

Gord downie' S Mother & other poemS

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WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...Oh my goodness, every one of Flanagan's works had a profound, upside-down, Asperger's half-Angel/ half-Devil's food cake recipe-redolence for me—chocolate and strawberries...he's like laudanum on the page, a tall tincture of tonic in print...Inkblots à l'Orange: curling swerving and dervish-whirling words hot out of a Gestalt roaster with a Rorschach glaze—here's your table for two...best seats in the house, you might have to duck, right down in front, don't miss a set—'no one has never not stayed 'til closing...' at least that's what the maî-tre d boasted (Poems are published on separate pages to maintain poet's spacing. Scroll down.) HS*

Gord Downie's Mother

It was her main job during college.
At this rescue home for poor mothers and children
that had nowhere else to go.

A converted mansion in downtown Kingston.

Providing basic services and lodging.
For those in town for medical appointments
at Kingston General Hospital
a few streets away.

And she worked with Gord Downie's mother.
Long before his illness.

Such a sweet woman!
she told me.

Which just made her love The Hip
even more.

You can get that in small town Canada,
I remember telling her.
*Everyone is a rock star until you work
with their mother.*

Everything is so small and connected here,
she said.
I really enjoyed working with her.

We never talk about the illness.
Just enjoy all that music left behind.

Flagellants Are Just Flatulence with Whips

I'm not going to run myself raw for you or anyone else,
flagellants are just flatulence with whips,
mules beating themselves silly to impress some backwards
bottom line boss man who never takes notice
and if you find me looking skyward, it is at the clouds
and for no other reason, I assure you;
that's gonna leave a sting, Brother Browbeat,
what a beautiful shade of black and blue!
Your screams are probably a turn on to the adult film people,
there is a market for everything these days.
Your discount bin pain may be straight to VHS,
but the pain is still yours I assure you;
if scars make the man, you must be over half
the human race by now.

Lurking is My Life

I hear the sizzling of meat
and head downstairs.

That smells good,
I say.

That's the onions and garlic,
she answers.

When I walk into the kitchen,
she is pouring out a side salad
and laying out some tortillas.

I stand right over the frying meat
and smell loudly.

I thought you were writing,
she laughs.

What is writing?
I say in a monotone voice
as though I have been brainwashed.
The lurker is here.

Oh good, I love him!
she jokes.

I knew you'd be happy the lurker was here.

Go write!
she implores me.

I can't,
I say.
Lurking is my life.

Awww,
I hear her say.
Like she is pretending to
feel bad for me.

But the smell!

The sounds of sizzling meat!

I walk over to the window and see some redneck
walking up the middle of the street.

In a head-to-toe grey track suit.
Yelling at a fresh skiff of snow on the ground.

See anything good?
she asks.

I turn around and head back upstairs.
The smell of fresh garlic and onions
all through my clothes.

Hipster Santa at a Beverly Hills Mall

This woman in Beverly Hills
raves on social media about how nice
it is to finally see a slender more fashionable
Santa at the mall for once.

Even has her picture taken with the kid.
A young hipster Santa in red designer suit
and matching red skinny pants.

Santa is about 20 years her junior.
A perfectly quaffed beard.
Dyed so there is not a single strand of white.

And that man bun tied tight and poking out
from Santa's hat.

Santa sure looks different out in Beverly Hills.
I guess all the kiddies will be getting specialty shop
vinyl for Christmas.

I feel bad for the kids in some strange way.
Like they are being cheated out of something
even if they are not.

I search the background of the picture
for some ethically sourced, fair trade reindeer.

There aren't any.

A Steady Brown Stream

This young kid in rags rushes up
to the end of the next drive over
bends over and vomits.

A steady brown stream.
His feet positioned far apart.

This one is a pro.
Knew it was coming.
I have used the same technique myself.
Many times.

Then he steadies himself,
wipes the sleeve of his hoodie across
his mouth before stumbling on.

A passing car steering extra wide
around the kid.

A few crows picking at old garbage.
Dead silence and a windless sky.

It is almost peaceful.
I close my eyes and enjoy
the simple darkness.

Majinder Stopped By

The bar of soap was subletting its last cleanliness
and he said Majinder stopped by to borrow a light
and since I didn't know who Majinder was
and I didn't believe in the light,
I just smiles as a child's stuffed toy might do
which seemed to be enough which was of great relief
to a man with nothing left.

THE POET SPEAKS...*My poems are usually (but not always) inspired by everyday events, people and places and various situations along the way. Not straight journalism, but to imbue such things with a little magic I may find or either infer in them. I have many stylistic influences such as: Frank O'Hara, Richard Brautigan, Charles Bukowski, Franz Kafka, e.e. cummings, Al Purdy, John Fante etc. Some for their everyday moments captured and still others for their irreverent humour or creative neuroses. Lastly, poetry is important to me as a vehicle of expression. It helps me see the world in my own way and gives me a way to express how I experience the world. If I did not have this release I'm afraid it would be a rather unfulfilling existence.*

AUTHOR BIO: Ryan Quinn Flanagan is a Canadian-born author residing in Elliot Lake, Ontario, Canada with his wife and many bears that rifle through his garbage. His work can be found both in print and online in such places as: *Evergreen Review, The New York Quarterly, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, The Dope Fiend Daily, Red Fez, and The Rye Whiskey Review.*

What to Get for the Woman who has Been Nowhere

Such clumsy skate park dalliances were never meant
for cyber café USB ports,

what to get for the woman who has been nowhere,
never left the intellectual homestead of her mind, not once,

you'd think 47 years of curiosity would creep up on you;
departure times, carry-on luggage because no one ever leaves
themselves easily,

that lovingly imperfect way the broken siding on
the first home your parent's ever called their own never leaves you,
old Polaroids of cavorting kittens no one can remember
the names of, even terse scratch marks long gone;

the last time anything drew blood that mattered,
you were fighting with a borrowed rescue inhaler,
bringing potted soup to boil,

your dead grandfather's rusty boy scout knife
inscribed simply with the year: *1874*.

Drugs Are There When You No Longer Want To Be

We got into the car
and my friend Shane was driving.

I was falling apart in the backseat like a silly laughing leper.
On a head full of mushrooms and beer.
Having apparently just been on a date with
some woman I couldn't remember.

At this pool hall that kept its few snooker tables
in the back because they were too difficult.

And we had to drop his girlfriend Catherine off first,
I remember that.

Covering my mouth, knowing that they would never last.
That they wanted the exact same thing
by far different means.

And how I sunk down into the seat
like a wilting umbrella under heavy rains.

How I was told by some disembodied voice
that I would have to sit up and "look normal"
according to the preachy seat belt clique
that never saved anyone.

And next thing I remember,
I was sitting on the basement toilet
back at my apartment.

Watching the flowery wallpaper
pulse and open up for hours.

Calling the only other mushroom head I knew
to ask if she was seeing half the things
I was.

I don't even remember who dialled.

Just that both our voices were there
and that all the others had gone
somewhere else.

After my Uncles Death

everyone came
together.

My aunt settled his estate
from Shanty Bay,
had a commemorative bench
placed outside the Barrie Public Library
in his name.

While my father
had the meagre inheritance
spread equally among
his offspring.

I don't know where it went.
Probably bills.

From the man who had
the very same walk
as me.

Wanted to be alone
as I want to be alone,
but a little more.

On the street
since the age of nineteen.

Wanting out
in the very same way
I have always dreamed of.

If you think you know me,
you don't.

We are coming and going
all the time.

Not even close to space.
A stranger in time.

She Died in This House

so it is perfectly respectable
to expect that her ghost will still be here,
hopefully not haunting, that is always the hope
after all these years, that she has passed on or at least
does not hate the all the changes, some of those fine finishings
that can seem a little blingy to the newly deceased out of time,
that hopeless colour splashed across the walls like a graffiti artist
just starting out; she died in this house, right there
where you positioned your marital bed;
do not be surprised if she is watching your
disappointing sex, in this very same house where she
could put her legs behind her head and break a half dozen
transformers along the aging power grid
like no one's business.