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SUSAN SPEAR

July, 1974

It is July, 1974:
four friends, a New York beach, and fireflies.
We swear we will be close forever and a day,
mountain roads, deer, and singing leaves,

four friends, a New York beach, fireflies,
transistor radios and talk of boys.
On mountain roads, under emerald leaves,
we chat on about our future lives.

Over the radio's hum, we talk of boys,
mosquito bites, Bactine, and suntan lotion.
We chat on about our future lives,
college plans, our older selves as wives,

more mosquito bites, *Let's try Calamine.*
I hide my fear of summer's forward motion
and July's dwindling days, no longer mine.
Gazing at the Adirondack sky,

I sense the sting that life and love might bring
and memorize that Adirondack blue.
(We swore we would be close forever and a day,
but that was years ago – forty Julys –)

j. tate barlow

On Coming Up To the Cottage Now That Dad Is Gone

I nose in gently crushing ferns and moss
in cedar-sugared air where he would stand
waving with right hand Old Milwaukee Light hand.
Direction given. Or a kind of truce.

Indoor the very silent roar of loss
becomes – drawerful of cards in rubber bands
old cribbage-boards with broken-matchstick pegs, and
forgotten arguments he couldn't lose.

Outside – a dusky glow that silhouettes
canoe and loon and bat. I see my breath –
each exhalation making room or space
for what comes next. A shudder of regret
sends Moon spinning spilling onto Earth
a silvered path – to grace perhaps or peace?

MICHAEL FOLLOW

The Creek Bed

I'd seen the trail off to the side for years,
gaping with rain in January thaw,
the pine floor turning black in late July.
It had once been a creek bed, by its depth.
Nobody owned those acres, that I knew,
or the lots behind them, far inland.
The leaves were off the trees the day I found
myself partway along its crooked run.
I knew I wouldn't get another chance.
I tracked it for a mile or two, until
the place I saw was neither wood nor creek –
it was somewhere far off, or in between.
You've asked, but I can't describe it.
The trail grew faint and shallow after all
and finally disappeared, as if to say
that rivers, and what was at their bottom,
the forest and what had been buried there
were two ends of the same path to be followed.
Followed or not, I found my way back home.
Go back – for what? I left nothing behind.
I couldn't, even if I wanted to.
The snow was thick that year, and by the spring
the trail had been washed out with the rain.

C.B. ANDERSON

Delta-Vee

In physics, Δv represents a change in velocity.

Upon our strand, a tide of worry lays
A shadow somewhat deeper than expected,
For we'd been led to think our final days
Would be well insulated, thus protected
From disconcerting change. We've just begun,
As seasoned citizens, to come to terms
With wading slowly toward the setting sun,
Postponing our appointment with the worms.

In middle age, each wave of mingled tears
And laughter seemed to promise thousands more
To come, but now, much to our horror, years
Fly faster than they ever did before.

Though silt sustains the delta of the Nile,
The turbid waters *here* erode our isle.

GAIL WHITE

Mermaid Sightings

Nobody ever sees an ugly
mermaid. Only a fool could mistake
a dugong for one. The Fiji mermaid
that Barnum used to rake in the shekels
from gullible crowds was only a monkey's
shriveled torso knit to a mackerel's
tail. A narwhal is not a unicorn.
No one believes in an ugly mermaid.

Surf the net for them and you'll find
a host of sightings – beauty that hides
behind the sponges and coral fans.
We want, O how we want to believe
in the webbed hand on the diving bell,
the bright tail flashing over a rock,
the fishermen who are afraid to speak
of strange bones caught in the net.

We want to know how they can breathe (with gills
or lungs, or both?); and how they can mate.
Could a solitary pool in the woods
contain a mud-nest of mermaid eggs?
Do they nurse their young among beds of reeds?)
Be damned to the skeptics; churches may die
of disuse, but ours is an age of faith.
Before I was born, my mermaid twin
died in the amniotic sac.
Although I've lost the gills and fins,
from the sea's abyss I can dream her back.

ANNIE FINCH

Tarot: The Emperor Card

Yes, my body is warm. My beard rolls
marks of power out from its sudden curves.
Yes, I move out of mountains. Their slow folds
spiral out from where my left shoulder swerves,
and yes, here's my scepter. And here's the treasured ball.
Hands that come straight from stone know how to lose
Nothing. Mineral holds all; rock is all;
I point my beard down through throne and iron shoes.
My murdering flanked by rams' heads, and my crown
tall as gems need to shine from, what can bone
take from flesh? In a land without up or down
(except what I hid in the dark under my throne,
knowing that there it would never be fully grown),
what could I learn? There is nothing I don't own.

STELLA NICKERSON

The Insomniac's Dream

If I could sleep, then it would change
(every "it" that wants for changing).
It's my dumb luck that I was born
onto a world that spins, arranging

light and dark around the rhythms
of the sleepers. Once I sync
my body's beating to the turn
(at last), my thoughts will flow, will think

themselves, almost. My muscles, too,
will glide like oil. My plans won't fray
against rough edges of long days.
The signs will sign the other way.

And when you hear how much I'm sleeping,
you'll show up outside my door.
(What was it that you could have wanted
if not someone who rested more?)

Sometimes I wish you people knew
what all of you were sleeping for.

BROOKE CLARK

A Message Left

Please call me, Meredith – please call me – please –
I'm lying by the phone –
and tell me you have no desire to spend
the afternoon alone.

Call down and let your sleepless doorman know
that I'll be stopping by
and ask him not to grin and leer at me
and wink his red-rimmed eye.

And don't make plans for later – set aside
nine hours for copulation;
supine, dozing, I watch my bedsheet rise
tent-poled by expectation.

(After Catullus)

J.D. SMITH

At the United States Navy Memorial

The shattered man proclaims a cryptic cause.
So far he hasn't broken any laws.
While pacing in a cloud of words and smell
The shattered man proclaims a cryptic cause
As tourists pass. One says "He isn't well"
And doesn't stop, for all he has to tell.
The shattered man proclaims a cryptic cause.
So far he hasn't broken any laws.

GEORGE SZIRTES

Illicit: A Dream Story

by way of Arthur Schnitzler

1

The mouth is cruel but the eyes are open.
The eyes drink as the mouth speaks.
The hands are busying themselves elsewhere.
This is the way things happen.
This is the way a morning breaks.
This is night. Here is the ambient air.

2

Walking at night you catch a glimpse of calf
and suddenly you are away, riding a carriage
to the enchanted mansion with its crew
of phantoms. You have failed at marriage,
you have to construct another you
to contend with. You are not your better half.

3

Who has not dreamt of a realm beyond
the provisional, a nether region where things
remain suspended for ever? You wake
in the morning and it's there before you, an ache
that is not purely light, where nothing sings,
where you touch the world and it doesn't respond.

4

Your cupidity betrays you with its puns.
You go out with a sabre fearing guns.
Your pride is flagging, whip it into shape!

You contemplate a courtship but it's rape.
You are both your own self and a slip
in language, a tongue without a lip.

5

You can turn the form round and see it
from all angles. It seems perfect does it
not? You can contain your senses in it.
What is bothering you now? What is it?
It won't let you sleep? You are hot? It
is normal. Touch yourself. You've earned it.

6

We have delved ever deeper into the psyche. Consider
the evidence. This is a brittle time. The pavement
is cracking, the walls fragile. You have no heart
to speak of. Do you insist on talking of the heart?
Do you sincerely imagine that there is pavement
under your feet? Isn't it time to reconsider?

7

The place goes mad as language. What is that noise
you keep hearing? Are people talking? Is the cafe
a hubbub of conversation? Is that a cliché
emerging from your mouth? What is that bubble
you keep blowing, the speech that annoys
and delights you? Are you well? Are you in trouble?

8

Everyone is suddenly desirable. The opposite sex
is something you dreamt up when you were unwell
one steamy night. The sexual engine is always
cruising the streets, it simply requires fuel.
You watch your fingers move and your mind stray
down a blind alley. It's not your fault. It's complex.

9

I am through with courtesy, he declared and made a rough move which she shut off with a sweep of her elegant hand. She touched him somewhere. She should take off that mask. He had played his hand, now let her play hers. It was unfair having to play this game while half asleep.

10

Act without passion. Move your cold desire into gear. Be vulnerable to the moon or what stands in for moon. Betray the confidence you promised to keep. Trust the finger-sense that negotiates both ice and fire. Let your eyes wander but keep your mouth shut.

11

Lie down on that couch and speak to me. Tell me anything you want. I'm listening. You don't know me nor do I need your name. Let your mind roam the feral dark. Feel free to swear. Is that your sweat glistening in the dark? Is that shadow there your shame?

12

It's time to pack away the uniform you've been wearing. Are you a medical man? Is that your rank? Are those your vital organs? This is your city. Here is the street plan of your desire. Here is the fierce storm of passion you've been saving. Invent a title.

LIAM GUILAR

Peeping Tom

Why should I not desire to hold you in the dark?
To trace, moonlit, the line from shoulder down to hip,
to leave my lonely fears behind,
a winter coat now summer's here.

Why should I not desire to make you smile
for me, and me alone; to see you naked,
taste the salt truth of your beauty,
share your body's unembarrassed joy?

Why should I not desire to know your secret heart:
the self you run from in the name of duty?
Oh lady, with all reverence,
why should I not desire to hold you in the dark?

STELLA NICKERSON

Midnight on the 202

I wanted all the best for you.
In the tight and private dark
of this car, I think of that.
The scarlet tail lights of my few
fellow travelers are sparks
of a fire burning down to black,

and that is well. All fires end,
and every day is made for night.
(It is a slowly turning ring.)
If neither of us ever mend
our ways, if those clouds cover bright
creatures or ones with ragged wings,

if behind these concrete walls
the city rages, it's the same
for now. The freeway reaches round
to bite its tail. I will call
it peace, and pleasing. Go and claim
whatever better thing you've found.

CONTRIBUTORS

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j. tate barlow moves to the music, and favours the key of Eflat. Singer, composer, mother, lover of the extraordinary ordinary – *c'est elle*. Born in Toronto, uphill from a great lake.

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J.D. Smith's third collection, *Labor Day at Venice Beach*, was published in 2012. *Notes of a Tourist on Planet Earth*, a humor collection including both poetry and prose, came out in March, 2013. He holds an M.A. from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University.

George Szirtes was born in Budapest in 1948 and came to England as a refugee in 1956. He was brought up in London and studied Fine Art in London and Leeds. His poems began appearing in national magazines in 1973 and his first book, *The Slant Door*, was published in 1979. It won the Faber Memorial prize the following year. By this time he was married with two children. After the publication of his second book, *November and May*, 1982, he was invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Since then he has published several books and won various other prizes including the T S Eliot Prize for *Reel* in 2005.

Liam Guilar lives in Australia. His most recent book of poems, *Rough Spun To Close Weave*, is published by Ginninderra press (ginninderrapress.com.au/poetry.html). His next book, *Anhaga*, will be published in 2015. He runs a blog about poetry and related subjects at ladygodivaandme.blogspot.com.au.