



Three Poems

by Robin Collins

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Sounds through Drywall

The ritual of the taped door is performed dutifully at exactly 10:26pm each evening.

Certain words must be mumbled under breath, an incantation warding off all possible intruders, it fortifies the tape with ancient, mystic power.

The schizophrenic next door dances to the music he claims gave him the power to control the weather, to make it rain in the California desert, to cause tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, to communicate with long-dead houseplants, and become the expert on burritos. He lights a bundle of sage—the spicy scent makes me sneeze.

I hear him shout each night--one strained yelp, wounded animal noise, he has burned himself again. He begs his bony girlfriend for more tape, orders her out the open door. In a frantic stage whisper: "There are no friends here." "Scrrrritch..." the roll responds.

He beats out a rhythm, fingertips drumming the oncoming storm. He spends all night with the duct tape and a 40oz, gulping down snippets of stale syllables. His ear, pressed to the ground, hoping for a stampede.

Potential Lost

Time has slapped him across the face, the Elementary School Genius, keeper of the test score, tarnished gold stars emblazoned. His brain addled with gifts--he bubbles his answers to magazine quizzes. He trudges, shaggy, greasy head hung low—stained khakis shuffle to the freezer, lurches towards a Red Bull, mumbles an order: a pack of Marlboros.

The mystery remains, his blue eyes still luminescent behind the apple-bruise of insomnia, he traces ghosts on the countertops, rolls his eyes over newspaper headlines, another classmate engaged, killed in action, arrested. He fumbles for change in his pockets, finds: dust,

an orange M&M,
an origami crane,
and six quarters.

His apologetic smile is a tear in canvas,
he surrenders to the orange Exit sign.

Jimbo, Akimbo

Dances the dance of the desperate,
jelly belly sways, pendulous.
His arms are tree-limbs,
he waves them above his head,
stretches towards bruised skies,
music swells inside his deadened skull

beer spills with every fumbled step,
yeasty odor seeps, like guilt.
He motions to drippy faces on barstools,
asks them to join him--
gyrates his hips in ritual,
to make the earth stop rotating,
stave off loneliness, to mate
awkwardly with girls
half his age, their hot pink forms
wiggle in his dreams.

He rolls his glazed eyes back to stare
into hazy Friday nights past--
hours munching on lonely pretzels,
his blood pressure rising.
The ghosts of disposed panties,
call to him from bedroom floors.
He hiccups pick up lines.

His dance, a spasmodic dervish--
a rocking, capsizing vessel of hope,
the world spins, spins, spins
but halts for no bouncer.

Robin Collins's work has been published in *Garbanzo Literary Journal*, *BlazeVOX*, and *Burnt Bridge*. She holds an MFA from Fairfield University and is currently working on her first full-length book of poetry, *Crumpled Napkins in Volvos*. She lives in Newtown, CT

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