

Clint Frakes

After Sitting Among the Candles

1.

There lives a hidden syllabic man trapped in wicked points of time, unaided by his braver thoughts. For most of his life everything went his way as if the world's chemistry danced to the timbre of his wine glass. A shameless corpse-eater, loathed even among evening's gentle trees, he foraged the catacombs of Cappuccini for stray medallions as his prescription demanded.

His time at sea was hard, sleeping cross-eyed each lusty night nose-to-nose with the black clown he refused to be. "I am a bone-picker of the most elegant legacies," he would argue. *Ah, but it all starts and ends with a woman*, the island would retort. So he'd start out again without anesthesia at his favorite Thai place, slender & concise at the bar.

Old rivalries pulled him over the speed bumps of his conscience. He couldn't stand it, tripped the gaunt waitress with his thick, hairy leg just for the thrill. Plates and hair scattered across the salad bar. "I know it was evil," he told the reporter, "but it felt so right." On the flight home he studied the pink feet of an infant.

2.

His dad couldn't walk far with the bad leg. They drove up
the Colorado Plateau in a fancy Jeepster one May,
pulled over for an enormous red agave in full bloom:

If ever there were a savage flower.

It was getting a little hot to marvel at much.

He's since inhabited the language with vengeful nativity.

Only the chirp of the gecko delights him, its orange flag
of neck protruding with quick push-ups.

He pairs up a pile of black socks in the dark.

Thought is the thief of all glory, a handsome Icelandic poet had said.

That's why he coddles the dead, forces himself to groom
& briskly fakes it through each uncertain door.

I Killed Johnny Rotten

Johnny Rotten stomped onto my porch
like an angry collector, jackbooted & drunk.
I hid all the valuables,
convinced my roommates to turn him away,
but he forced himself in as I pretended to sleep,
insisted on a fight.
He had a rash on his face,
smelled like an infection,
found the Wild Turkey under my work jacket &
jounced & taunted like a fool.
When he spilled bourbon on my good Balinese rug
I leapt from bed & kicked him hard in the nuts.
He tried to pull a knife as he rolled on the floor &
I knew I'd have to kill him.
Roommates & neighbors interfered,
rolled shopping carts at us.
Two party girls in tight skirts tried to distract us
by sticking out their round asses,
but we were set on blood.
"I'm only trying to help you meet your demons,"
he said, holding his stomach & waving the blade.
This gave me pause for only a second
before I dealt him a roundhouse kick
right out the window,
three floors to the sidewalk--
all blood & leather down by the hydrant.
Drink my fucking whiskey,
Rotten, why don't you?

A Brief History of Summer

for Harry Smith

After the longest day of the year
independence was only fitting.
Some ruffians blew up the sky;
the Romans let the dogs out,
forsaking 13 moons & the innermost
juice of memory.

We gained only the dim
profile of an inbred king.
Then the chokecherries ripened
in the unfolding corolla of
long northern light,
filling our freshly opened eyes.
We ate dog,
rubbed its fat on our heads.
The elders say it cures all.

News that Stays News

Executioner finches bob their heads in the wild rhubarb
& another great Italian poet collapses.
January's rain-glossed stones devour the waning sun
in the high savannah fallows &
bloody yolks melt under the pinyon--
(the quail hen knows which eggs make good offspring).

Today was stillborn in El Nino's mist,
morning glory & clematis shriveled to chicken wire--
Stellar's Jay rattles his tail, flinging wet
sparks from its juniper perch.
This is a day for headlines & myths:

“50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz”
“5 billion set aside for new prisons”

A good day to read Ovid: the subduing of
Titans & fall of Thebes are always news.

A falcon carves up a cottontail
with curt slashes of his velvet head.