

H(ear)tache

+

Seven

(7)

By

Marc Darnell

WHY I LIKE IT: Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...

Okay, Marc Darnell is a bonified madcap: zany, absolutely absurdly insane. Still, he couldn't be more accurate in the absence of his findings. For someone hailing from Nebraska, he is entirely too outlandish to find himself so far inland. Landlocked at high tide. A mind without borders and occasional weekend passes he cuts into tiny pieces when they loosen the buckles on his sleeves. Just read 'H(ear)tache,' daring you to go down the Darnell-hole. "...a band nerd lifer / who played the sissy clarinet, / so my overbite kept getting larger." Follow along, just when you thought you didn't belong. Captive of his own free association and proof positive that not all minds that wander are lost ... "Tote me like a bowling ball / down the valley of the shadow of death." (Spacing is poet's own.) HS

Five stars!

H(ear)tache

The bump behind my ear is getting larger.
I told the doctor I've had it
since, oh, maybe I was a teenager.

He tried to badger
me into having it removed but
I like that it's getting larger,

for attention-- the man with the otological tumor,
with passerby pathos and a handicapped spot.
When I was a teenager

I was a nobody, a band nerd lifer
who played the sissy clarinet,
so my overbite kept getting larger.

I'm still a nobody, a middle-ager,
single no kids with a big TV set,
never in love, even as a teenager.

On Sunday I'll call my mother,
tell her I'm engaged but not married yet
to the bump behind my ear, getting larger
since, oh, maybe I was a teenager.

the dentist chats with his dental assistant while he gives me a root canal

yes my first house is three years old
and the driveway has cracks

they put my wife's chandelier
in my bedroom it's not

masculine enough ha
ha

ha
something is askew

in my dining room the
paint on one side seems like

it's eggshell the other is fluffy
bunny so you started as psych major?

Flora Mindset

Unlike us, plants don't need friends or family
or quiet and sleep to keep their sanity

to be at peace and then put on their poise
before the day drags them through the noise,

or teeth to tear at meat done just right
or bowels to flush it out barbarically

to only want more junk with fructose for free--
they only need water and the likeness of light,

atomic attraction so they don't fly apart
and some rot below them-- they respect their dirt,

content they don't have clothes to wear
or noses to smell what we've done to the air

or offspring that must be herded or blessed,

though plants are disappointed by us,
by our penchant to plow and hoard all the water,
turning yellow when they don't want us anymore.

Skull

I am god Skeleto,
I am superhero bone deluxe
with Christ on his gnawed crucifix
stabbed dagger-like into my head.

I am Mount Golgotha,
my mass of pagan craniums tumbling
down like dried mudslides.

Tote me like a bowling ball
down the valley of the shadow of death.
I am the good evil--
the thrilling one, the naughty beheading.

Toss me so the scarabs scatter like bowling pins
in that damn tomb of the richest pharaoh ever.

I am the egg of all knowledge,
orb of lust, alien shell
of mucous drive and gray neurons
puddled and scheming hamburger hell.

I am slowly grown, sutured sphere
of adolescent distillations,
old-age regrets rotting to Alzheimer acids.

I am ball bone bone
bounce crisp melon,

the target of the clubbed kill--
I heal as my guts morph
retard to staleness.

I am erect shroud
of the 90% untapped,
hard cape to the omnipotent.

I am nutshell God to the nth,
pirate icon
sailing to rape and eat the unscathed.

I scare with reaper grin,
knob of Australopithecus,
beacon to body,
calcium king, good to the bone.

I am thy rod, thy battering ram
staff, nub of rhino horn
to the stars.

Pray to my sockets--
they are gates to calcified ghosts,
my stag desert jaw
the godawful gape to a gnashing abyss.

the astronaut has racing thoughts

I thought I
knew ennui
on the 7 billion-
bodied ground--
no wife child
no friends to
tell of my dense
heart the gravity
of the blade in
my blunted being
my echoed screams

but here truly no
air to carry my
cry no dirt to root
no faces no
mutual breathing
or direction for
the tears that
cascade in my
helmet and dance--
intent amoebas
globule babes
with no down-
ward drift as they
rightly deserve

take me back

o I will connect
I promise! I will
find brothers
lover and kiss the
sere desert of
my O₂ solitude

abyss of blue
below is all I see
here and the promise
of a black vacuous
tarred God above

to float
might be
heaven but my
soul is still in
heavy hell
how I reel here
so reel me in
return me to
that sticky safe
bound ball
its coddling
mothering spin
to plant my heels
and spit glee

Sensing Imminent Death In A Houseplant

My love, what is this crispiness
at one kind leaf tip?
Some chlorophyll psoriasis?
You betray me,
begin to cower in the mauve glow

of this lamp I ordered from Amazon
that fills you with blinding vitamins.
I watered you like a hunched old witch,
measured your meth nuggets
down to the princess milligram.

You smell of fungus gnat blood—
last year they invaded you and
your crowded, waxen sisters,
but most of you survived
and steamed through another winter.

Your aura is now taupe—
the tint of dirtied fossils.
I dreamed this wilt.
Another leaf rots in the shadows—
you amputate yourself?

Soon your pot will be another's.
I'm sorry you don't have
a skeleton like a tumbleweed,
so your carcass can roll across

my floor when the AC thunders.

Punch Memory

I lost four teeth to a fist.
The throb remains, slightly,
but I try to forget the past,

the times I didn't feel so blessed.
I saw the knuckles coming and I
somehow wanted the wrath of the fist,

and thought I deserved the worst
of the terrible things that have hit me
or burned and scarred in the past.

I've never been kissed
by lips or luck, but I can say
I've been kissed by a fist,

then wanted to slash my wrist
but didn't, wisely,
since I learned to paint with the past,

to feel loathing and guilt, for the best
of times may still come for me.
I harden from hard walls and fists.
Why try to forget the past?

Wings

When I am done
pumicing the green
copper stains from
your toilets, and
finger-picking the
hole punches you
dump on the carpet,
when I am done
wiping your ape
prints from your
faux wood desks
and unnecessary
glass tables and
dusting your dander
from black pedestals,
done dumping your
trash mucked with
yogurt and neon
green gum, I drive
home 90 mph on
Highway 275, and
wait for the three
roller coaster dips
in the road that make
me fly a little as if
I'm escaping your
cubicle prison, and
realize I never want

my ass in your butt-
worn Dorito-crumbed
chairs and ergonomic
anemic lit catacombs.

THE POET SPEAKS: *Growing up in a town of 120 people in eastern Nebraska surrounded by cornfields, there wasn't a lot to do. Plants and flowers are a big part of imagery in my early work since my mom planted so many different flowers. They take on human characteristics in my work. I am bipolar and was depressed though both of my college degrees, even suicidal.*

I was influenced by and imitated Sylvia Plath, but somewhere along I got a sense of humor and also passed into a formal phase, writing sonnets and villanelles, but there isn't much market for that.

Writers who inspire me now are dead ones-- the gods Wallace Stevens and Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman. When I read a lot of Ernest Hemingway my poetry was very bare and intentionally unmusical, but I think the majority of my work is musical since I was classically trained on piano and clarinet and started college on a music scholarship.

When I attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop my instructors were James Tate, whose work I never really hooked onto, as well as Gerald Stern and Marvin Bell. I took classes with the former poet laureate of the US, Juan Felipe Herrera, but I doubt he would remember me.

I have been a phlebotomist, a farmhand, a busboy, a hotel supervisor, an editorial assistant, and am currently a lead custodian for the county. I don't have a wife or children, or even much money, so my poetry is everything to me. I've written for over forty years and read my work over late at night when doubt sets in if I've accomplished anything in life.

AUTHOR BIO: Marc Darnell is an online tutor and lead custodian in Omaha NE, and has also been a phlebotomist, hotel supervisor, busboy, editorial assistant, farmhand, devout recluse, and incurable brooder. He received his MFA from the University of Iowa, and has published poems in *The Lyric*, *Rue Scribe*, *Verse*, *Skidrow Penthouse*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *The HyperTexts*, *Candelabrum*, *The Road Not Taken*, *Aries*, *Ship of Fools*, *Open Minds Quarterly*, *The Fib Review*, *Verse-Virtual*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Ragazine*, *The Literary Nest*, *The Pangolin Review*, and elsewhere.