

Michal Broussard

## Happiness is New Orleans

Happiness exists  
On the street and on the corner  
in the lobby, oh, and definitely  
during breaks.

Ready to shoot, chug, and cheers,  
which leads to: *Encore! Merci!*  
*Santé, mon mimi!*

The band leader yells:  
“*Applause is nice but she don’t pay my bills...*”  
(or for booze, or cigarettes.)

Life is short, Miss.  
This I know, yet I’ve spent  
my whole life trying  
to shorten it.

How much longer can my  
body handle my soul?

And I just sing, much too loud,  
in the street, on the corner.  
There is no other happiness.  
She exists, fleets,  
hides, surprises.

She is all that is good in this town.

## After Tukamukaru, Tucumcari

Cruising next to a cargo train—  
set-after-set of boxes—  
carrying items of mass consumption  
closer to a town near you.  
Curving a corner, we can see  
the sun peek through clouds  
kind of colored cobalt blue,  
and I can see, shining over everything,  
the very reason The West was explored.  
This magic hour  
before the sun retreats  
keeps us chasing this heavenly hallway.  
Rivers rushed to create canyons.  
Man's restless tendencies rushed  
to pave the path for others to travel,  
to teach themselves peace.  
We still wait for that to arrive, but it's approaching.

*(Title pronunciation: TOO-kah-MOO-kah-roo.  
Comanche Verb: "to lie in wait for someone or something to approach")*

## No Room for Blue Skies

Reaching heights topping ten thousand feet  
and I'm still managing to breathe.  
I still manage to climb ten feet higher,  
chasing the horizon with my eyes.  
Give thanks; step forward—reach for my peach—  
as long as I stop first to breathe.  
Cloudy skies peek past rocky peaks  
causing me to kneel in wonderment.  
Those clouds add layers of white  
to endless snow-kissed tips.  
Triple the stars in the sky  
to equal the pines in my eye.  
Double the allotted time to travel  
and make this place mine.  
Relish the rolling hills.  
Soak the mountains into my marrow.  
At this elevation, there's no room for blue skies,  
and there are no tears to cry.

## Uitwaaien

These here bubbling waters kept her ship docked.  
Once the Captain reaches down to release the ropes,  
she's free to maneuver through the waters—  
dodging some waves, cutting through others, always  
propelling her ship, herself, to unknown places,  
to adventures waiting to raise her to higher elevations,  
to define herself, separate from this sea of misery,  
as others have defined it.

Her blue eyes reflect a mostly manageable misery.  
Mostly maintained by the wheel which is oiled  
by the hands of those before her,  
by the mast tall enough to peek through the clouds,  
by the deck which is sealed to prevent leaks from below  
and by her mates' voices which rise when she has lost her own.

Yes, in the middle of this sea she sees  
no land, no misery. Only  
ups and downs, waves of contentment, joy,  
and gratitude that she hasn't sunk her ship yet,  
paired with respect from her peers because  
she—their Captain only in title—  
still smiles at the sea.

*(Title pronunciation: OUT-vy-ehn.  
Dutch Verb: "to take a break to clear one's head"  
Literal translation: to walk in the wind)*

## Portland Begins with a B

Behind unyielding clouds,  
five mountains hide, feigning modesty,  
simultaneously claiming their solitude.  
These same blanketed clouds  
block out the sun, begetting time meaningless.

Bridgetown, with moderately busy streets,  
breaks for pedestrians.  
Below the balcony in the Pearl District,  
busses on eighteen wheels are filled with mailable bundles  
waiting for Monday  
to brighten someone's mailbox.

The coffee brewed isn't bruised,  
and the bacon—bountiful.  
Bourbon blended with blood orange blurs lines.  
Baked prosciutto joins every party,  
and burgers have a ball with biscuits as buns.

Bridgetown's newest pup, Bridget, bounds  
through puddles, over and under bridges,  
blushing away from strangers,  
barking in the morning.

Breathing is easy between numberless trees.  
Bubbles from beer spark bonding with your best friend  
and banter between lovers quick to fall into each others' kiss.  
Blueprints of the blocks and byways memorized pull me,  
beg to bring me back to Portland.