



Lover Boy

Megan Cassiday

10:17pm

a decaying woman holds a breath
hostage in her lungs; the fading glow
of a neon cloud ignited by a flare gun shot
from a boat that's already finished sinking

02:35am

I am laying in bed with a beautiful boy,
and his silk sheets are sticking
to the backs of both of my thighs
and so is the gravel in his throat
and the ache in his fingertips
and the haunts soaked in his mattress

03:20am

and the
and the
and the
and
and

03:57am

I am the woman

04:19am

He is the inevitable inhale



目光与质感

又岚

一首歌的质感
来自他目光最后的加工
当我的歌单唱出Inside
他唱，Inside
帮我把这个词，加上质感

他看我的气候
便在清晨的肌肤上
种下星星的吻种
前世的观星师
今生的农夫

他说我的情感太深重
不见得
相对他的目光
远比这个女人的盲目强烈
更具体

我的目光是故障的
行为是粗鲁的
甚至来不及思考
在我转身过街时
是什么使他
把我走路的样子
写得有些尴尬，也令我喜欢

DOORS

Jesse Riley

Leslie lived in fear and died in fear.

In front of her now were two black doors. One of them had her name written across the center and the other had her husband's. He was there too, knelt beside her, hair sweaty and shiny as a crow's back.

Between the doors was a nightstand with a note folded perfectly across the middle. Leslie went to it.

Leslie & Wayland,

You each have a door. By answering one question honestly, your door will open and you will pass through and return to your life. If you lie, your door will remain shut and you will stay here until I come to meet you. When you are ready, turn the page over.

Chills ran up her spine. The room, dark and empty, grew more ominous with each minute. There were no windows. No natural light. Just a room forever.

When she was a child, her Father used to tell her a story about Heaven and Hell not being finished yet and that everyone who died went to a sorting place to wait. *Maybe this is the sorting place.*

Wayland rose to his feet and strode toward his door, his boots echoing like heavy cracks of thunder. This was the fear she knew. The fear she lived and breathed in. The fear of his immense and powerful body.

Thump....Thump...Thump.

He continued throwing himself into the door shoulder first. It was the same way he played football. Back then, Leslie used to attend every game, sit in the bleachers with her friends and cheer for him. Everyone hated playing against him. He was the monster that tore through the offense with ease and even if the quarterback ditched the ball, they'd typically end the play with a taste of his strength. Something inside Leslie stirred when her friend told her that everyone hated Wayland. Whatever it was she felt, she liked it.

After a few final thrusts, Wayland gave up on the door.

"We're locked in it says and I don't remember anything about today." Wayland rose his eyes to meet hers. Without warning, he turned and grabbed the nightstand and flung it into the wall, shattering it into its original pieces. A memory of him punching himself and shattering plates flooded Leslie's mind. *I'll break everything.*

Leslie pulled away until her back pushed against the cold wall. Wayland began to pace the room. "Well," he muttered, "help me find the note then."

Leslie found it lying on the floor, perfectly unbothered. Before she could grab it, Wayland snatched it from her and began to read it aloud.

Do you love one another?

Wayland shifted his gaze toward Leslie. His eyes were piercing through her, burning her insides. Burning everything until only the truth remained.

"Answer it," he said as his shadow engulfed her.

Of course I love him, she thought. Leslie often caught women staring at Wayland and then staring at her, probably wondering how she managed to marry a man like him. Part of Leslie liked that. She liked knowing she had something over others, especially something they would never have. Yet after a couple good years, the real man inside Wayland began to surface. The hateful and cruel man. The shadow inside him. Quick to erupt in anger and quick to return to his natural boy-ish charm. Leslie loved the way his eyes turned from cold steel to as soft as late fall snow.

"Of course I love you," she said.

"I love you too."

Just as the final word fled his lips, a great noise filled the room. It sounded as though a large clock was hidden behind the walls and its gears were springing into action for the first time in a long, long while.

Wayland's door opened first. Nothing inside but darkness. Leslie

turned toward her door, yet nothing happened. It didn't make a single sound and after half a minute, the realization kicked in that it wasn't going to.

“Why isn't yours opening?”

“I told the truth.”

Wayland clinched his hands into fists and hung them low near his pockets. There on his jeans, Leslie saw the specs of blood. How had she not noticed it before? The blood trailed down the legs of his jeans in wild splatters and the bottom corner of his blue shirt was soaked as well.

He always said he would. Break everything.

Leslie dashed through his arms and went straight toward his door, leaving him running after her until she passed through it and finally, lost him somewhere in the darkness. Although she couldn't hear him, she kept running. She ran until her legs ached. Even when they began to buckle, she kept going. She kept her arms and hands outstretched, hoping she wouldn't bump into something that felt like flesh.



In Beauty

Sean Woodard

My memory recalls
old stories, mysteries.

She lasted in beauty and life,
a fragile corolla of naked beauty
admired for her graciousness.

Alas for me, sweet nostalgia
cannot renew what death did wilt.
Melancholy observed anguished silence.

Apparition, forgive thee,
I ask proud death.

Unattainable Forever

Sean Woodard

I write pirouettes in the air
what my secret body can't speak.

Moments I had with you,
when I would love you,
slip away like beach sands.

Now day is breaking,
a dawn of white mist.

I shudder at the death rattle of love.



Time Dilation

Jowell Tan

Do you remember when you were five years old and you asked me “Daddy, how long will you live for?” and I gave you an arbitrary number — “oh, maybe one hundred” — then you counted from one to one hundred and you started crying and I had to comfort you in my arms as you said through your tears “one hundred comes so fast!”?

Well now your old man’s on his deathbed, and while you sit here crying just like you did when you were five, I wish that every next second I spend with you could be as long as a year so that we could have all the time you need to find someone else to be your comfort when I finally have to leave.

THE TIDES WHISPER

L.L. Bowers

The moon's soft rays reflected off the sea, broken into so many glittering gems of pale light. Sebastian stood shivering—autumn would soon turn to winter—ankle deep in the moonlit water. If someone had walked by, perhaps from the party at the nearby beach house Sebastian had just left, then they would have guessed he was lost in thought, no doubt moved by the evocative Pacific, that immense water which separated him here in Japan from his home in America. And he was. Maybe there's something about the ocean, call it the melody of the sea, or the rhythm of the waves, that's always called to us. As Sebastian gazed out into that water, he felt that he, too, was being summoned.

Not half an hour ago, back at the party before he'd come out by the beach, Sebastian had been trapped by the one they call "The Yakker" while wandering around hoping to run into Ayumi, a math teacher who worked at the same school where he taught English. The Yakker's moniker derived partly because his last name was some unpronounceable Canadian-via-East-Slavic combination of letters that, to the best of anyone's spelling ability, started with "Yak." The other, maybe more pertinent, reason was The Yakker's supernatural like power to entrap anyone into an inordinately one-sided conversation—as he currently had Sebastian, going on into excruciating detail about

Saskatchewan high school hockey. Sebastian was desperate to get away. Luckily, as he was contemplating diving through a nearby open window, Parker, one of his friends, was heading toward the drinks: right by where he was currently trapped. This was his chance. Sebastian tensed his arms, like a cowboy ready to draw. Right as Parker came close enough, Sebastian reached out, grabbing and pulling him in close.

“Wha...?” Parker asked turning to Sebastian, but by that time he was already gone, headed up the stairs. The Yakker, without pausing or even acknowledging he had a new victim, was now conversationally assaulting Parker with his detailed, near-esoteric knowledge of his local high school hockey team.

Having absconded to the second floor, Sebastian, wanting to just get away from The Yakker, or from the party, or maybe more than that, found an unlocked room. He closed his eyes and the door behind him, leaning back on it as if needing to barricade it against intruders. He couldn't help but think of early birthday parties, forced into those gathering by parents for whom the parties were probably more for their own enjoyment than his. Skating rinks, run down Chuck E. Cheese's, public swimming pools: meccas of youth, of eternal summers. One particular birthday—perhaps when he was eight or nine—instead of allowing himself to be forced to blow out the candles (he absolutely hated everyone sitting there watching him), he ran away when no one was looking. It was at the mall's food court, a pretty crowded place so it wasn't hard for him to escape. But they found him just a few minutes later at the arcade getting beat at Street Fighter by a much older kid, and made him blow them out anyway. Too bad there wasn't an arcade here, he thought. He opened his eyes and glanced around the room—and saw Ayumi sitting on the bed.

She smiled. “You too, huh?”

“Erm?” Not very smooth....

“Taking a break from the party, the noise? Everything downstairs?” as she spoke she slid over, inviting him, wordlessly, to come sit next to her. He was unable to believe his luck. Her perfume's scent, vaguely vanilla, filled his lungs. Their hands were just inches apart. This was what he'd wanted from the first time they'd met.

The first day he had started work, he'd seen her across the hall, her long hair cascading down her back, a Mitsuoki-style Heian courtesan come to life, one not engaged in writing a pillow book in the Emperor's court, but rather teaching linear equations to bored students.

As the chalk moved across the blackboard she turned, no doubt through some magic force alive still in Japan with its Torii gates and shrines to the kami, a closeness with nature that still afforded a certain proximity to the divine long lost in other cultures...because how else to explain she knew he was watching her?...and so their eyes met. She smiled. He dropped the papers he'd been holding all over the floor, and she went back to teaching.

Unfortunately, they hadn't been able to really get to know each other. But maybe now was his chance. He knew if he didn't try he'd regret it, the kind of regret that you suddenly think about years later,



asking yourself how in the world did you ever allow that to happen, and no matter how long ago it was, you still feel ashamed, or embarrassed, or maybe you just physically cringe at the thought. Glancing over, he could see her looking at him, waiting for him to say something, hopefully good or funny, but at a loss he went with the first idea that came to mind.

“Do you think these bedsheets are cotton or polyester?”

Her eyebrows scrunched together. “Huh?”

“Oh, nothing. Nevermind,” knowing that didn't go as he'd hoped.

“It's a lot quieter up here,” she said. “You could get lost.”

“Lost?”

“Like it's another world. A wonderland. And we're Alices who went through the looking glass. Only all we had to do is walk upstairs.” She was turned towards him. Their eyes only a few inches apart. He could see himself in her dark eyes, swimming, reflected, a piece of him, if only for a moment, a part of her. Outside, the tide, whispering softly, drifted into the room.

“I'd love to get lost,” his voice a whisper now. She smiled. He wondered if this was his chance. He leaned closer—

The sound of a flushing toilet came from the bathroom.

The door across from them opened and a man, tall and handsome, stood smiling. He ran a hand through his blonde hair. “Hello, Love,

who's your friend?" he asked in a Hugh Grant romcom British accent.

"This my coworker Sebastian," she said, then looking at him, "Sebastian, this is my boyfriend Oliver."

"Pleasure's mine," he said as he offered Sebastian a perfectly manicured hand and beguiling smile. Possibly a wink, too. They shook hands then Oliver turned to Ayumi, "Shall we go then, dear?"

They went out, leaving Sebastian, alone, with only the crashing of the waves to break the silence. Damn, of course she would have a boyfriend. He felt then that of all the places in the world, this was not where he wanted to be and decided to get out. Downstairs, he made sure to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis that was The Yakker (still verbally pummeling Parker) and the loving couple of Ayumi and Oliver (why did he have to be so *perfect*?). He made his way to the shore.

Standing there, listening to the ocean's whispers, he wondered what it'd be like to take to the sea, a modern Odysseus wandering year after year, with no idea when he'd ever see home again. A part of him just wanted to get away. But he couldn't, not here, could he? Well, why not he asked himself... The first to go was his belt. Next his jeans. Then his shirt. Finally, all that remained between him and the elements was a pair of black, cotton boxer-briefs. He glanced over his shoulder back towards the beach house. The party was still in full swing; he could hear music spilling out into the night. It looked as though someone were coming, but then, he figured it was just some shadow. The boxer-briefs slid down his legs.

If he walked he knew he'd never make it far, so he broke into a run. Water loudly splashed with every step. Running was easy at first—the water didn't come up very high, but it quickly rose until eventually he had to dive in and swim. The cold, so much worse out here far from shore, seeped inside him. Not used to the exertion, he could feel his arms, legs, and lungs begin to burn. Breaths came shallower. Where was he even going? He wasn't sure. A Calypso's island of his own? Maybe not to return for twenty years? He cut through the sea, the icy water giving way to him. Somewhere on the shore he could hear a voice shouting. Calling out to him. All around him the ink dark water obscured his vision until he couldn't tell ocean from sky. He swam, through the sea, through the sky, the stars guiding his way.



She Flies Through the Moon

Nancy Machlis Rechtman

She stands on the rooftop
Ready to soar
Through the paint-stained clouds
Lit by the moon
And she wonders
Who will be her love tonight.

She is so tired of being trapped
In this stasis
Where she has been ensnared in a web of silk
Anesthetized by its gentle touch
Unaware that it has been methodically strangling her
Until glistening pearls drop onto her upturned face
And across the gossamer strands that loosen
Until the spell is broken
So she can finally take a step forward
And jump.



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Art by Irina Tall

Page 1: "Sirin"
Page 3: "rabbits"
Page 6: "Core"
Page 8: "sun"
Page 11: "two."
Page 13: "Sirin and the city"
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