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Five Poems

By: Jon Vreeland

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Humanity and its Foes

My counselor called me on the phone the other day
and wanted to ask me some questions
I had seen him the day before and I guess I didn't tell him enough.
just read him excerpts from my new book
I taught him about mental illness conveyed through a dirty syringe
the grandeur of the summer grapefruit mounted in
The summer night's sky
unhealthy women dressed in wolf's clothing
(claiming to be wolves but are sheep,
Sheep with dull fangs and bumpy red limbs)

He asked when was the first time I did drugs?
What kind of drugs?
Who I did drugs with?
He asked when was the last time I was hospitalized or the last time I od'd?
I told him I didn't know
Years and Years.
like 5 or 4.
I was waiting for him to ask me.

"when was the last time you took a shit, Jon?"
But instead he asked,
"who do you turn to when you get down and out?"

I understood the question I really did
He wants to know what I do when the hills catch fire
and red turns to black
and black turns to red.
Mr. Counselor wants to know what I do
when a childhood friend pierces the earth with their corpse
at the young age of thirty?
Who do I call when it is time to stand amid a gathering of people
at an empty hole before the setting jewelry
is swayed in the soil like a piece of golden trash?

"Next question," I told him
Then he asked, "well, how many friends do you have?"
"Counting my wife? My blue-eyed feline? My Countess of the Sea?"

"How many male friends do you have that you can turn to
when tragedy strikes?"

He asked the question with a hundred percent patience and kindness
But the question was vague - A tragedy to me is having one
cigarette left in the pack
The lack of the color green
The absence of the moon
The burning suns violent grin is a tragedy especially
when sweat gets into my eyes
and my poetry book sales are a tragedy
(a real knee-slapper)

He waited for my answer as I started to sweat
I moved by the window and opened it
He made sure I was still on the line and amiably said

"How many friends would you say you had
Jon? 8, 9, 3? 26? 52? 986?"
The beaver felt nice and rubbed the back of my pimply neck
and the sun was raped by a set of harmless clouds
sauntering a paling sky.
As God rubbed my shoulders and neck, I came up with my true answer

"I guess none," I told him. "Not a damn one and I don't care."
(And I'm a hundred percent sure that is true)

"I'm sorry," he told me like he really cared.
"It's okay, I really don't mind," I told him.

He waited patiently for a response, the clock ticking,
adding more and more portraits of dead presidents to his
thriving bank account

"Next question," I told him
He asked a couple more boring questions, then we hung up.

This afternoon I sent Mr. Counselor a copy of my first large manuscript
Apparently, his sister is in the publishing business and really liked my first
poetry book.

So I will be his "over the phone lifesaver"
I will do anything for this
new best friend of mine
Isn't this what we call Friendship?
Hanging around when the hills are greenest?
When the scarlet rain is wiped with the tongue of the devil's pet?

(Well I don't know about friendship, but it sure is humanity).

Tchaikovsky, and My Little Ponchinella

I'd never seen the Nutcracker
until my daughter was in the ballet herself.
The story starts with a
party on Christmas Eve with a stage full of
opulent children dressed in pajamas and
receiving presents.
(dolls and trumpets mostly).
And their parents who are wearing tuxedos and fine dresses
(which easily belonged in the Scarlett O'Hara category)

And the main ballerina receives a
nutcracker
which later comes to life in her dream
where the sugar plum fairy's dance and
my little Ponchinella comes on stage
with Mother Ginger looking like a
younger version of her mother
(which is what she ultimately is).

The theatre was dark except for the stage
and the two babies who belong to my
Ponchinella's momma sat quietly on the other end of
the row and watched:

the Children the Parents the Dolls the Soldiers the King Mouse and its Babies and the Prince and the Guiding Angel and
Snow Queen and King and the Snow Leaders and Icicles and Snowflakes and Angels and the Spanish and Mirliton and Arabian and Chinese
and Candy Cane and Russian Dancers and The Dew Drop Fairy and her Cavalier and the Waltz Leaders and the Waltz Flowers and Clara
and her Best Friend and Fritz and Dr. Drosselmeyer and his Nephew and the Maid all dance like the magic characters my little Ponchinella's
sisters watch on the Disney Channel and movies like Frozen to Tchaikovsky's all brilliant melodies that make the dancers dance like their feet
aren't touching the ground

Like they hover above the wooden stage
just enough to hide the fact that some might belong to
a secret society of covert operations.
(Yes sir, they have to be! just like my little Ponchinella and her little sisters. And even Tchaikovsky. Sometimes I think they are all just too
good to be true).

Teacher on Acid

The only classes I seem to remember from
high school are my English classes,
(which are the only classes I did okay in).
At my first high school Ms. McKibben
weighed less than a hundred pounds
(I think she might've had an eating disorder)
and at my second high school Mr. Webb
was the guy teaching what I kind of
understood,
giving me B's and complimenting my descriptions
of animals when I wrote about them.

About a decade and a half later he was
still teaching English, my daughter
had him too and witnessed a chewing gum
catastrophe, something I was very unaware of,
as unaware as Mr. Webb was of the
LSD laced inside the juicy fruit gum
causing The Old Man and the Sea to leap from
Ernie's Nobel and Pulitzer Prize and beat him
with the air of the Havana beat.

The students watched Mr. Webb run from
Dr. Frankenstein, while cursing Mary Shelley
and the ten-foot beast.
He tried to spit out the gum
but it was too late.
Mr. Webb scrunched his nose and chased
the rotting corpse in the wagon trundling
down the hallways and out to the
track and field and baseball diamond,
holding hands with young Godman Brown
while Kafka's hunger artist
(who fasted for forty days with nobody's care)
snickered the teacher on acid as the students
snickered and pointed until the ambulance
took him away. I wonder if he'll ever be the same?
and I wonder if he really meant it when he said
he likes the way I describe animals?

Even if it was twenty years ago, it's still the only
class I seem to remember from high school,
and Mr. Webb was the guy teaching what I kind of
understood.

Telemarketing of Jewish Tweaker

When I was 18 I got a job as a telemarketer
The company was called Minimum Rate Pricing
and it was a long-distance phone company
run by a Jewish man who wore a yamaka every day
and talked a million miles a minute.

Unfortunately, I would call people at their homes
and try to get them to change their long distance
phone carrier
to one nobody had ever heard of.
I only worked there two weeks
and by the second week I was closing
some deals.

Some I didn't.
"Okay sir so your new carrier is called MRP
and you will be getting your first bill soon sir!"

The man replies:
"Okay let me just ask you one more question."
"Absolutely my good man. Shoot"

"Well, young man, despite me being in Tennessee
and you in..."
"California..."
"California!"
"Yeah"

"Can you smell this all the way out here?"
The man then puts the receiver to his ass
and farts louder than I have ever heard
then flushes the toilet and hangs up.

This was after a half an hour of me thinking
I was going to close the deal.
I gathered my sack lunch and told the
vivacious Jew that I quit.

When I picked up my check at the end of the week
it was \$500 and I wanted my job back
so he gave me one more chance.

"Okay but I'm relying on you to stick around a while,
and by the way, can you get any crank?"
"No sorry, I've been off the shit a year."
"Actually, I've already filled your position,
so we won't be needing you after all."

A White '65

I used to drive a '65 Pontiac
that hovered like a spaceship with a tired 326
And tinted windows.
It was white.
It was sometimes fast.
It turned a lot of heads,
got me a couple of tickets:
(was my punishment for drinking and driving).
My first love sat in the passenger's seat
Smoking cigarettes, having fun being
Swept off her feet.

We were just kids.
The radio weak but always on.
We parked against a desolate wall
almost every night
(before the biggest news of our puny lives).
A rose bush draped over the cemented bricks,
swaddling to the sidewalk leaving
white pedals to die.
Ran over by kids and their motor-less machines
Staining the sidewalk with their dead pollen

The car ran less than decent but it looked good
Not movie good but good.
It burped and puked at red lights gone green
I gave it a bath once a week.
We blew smoke inside while we drove
Along the Pacific Coast and its
Laughing Moon.

I wonder where it is now?

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Blackbeard By: Campbell Haynes

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Attend the tale of Edward Teach
He ruled from Britain to Plymouth Beach
He fought like a demon, and beard afire
He killed all men to his heart's desire
He was well known and much feared,
As the pirate Blackbeard!
He sailed the seas in a great frigate,
And taught his men how to quickly rig it
A pair of pistols were his weapons of choice,
Aided by his loud booming voice
The great God may be revered,
But fear was enough for Cap'n Blackbeard!
Swing your sword high, Blackbeard!
Hold it to the skies!
Freely flows the blood of those who moralize!
Teach was quick,
But he was not subtle.
Merely his name
Could cause a ship to scuttle!
Queen Anne's revenge
Was his choice of ship
He used for only a year
Before letting it slip
He had piracy
Down to an art
He flew a flag
With a stabbed heart
He wouldn't wait
For the finer things
He cut off fingers
Just for the rings
Even in death,
He did not blink
His body swam three laps of the ship
Before it did sink!

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Genesis

By: Sarah Huntsman

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What I say to you is neither fact nor fiction.
It simply is. Nothing can be done about what
will be nor can anyone change it. Rules do
not apply here, as it has always been. There is
nothing but my word, and my word is law.
There isn't a force in any world that can
change that. I am the ultimate power.
They cannot stray from the
path I have set before them. I decide who
lives and who dies, yet they do not know of my
existence. There is no free will.
They think they have free will; to
choose what they want to do and where they
want to go. If anyone dares to defy me, I will
strike them down without hesitation or
second thought. I have the power to destroy
worlds -to destroy anyone or anything I see
fit. When they are gone no one will
remember them. No one will care
because they do not exist... They never existed. This
is how it is to conquer the blank page.

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Insomnia Pt. 2

By: Erin Elliott

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There is a space
In the small of my back.
Crawling hands kneed the skin there.

If I close my eyes,
He becomes a thing that is present,
And whispers those things
I do not want to hear or see.

Not even safe from sleep,
There is no haven it will not invade.
There is no escape at all.

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Sorry

By: Erin Elliott

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I have a habit of
Apologizing for things that make me human:
Aggressive sneezing that interrupts a quiet class
Is met with a meek, "Bless You,"
And an apology-from me.

Running late for church
When I was six-
Constant brushing did nothing
To tame my unruly hair.
Uneasy at my mother's frustration,
I apologized.

I say to a friend,
I am sorry for my emotions
For rambling about the things
I am passionate about-
The things that make me come alive.

But I am not sorry,
I will not apologize,
For caring so deeply
I give it the power to break me-
Without it I would not be human.

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Winter

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by Kyrie Siepel

Winter

Loneliness sank Her claws into my sternum
She asked why I cried when she tightened her grip
"It hurts."

She only smiled, sweet and passive.
Insecurity grabbed my arms with His frozen fingers and told me
"You won't find anyone as warm as me."

Anxiety tangled his fingers in my hair like a lover.
I asked him to be gentle. He yanked and pulled anyway.
"Try and find someone who will love you like I do."
And then She came. With her gray eyes and numbing touch.
They told me She would pass. They told me She was a phase.
But every winter she crawls into bed with me, curls her hands around my waist,
Faces me in the morning.
"Stay with me," she murmurs, voice gentle.

And every morning, it gets harder and harder to say no.

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Haiku Contest Winners



First Place: Treva Noakes-Miller

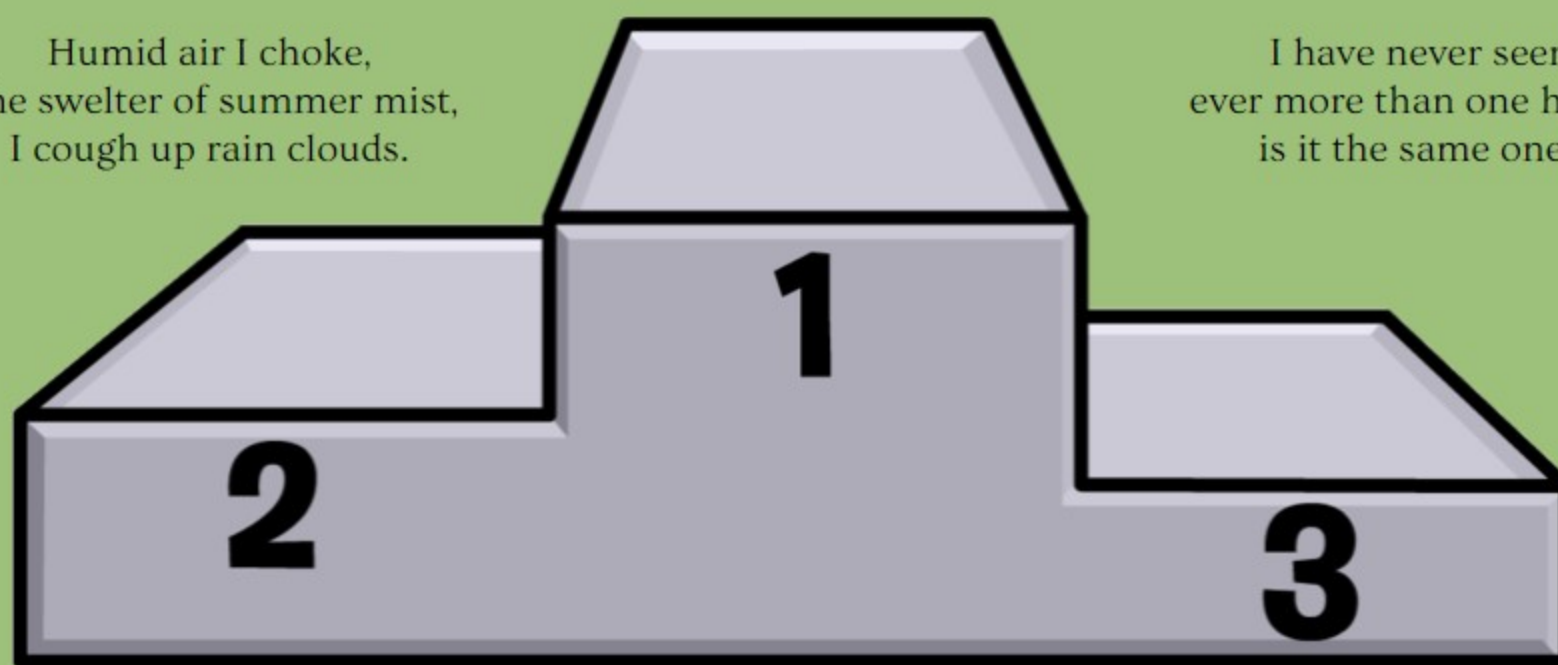
Our footsteps were wild
Untamed, sporadic. Underneath,
The grass breathed heavy

Second Place: Julia Wahle

Humid air I choke,
The swelter of summer mist,
I cough up rain clouds.

Third Place: Benjamin Ward

I have never seen
ever more than one heron,
is it the same one?



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