

AESTHETICS and other poems...

By Larry O. Dean

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *This entry leaves me overwhelmed and under-nourished for more...*

Aesthetics]: *The first is a haiku, less is always more...Is 'tics' a play on words? Maybe it is the Fleas in me. We all have the--eyes blinking, throat clearing, toes clenching or alternate spasms--And as we grow older they collect and infest. Nose tics can be most bewitching or annoying in others, but not in long-time lovers; with familiarity the face of tics fade. But for the sake of new acquaintances. 'keep an eye / on your nose' (It is odd how pith evokes more thought than poems-in-prose.)*

Chopped: Slasher Film Edition: *The gastronomic-thriller imagery, here, recommends that Dean knows how to cook: '...point-of-view tequila / shots representing the "chef's perspective," / a jolting sauce and graphic deglazing...'*

The Elephant in the Room: *I wouldn't want this misconstrued, but one of my favourite verse-ists is Dr. Suess. This reads like quintessential, adult Suess. Maybe it is due to the Horton Hears a Hoot in me—'boil that dust-speck.' In the aftermath, the biggest most elusive, illusive, docile, yet untamed, entity in the room has now been shrunk to its most diminutive form: 'His trunk was limp as unspooled thread,' Not to go unread.*

Tangent [bold]: *Now here is some poetry-in-prose that would appeal to the most orthodox of standpats—what a diverse perspective Dean offers us...(Spacing is poet's own) HS*

Aesthetics

As the tics grow,

keep an eye

on your nose.

Chopped: Slasher Film Edition

What I've made for you today is a horror
or a thriller of a dish, typically involving
a mysterious, generally psychopathic
entree scalloping and kneading a sequence
of adolescent or young adult taste buds
in a secluded kitchen
with little or no
adult supervision, point-of-view tequila
shots representing the "chef's perspective,"
a jolting sauce and graphic deglazing
by vinegar and meunière, with a twist
at the end leaving it open for seconds.

The Elephant in the Room

The elephant in the room is dead.

Found him this morning, locked the door.

I still can't get it out of my head.

His trunk was limp as unspooled thread,

splayed out there on the icy floor.

The elephant in the room is dead,

though I didn't check for a pulse; instead

I wished things could be just like before.

I still can't get it out of my head

but maybe there are signs that I misread

—I'm not a vet, and can't speak for

the elephant in the room that's dead.

His tusks were pointed overhead.

Elephants are herbivores.

I still can't get it out of my head,

where images in infrared

burn in my brain to underscore

the elephant in the room is dead.

I still can't get it out of my head.

Tangent

This next poem is a new one and it's based on a true story.

I was in a pretty dark place when I wrote it—and by that I mean mentally, not 'dark' as in low-lighting, though now as I remember when I wrote it, the room I was in was pretty dark because one of the bulbs in the lamps had burnt out and I had been so depressed because I'd lost my job and my girlfriend all in the same week and I didn't have the energy to buy any bulbs much less any money, which I then needed to watch because I had lost my job.

I still have to watch my money, but if I needed a bulb right now I could run right out and get it, or two, or even three, or come to think of it a lot of the time they're packaged in a box of four and I could afford that—buying four at a time would be smarter than just a single bulb—they'd be cheaper per bulb and bulbs are the kind of thing it's always good to have a supply of, but back then I wasn't in the right state of mind to be thinking intelligently

about bulbs, or bottled water, or batteries, or any of those
emergency supplies they say it's wise to have on hand. Like I said,
I was in a dark place, and wrestling with my demons, which I know
is a cliché but as far as me at the time, it was true; I was at an all-time
low, sitting in my spare bulb-less apartment and ruminating
on a lot of stuff, not just about getting fired or breaking up
with Brooke because I slept with her friend from the bar,
which was a terrible mistake, I admit it, but we were both drunk
and kind of did it on a dare, and sorry about it the next day,
though it was awesome, she's cool and we like a lot
of the same music—unlike Brooke—and even though we only did it once
we kept texting each other and that's how Brooke found out.
Anyway, she was none too happy and dumped me
right before we were set to take a trip out east to meet her parents,
which got me to thinking about my dad, and what a hard-ass
he could be, and how when he died I kind of compartmentalized it
because we had one of those love-hate relationships that a lot

of fathers and sons have—though ours was way more complicated

—and it's a relationship that I'm still unraveling, the way you

open a present, or better, the way you unwrap a bandage

to change it when a wound is still not healed and you can't help

but stare at it, all scabby and gross, and it gets you kind of woozy

but you keep on staring because what doesn't destroy you makes

you stronger, and I remembered my dad's car and how it always

smelled like cigarettes because he was such a heavy smoker,

and how he'd be driving and the ash on his Camel[®] would get

really, really long, and kind of curl over but not break,

and how I'd be watching it the whole time, waiting for it

to crack in half and fall and how he'd swipe the seat where it

fell or stomp on the floor, swearing, making sure it wasn't still lit,

and the car would swerve and jerk a little, and the image

of that red ash always stuck in my head. That's what I mean

in the first line. It's called, "A Fiery, Falling Ash."

THE POET SPEAKS: *I've always been a reader, as well as a writer; I don't remember discerning a difference between the two—a “hey, I'm allowed to do this too!” moment—but rather, an inherent inclination to write intermingled inextricably with the pleasures of reading, especially since each feeds off the other. I was also a drawer, and an innate visual acuity offered me an idea of the power of images. I messed around with prose but later gave myself over to poetry, as an outgrowth of being a fan of pop songs, then later a purveyor of smart songwriting. I admired how songwriters could do a lot with a little, toying with language, making jokes, being deliberately vague or ambiguous, such as “Lola” by The Kinks—a perfect marriage of words and music. My early poems were angsty and serious, and a friend once asked, “Why isn't your poetry funny? You're funny.” I'd always had a sense of the absurd, embracing it aesthetically in what I liked but hesitating to embody it in what I wrote. Creem magazine out of Detroit had a very particular kind of rustbelt existentialist viewpoint that spoke to me, and over time I realized their attitude mirrored as well as amplified my own. To that extent, I consider the Creem school to be every bit as (if not more so) important in my development as a poet as the various versifiers, hardboiled scribes, and fringe rockers I found sustenance in.*

BIO: *Larry O. Dean was born and raised in Flint, Michigan. His numerous books include Frequently Asked Questions, (2020), Activities of Daily Living (2017), Brief Nudity (2013), Basic Cable Couplets (2012), abbrev (2011), About the Author (2011), and I Am Spam (2004). He is also an acclaimed singer-songwriter whose latest solo album is Good Grief (2015); the sophomore album from his band, The Injured Parties, Product Placement, was released August 2019. For more info, go to larryodean.com.*

LARRY O. DEAN
Songs & Sardonica

=> New Injured Parties album, *Product Placement*, available from [Bandcamp](#) and [Apple Music](#)
=> New book, [Activities of Daily Living](#), available from [Salmon Poetry Ltd.](#)

=> [Home page](#)
=> [Facebook](#)
=> [Goodreads](#)
=> [Poets & Writers](#)
=> [LinkedIn](#)
=> [Draconian Measures](#)

"*Cachet* — isn't that like *panache*, but sitting down?" *Warren Zevon*