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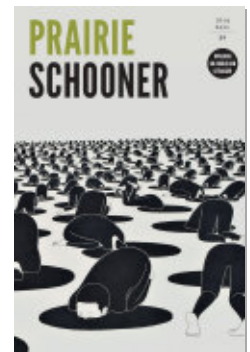
The Bees, the Flowers, Jesus, Ancient Tigers, Poseidon, Adam and Eve, and: Taxonomy of My Fossil Megafaunal Heart, and: Why I Never Amounted to Much: My Graduation from Ohio State (December 1988), and: Lament for the American Space Program on Halloween Night

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The Bees, the Flowers, Jesus, Ancient Tigers, Poseidon, Adam and Eve

Huh! That bumblebee looks ridiculous staggering its way

across those blue flowers, the ones I can never
remember the name of. Do you know the old engineer's

joke: that, theoretically, bees can't fly? But they look so

perfect together, like Absolute Purpose incarnate: one bee
plus one blue flower equals about a billion

years of symbiosis. Which leads me to wonder what it is

I'm doing here, peering through a lens at the thigh-pouches
stuffed with pollen and the baffling intricacies

of stamen and pistil. Am I supposed to say something, add
a soundtrack and voiceover? My life's spent

running an inept tour for my own sad swindle of a vacation

until every goddamned thing's reduced to botched captions
and dabs of misinformation in fractured,

not-quite-right English: *Here sir, that's the very place Jesus*

*wept. The Colosseum sprouts and blooms with leftover seeds
pooped by ancient tigers. Poseidon diddled*

Philomel in the warm slap of this ankle-deep surf to the dying stings of a thousand jellyfish. There, probably,

atop yonder scraggly hillock, Adam should've said no to Eve.

Taxonomy of My Fossil Megafaunal Heart

Oh fat whale with the flatulent spout! Musclehead marbled to the bone. How many times must this cold fish

get gaffed, flensed, and rendered? *Avast!* At only fourteen, sweet Lisa Rodenbeck sat on my lap

for a sweaty bus trip home and to this day I'm pincushioned by fragments of those hand-whittled harpoons

from that antediluvian event. Sophomore year Linda Lozier tried to goad me to a bull's snort but got only

pizzle and mope. Brenda King stampeded me off a cliff and went at my carcass with a hatchet of stone

but took only the hump. And at Ohio State Juanita Mettler

scattered her dainty saurian footprints across the landscape of ash left after my Paleozoic spews . . .

And as for my ex-Mrs. Meteorite, even God'll tell you she

looked like oxygen. Like bacteria's last hope. Like nothing else ever since. Since then? I'm still thrashing

in the shallows undecided about flippers or thumbs, gobbling plankton and steadying my final quivering inch

to add to the sixty-five million years of coal beds a mile thick.

Why I Never Amounted to Much: My Graduation from Ohio State (December 1988)

It was ritualized foregone conclusion, like the resignation
of President Nixon, and, just like the resignation

of President Nixon, reduced now for history's sake

to a single image. In the foreground some blurry officials
crouch, ready to roll up the red carpet.

Far in the background, waving all of my furious farewells,
I stand sweaty, stubbled, and stooped

next to a woman enduring nights of delusion and rancor,

my pockets bulging with bad paper and
a half dozen miniature bottles of first-class airplane booze.

Lament for the American Space Program on Halloween Night

The ten-million-years-ago stars, those glittering fool-makers,
impassively contrast their frigid perpetuity

with my heart's transient *thud-thud*. At my feet, the leaves

skittering across the driveway say: *Thanatos! Thanatos!*
as if to shush me with the bug-holed currency

from life's latest bankruptcy. But let me tell you all about
this year's spooky costume, an idea filched

from an old song: I'm a disgraced cosmonaut in tinfoil pants
festooned with pulled ripcords & severed

oxygen hoses, peering through the scratched visor of a dented

helmet. Patched at the knees, stripped
of all rank & privilege, I'm vodka-soaked & etched all over

with busted capillaries. Tonight, the neighborhood zombies
& lipstick princesses flit by, children gone feral

on the incomprehensible 21st century. Insensitive leaf-kickers!

Reluctant moon-gazers! *Apparently, the moon*
wasn't worth the effort, comrades, I tell them in a villainous

Ruski accent, pointing out a spectacular waxing
gibbous emerging from a tatter of clouds. They note my pinhole

leaks, the futility of my zero-gravity shoes. They set me straight,

informing me that *Star Wars* has a two-moon minimum, super
giant moons at that, with blue-green atmospheres

crisscrossed by glabrous heroes shooting down spiny monsters
& so much better than the pitiful dust of my sorry

dime-size moon & Sea of Tranquility's lonesome old footprints.