

Postcard & other poems

By Bill Rector

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WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... 'Postcard' is subtly unassuming and uproariously funny. I can only describe it as a brilliant piece of nonsense portrayed as an earnest account of Allen Ginsberg standing naked on a stranger's doorstep under an exclusive cloud of slanting rain. "...Happily, Allen Ginsberg / doesn't make a sound." Rector hits the mark again with 'Wanted: an artist' except for the few who'd deal Martin for Lewis. Here're a couple more irresistible lines to give you an idea what you're in for: "Secretly, though, he hopes to be conked on the head / by a piece of the Sea Of Tranquility." And, "The fake beard is tougher than a chin whisker hunkered in a dimple." No need to buy a ticket to Mars, we have Bill right here at home. (To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page. It'd 'HOTS' in action. Please scroll down.)*
HS

Postcard

Don't get the wrong idea.

The man has absolutely nothing against Allen Ginsberg,
except that Ginsberg has, without warning,
shown up at his front door. Worse, Allen Ginsberg
is as naked as the day he was born.

Behind Coke-bottle thick lenses, Allen Ginsberg's
eyes are enormous. His vacant expression
doesn't reassure. The man has barely read Allen Ginsberg.

Have you? Be honest. And yet, Ginsberg
seems familiar. The man worries that Ginsberg
will begin to recite from *Howl*.

Or just start to howl. What would the neighbors say?

The police? The National Guard? Paratroopers
from the 82nd Airborne? The man
could be beaten senseless or tear-gassed
and led away in handcuffs, weeping and crying
to a crowd of expressionless onlookers that he did nothing
to deserve the fate that has befallen him,
nothing at all... Happily, Allen Ginsberg
doesn't make a sound. He holds an umbrella above his head,
the way Liberty does her flame. The fabric's frayed.

A rib pokes out. Rain is slanting down,

but only on Allen Ginsberg.

The mailman shoulders his leather bag
and disappears in a crowd of purposeful, fully-clothed
people going about their business in sunshine, indifferent
to the minor weather disturbance at the man's door.

The man figures that Allen Ginsberg
was misplaced in a sorting bin or cobwebbed
in a corner of the Post Office for fifty years.

The raindrops slanting down are cancellation marks
made on the 2-cent stamp. But why, out of all
the Current Occupants in the world, has Allen Ginsberg
been delivered to him?

Wanted: an artist

to frame the Condition of Man in a new and interesting way. All applicants are welcome, unless your name is Jerry. The man has never known a Jerry that he liked, starting with Jerry Lewis. Jerry Lewis acted like he'd cry or go crazy if you didn't laugh hysterically at his sorry act. The Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon? A big shakedown, the man calls it. On-duty firemen at roadblocks held big rubber boots to your car window, demanding that you fill them with money. How many houses burned to the ground because of Jerry Lewis? How many women gave birth in the back seat? On Labor Day, no less. You want more proof? The French love Jerry Lewis. They think he's a comic genius! Which tells you all you need to know about the French. Which is why the rest of the world laughs at them. Paris? The man's never been, and he's not going any time soon. Just a bunch of waiters who sneer because you can't read the menu. No snails for this man, *mon ami!* So if you apply, and your name is Jerry, he's here to tell you, Nobody cares.

A minor misunderstanding

To his surprise and disappointment,
the man discovers that most moon rocks are counterfeit.

Maybe all of them. Moon rocks
don't exactly come with certificates of authenticity.

Even those under glass counters at the collectibles store
or labeled *Certified* on eBay.

The man was given a piece of the moon as a boy,
a crescent of gleam he kept under his eyelids.

Ahead, a space-suited Neil Armstrong was always
poised to take the next Giant Step --

Enough daydreams!

The man sets himself a goal of collecting
all of the counterfeit moon rocks on the planet.

Once this is done, it doesn't take long,
he bulldozes the counterfeit moon rocks into great heaps
and blasts them into outer space on giant rocket ships.

Probably some real moon rocks, too. Mistakes are made.

Needless to say, the man doesn't succeed
in collecting all of the counterfeit moon rocks on earth. Only a few...

The bulldozers, the giant rocket ships? Well...

The man in the moon, who has a dark side of his own,

soon becomes fed up with the disenchanted fellow on earth.

Counterfeit moon rocks rain back down.

Probably some real ones, too. Mistakes are made.

The man shakes his fist at the moon.

Secretly, though, he hopes to be conked on the head

by a piece of the Sea Of Tranquility.

All made up

For Halloween, the man pastes a fake beard on his face. His friends don't recognize him. They call him, *Mystery Man*. Go ahead, he tells them, tug on it. When they do, their chins hit the floor. It's you, they say. We knew it all along. The fake beard loves the attention. It refuses to come off. It starts to grow. It grows like crazy. This wasn't in the plan. Actually, there wasn't a plan. Maybe there should have been. The fake beard is tougher than a chin whisker hunkered in a dimple. It deflects tweezers. Dodges the razor. Defies the mincing shins of the nail scissors. The Halloween beard reaches the man's knees. Tangles his feet. The new man who rises has only a stubble of soil to disguise him.

THE POET SPEAKS...*I have recently become drawn to the poetry of the absurd. I would call Russell Edson my principal influence. See in this regard his wonderful interview with Peter Johnson, founder of the journal, The Prose Poem.*

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Right now, the "I" is dominant in poetry. And its theme is usually a grievance. This can be a tiresome combination. Who isn't an "I?" Who doesn't have a grievance, however legitimate?

These poems are about an anonymous individual, "what man." His burdens are important to him, even existential, but to us, they are preposterous: the sudden appearance of a nude Allen Ginsberg at his door, counterfeit moon rocks pelting down, a paste-on beard that won't stop growing...

I could go on and on. And plan to do so

AUTHOR BIO: Bill Rector is a retired physician. He is former editor of the Yale Journal of Humanities and Medicine. He has published a full-length volume of poetry, *bill* (Proem Press), as well as five chapbooks: *Biography of a Name* (Unsolicited Press), *Brief Candles* (Prolix Press), *Lost Moth* (Epiphany prize-winner), *Two Worlds* (White Knuckle Press), and *Hats Are the Enemy of Poetry* (Finishing Line Press).

