

John C. Mannone

Where is Dr. Luke?

I can see things in the clouds, you know, by the way they shape,
and in the water breaking over rocks, as if they were some sign for me.

Where is my patron Saint Amabilis or Dr. Luke for that matter?
Amidst the myriad of bubbles bursting out from this unholy sea?
Hiding from the emerald shark shaped inside the walls of waves —
sleek, with white-laced belly splashing out of the deep blue?
I see it batter the limestone rocks, this Great White materializing
from green black waves. I see the spray wisp to shadows, to wings:
a metamorphosis to Mephistopheles.

Can monsters turn into angels? No doubt, the angels have
transformed to monsters. Lucifer can tell you about that.

I see its eye, a black swirl; its mouth with teeth torn out
still gnashing in this kind of hell. I see it dissolve in this lake of water
spattering like fire. Can you see the foam reform... into a werewolf?
Is this what happened to the herd of insane pigs that jumped off
the cliff into the Sea of Galilee? Those demons trapped in swine
now washing loose the violence in this ocean.

I can see things in the clouds, you know, by the way they shape,
and in the water breaking over rocks, as if they were some sign for me.

I see that same eye bulge from the wet chrome fixture in my bathroom.
I suppose it came to scare me. Where the hell are you, Dr. Luke?
Come out of the shower mist and quell this leviathan! There are swarms
of mist glowing as embers, and they remain unquenched.

Nightstalker

The sky opened its eye tonight,
Glared wrath of the moon.
I prayed I was too close for it
To see me shivering in the pines.

The pine lashes of its eyes
Caught tears in the wry air—his
And mine. For centuries, I ran
Through the universe, but now

His werewolf smile found me.
His tears are from dust of night-
-mares lodged in clouds of time.
Mine are from the mist of terror
Of his love.

The Lazarus Phone

My cell phone, sleek and charcoal gray,
lies on a polished wood table. The edge
of its lid buried in glare from an overhead
light as if some trans-celestial star.

This would be miniature coffin has a body inside—
flesh and bones all turning to pulver. Its casket face,
not wrinkled, but smooth as gravestone.

A name is lettered there, it doesn't matter
what it is. We all know whoever's inside
is merely dust to the wind, scaled way down.
But death sizes it the other way. What the hell?

It's nothing more than a bunch of circuits
and an empty screen. I wonder if it'll light up
after the resurrection or simply give blank stares

waiting for the call, *Come hither*. Can He stand
the stench from waiting so long? Is this

an out-of-body experience? Even mine?
Would that mean I am Lazarus
or just your run-of-the-mill living dead?

I don't know. All I know is that I started
writing about something — my life, or was it
just about a cell phone, which is now on hold
between heaven and the other place?

Martha! I'm just a cell phone waiting for a call
from God. Please don't weep for me. But if you must
just dial 911 and pray that someone answers.

On the Brink of a Spinning Black Hole

Has it ever occurred to you
that we might be sitting on the edge
of a spinning black hole
boring through space convolving time?

And when we call out in search
of other intelligence, don't you wonder?

Where have all our disembodied
voices gone? Have they looped
through time, wormed back
to meet up with their mouths?

Will the sweet words, and the vile ones,
disappear into streams of unconsciousness,

into a zoo of particles, and antiparticles,
into the good, and the bad, then separated
and beamed back on a black-hole-wind
scattering seeds for new galaxies,

new beginnings, new intelligence? Maybe
the dice will be thrown differently

this time. Maybe we'll find ourselves
and won't have to die on the rim,
spinning on the rim of a deep black hole.
Maybe this time, we'll learn not to kill.

Mercury Rising

It is a mere black speck, an ember in the glare of the red morning sun, you'd never spot it without a filter on your telescope, unless the sun had turned its back on it, dipping below the horizon when Mercury was in opposition to the whole thing, his deserted parent leaving him in the twilight of early dark. In those silent moments, you'd see the messenger with his winged feet chasing the sun. You'd see him naked-eye, no telescope needed, not even binocular glass.

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Glass, clear blue, as the Pacific Ocean that hides the blue-skinned shark wavering in the clear light. It's in the waves pulsing the glass wall, the metal parts of this fluorescent world. Inside this ocean of light, held by the thin glass of bulbs, there's a different kind of bioluminescence, a different kind of temperament. Mercury rising. Do you suppose this is what drove the sharks mad?

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Mad in the melting heat of the desert mines, alone with your mirage. In the smelting heat where the greed for gold gives metal fume fever and the heart is poisoned. The temperature is rising mad as a hatter. Mercury is boiling. Mercury, on the sunny side of Sol.

How Many Angels Dance?

The Flight room weather map loops
Yellow flickers over strands of green
Just mist edging Chicago. Red globs
Already dissolving in the Great Lakes.
The storm was dead when I left her.
Mid way, Michigan bound. My single
Engine drones in and out of ghost clouds
Washed to graveyard gray. By Gary, Indiana,

Radios crackle from electrostatic rain hiss
And lightning slashes clouds spilling rain
As blood; the storm howls and my engine
Rumbles. Instruments show the resurrected
Black crosses stabbing my plane
On the screen, I zigzag away; jagged
Lightning in all quadrants, in angry pursuit
Wields its fire sword burning air to melt

My wings under the egg-crate sky cracking.
The wind globs the albumin clouds
As funnels of turbulence on me. Fear churns
With prayer, but angels dance on heads of pins.
I see them waltz on oscilloscope screen,
Swathing the ballroom as whirling lights,
Waxing the stratus, buffing out all the red
And yellow streaks, until its nothing
But green.

The Craziest Thing Mona Has Ever Done

A red lamp shaped as red lips is poised
across from you; you, half in shadow;
her light, in secret, caressing your face.

How I envy that. For now, in quiet I sit
in the other room, no moonlight to glance
at me or warm my loneliness. I pray

tomorrow's dawn clicks off her hot light
when sun slips through the bamboo wall,
lets my silhouette kiss you on the cheek

and when you wake, you'll understand
my sated smirk, my dear Leonardo.

Chewing Pasta

Reading while chewing pasta is a choking hazard. John Tesh said so on the radio station. Politician's words could lodge a wad of noodles in your throat before they're ready to be swallowed, chased there by the rapid inhalation preceding a guffaw. But if you survive the laughter, you could still choke-up on their not-so-funny lies.