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(LIKE SERIOUSLY SMALL...)

By

Howie Good

WHY I LIKE IT: Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes...

Howie Good's, "Four Prose Poems," or, as we're going to be using them, "Four Microfictions," do what great poetics do best: they harbor much more beneath the surface.

These are pieces that are worth breaking down, these are pieces that are worth reading, and, while I may not have all the time in the world, I will attempt to tell you why.

What Good does well (I really wanted to say what Good does good here, but alas) is to compact the imagery and the idea together to create feeling. Most of you may go, "but, Joey, isn't that what all good poetry does?" The answer is, "yes." Which is why I think that the concepts that are conveyed within this work are worth searching through.

Inadequacy over life, anxiety over the current state of affairs, the inability to rationalize dreams and their constant discussion of being searched through for meaning, love and the future, disaster and the future, the self-reflexive knowledge of those who have come before you and how you internalize them into your present, our subscription to nonsense while claiming the need to make sense...

Take your pick.

What Good has done here is make some good goddamn poetic prose (had to sneak it in somewhere), and that, as always, is worth reading.

Enjoy.

QUALITY QUOTABLE (*for the love of language...*)

Women are knocked down and children trampled, but vendors in the stands just go on howling, *Beer here! Beer here!* It's like someone has dropped in unexpectedly, told you their dreams, and wants you, the average fan, to interpret them.

Memento Mori

I was taught in school to never begin a sentence with "and" or "but." But, realistically, how do you do that? And why would anyone even want to? At the premiere of the Moonlight Sonata, Beethoven played with such fury that several piano strings snapped and became entangled in the hammers. I'm beginning to understand something about it. Buildings don't burn up or burn down, they just burn.

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Whatever happened to the right to be lazy? While I slept in, hundreds were stripped of their shoes and eyeglasses and the gold fillings in their teeth. It doesn't have to make sense. At work your sister would eat lunch alone in the bathroom. She had a sad little funeral. The few who attended couldn't even wait until the grave was completed before scrabbling for keepsakes. You treasure an electric bill from 1984.

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I have to force myself to continue looking down at the dead fish that the tide has washed ashore. The gulls have been at it and the crabs and now the fat black flies. In fact, it's so mutilated I can't tell what kind of fish it was – a fluke? a porgy? – its skin rotting off and its delicate bones obscenely exposed. A little way up the beach, sunbathers sprawl on towels, children dig in the sand, the lifeguard on the lifeguard tower blows a whistle. The land has no memory of having once been ocean.

A Whole New Ball Game

The catcher tears off his hockey-style mask to go after a foul pop-up and the skin of his face gets torn off with it. Meanwhile, a dirigible emblazoned with a death's skull logo comes slowly

floating over the stadium. The umpire behind the plate points up and signals for timeout and then flees the field, setting off a general rush toward the exits. Women are knocked down and children trampled, but vendors in the stands just go on howling, *Beer here! Beer here!* It's like someone has dropped in unexpectedly, told you their dreams, and wants you, the average fan, to interpret them.

Love Was Infinitely Shining

My wife and I were sitting with our coffee at a little square table in the window of the bakery/café. We could hear gunfire in the distance, militiamen shooting into alleys and cellars where illegals might be hiding. "The soul of man prevails," my wife quoted as we sat there, "but only when moral struggle is present." Any wonder I love her? I blew on my coffee and carefully took a sip. The hour's top headlines were crawling across the bottom of the big screen TV on the wall: *Disgraced NY Congressman Resigns, Japan's Sakurajima Volcano Erupts, Pope Prays for Peace*. Bursts of gunfire repeated in a periodic pattern, similar to a beating heart.

The Anxiety Index

Then one night I dreamt I was dead and looking for my grave. I looked in the gray, frozen streets Kafka used to walk. My bones crunched with each step. My eyes rattled in their sockets. I wanted to cry out, "I don't belong here, I don't!" but couldn't because my childhood stutter had returned even worse than I remembered. The clock on the city hall tower moved neither backwards nor forwards. I encountered Kafka outside on the steps. "Where's the moon in the Moonlight Sonata?" I shouted in his face. Deep red drops of blood dripped on a bunch of white daisies.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I'd like to say these were written in a white-hot fever of inspiration. They weren't. My writing process is a kind of magpie-ism. That is, I gather bits and pieces that my subconscious or living in the world toss up. I assemble my poems accordingly -- and often painstakingly.*

AUTHOR BIO: Howie Good's latest poetry book is *The Horses Were Beautiful*, available from Grey Book Press.