

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 O<sub>2</sub> 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.