

Y'ALL

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POETRY

A LIST OF THINGS I CAN MAKE INTO WEAPONS SHANNON CURTIN

The contents of the silverware drawer,
every secret you slipped into shots of
cheap liquor,
the hard candy between my teeth,
May 2007, my mother's pot roast,
Polaroids drowned in the gutter,
a key to a 2003 Toyota Corolla,
my unborn son's surname,
Pennsylvania dirt roads, char,
the astringent sentences you spit at me,
devotion, one thousand paper cranes,
a 1980 blockbuster romantic comedy,
the length and color of my hair,
every apathetic apology, perfume-stained sheets,
two quarters, one nickel, a dime,
this poem.

THE NICEST GUY YOU EVER MET ART HEIFETZ

The widows in the Catskills
loved my father.
They ran their fingers through
his wonderful silver hair
and marveled at his virility.
When he was 82
we found a giant box of Trojans
in the glove compartment
of his totaled car.

That was before
he started hearing Mafioso
talking through the plumbing
and saw the Germany army
advancing on the front lawn.
Because of some imagined sleight
he re-christened Father's Day
as Holocaust Day
and referred to his son-in-law
as "the bum your sister married,"
deriding his many illnesses
as proof of bad genes.

Before they carted him off
to Sunset Hills home,
he drew aside the curtains
in the ER
and gave a hearty ovation
to doctors and patients alike.
"Nice performance," he said.
"You can all go home now."

They finally
got the medication right
and he became
what he had always been
for widows and grandchildren,
the nicest guy you ever met.

IN THE LAST CHANCE HOTEL WILLIAM DORESKI

Shoebox rooms sweat and gloom,
reeking of last year's pizza.
No one has sex here. No one
arrives with a leather suitcase
or a tourist visa from Poland.
No one brings children here.
No couples, freshly wedded
or dumpy and coarse with age.

Only men alone with duffel bags
or shopping bags or nothing but
stolen wallets full of credit cards
not accepted here. Cash only,
but with rooms a dollar a night
I can stay awhile, etching myself
into the gray polyester sheets
while dreaming of the honeymoon
that withered my favorite organs
and left a heart murmur so loud
most physicians can't detect it.

This murmur can't finish me, not here
where even suicides don't die.
They only sigh and bubble in sleep
while fleas and bedbugs riot
with feelers tingling like radar.
But the view of the ruins next door,
an infamous, burnt-out Turkish Bath,
stimulates flesh to ache like spirit,
so I tense myself to escape.

I open the creaky window
and spit into the alley six floors
below. Spry as a toad, I leap and land
atop a hulking green dumpster.
I'd hoped to breathe freely again,
but a dozen zombie junkies gather,
greet me, shake my hand, kiss me
with mucous smears. They hope
I'll join their sorry parade;
but instead I re-enter the lobby
to register under a different name
and barter another last chance.

APOCALYPSE SOON WILLIAM DORESKI

In the mountain house kitchen
you angle a pair of TVs
to maximize your viewing pleasure.
Crime shows crackle with gunfire.
You're washing actual guns,
disassembled, in the sink.

You also want to maximize
your shooting pleasure when
the government collapses in debt
and roving gangs loot the homes
of innocents who lack clean guns.
I walked ten miles up a road

rougher than a hiking trail
and you greet me with gun oil and rags.
You expect to lead a grisly bunch
of gat-toothed hammerhead thugs,
looting, burning, and devouring
everything in their path. You think

you're the toughest woman this side
of the Hudson River. Maybe
you are. But maybe your TVs lie.
Maybe the space between them
offers a truer view of the earth,
a glimpse through a dusty window

of krummholtz and glacial debris.
The government won't collapse,
and your guns won't fire because
rust and doubt will embargo them.
In your frilled apron you look
like a dish detergent ad.

Your stock of ammunition fills
the cupboards. But tonight we'll share
a giant pot of spaghetti
and laugh away the TV shows
that even with fuzzy reception
look too assured to come true.

MIKROKOSMOSIS IN MAGYAR SCOTT BECK

In dancing, Bartok found it
effective but didn't at all

decide to do it again.

And still he was hungry
for what the people
hummed outside of papal

lights, when their hats
were hung on posts
and they hadn't
washed their feet
for days.

This is why at certain
points, the hands cross each

other, uncoil to lean
in turn, stiffen
to a march or

rest for bars.

Not as to be clumsy,
but out
in the strange open-

ended fields, nesting
for moments, re-routing
then reaching

back to the storyteller
inhabitants that led him
here, the sheet songs
in shorthand crumbling
with age into dusty
new awakenings

on his desk.

He made a gesture
like striking a match
against the keys

and that marked the beginning
of the old night
and the burgeoning
cosmos,

 a harboring fire
in the middle
for all of the people to
warm their hands
and lift their feet.

NO MORE POEMS ABOUT PLAYING LOVERS AS INSTRUMENTS J. BRADLEY

The orchestra pit is roped off, your fingers banned from spinning want into horsehair. Last time, you left your name in her lung as a wheeze; she strings the arms of Ken dolls above her bedroom as a warning.

FLASH FICTION

SHARDS RAY SCANLON

I'm content to sweep my driveway, pushing a thousand glittering prisms of auto glass into a pile. Because I can. Because I'm not the head-injured kid in a coma with a fifty-fifty chance, nor his passenger, also with a fifty-fifty chance, who'll be a paraplegic if he lives, nor his weeping friend who came to my yard to pray at the big oak that finally stopped the Civic last night. I'm just out a couple hours of sleep.

