

Natascha Tallowin

Family Gathering

He looks at me with interest

Head cocked with expectant eyebrows

Takes a wine glass from a tray, and fixes me with a stare

Smiles toothily, while I prepare

For him to ask...

“What do you want to do?”

Pause for effect

Nods to a stranger with lustful respect

I feel the need to prolong the answer which I know he expects:

“What do you mean?”

He laughs at my question

Guzzles his alcoholic drink

Gives an avuncular wink

Pats my arm

With gluttonous charm

Oblivious to my obvious alarm

“What is it you want to do

For your career?

What’s your plan for future years?

Have you got something in mind

A job of some kind?”

His face nears

“After all, I’m sure you could,

Get a job as good as mine

If you wanted to, which of course you do

You could get a job that earns a good bob

You could be like my son; he’s reached his first ten million

And he’s only twenty one.

Of course money isn't everything
And you've got to be smart
Not like all these hippies who are into art
And think with their heart
You've got to be clever; you've got to have pride
But I think you could do it if you really
Tried.

He leaves me to ponder his wisdom for a bit
Before beckoning over
The blondest waitress in the entire place
And with a leering smile on his face
Takes another glass of wine
Applauding the quality of grapes and their vine
And before I have a chance
To advance, in a different direction
He is back with another selection
Of greatly treasured reflections

“Don't get me wrong
Just because I've got

The proverbial lot
With a wife from Thailand
And a maid on hand.
Two millionaire kids
And a home in Madrid.
Money can't buy you everything
It's just luck that I've got a house
With a natural spring
Six bathrooms and
Seventeen bedrooms
That I'm happy is just what everyone presumes."

He jokes, quite clearly happy that he's never been broke.

"So what is it you've decided on

Hairdresser or beauty salon?"

He pauses for a beat

Long enough for me to retreat to a nearby seat

And sigh

"I want to write"

I admit

Pondering this postulating half-wit

Genius comes in many a form

And this frightfully fantasy engorged fellow

Isn't one of them.

He looks taken aback

Wheezes like an asthmatic before an attack

“A journalist, a good job it's true...”

He grins, reforming himself like Terminator II

“I want to be a writer of fiction, poetry...”

My words are cut short

And before I have time to abort

He descends upon me and snorts,

“You want to be careful who you tell that to

Not many people are as open minded as me and you.

I know some people think

That all you writers do is drink

And smoke

And take drugs

But I don't listen to what people say

I know all you musos and artists and writers...aren't gay

Not that it matters to me by the way

If you want to be a fag,

Be a fag

That's what I say.

My mind starts to wander

His wine is gone

And he's starting to dribble

As he dribbles on and fucking on

"I don't know much about writing

But I'm sure that it's exciting

To know, that one day you might

Be able to write

Almost as well as that bird who died.."

He momentarily loses his stride

"You know the one I mean

The one who drowned herself in that stream

Virginia something, is that the one?"

He asks as my facade starts coming undone...

Circus of the Damned

Ladies and gentlemen,
Boys and girls,
Children of all ages...
You are about to witness the most spectacular show on earth
Hold your children's hands
Squeeze your girlfriends shoulders tight
And peer into a world of altered reality
Of ghoulish delights and bitter sweet dreams...

Come one, come all; step on in!
A good time for everyone's about to begin
You watch the woman walk high on wire
And wait while we set the net on fire
You'll be sad to see our circus end,
But it doesn't have to stop here my friend.
We wouldn't like to be thought to deceive
But once you join, you never leave.
You may go anywhere you'd like and more...
Except that final dressing room door.
In there, the biggest draw resides
The girl of many faces hides
With rows of masks up on shelves.
So many, she's never seen herself.
One moment she's an angel who protects,
A vicious self-preserveder at the next.
But alas her true face she's yet to see,
It's faded in her memory.
And she, and we, aren't even sure
If she even has one anymore.
But it doesn't matter if its a face not worth showing
As long as her masks keep the business flowing.
You'll learn all sorts of fine things first-hand
In the clever circus of the damned.
But do not look at us aghast,
Now that you know our tenants' past.
It shouldn't matter if you know
The face-girl's misery and woe.

Because now, with everything you know,
We can never, ever let you go.
So now you finally understand
The morbid circus of the damned.

Welcome to the Circus
Enjoy your stay...

Some Of Her Parts

Jennifer Schecter.

For you the words from a salted tongue

Used to pepper pages of precious thoughts

Unwound.

Words shrivel from your tongue

Your eyes a glacial picture of togetherness and sanity

But behind them rots the dream of oneself

An ingénue, a writer

A naive, complicated saboteur,

A puzzle

A monster.

Jenny Schecter.

You are the demon that tempts me

A child immortalised behind the fictional facade

Of a tragic alter ego – Sarah Schuster

A girl washed up on the shores of a daydream

Fastened into place with a full stop.

Jenny.

Words are the best thing we can give to another human being.

They know the reality of your mind.

At the end of your fingertips, the world is sublime

A place of freedom, pontillised reality and realist fiction.

It is only when you look up

That the categorical distinction between brains that know reality and brains that don't

Comes into play

And the weather vane that points so accusingly in your direction

Takes on a much more sinister charm than before, when the mere sight of it had tortured your imagination with pleasure

Jen.

For you the fruit of my thoughts

Masquerading as something divine when you want to eat them

And something detestable when you don't.

Whatever your intentions toward them,

They will always be thoughts,

Dreams,

The rattle of the train next to your own leaving the station

The flicker of something in an empty room.

The creak of something unexplained at night.

A monster.

.

You could never have the freedom of a bird,

With the weight of such glorious stories upon your shoulders

The sheer weight of your human body

Shackles you to the ground.

And now you will sit

Forever weaving tales

Perpetually waiting.

For the wind to lift you off of your feet.

Dearest... (A poem inspired by Virginia Woolf)

Clarissa floats from
time to place
to memories
back, and forth

Leonard digs weeds
from their roots
persistently
watching

Virginia immerses herself
in Clarissa, Sally
her mind
(and the river)

Forging a work of fiction,
A love letter that brands
the protagonist's hands
Mrs Dalloway – these words are for you.

These words written sparsely, in
pepperings of time
faded love letters on pages,
crumpled and unfolded,
where the handwriting spider-dances from each page to the next

sketches, kisses –
hurriedly scribbled in London cafes
(the waiter leaned over to see
what the woman scrawled –

so passionate was she!)

To dinner parties
Veiled in romance.

From Richmond to imagination,
where winding steam trains
chunter
And lovers stroll
arm-in-arm
on boulevards
where men tip their hats
and the women twirl parasols.

And then to the end
settling ungraciously into purposeful steps
with weighted pockets
and bowed head
thick with the memory
of imagination
memories of conversations had
with friends forged within her
own mind.

I hope death was what you imagined.