

11 (Eleven) Poems

By Frank De Canio

Poetry editor Hezekiah writes: Frank De Canio is liquid light, lightening in a bottle. Each of his works has such a unique fluidity it is not easy to select excerpts. They spark like flashes of fiction and I am supposed to be the feckless, fecked-up Poetry Editor—but I wouldn't miss a word. Their cadence is contagious. (Note: I avoided alliterating with COVID or Corona.) Do you ever find yourself in such a disagreeable mood that rainbows, sunshine and lollypops can't alter? Well I did, and I was determined to reject at least one of De Canio's poems on principle; but I couldn't and my life has been enriched because I didn't. What if yours was too? Isn't it a wondrous thing the simple, and not so simple, things that put you back in a better frame of mind? This poet recomposed me. Here is his all. I recommend you read each, if you want to discover yourself in a better frame of mind than when you started...(Spacing is poet's own.) HS

Delicatessen Gal

With matron efficiency she teases pieces of roast from the meat slicer into the damp rose of her opened palm. Slim, dexterous fingers toss soft slivers of cheese on sodden slabs. Scattered parts of my white-breasted hero are stretched-out on the marble counter. Naked to the warm insouciance of her touch, the bread's diapered with assorted cold-cuts, then handily dressed with tufts of lettuce, like bibs on a driveling child. Delivered to the check-out counter's genial cashier, I tuck it in my baggage, thoroughly beguiled.

Miss Appraisal

Every man's a fugitive from justice as far as women are concerned. He saw the girl reflected on the window of the subway car where he sat suspiciously engaged by her resemblance to a singer he was fond of. Propped against the exit door beside him she didn't leave at the next stop but occupied the seat opposite him when one of his familiars left. Put off by his expropriating looks, she sat resolved to confiscate his stolen goods. Furtive glances ensued. Stared into submission, he was arrested by her tough demeanor. After he was placed in custody, she frisked him for any contraband involving wife, children, present liaisons or seminal associations. Pursuant to being ID'd on the way to the next station he was booked at the restaurant where he was charged with a 3 course meal. In the interrogation room he confessed to Miss demeanors that shadowed him all the daze of his life. Handcuffed to her waist, he was later fingerprinted by her neck and shoulders. Preliminary tests on the hickies he left behind - coming out positive for his being a good kisser - he was remanded into custody where he's serving a wife sentence with little possibility of parole, unless under strict supervision that he pay child support.

Magic Lamp

I'm Scheherazade. Telling my inner sultan tall tales, I survive another day. At night I start another poem to pique his interest. He follows the exotic lines of my cunning concoctions to arousal. Bewitched as he is by my iambics, he spares me. Indeed. The fantastic stories I spin beg closure. For well I know the fate of my previous lives. Death awaits me should I cease enchantment during this forced marriage. And I'm scared, lest unceremoniously, nuptial tensions be brought to a head.

Munch Hour

Where's that sultry French girl I saw in the heat of a Summer afternoon selling fruit on Park Avenue South in the Flat Iron District of Manhattan? "The Tide is High" was blazing on the radio like waves buffeting the sweaty shores of my body. Did the dust settle on her pretty cropped head like that of Jean Seberg's in Joan of Arc? Or have tresses of time embalmed it in a coiffure of sackcloth and ashes? Nothing remains except the sultry air of her. Ah! The permeable suture of youth, where women enter stitched into our mindsets at their behest and there's no gainsaying it, before the armature is settled on our bodies like an embalmer's primer. I remember her boyfriend appearing as if from back stage of a play unfolding on this patron of her parts. How I envied him in his youthful exuberance, embracing and missing her. Has the sun set on his enterprising affections? Or have they sublet some tawdry apartment on the lower eastside where he's fodder for her plebian tastes? Oh, those dog days of summer. How they cling to me like a wet blanket on a hot beach reaching out to tides of passion that ride me like a surfboard on their surge.

Scrumptious Sex

What matter if it's raisin, rye or wheat
bread sandwiching the food stuff that's inside?
It's meat, plus lettuce, cheese and all you eat
with it that makes you feel so satisfied.
Such appetizing victuals can slake
your hunger. Nor should spicy mayonnaise,
and red hot peppers force you to forsake
them for less pungent flavors that won't braise
the sensibilities. For they're subsumed
within the context of a proper lunch
that doesn't leave one's healthy diet doomed.
But listen up, before tour features scrunch!
Those condiments affording you a thrill
as seasoning, uncoupled make you ill.

Prisoner of Sex

Hung over from his binge the night before,
he sits against the backboard of his bed
as his fond lover enters through the door
with breakfast – coffee, scrambled eggs and bread.
Despite a pompous sense of royal ease,
he feels in some unsettling way remiss
as she unloads his burden on his knees,
and then bends over with a sidelong kiss.
Unable to maneuver her to bed,
he plays a foppish king since overthrown
who takes base tribute from her lips instead
of her subjection to his sceptered throne.
This stiffens like a trophy in her keep
as she sets off to work and he to sleep.

Nurturing Her Animus

Exasperated with the gender role
assigned to her, she first stopped using rouge,
then makeup all together. Mind control
sufficed as a becoming subterfuge,
before she took karate and Tai Chi.
But still she needed thumbs up from her peers,
besides subverting femininity
by putting triple piercings in her ears.
Enjoining older men to take her seat
on bus or train accorded social clout
to her. And though policing on the beat
afforded her pro forma ways to flout
the stigma she felt compromised her sex,
just running down a suspect purged the hex.

Wheedling Wedlock

is sort of like the lovelorn out on bail.
He stumbles on his girlfriend's house to rob
her of her valuables, until she flails
to constrain her armed, if ardent, heartthrob.
She manages to confiscate his gun,
but before he cocks it in her face,
believing she's be stunned and overrun.
Instead, with frantic thrust, her arms embrace
him in a stranglehold that makes him rear
in desperation, writhing to escape.
With no recourse then biting on her ear
he breathlessly concedes to her the scrape,
if only so he get sufficient rest.
Of course, the case contested in the court
of public opinion, he hence confessed
to charges that require child support.
And with the evidence inside of her,
the court remands him as her prisoner.

Salaciously Served

Though smitten senseless by the handsome thief
of hearts who brashly swaggered in her store,
she was accomplished at preparing beef
her gourmet peers and family adore.
As such, she clasped the fellow in her arms
and pressed him to her appetizing ear,
then seasoned him with hot and spicy charms
like thyme, until she felt his passion rear.
With aromatic preparations done,
she took the silken ribbon from her hair
and, just as if he were filet mignon,
entwined his hands with gastronomic care
where, later, like porchetta, she then tied
in nuptial knots with culinary pride.

Love Ties

Forget that talismanic gunny sack of oils. Pin peppered dolls dripping honey merely made her squander hard-earned money. Even that twisted arm behind his back could hardly pick up Aphrodite's slack, tickling less the pubic than the funny bone. Though trussing up his hands would stun him. in spite of its incendiary tack, she left him flaccid, off the beaten track, if only to avoid a felony trap. But watching her, all worked up, runny nose, disheveled hair smelling of lilac as it dispensed its aphrodisiac, roiled his blood. Eros rose as – her sunny disposition darkening – she spun him all about. Such miffed scrambling for the knack of disentangling that quadruple knot with which she'd gingerly secured his wrists, worked magic to assist love's steaming pot to boil. She champed at the chord, pounded fists, as her frenetic body stewed to hot. then wet. Though no man worth his salt enlists prolonged restrictions sitting in one spot, she – baffled, huffing mad – puffed catalysts of fetid breath to equal megawatts of Spanish fly in a romantic tryst. It tripped him to discharge his pleasure shot much quicker than the rope's abrasive twists deferred to her remedial assists.

Sexist Scrimmage

Her fluency's alive and well.
And not just on the podium
when she, while fielding questions, fell
afoul of backfield odium
from hecklers taking her to school.
But rushing one as he recapped
his triumphs on a tavern stool,
her metaphoric tackle zapped
him harder than the verbal bricks
that fell on her like an assault.
It hit him like some forward chick's
improper pass. For by default,
her dexterous, linguistic sack
became an aphrodisiac.

THE POET SPEAKS: *My poems are sometimes inspired, to echo, Robert Frost, by a lump in the throat; thoughts tugging at my sleeves; or an epiphany I have about life or love. My formal poetry is clearly influenced by the great poets of bygone centuries; John Keats, Shelley, Shakespeare most of all. But my prose poems seem to be informed by an elliptically suggestive narrative I sometimes get from Ginsberg and Dylan Thomas, where one idea might mutate into another. Poems are emotions made concrete. Writing poetry for me is a way of organizing my emotional world, putting it down on paper and subjecting it to analysis, clearing it out of my mind (with all due respect) where it appears to put a lien on me. The finished poem is as it were, a coffin with a tombstone that says: Rest in Peace.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: Born & bred in New Jersey, I worked in New York City for many years. I love music from Bach to Amy Winehouse. Shakespeare is my consolation, writing my hobby. As poets, I like Dylan Thomas, Allen Ginsberg, and Sylvia Plath. I also attend a Café Philo every other week in Lower Manhattan.

I've written 3500 poems which I write to elucidate my concerns, and purge them out of my mind, as it were. I don't write what I've thought through but what I'm thinking through. Dylan Thomas said if he knew what I wanted to say when he wrote a poem he wouldn't have to write it. I have the same idea.