

Jason Joyce

Retired Teenage Sleuths

Beach blanket
seagull eyes
Bible verse on the marquee
I'm speaking of my insides

branches
parting panels
in basement walls
with uncreative determination

Your parents with their Cosby Show humor

I explore
thinking thoughts of me

washing machine button clack
poorly wired table lamp

guided by to-do lists
and checklists
written on
floral pattern notepads
with a bank logo
smeared cross the top, we are
desecrated by design

My intentioned hand
poor in practice,
a kick drum pulse,
concentrate on the color scheme
same as the uncertain certainty
my possessions
will arrive at baggage claim,
Father, Son, Flight attendant

Lattice pattern veins
backs of knees
like the Guadalupe candles in the Mexican food aisle,
let hope climb

Come, let us take our flashlights
and go searching
for more comfortable clothes

Taxidermist

Mothballs in a candy dish
keep the spiders away
a candy sacrament
atop the mantle made
by my father's father's friend,
chastened porcelain figurines
cascading from the balcony
tiny teeth cracking against cavern
car stalagmites, parking lot priests
wielding holy spirit

My grandmother blamed her farts on
tiny frogs that my brother and I could never seem to find,
my grandfather, mud in his throat, a brash
crocodile atop a tweed chair,
we had afternoon snacks of Pringles and language,

tiny miners searching for the ghosts the
dirty earth holds, arrowheads and prehistoric bones
churned up in the process

dark dust streaks blanket your
face, worn like war paint, supernatural wisps, worker
bee static fuzz, feathers
finger bones and soil making your hair
a mess, lessons learned one
year at summer camp, and now it becomes:
leave a light on when we
go out for the evening

Early 20th century house, an
Indian burial ground with
premeditated plastic slip covers,
piano lessons with your great aunt
in what she called the grand living room,
cobwebbed chandeliers that belonged to presidents cut down quickly
by assassins,
to this day you remember

that the color of the bench was dusty plum, nearly the color
of the jelly you brought in sack lunches,

for sale: barely used bicycle and bedroom set,
the living room has been swallowed by a forest,
vines and veins and drapes, the timbre of the trees

Bougainvillea

Meadowlark lemon-esque hinged to a doorframe
one lizard leg caught in the fence, a print of a woman in her
bathing suit covered up by a sundress, wilt

Run and gun, rummage sales at abandoned car lots,
there must be something of value here, we've been in
this house for a thousand years, movie stubs in
a mason jar kept on the floor, hieroglyphics

The band is on the field, actors calling
in sick, ceramic bells commissioned to tinkle
before hurricanes, somehow no picture will
capture the feel of a field before a summer storm,
and what we look like naked never gets old

Tumble

My friend dreams quite frequently
about his teeth falling out,
he also has a crush on a barista
from the Daily Grind Coffee House
who has a swallow tattoo
on her right foot
and a birdcage with an open door
on her left foot,
this is so indie of her,

But I say, Jeff
you can't fill a cage with teeth

Except, with modern birdcages you probably can,
these cages are so square and bland and (plastic)
reminiscent of the
Payless Shoes' box my brother and
I pecked holes in with
a pencil
to carry the robin with a broken limb
to the vet,

we found it in the backyard hanging from a
slat in the fence
like an oil rag not worthy of
the clothesline

Startled by every shrill
and tumble from the box,
placed as far to one side of
the backseat as possible

And to think
throwing the creature in
the trash ourselves
would've saved so much time

There are tiny birds now
with scissor teeth
snipping red ribbons
hopping about,
sitting on the tile counter and
mosaic tables (they were purchased to create
atmosphere and ambience)

Jeff believes my story is irrelevant
to people who grew up in large
cities as there are no backyards there,

I agree to this but wonder
who to contact so that
when we die
our bones can be
recycled like trees, turned into
something useful like coffee cup sleeves

or life jackets

For now though
I'm preoccupied,
what they have done
with the wall hangings and
color schemes in
here is just golden