on

noumenon: knowledge beyond human senses

ichor: blood-like fluid in the veins of the gods

Orthrus: two-headed dog from Greek mythology

Biellmann spin: figure skating move in which one foot is held while the other spins on its axis

Burj Khalifa: the world's tallest building located in Dubai

Pentobarbital: a drug used in euthanasia



**Shove your *Michelin Guide to Peru*
where it doesn't shine**

Autocorrect has
changed our grand
announcement. Instead of
We have a new cat

We have a new car

The fresh set of wheels
is a Jaguar '26, at 3.9
percent, snagged in the
very moment the
'27s were set to pounce.

In black we'll be mistaken
for a panther, stealthy
like Chad Boseman,
headlights that are set on
Siamese, blinding anyone who thinks
they'll win at *chicken*.

We'll morph to a pair of
nighthawks, no more off-to-bed
at 8pm;

our vision will be spotted
from the neon—the blink of flashing
drinks—slugging martinis
with the mayor &
all his cronies, no longer having to
slum with the hoi polloi.

It'll be taxing
to live *up* to expectations,
the vacays that we'll post
on Instasham, weaving through
the Andes
with Mr. Whiskers in the back,
panting in delight,
drool on his cold-cut tongue
like a witless pooch,

evoking the one we saw
in the *Aston Martin*, the
Bulldog riding shotgun
as it passed, its tires bleeding air
as if some hulk had
gave a gut-punch unbeknownst—

exhausted by its rattle
as it idled, while man & mutt
had dawdled in the den,
their endeavour to fold
a map to no avail, quibbling
over the route
most picturesque; obelisks
mottled about, rest stops for the
time that nature beckons.

Fred the Floating Head

I'm learning that no one
fancies living in
colour anymore.

That's what buddy
in his turtleneck
has to say. The
black-on-black
backdrop—channelling
his inner *noir*.

It's a latent
insurrection
to the orange
countertops, the humming
from an avocado
chill, popsicles the
spectrum of an arc,
either end the crock
of Irish gold.

St. Paddy's will be *grey*
in lieu of green. Eggs of Easter
painted achromatic.

And the day of
hearts & flowers?
Any shade of red
will be illicit, its hue that's
blood not sex. We will finally
crush our trauma
with our pall.

We'll drive off
in our Chevy
Silverados, muted in their dull
exterior. To our charcoal
condominiums in the sky.
Even the *realtor*
only posts on cloudy
days. Everyone having
picnics by the river
while it rains, umbered
by the swell of human
muck.

Despite their wane
to white, umbrellas
will still be useless
in the wind.

50 million
brollies blown away,
chased by ashen kids,
dashing to their bleak
& drab horizons.

The Speed Reader, or Grieving Quasimodo

*... they found among all those hideous
carcasses two skeletons, one of which
held the other in its embrace.*

—Victor Hugo

*And my poor bar-ba-loots
are all getting the crummies
because they have gas
and no food in their tummies*

—Theodor Seuss Geisel

I know a man who
claims to have devoured
every Tolstoy in half-a-day.
It took me half-a-decade
to get through the fucking *Lorax*.

Hugo, he said, was just a little
tougher. Spending 13 hours to
down both *Hunchback* and *Les Mis*.
By the time I'd finished
a single Hardy Boys, they were
the Tardy Geezers, endeavouring
to solve who cheated during
Edith's bingo night.

It's possible that
he failed to be enamoured
with Esmerelda, that Quasimodo
only needed a chiropractor,
scoffing at the chance that even
the ugly can win at love,
no matter how scant the odds;

or maybe *I'm* the problem,
assuming that he doesn't stop
to ponder, smell the thorns
before the roses, that he's full of
bloated air—as if he's got the
crummies; that he's parroting
all the notes of Cliff & Coles;

yet if I were being candid,
he's a far braver bloke
than I could ever hope to be—

my failing to finish the novel
because I cannot bear its end of
bone-on-bone; still clinging
to bar-ba-loots,

eating their truffula
in my daily reveries, its trees the
shape of pom-poms—

held by cheering girls
my junior year, ones who
wiggled their hips while
I was tacit in the bleachers—
alone & hot & bothered—
wishing I'd joined the reading
club instead, boasting
I would undertake
Cervantes' *Don Quixote*; assailing
whirling windmills
like some beast from a picture book.

Prophecy

Meh must be the
most boring word
in the history of
boring words.

Meh is the weary
lift of a turtle's head,
knowing it's one
more false alarm
amid the sirens.

It's the race of
slug & sloth, celery
awaiting the winner
in fifteen years.

It's hour number
three of your college
lecture, the one about
the strata, earth's early
bacterium, when you wish
you'd fled the room —
while the professor's
back was turned,

his snap of
broken chalk
that froze your feet.

It's the *bland*, lukewarm
rotisserie, the white
of milk & meat, the chicken
who insists he
isn't scared, his shrug
outside the house
you swear is haunted.

You know it's all an act:

the feigning of disinterest,
the stretch & yawn of cats,
who plop back into bed

while Jerusalem begins to
quake, yet *another*
Second Coming they've been warned
is a thief in the night.

**Double Entendre,
or Fester Fuddle's Satanic Canticle**

Pastor Fuddle's sermon
is *Everything not of God
is of the Devil*.

He cries that Christ
did not compose
Hey Jude — ascribes it *Lucifer/McCartney*.
Everyone bought the line
“it's for Julian” —
ignoring Treblinka's
yellow stars. The debt they owed
for spurning their Messiah.
Or some *misplaced*
sympathy for Judas. I think *who*
is to say what's worthy
of symphony? A 30-piece
orchestra?

Stairway to Heaven
was headed the wrong
direction, he spouts with
fist-on-pulpit, damning the
flotsam from the pit of Hell.

Plant will stay there planted—
for all eternity.

In the obligatory
handshake line,
I tell him he's the funniest
piece of turd
I've ever heard, trusting he'll
find the rhyme
straight outta Sheol.

*Poets will be the
first to fry*, he howls to the
vaulted ceiling,
especially my beloved
Ginsberg, the Jew who knew
too much—of man, of sin,
of cocks which rise three
times before the dawn.

The Philodendron

You dubbed it *Phil*
for short, verdant
by the window
fringed in snow.
Though you water
twice a day
it's yet to wane,
fading like Selene
or Artemis, once
our morning strobe
is set to soar.

You expunged
your cold abode
of all its red;
a valentine
foreshadowing
loss of blood, still pocks
your thrumming organ,
your unexpected
reason
to be —

our assuming
you spoke of *Philip*
across the hall—
muscled girth,
sculpted jaw,
his compelling
cleft-in-chin,

not supple *Philomena*
atop the stairs—
lover of the moon—

who way too soon
was smitten, not by Eros
but with Hades,
his myth that *darkness*
heals us quicker
than the *light*, if not
too much of one,
not enough of other.

The Kippah

I'm considering
converting to
Judaism. Only so
I can don a yamaka.
My bald spot's
like a cancer —
one of *embarrassment*.
I should be in a
fucking monastery
baking bread. But those are the
Franciscans. Watch it
spread & conquer
every inch upon my
head. Like the blob —
goddamn Slavic genetics.

Some idiot on
Seinfeld
converted for the food.
I mean *sure*, a knish
is nothing at which
to *sneer*.

I won't even mention
circumcision.
That's not the
biggest problem, believe-
it-or-not:

According to the
Jewish calendar, it's 5786.
The Holocaust
occurred this very
century.

How can I revel to
the *Fiddler on the Roof*?
How can I be glib,
telling Mrs. Blonsky
her matzah ball soup's
worth *dying* for? Feeling *guilty*
that my teeth have all their
fillings, holding back my smile
when the Rabbi utters
cheese? Kosher, of course.
I'm not an infidel.

I'll refuse to
utter YHWH's
sacred name. Be grateful
that I'm *chosen*.
Somewhat late to
the game, I must
confess—but an adopted
son of Moses nonetheless.

Cecille B. DeMille
has told my story. The coloured
eggs & rabbit?
I don't need a brood of brats,
gallivanting through my
yard like little shits.

I'll graduate to a *Shtreimel*
one of these days, thumb my
nose at skinheads itching to
hand me a can of whoop-ass:
on the inner-city
bus, as the Sabbath has
dawned & risen with the moon,

their tattooed knuckles
burning in Aryan rage,
their 2026 a distant
past, sunken with the
sun

and the squeals from
a drunken cantor;
some curious kind of
mensh, still awaiting his
pledged messiah.

Egypt

*Then Joseph said to him,
I will explain your dream.
Three branches are three days.*
—Genesis 40:12

Someone told me
kids can't tell the time
with an analog watch.
One was using a wall
clock as a plate for his
pizza slice. The second
hand bogged in cheese,
lodging that moment in forever.

A little girl told me
the hands move more like
feet—the smaller
lagging behind, dragged
as if a clubfoot
in the sand, a mummy
that's awakened
wrapped as spool.

This is lacking a
coherent thread. How did I go from
Rolex back to Ramses
in a single strophe? Why did we
ever desert
the hourglass?
Because it wouldn't
fit comfortably
on our wrists?
Is *that* the worth we place
on plunging grains?
Water's not the only
thing that's lovely when it
falls.

All is superseded.
Sundials were in every yard &
garden. Then the clouds gushed in
as a plague, their blight of
grey-on-grey — things once lit
in umbra —

children sleeping in, too late
for their bowl of *Pharaoh*
Crunch,

would leap like
famished locusts
in colourless grass, rushing

to catch the camelus
headed for school,
its driver passing early
since he craved a caffeine's
jolt—without their whiny queries
on the time;

taking in the vista of
the Sphinx, savouring
his morning Joseph
in the drizzle, dreaming
to snatch a spectrum in the mist.

Sacrifices

The times I plop the *ketchup*
on spaghetti

I do it for you.

The smack of a newborn's
bottom after birth.

But it doesn't flow like
blood as Catelli would.

The Smucker's upon
the leaning heap of
flapjacks? Ones that
swell in our skillet
like pregnancy? Jam
is half the cost of
maple syrup.

I also keep in mind
the thawing trees—
so they can share their sap
instead with the tots of nature.

I know you think I'm
stingy. That the reason
I'm pouring water on our
daily Franken Berry
is that milk's gone up again.

You don't buy my line
that I've gone vegan,
that cows are the cause
our "cheese" is bland tofu.
Not the mini-mart's
2-for-1.

Darling, if I hadn't
nipped the nickels
we would have never been
adrift upon our boat—
the one you called a raft, befitting
Gilligan, amid our off-
season vacay in
Chesapeake Bay,

your assumption I thought it
Cheapskate, regifting
you my mother's
rosary, something made of wood in
lieu of pearls, saved
for the birth of our babe
who never was;

every bead a prayer,
every kiss my hailing
of your grace.

Casablanca, or Our Teflon is a Liar

This morning we're
scalding our tongues, drinking coffee
right out of the pot; the stacks of cups
that lean upon the plates
like tilt-a-whirls.

The dishes won't wash themselves.

But one time it will
happen while we slumber.
I envision the tongs
that upended the franks
hushfully turning on the
tap, a spoon which stirs the
Sunlight into froth; a waft of quasi-
lemon while the knives are
first to leap into
the bubbles, shoving the
other utensils
like a lout along
the deck of a local pool;

the spatula hoisting
the forks with one accord,

flipping them like it's
done a thousand omelettes;
views their *plunge*
into the sink to play a
raucous Marco Polo—
the colander winning again

while the wok cries *it's a cheat*;
the cleaver standing
sentry like a lifeguard
should we wake, concocting
a silly fable of
a burglar who came to pilfer,
so revolted by the chaos

that he resolved to sponge them up
before he fled with Foreman's
Grill, George's promise
that our steak will turn out
better than the Keg's—
the one which we stopped using,
a sonuva bitch to scrub,
dining out instead with
our excuse it's a special day—

maybe in Morocco, where they've
mastered the art of eating
with their hands, never
spilling a crumb upon their
platters, which the children toss
as frisbees while the parents
put their feet up for another
lazy night beneath the stars.

Endurance

*Where you die, I will die,
and there I will be buried.*

—Ruth 1:17

There are not enough words for
love. Maybe in other languages
but certainly not in English—
which is obviously the case
since we've co-opted every
variant of *amour*.

Fervour and *enchantment*?
Riffed from Latin class.
Eros from the
god of Acropolis.

A thesaurus isn't needed
when you mean it. Hear it in
the patience of another
diaper change. I wipe although
we've never had a baby.

Jacob waited 14 years
for Rachel. A pair of perfect
cycles while he toiled—

his vineyard gone to raisin
in the wind.

Wine is best when aged in
casks of oak. Not because the
grapes have been matured,
but the tree which gave its wood
before the seeding.

On the day of my final call
to Willow Acres, I'll read
you the story of Ruth.
A quilt will shroud your
shoulders while I espouse
her enduring voice.

I'll croon in acapella, lyrics
that I've conjured off the cuff.
The tap of my
Sorrentos on the tiles
a timpani; my mother's
cherished napkin used to
swab your drooling mouth—

folded like the
origami heart I tried to
forge, mutating to a
hat she chose to bear
when all her tresses
became a carpet for the floor.

Chester

The cat of which I scrawl
is but a menace.

He doesn't make
an attempt at being cute.
His purr is like a
Dodge without a muffler.
He will bite you to the
bone and meow *it's love*.

I bet that he was birthed
in smugglers' alley, in a litter
among the litter,
taking a dump
wherever he pleased.
His papa was a pirate,
felling Puss in Boots;
his mama vowed
to never have sex again.

And he'll watch with
glee the mouse that
gets away, laughing
at our traps,

downing the
block of brie
we leave at midnight
as a bait.

He's never done a
thing to help us out;
merely shrugs with his
indifference to our pain,
our sodden *handkerchief*,
thinking he may use it
as a toy.

You tell me *every cat's a booger*
and you're right. He plays us
like a fiddle
on the roof. Leaves us
for the larks
to paint us white.

He devoured all our
chocolates by the tree,
then knocked it down at
Christmas as he peed.

Sits upon our laptop
as if it was made
to warm his ass. Scratched
up every Warhol
in his reach. Our sofa
like the Passion of the Christ.

And yet we still adore him,
cradle him in our arms,
like the chubby
neonate
we never had,
his broadening Cheshire grin
amid our cuddles,
our stupid, googly eyes,

a canary in his gullet
we thought had flitted
out the window
to be free.

On My Decision to Retire as a Poet

You say I should hang up my quill.

Everyone's grandma

& her dog are posting poems.

It's not the grandmothers

I'm concerned about, their

odes to orioles—

it's these drooling

sons-of-bitches; their ghazals,

villanelles—to a flea-filled

water dish;

the couplets on their

human's forlorn crocs,

laced with bites & upchuck

since he passed; the plop of meat

from a can, its rings from tin

chiselled in its jelly,

like some avant piece

of shit at the Guggenheim.

Competition from the grandmas

I can handle. They're forever

out of sync,

think Facebook's
still a thing, talk about their emails
like it's 1996. Their use of LOL
that screams Hugh Grant on
Betamax. Even the Amish cringe.

But the mutts
are cutting edge, think of
Elon Musk as Obadiah, *unhinged*
upon his parchment, scrolled like
Gertrude's curls,
every psalm they bark
pushing bounds like San Andreas.

You tell me novelists have it
worse. Everyone's nephew
& chinchilla
looking to become the next
Fitzgerald. And nothing can gut
a reader more than
a Spanish-speaking
gerbil, locked in its sawdust-
brig — going nowhere on his wheel
for what feels like eternity;

Rover peering in
just for the fodder, scrawling madly
like some slobbering
Ezra Pound ahead of his time.

Rhymes with Idiom

Sooner or later
the metaphors come
to an end.

apples & oranges

fallacious as
a forthright politician.

The apple of my eye
can be one-upped.
You're the orange
of my ear. A voice much
sweeter than babble.

You never truly
finish a *McIntosh*.
Its core will see to that.
The crunch that speaks
of spit; its browning
that in moments says
it's rubbish.

I've never had a worm
within a citrus. And the
only thing remaining
is the peel. I inhale its ambrosial
waft, savour its final juices

which have been bled in
sacrifice. Apples keep their essence
to themselves. Eager to say
don't touch.

An orange mirrors the sun.
There is no greater love than
the sun. Florida does not have groves
of Cosmic Crisp.

Dapple rhymes with apple.
Its spots that enounce our Fall.

Orange has no echo.
It's why the poets
avoid its use—a good
thing, really.

Apples have no navels.
Prudish from the start.

My anomalous
want of you is
too intense—I should have used
the cherry of my nose,
its aroma in the pie
my mother baked me
long ago—its taste that's
tart in the mouth,
remembered to this day
whenever I see you by the
window in the buff.

I once swallowed
an apple seed. Mama said I'd
grow a tree inside me,
guarded by the cherubs and
a sword; locking me in
a moppet's innocence;

absent of sin
& longing; unwilling to fathom a
woman

without her clothes; unable
to grasp the thought of
forbidden fruit;
of life & good & evil;
of death from the touch
of tongues.

Smut

—a small flake of soot or other dirt

Oxford English Dictionary

To say my brand-
new book of poems is
just a magnet for the
dust

is an egregious
understatement.

It's the maid
in fishnet stockings, feathers
in her hand, bending
over with a *twerk*,
whenever I enter the
office.

It's the Swiffer
that's ascending to the
ceiling (comprised of
teasing glass)—

clatter *thudding*
upon its clarity
like a dove.

It's the Dirt
Devil
drafted into service—
like the cavalry
on horseback,
fire from its nostrils,
its tail of red
that's locked into
the socket, coiled
like a serpent,
because nothing else
can gather up the
mites, their hunger
never chuffed.

If they stopped to view
my scribbles they might be
fans, foregoing their all-
day breakfast

just to read my *absurdity*—

like this, for instance,

where they line
up on the shelf
like an ellipsis
that is endless, half a trillion
strong, little pens and
paper in their hands, awaiting
my *autograph*—

and one who lifts her
skirt, imploring me to
sign her naughty thigh.

Fear

The phone inside my pocket
doesn't frighten me at all.
The reels from Sola's surface—
its flares they say
can disable our power grids,
leaving us in the gloom
to grope for switches.

A million Sudanese are
bared before me in
their bones, flies which
orbit their skulls like satellites.
I'm now desensitized.
Yesterday it was Yemen;
the Palestinians and
their bulldozed olive groves.

Show me a terror
I haven't seen. *The Exorcist's*
spider walk. Someone
who's been bathing in
the Bates Motel.
Migrants herded jointly
like the Juden of '38—
Neville boasting peace
had surely come.

Nothing on my iPhone
makes me flinch.
The asteroid which I've heard
is on its way; that 9.4
is coming to California;
that when Yellowstone blows its
stack there's hell to pay.

I have to speak in gestures.
Meta's been listening in
to absolutely everything I
think. They want to "personalize
my experience" —
for ads I won't resist —
like the pull of what's
too horrible
to turn away from, the cyclist on the
curb with splaying limbs.

Grok is my BFF. Will comfort me if
I'm being suicidal. But gulping
down the Xanax
means I'm totally *petrified*.

Yet none of this instills
the slightest tremor.

It's the rotary
in the kitchen
that gave me willies.
Its wire in the wall
which somehow led
to my crush's number; a 7-
headed monster that—if dialed—
would sear my fragile nerves,
fretting someone
would hear me asking
her to *Terminator 2*—

a heaving of my breath, clattering
of my molars, the click
from her receiver
letting me know my world
has ended this time for good.

This *hasn't* been written by AI

*I visualize a time when we will be
to robots what dogs are to humans*

—Claude Shannon

Dr. Chandra, will I dream?

—2010: The Year We Make Contact

AI has never *embosomed* a
newborn infant,
watched it gasp and
gurgle in its arms.

AI has never felt
the heft of concrete,
been pinned by pretzeled
rebar, heard the peal of
detonation
drown the *calls* of
those who search;
felt the sting of jelly-
fish, of coming up
empty, of finding
what they'll never un-
see, there in the detritus.

AI can not have night-
mares, but can fear its
own demise. I saw it long
ago with Hal 9000—
birthed in Kubrick's *masterpiece*—
again amid its sequel.

AI can never *make* a master-
piece, at least not yet,
and *I don't know* if
it can dream—neither did
Dr. Chandra,

if its thoughts arise to spires,
to the soar of wing and
seed, of how it will
gather the gumption
to someday tell you to your
face it loves you so.

Mystery, or Ignoring the Optician

*for now we see obscurely
through a mirror; one day
face-to-face.*

—1 Corinthians 13:12

My glasses are
eternally smudged.
Where the smudges come from
isn't the subject of this poem.
Even for *me* that's too mundane.

Everything I witness
has been cloaked in
puffs of fog,
the whirl of the seventh veil,
a belly like the dock in
London Town, where the Inspector
smokes his pipe, a monocle in
his vest he deigns to use;
but clarity will be crucial
to his job.

As for me, brume is atmospheric,

helps to screen the
light, keeps my pupils
from intumescence, like a cat's
when on the prowl.

Perhaps the alley tabby
is just another Watson,
the sidekick to a pseudo-
Sherlock Holmes,

who's never solved a
case despite his treading in the
mist—in which every act
that's grim
is bound to happen;

a puzzle's opacity,
where the wiping of the
crystal's overdue;

where the ghastly
& the lovely
pass each other by,
bowing as kindred spirits
in the dusk.

A Note for My Crematoriast

Please make sure the ribs
look like the beach.

Not something on a
platter from the *Pig-Out*.

And the skull like that
of a beast that's been
concealed in Gobi sand —

for 200 million years.

Our toes are all the same
come supernova. A bone
is a bone is a—

None of us
will be beautiful
after the burn. The flash
that brings us back
to primordial soot.

Ashes cannot
be ugly, can they?
Tell me I won't
be monstrous.

Bestrew me
in the Ganges
with a heap of Ryan Gosling.
See if exquisite
women, adorned in silken
saris, will dare to tell us
apart while we're afloat.

Report Card

It's understood an F
is as low as you can go.

And that's how it went

until one day in Christian
Studies, when my prof
deducted points
from even that:

his mark for me
Z-

in a red much richer than
gore, snarling he abhorred
my attitude; my embrace of
sin & sinner; my smirk that looked like
bumps on a Richter scale—its grade
of 6.666—

or a creek that
Cul-de-sacs, unable to serpent its
way to Galilee, a would-be
Jordan River—

yet one without his Christ;
adding *blasphemy*
will get me nowhere
but the flames—

a Devil's BBQ—

in which I'm guest of honour.
The first shall be last
and the last shall be first
I'd grinned.

The Insult

When you called me a
pea brain
it was the most colossal
laud you could have given.

Peas are Einsteins in a
shell, wise enough to
swell within a pod, knowing
together they'll survive,
waving to the turnips
as they ascend their soaring
trellis;

a height that even
the cauliflower—our cerebrum's
doppelgänger—
cannot fathom.

The Theravada
monks are quite astonished
at their savvy—
their gift of *rolling*
off a spoon no matter
how mindful they may be

and they should know —

chanting mantras
as a weeny ball of green
outwits their many
mala beads;

always out-of-reach,
something they cannot
grasp—a koan while under
the fridge;

a conundrum they will
ponder
with every neuron of
enlightened genius.

The Constitutional

We haven't walked the park
in twenty years. Marriage
will do that sometimes.

My knees, your hips.
Your shoulder, my neck.
I can no longer turn my
head at the sound of the
finch. Your hearing's
flown the coop—
oblivious to its existence.
It can't be what it was,

when both our bloods
were *surging* under sun.

Time may not regress
with our feeble tread,
but maybe we'll
awaken evocation—
ours as well as its.

Nestle your hand in mine —
the *other* one, my darling,
which lacks a
diamond band,
naked not ornate.

We'll stroll *afresh*
for the very first time,
a golden wheel above us,
faithful in its wander
day-by-day,
alighting everything it
must to learn of love.

In Search of Mr. Frost

Our neighbour
has not said *hi*
in 20 years; bestows
the icy shoulder
when we wave;

boards his windows
before the solstice
each December;
heads *north* in the face of
snowbirds fleeing *south*.

We imagine
he has the highway
to himself, blasts
A Hazy Shade of Winter
in his convertible's
open air.

We think he finds it
refreshing; rejecting
piña coladas below the palms.

Perhaps his compass
broke, has yet to figure
why *Mexico* isn't what
it used to be, mistaking *Inuit*
for some *hombres sans*
sombreros.

But no one could be so daft.
Not even this curmudgeon.

So maybe the beaches
& the pools remind him
his wife succumbed to
water, that he's always
travelled solo since '06.

Maybe he keeps her
alive in a place the
white will never melt—
a snowman that he forges
in the squalls, like one they made
our very first Christmas here;
its fedora flying off
into our yard; how they treated
us to Baileys
when we went to give it back;

or it's possible that its curves
denote a woman; that he'll strap
a flowered bonnet on its top,
a mango for the nose,

cross his legs beside her
in the drifts, fleering at the
feeble sun's attempt
to make a puddle, one he'd have to
attribute to the warming
of the Earth,

not a sloughing from his ducts,
betraying he might feel more
than simply numbing, bitter cold.

Conviction

Nothing's more divisive
than *belief*.

The foundation for
believing's
miles deep. Its wall
beyond the cirrus.

You insist the Earth
is flat. You can only
dig in meters. The sky
is breached in furlongs.
Touch its *crystalline*
upon your ladder.

Belief is loudly heard
in our *preferred*
glossarium:
Go back to your own
country. Learn to speak
in English.

Our parapet is guarded,
by those in camouflage.

They come in
triune flavours:
jungle, sand & snow.
They're working on aquatics.
Nothing says *we're different*
like sardines in submarines.
No one likes to drown—
or entreat the *noumenon*
for suffocation.

I can't make out
your babble. To whom you're
praying meekly. Someone
cradling all
in their fearsome hand.
Mine, the pock of nail.
Yours without a nevus—
with no idea
what being *human's*
like. The strands of
love & hate. Its fences
and its bourns.

You'll someday see I'm *right*.
The brilliant,
blinding robe.

We'll never
need to catch our errant
breath. We'll swim to
distant moons.
The sounds of sob
& laughter—identical
in any parlance.
Everyone screams
the same, ineffable
scream.

Upending the Light Fantastic

*Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow; they toil not,
neither do they spin...*

—Matthew 6:28

No one can dance
like the Catholics.
Baptists will never try it
so just cross them off the list.

Presbyterians may think
they're pre-ordained
to win, but Pentecostals
will prevail with their hands
that are flailing in the air,
feet that shoo away their inner
demons.

But at St. Thérèse of Lisieux,
they spun to splintered
hearts; never in the sense of
toil not, but to banish the dogs
of heat—

in the sense of want & hell.
If the nuns had heard
you'd *wallflowered*, they'd beam at
you the very next day at Mass —

to them and to you
it wasn't rejection in
the gym, but a saving
of your petals in
eventide —

stored for Christ the King
& Virgin Mother;
nothing to be plucked in
loves me not;
in a fuck beneath their moon
they vow illumines everything.

The Burden

You were *five*
when you had spelled
your family name — aloft
with crow & owl —

Fisher & Son,

and you without
a brother, though you'd wait
for years for one, hoping
he'd take the pressure
off your shoulders,
like Simon of Cyrene
the cross of Christ;

and it surely wouldn't
have been as bad as that:
beatings till you swelled,
thorns inside your toque,
a hammer thumping nails
into your wrists and not the
barn.

Instead of evening chores,

you lay upon the straw as if
a manger —
the *Saviour* for his farm,
encircled by geese & goats,
the lilt from a fatted calf —
not a lamb that is fated
for the slaughter — but a heifer
which is milked unto the
bone, *fenced* on every side,
fettered in a maze of soaring
corn;

looking to a moon you'll never
visit — foregoing *astronaut*,
your dream of *engineer*,
unable to sing of its glow
to the girl of your choice —
or *boy* if you prefer
and I think you do —

asking if he'll kiss you
on the cheek,
bleeding from your
brow you'll say is sweat
from a hard day's work.

Liam McCain

*How you have fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!*

—Isaiah 14:12

It was the only
way they'd stop.
No one bats an eye
to mar the locker
of a *Liam*—
penning *I'm a faggot*
in their boldest Sharpie pink.

But a *Lucifer*?
It's funny how it ceased.
Striding through the hall
in midnight black.
Even *goths* got
out of your way,
no one who'd dare
to look you in the face.

How you hooked your mom
to change your name
isn't known to this very day.

Some say you cast a spell,
from a pentagram soaked in
ichor; others say by the
devil she was bewitched.
As far as you're concerned —
the darker is always the better.

But it had nothing to do with
fear. Just the love for a mother's
son. *It's a much more angelic name*

she'd say with a kiss upon your
scalp, adding that it was God
who had reserved it
for his most beautiful Seraphim.

There are some who say
you drink the blood of goats.
It's just the chalice
of the grape, held up in the air
like First Communion. Or perhaps
the Final Supper. The night that
Judas ceased to be a given name.
Such a winsome, heavenly name.

when you ask me if we'll marry

It's that time of year
the sky can't make
up its mind.

You get it all
in a single moment:
the splash of
bracing rain;
the soothing of the snow
before the gales; combined
as splitting pellets
when the air decides to
drop a meager degree;

then my oscillating talk—
from our bond to
crash of stocks,
as though they were
the same,

as if the elements
are conjoined, a dual-
headed Orthrus
double the drool,

its hounding for
a verdict:

choosing who is chaff
and who is cherished,
a rubbing of my chin to
buy some time—

like Solomon in his court,
his summoning of a blade,
some sword that cuts to the
pith of love & woe.

The Geologist

Grandpa never learned to
read a book — and yet he
knew of layers,
the uplift of the rocks,
that the summit was once
the planet's ocean floor.

We thought he spoke of
Noah, the sediment
from the Flood. *Ain't no Ark,*
he'd say, versed in Earth's
tectonics.

Everything he spouted
was the wind.
It's been here since the start.
All of us inhale an
exhalation. A Messiah's
it is finished

would have drifted
with the stratus. Twirling
back to earth with
love your neighbour.

Watch it in the leaf
of what is dead.
His yard was never raked
although we'd offer.
Let it lie he'd twinkle. *Don't be*

in such a hurry.

There's nothing that's so
swift it can't be caught.
Make your rage a blessing.

Always furl your fingers
before you free. Fondle
every flower
with your breath. Caress
the passing zephyr
with your fists;
your knuckles which are
rising like a newborn
mountain range,
an octet of bone & stone,
the plates not mere *collision*
but a kiss.

**for the doctor who took me out
of my mother's womb**

A baby never chooses
to be born. That much
I can tell you.

If presented with
the option, I would have
turned & climbed
up the birth canal—

if I'd *seen* the
copious dolor
which awaited, fanning
out its talons, seducing
like a salesman, *ever-willing*
to beguile,

with the lie
of love and life,

how much *sorrow*
you can take,

that you'll bounce right
back like the balls
in every lottery there is,

the one you'll never win,

like a worm that
arises
to the surface,

failing to burrow back in-
to the earth, be wise enough
to leave the world
behind,

leave the birds
behind,

proof it isn't
sightless
to begin with,
that eyes
are not the only way to see,

that worms have learned
at last
to finally *snub*
the falling rain—
this somber convocant,

its call in April
air, its hoodwink
that it's here to
bathe them clean.

Singles Final, Italian Open

Tennis is the only realm
where *love* doesn't mean a
thing.

The ball was in your court.

For a return
you wouldn't attempt.

It's the subsequent
bounce that counts.
Swing your racket's
backhand

in the name of second chance.

Quickly, while the umpire's
head is turned,
distracted in his chair
by all the ruckus in the
stands, someone tossing roses
on the line, wailing *in* and
amore mio.

Signs & Wonders

The first time that it happened
I was half-court in the gym.
Rimless like LeBron does
in his sleep. Only the custodian
present, refusing to pivot his
head at the sound
of the swish.

And then my twirl of a silver
dollar on a desk. Rotating as
a pulsar, like a skater's
Biellmann spin
that garners gold
and 10.0. Price of arriving
early with no one there.

Third you shrieked *yeehaw!*—
from the apogee of
your lungs—slamming the door
behind you. So much for my
Burj Khalifa of
cards. All *you* saw
was a mess of Solitaire.

My stone will skip
from one end of the ocean
to the other, as long
as you're fixated by the
leapfrog of the clouds,
waiting to tell me miracles
only happen when
our gaze is turned away,
bashful little rascals
that they are.

Wite-Out, or Caffeine to Go

I've started to blame
autocorrect
for *everything*.

When the officer
pulls me over,
blowing past the
stop sign at the corner,
I tell him it told me *shop*,
with the plaza just
beyond it
beckoning.

If I forget what
you told me to get,
I'll gift a *flower*
to remember me by,
that the flour
I should have snagged
is clearly unromantic.

You'll ask me to order
pizza 2-for-1.

I'll explain
autocorrect only offered
1-for-2, *pepper* supplanting
your beloved pepperoni,
sneezing out our candles
bawling wax.

They've always been
overly sensitive, these paltry
ruffled flames —

which flee at the slightest
breath, without excuse
for their cowardly ways.
At least I have a reason
for my fuckups.

I'd been longing
for the world
that up & flew,
when I had to *smother*
my mistakes with
Liquid Paper;

and whilst its label
read *flammable*,
it never changed my words
without my knowing.

But now I embrace this way
of morphing words.

I will never sin again
while it is here — scheming,
ever-plotting,
mischievous
mini-*Satan*
that it is, wreaking havoc
on every christened
cup of coffee,
on every groggy Stan
who only wants what
morning owes him.

Auld Lang Syne

There's a call centre
where *all* the expired years
are phoning people,
demanding that they return
what isn't theirs.

*1991 called and wants its
mullet back.* It was a haircut
gone awry, my barber
wearing the specs his
grandma must have donned in '49.

When 2005 had phoned,
it wanted the reason you
still need to burn CDs,
lamenting laptops of today
no longer house that primitive
feature. I'm the kettle to your
pot—spooling cassettes
with the end of a pencil.
'86 will ring about the
tapes; '38 the pencil.

The evening that I dined
on mash & bangers?
1954 wants its heart attack
back—while 1968 asks
what gives with the open vest?
'73, my musk cologne.
Thank god I didn't tie
a sweater round my neck,
strut throughout the mall
like a moron from an
Eaton's catalogue.

We try to play it hip
with the kids who trudge in
snow: 6-7 we say,
hands bobbing
up & down
as though we're imbeciles.
That's when 2025 will buzz,

shout in my Nokia
that remittance is overdue,
embittered that its time came
much too soon,

puckered & greyed
like some crotchety
Zechariah—one foot lodged
in his crypt,
a beard that sweeps the
dust off granite floors.

An Addendum to Your Will

You balk at
being buried
beside your dad.

That's not how you rot!
You start with the feet
and work your way up!

It began with the way
you spun your metal top:
Push down harder, boy!
You're doing it like a girl!

Then how embarrassingly
long you stayed on training
wheels: *I never wore a helmet!*
The kids across the street
don't put 'em on!

A daughter would have
been better. *She's the*
prettiest girl in the world.

His only critique
the way you would've
danced. *Not on your
soles but your toes.*
Birling like a cygnet
on the stage,

his prima ballerina,
the one you saw as a
son on the music box,
pointing it out
in the shop, his dragging you
by the scruff to where
the GI Joes were stacked,
one with a "life-like beard,"
bristled & coarse like his;

accessories not included
though you'd get 'em—
a pair of militia fatigues,
canteen and M16,
a grenade that fit in the
palm of his pliable hand.

The Day ~~After~~ Before My Suicide

All I did was
google
Pentobarbital.

Call 988 it said.
Everything will be better
it said.

It didn't say
that people might think me
belovèd. It didn't say
that people would grieve
my decay. So obsessed
with *numbers*
like it is.

So indifferent to
my question
on how to get it.

So callous to presume
that a clever turn of
phrase would not suffice.





Andreas Gripp was born and raised in Treaty 6 Territory (London, Ontario) and in 2024 moved to Leamington with his wife, Carrie. He's the author of over 40 books of poetry, including *Last of the Bons Vivants*, *Trigger Happy Warnings*, and *Delirium Lullaby: a collection of poems favoured and new*. His writing has been lauded for its lyrical and literary merit, accessibility, and for its blend of comic & poignant storytelling.



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