

She *Loved*

... It... (*Loved... Loved... Loved*) et al

By Mary Paulson

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... Mary Paulson is searing, scorching white heat reaching temperatures at which body becomes brightly incandescent. In 'Thief' the police are summoned to a midnight burglary of an item so close to the heart it might as well be, "When I turn my head— / he absconds with it, / slides it right up his sleeve and runs," 'She loved it' is a must read a terribly difficult subject, "You and a friend took turns" written with such a curious calm, a spouse's confession, recounting something that happened a long time ago "I tell myself you were young, / drunk, light years away / from who you are now— / I lie in our bed, blank" What if we were our worst mistakes? Loving and sometimes hating that same person. As we nicely segue to the 'Fight,' a little verbal domestic quarrel, quibble, squabble—no shortage of queues or cues, not minding pints and quarts, poems and quotes? "Twist fingers in my lap, mentally / wring the heart from your heartless body—" "You'd set yourself on fire just to prove me wrong / and I'm never wrong." Wouldn't want to tangle with this gal... well, maybe... (Spacing is poet's own.) HS*

Thief

I will call the police.
Red and blue lights will litter
the front lawn, wake
the neighbors. Pink sleep-shot eyes,
terrycloth robes,
expensive
cushioned slippers—

What happened? What's going on?

It's a burglary! A random midnight
crime. A malfeasance
of the worst order.

He knocked,
postured himself a fellow student
of good faith—
compatriot, compadre,
bon amie. How could I guess?
Dropping by, just
in the neighborhood: Yada, yada, yada.

When I turn my head—
he absconds with it,
slides it right up his sleeve and runs,
runs like a man on fire—
down the blue pavement, through
the rose garden,
trampling new basil and innocent
rosemary sprig. Oh
he's wily, a filthy thief.
Why me?

I went to college, earned
my degree, bought
a house. I keep the lawn
neat, take the trash out morning of,
not the night before.
A model. Citizen.

I support the troops. I'm the kind
you bring home
to your mother.

Lock him up, build
a scaffold in the town square,
hang him out
for all to see: Miscreant!
Delinquent!
Felony villain!
Even better, shoot on sight! But wait –
not before you find it, make him
give it back—
my ticker, center, core,
the nucleus
of poor, poor me,
my bloodied, beating valve
assembly. What?
It's not a felony? How
can that be? What's this world
coming to when such wrongdoing could happen
to a person like me?

She Loved It

You said she loved it.

Three of you
in your '62 Chevy

parked in a cul-de-sac
at the end of your parent's street.

You and a friend took turns
fucking her

one sticky-hot July night,
blue leather interior bench seats,

Vladimir vodka and old beer
stinking the floorboards.

Good 'ole boys from Missouri
pumping, grinding, legs

dangling outside
the open door of the back seat.

I tell myself you were young,
drunk, light years away

from who you are now—
I lie in our bed, blank

in the face of your account,
cemented by the view

of historical you. Tonight feels
like bad night for porn,

but we still watch together
with the volume turned down;

naked all-cream girls
mouth expletives at the camera.

I lie in your forever arms and
can't get comfortable, thinking

of a high school girl waking up
bleary-eyed, knots

in her blonde hair so thick
she can't pull her brush through.

Your arm underneath my neck
is like resting on a log, your

kiss is too wet,
for the first time since I met you

I dislike the way your mouth hangs
a little open when you sleep.

Revolt

Johnny, loyal friend to all who scratch,
rub belly, tug ropes and stuffed monkeys,
toss toys high in the sky. Normally

so happy, so eager
to please, now moping around
the house. No kibbles, three days

counting. Doesn't even
want to sleep in bed with me.
Instead, he's out back, howling,

stirring up trouble with the locals.
About what? The state of their humans'
generosity, lack thereof? I fear

I'm being unfairly maligned,
character assassinated by the beasts
of the block. Is this the result

of last week's vaccinations?
Bath, blow dry, toe-nail clipping?
These days, even a milk bone, beef jerky

bribe doesn't suffice. He's up on the hill
rubbing noses with Sasha, plum tongued
Chow Chow twice his size. Ignores me

when I call him home. I'm suspicious.

There's a new wiggle in Sasha's big-bottomed
bottom and Suki, half-breed buddy, lingers

loop-eyed in the background. I sense
he's recruiting, playing the crowd,
planning a break, up, out over the ailing fence—

leading a proletariat parade down
the middle of the street. Sasha, Suki, the whole
neighborhood's canine gang

following his lead. I've tried
to reason with him, but he just lifts his nose,
sniffs the air, flips his ear right-side up

as if to say he's blowing me off for good.
He's giving me up for a better life—
Italian leather boots, high-end

pillows, unrestricted
on-furniture lounging, leftovers
from exotic hotel kitchens.

Fight

I glare blind out the window
of your red Ford.

Twist fingers in my lap, mentally
wring the heart from your heartless body—

This, our third fight of the week.

Satellite radio pours out a velvet voice.
Billie Holiday, hole in her heart big as Texas.

I glance at your profile.

Muscled jaw, straight-ahead stare,
sensuous full-fem bottom lip.

You were a junky too, years ago—

Stainless steel syringe, snowdrop
on the needle tip shivering like a dream.

I, a corrosive cokehead.

Both willful, meat-headed, we glide on our guts,
eat our own hearts—

You'd set yourself on fire just to prove me wrong
and I'm never wrong.

THE POET SPEAKS: *Writing is one of the few ways I'm able to discern my own thoughts, feeling, concerns, etc. It's as if I'm pulling down all these things floating around in the air around me – emotions, thoughts, senses, images, information. I put the pieces down on paper and move them around until I can see what I'm really thinking. Words inspire me – delineation, rhyme, rhythm, definition, alliteration, the feel of them in my mouth. Connection inspires me – saying something, being understood and vice versa. But in the end what I'm looking for is truth- in my own poems and in the poetry I read. Not a factual, explainable truth but a truth that comes over my whole body and mind and settles in my bones. Somehow, I know it, I feel its answer inside me.*

AUTHOR BIO: Mary Paulson's work has appeared in *Slow Trains*, *Mainstreet Rag*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Arkana*, *Thimble Lit Magazine*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *The Metaworker Literary Magazine* and *Months to Years*. Her chapbook, *Paint the Window Open* was recently published by Kelsay Books. She currently resides in Naples, Florida.