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Four Poems

Diana Rickard

Annoying Goodbye

So, people now write: "hugs"
And I know she is thinking of me
Because she was just talking about a pink t-shirt
And shared a graphic depicting progress in a humorous way

I consider starting a GoFundMe
For my next haircut
I crave sesame breadsticks from Tony's Italian Kitchen
And wonder if that can be made interesting
Or at least endearing
Like knowing where your dad bought his first 45rpm

In related news: I've decided on the song I want played at my funeral
And have my tombstone quote all picked out
("Go ahead fix my wagon -- I don't care")

If nothing else my playlist dates me

I suspect The Pajama Diaries is a suburban thing
I want to reference a secret fart in a time lapse video
But don't know where it will fit

The English Beat said leave it till the end of the party
But I'm no longer one to wait
Tentative baby dyke moments on Amsterdam and 92nd
(Raise your hand if you remember Ferron)

It's not clear when it shifted, when I turned into the person
Who is **always** expecting a package

See how she's all pride and absurdity?
Maybe it's true that stereotypes are erasing femmes
That you learn something in your forties
That 36 questions will make you fall in love

Damn,

It all requires constant vigilance

And then not giving a shit

Notes from the Interior

I am beautiful radiant and charming

Almost every year I get to hold a lemon
And shake a rattle-y stalk
Laced with something instantly recognizable
Like "I drew a map of Canada"

A negative, painful, social emotion breezes through a loose door
It's this florid sexy, not sexy, female presence
With an amazing past no one responds to

The coded depths of what is happening
Overwhelm attempts to pre-read, pre-eat, pre-vent
And the rubric ruins everything

The smell of liquor on morning's breath
Pungent weed on a ramshackle bus
Large and desperate nudes
A nightmare of clichés hurl forward
And a demon in the monitor shudders free

(I am beautiful radiant and charming)

The illness is short-lived and unremarkable
Fragile spider on a red desk
Bear-claw reaching for dead skin
Thick face quietly leaking

The poem is a thin slip of soap
And the tub piled with plastic gems
Many are the shadows of the many
Casting buds of light on dreary subway tiles

Confused by the array of accessories but wanting
Wanting more from the pageant of objects
Spread out, unfurled, displayed, and indisputably real
The award-winning lessons of symbolic interaction
As decoration in private homes

The maddening demands of this institution
Narcissistic release in quasi-open forums
It's stunning, the abundance
Of dinners, children, animals, fitness goals, current events and clever jokes

All delightful, all inviting
Welcoming into the widening expanse of pedestrian discourse

I accept myself completely here and now

The Chartreuse Owl

So many likes the other day
I give a shout out to this privilege
Cover my bases

And dutifully study ways to ruin one's life
(By tolerating it)

The blue light gives a strange headache

Conversation disjointed, random speakers
Cheery bursts of humor
Even though all the emptiness is really, really there

"This is no dream!" -- from the iconic and supernatural
Rape scene – my childhood stomping grounds
Dangerous and cool

Needle Park, and prostitutes on 85th Street
Wacky Packs and Charleston Chews

From *The 7-Ups*: "Oh my God, What I have I done?"
A line I've never forgotten
Because I'm certain

Few of us are certain
How we wind and wind through it all

I give thanks for the concrete O'Hara bust, pensive and alert

A queer couple speaks candidly
(oh hurray!)
Someone else is afraid of what she might say today

The city is righteous and riotous

None of us can breathe

And yet we do

Okay with my mayor I would like more from my President

So many ruined cakes

I still can't stand the smug film editor in my feed
But perversely do not hide him

Why aren't we sitting in this everyday?

If there are police they give off a foul odor
From musty puppet selves
Meridith's carefully sewn Pinocchio dolls

Blank-eyed and multiplied like in *Fantasia*

... That brooms can be so frightening...

I'm sated with my singular objects and bittersweet real estate

So I will love this grey afternoon
Paper towels for toilet paper

Glue on my pants
Dried vomit still in the rug
The ever unreturned DVD

It won't be easy but I'll rally
Dust the tchotchkes and scrub the sink
Listen to favorite songs

Here goes:

"I'm gonna make

a joyful sound"

The Syrup Smell

Autumn arrived in a surprisingly thin box
Grape, moss, and rust

Balsamic accords, notes of Africa

In green depression glass, a large mustard stone
Set in clay and onyx

There is a number in the earth we have not found
Her proofs so silent and inscrutable

I once held court in a chiropractor's
Cake fragrance on Waverly from a blue star

Memories of *Empathy* and *Bad Behavior*
The obdurate fact of appearances

I am the blotchy poet of the romance she describes
Cruel sister self
Righteously sweating in lavender stenciled rooms
And all legs are alive in my serenity

To swallow the bone inside the nurse
To eat chaste water from smooth lungs

An enormous talent not passed on
So many intricate sketches, dark and fragile ink

Riverside Drive was an endless stretch of blinding snow
Sharp cold through cheap boots

A bloom of fireworks at the midnight run
The crowd a-shudder
Our insides squishy wherever we are

At mid-life I now play Scrabble with my second grade teacher
Tender opposite of nostalgia

Beads as dizzying and tempting as candy
A garish, greedy stash of cabochons

My world is glorious, vast, and intimate

Why not press against the marching flowers

Or stand still in our luscious town

I had grand and wide double doors
Wrote noisy poems
Drank whiskey and Rolling Rock above 100th Street

Chestnut bangs, fringed jacket

17 storms

And Love Saves the Day

About the author

Diana Rickard is an expert in issues surrounding sex offenders and the corrections (penal) system. Rickard is the author of *Sex Offenders, Stigma, and Social Control* (forthcoming Rutgers University Press, 2016). She has taught introduction to criminal justice, criminology, corrections, deviance, sociology of law, juvenile justice, and violence and society. Previous appointments include teaching at Queensborough Community College, Brooklyn College, Baruch College, and University of San Francisco. Her teaching methods utilize various writing techniques and focus on close readings of academic texts, incorporating sociological perspectives addressing race, class, gender, and social control.