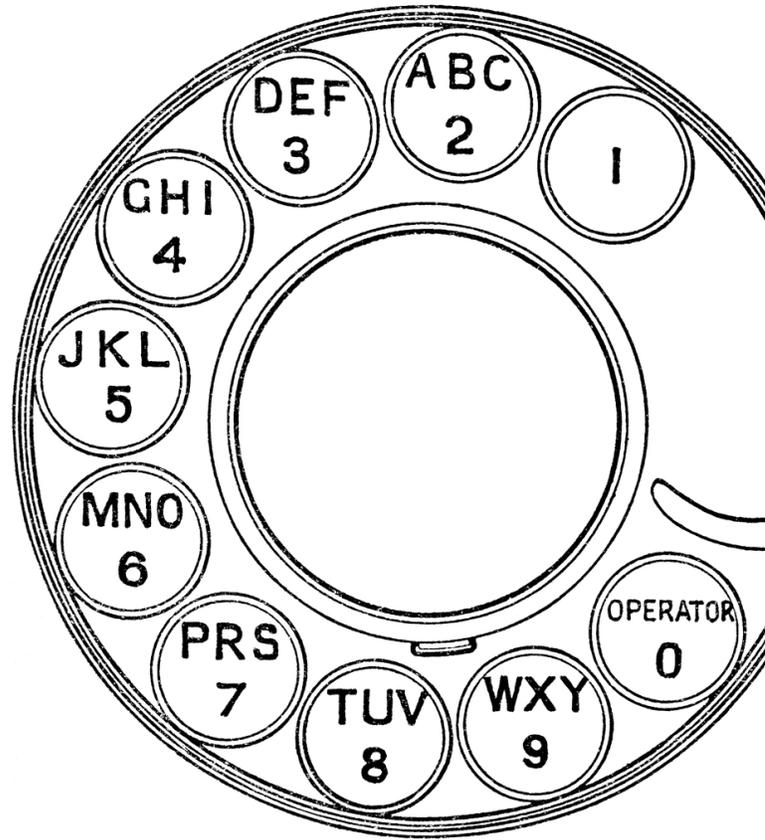


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CHRIS O'CARROLL

Sexiest Woman Alive

I think the risk of being the sexiest woman alive is that you don't want to ever have sex again. – Kate Beckinsale

That's how the star reacted when *Esquire*
Named her the world's prime object of desire.

In the event you feel likewise, I ought
To hasten to assure you that you're not.

(It wouldn't be the first time that a guy
Had angled for some action with a lie.)

Or maybe, to incline you toward congress,
I'll say you are, but not inform the press,

The better to enjoy in blissful privacy
All of your sexiest woman alivecy.

Love and Nonsense

You gimble with my vorpal blade,
I gyre in your wabe.
I whiffle tulgey coinages
For such a frabjous babe.

'Tis brillig and my love's unhinged
In uffish consequence.
My tangled tongue is burbling you
With words that make no sense.

Callooh! Callay! I want to say.
I'm beamish that you're mine.
My borogoves are mimsy
And my heart is on the line.

NED BALBO

Ghost Armada

A variation on Rilke's "Spätherbst in Venedig"

This Venice – once our Venice – is no longer
quite the city we recall from days
when every palace window held a stranger,
someone's tryst, another's fall from grace,

and murder thrived in plain sight on the Square.
We were assassins, lethal marionettes
sent on clandestine missions far and near,
imposters patient in the epaulets

of hired musicians, brass, baton, or bow
completing our disguise....

And now, at sea,
a ghost armada turns back with its show

of force, ships long forgotten, guns eternal
like their crew, a thunder audible –
and all invisible, like you or me.

Nearing the Buddha

A variation on Rilke's "Buddha"

From far away, the pilgrim feels a light
that touches him then falls away like rain –
as if great wealth were hoarded here in secret
where he might discover it again.

Nearer, he's in doubt: the solemn furrow
of that brow compels him to reflect
not on some craftsman's object but its glow,
surpassing lesser art or artifact

with elemental light that's born within....
What things were melted – earrings, chain, or chalice –
to create this figure not as golden

as the One it represents, all-seeing
in his wisdom, seated on the lotus –
silent, calm, connected to all Being?

Venetian Courtesan

A variation on Rilke's "Die Kurtisane"

It's almost as if Venice knows a secret
alchemists once knew: how any substance –
hair or skin or lips – beneath the sun's
gaze turns to gold. You touched that secret, once,

and can't let go. I wish you could forget,
but you're one more who can't survive the night
unless he finds some bridge from dark to light
over the dim canals, the rising tide

that drowns or bears us homeward...This dog I walk
I sleep with, too: his presence comforts me,
as love and strangers' company do not,

though, yes, I occupy your every thought,
or so you claim... I smile occasionally –

How much more dangerous it is to talk.

JANICE D. SODERLING

Autumn

In the red and yellow valleys,
Pan the goat god plays his pipe,
calling each unsated lady
in the autumn of her life.

Sweet her itch and sweet the scratching
of his hairy, goatish thighs.
On a shallow couch of grasses,
mellow maids lie compromised.

Garlands on his lusty horns.
Tangy honey on his tongue.
Ripened maidens lose their reason
and depart forever young.

Abdication

Again the hawk. Goldenrod guttering along the lane.
Bare giddy green. Sober moss. A thornlike stab of loss.
Under this redolent, fragrant morning after rain,
I long to just walk on and not turn back. The rest is dross.

Matryoshka

Running and jumping and skipping in sunlight,
Mary, the merry child, fleet as the wind,
runs through tall grasses and into the forest.
Turning and laughing, she runs back again.

Mary, the maiden, peers into the mirror.
She cannot glimpse Mary, the mother of ten.
Young Mary is running, the woman is weeping.
Married is Mary, past Marys within.

SETH BRAVER

Sestina of the Hound

And once again I find myself in bed.
Again I feel the darkness where I lie –
The ancient rubbing of the tomb of Time:
My shrouded body rests in sheets and leaves
My mind to turn obsessively and hound
Itself on cyclic paths that orbit sleep.

An inhumane humiliation, sleep.
Obliged to curl up every night in bed,
Poor man the mammal, poor inhuman hound,
Must lie immured in stupor, stoop to lie
With kings and counselors and cabbage leaves
In hirsute hibernation for a time.

The selfscents fade and die – the skein of time
Unwinds inside the labyrinth of sleep,
Where dreamwinds rifle randomly through leaves
Of memory's infernal book, and bed
Becomes a hell, where clue-cut demons lie
Among my ruins, howling hound to hound.

Again! Again! In thrall to thoughts that hound
The helpless half-awake, I tilt at Time
With arguments whose premises all lie
Mere tonguetips out of reach. The veil of sleep
Obscures them as I turn the terms in bed,
Aligning words whose truth arrives – and leaves.

It's now again – I catch it as it leaves,
I pluck it from the current like a hound.
The multitudes of midnights in my bed
Are weirdly one: a bubble trapped in time
That surfaces each night before I sleep.
Appearances deny it, but they lie.

Again I feel the darkness where I lie –
The ancient autumn night among the leaves,
Within whose wasting winds I fall asleep,
Where waiting ends in weightlessness; the hound
Of consciousness forsakes the scent of time,
And once again I lose myself in bed.

Here lie your master's bones, sestina hound.
He leaves you here to guard them for a time.
Sleep not upon his newly planted bed.

**Requiem
(A Morning Psalm)**

From darkness you have drawn me, Lord –
A tense, a taut vibrating chord.
You hear, but hearken not to my despair.

From me you draw this cryptic air.
You pluck at my impermanence,
And promise death as recompense.

What music you extract from me
You've pitched beyond the frequency
My ears and brain can recognize as tones.

Alone, the trembling in my bones
Betrays the aural dregs and lees
Of vast symphonic obsequies
Hid from me, yet driven by my groans.

Chicken Little

The storm-cock knows
That when he crows,
The dormant world's machinery
Must needs obey,
Bring forth the day,
And reconstruct the scenery.

Thus from the height
Of his proud perch,
The rooster crew
Unto his church:

COCK-COCK-A-DOO !!

And there was light.

COCK-COCK-A-DOO !!

Yes, I hear you.
Jesus, what an
Awful sound!

Zip, then button,
Loop around
The belt, then fix it.
Wake and stumble,
Dress and mumble
Imprecations.

COCK-A-DOO !!

Ipse dixit!
Patience, patience.
(Where's that sock?!)
Patience, peace:
The goading cock
Will soon release
You. All will cease
At Ragnarok.

CHARLES HUGHES

**Fall at a Park-Like Rest Stop
[2012]**

An hour by interstate west of La Crosse.
October leaves burn in the trees, burn out,
And drop – then gutter in their own dry streams,
In windblown rivulets that make us pause.
The early fall recalls the summer's drought
I've come close to forgetting. Now it seems

Stiffening leaves flow past our feet like clues
Of interest to an archaeologist
Or like a hemorrhage a doctor sees
Diagnostically as something he can use,
A road map leading to a ruptured cyst,
Let's say, itself perhaps spawned by disease,

A cancer. So inductive logic goes,
By reasoned steps, toward the incurable:
Pottery shards to settlements; from there
To a lost city, which in turn will pose
The further question why it fell at all –
War, famine, plague? Or climate change? That scare,

The last – the sunlit leaves falling too soon
After a too hot summer couldn't rain –
Given the well-known wounds to earth and sky –
That scare is scaring me this afternoon.
It's therefore a relief when we again
Climb in the car, despite the silence. I

Can't help but be a little curious.
(Often what one has seen the other saw,
And thoughts – some thoughts – speak up unsaid.) I say
She's taking stock: there are the two of us;
We have two sons; we have two daughters-in-law;
We also have a grandchild on the way.

CONTRIBUTORS

Chris O'Carroll, a native of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a writer and an actor. His poems have appeared in *Angle*, *First Things*, *The Flea*, *Lighten Up Online*, and *New Verse News*, among other print and online journals.

Ned Balbo's latest book is *The Trials of Edgar Poe and Other Poems* (Story Line Press), awarded the 2010 Donald Justice Prize by judge A. E. Stallings, and the 2012 Poets' Prize. His second book, *Lives of the Sleepers* (University of Notre Dame Press), received the Ernest Sandeen Prize and a ForeWord Book of the Year Gold Medal. Co-winner of the 2013 Willis Barnstone Translation Prize, he has additional translations or variations on the work of French- and German-language poets out or forthcoming in *Able Muse*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Lavender Review*, *Unsplendid*, *String Poet*, and elsewhere.

Janice D. Soderling is a past contributor to *The Rotary Dial*. Her poems, translations and stories can be read at many Canadian print and digital magazines, also in the US, Europe and Australasia, most recently *About Place*, *The Centrifugal Eye* and *New Verse News*. She lives in Sweden.

Seth Braver lives in Olympia, Washington with his wife and two basset hounds. He has, with the publication of "Chicken Little" in this very issue, fulfilled an unwitting prophecy of A. E. Housman (see *A Shropshire Lad*, X, lines 5-6). His poetry has previously appeared in *Angle*, *Kin*, *Umbrella*, *Snakeskin*, *The Centrifugal Eye*, and *Four and Twenty*.

Charles Hughes is a tutor at St. Leonard's House in Chicago and a retired lawyer. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *America*, *Angle*, *The Anglican Theological Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *First Things*, *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *The Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Measure*, *The Sewanee Theological Review*, *Verse Wisconsin*, and other publications. He lives in the Chicago area with his wife.