

**Keith Snow**

is

ordering a five cheese, grilled cheese sandwich, on toasted garlic, sourdough bread from one of your favorite restaurants

but receiving a tasty cheese sandwich which is neither very well melted or toasted

better

than if you got the sandwich melted and toasted but receiving only four cheeses

Or

is it similar to if you go to the grocery store to purchase Swanson Salisbury Steak buy one second one, two dollars off but in frozen food section they only have Swanson's Chicken Parmesan, Fried Chicken and Meatloaf trays

is

it worse than thinking your friend lives in El Paso, Texas but really lives in the plains above Denver Colorado

and

could it be as bad as calling friend honey who will never be yours?

Aaron Wiegert

**Inspecting Atlanta**

We entered the empty freeway on Sunday morning,  
It didn't matter which lane, parabolas unparallelled,  
Each with a lesson of chance, the notion of choice.

We saw the ghosts of commuters swarm the pumps,  
In a loop of stock footage from the Oil Embargo.  
We flew like dust in the light of a projector to inspect

Stored gasoline, inflating our importance, we moved  
In tune with the absence of Baptists, left behind as  
Blackbirds gathered overhead. And convenience is

A blessing in a Depression, but be wary as you make  
In-roads, in some states unleaded is sold with a premium  
Label. Now it appears no one's concerned with Truth

Or its pursuit, faces masked by other faces, beaming as  
The incarnate of progress, but once the well is dry we will  
Eat ourselves alive and tune in for disembodied headlines.

**Nothing So Feral**

What do you get when someone watches you,  
Or you them? A heaviness like a tongue  
Licking the inside of a bell.  
Sitting like dew upon the watcher, is gooseflesh,  
A premonition, every movement at foot,  
A finger, the gambit of a Queen unfurled  
In the mind, a map exposing parallel instances.  
Nothing so feral as the transaction of a glance,  
And the knowing that the observed is of such value.  
A power bound to the prow with such desire can  
Generate action, like the transference of great  
Terror, sheer revelation, look out your window,  
Right now, does this feel familiar?

## Let the Sound Come to You

There was a boy nearing graduation,  
With great acceleration, college on the horizon,  
First in his family to

--he was pulled from one side  
Of the gravel, down into the ditch  
& never made curfew.

Mom and dad cried and tried to find  
Meaning and with an open heart  
They gave the body of his car  
To the graduating class.

The mangled frame sat on the back  
Of a flatbed's slow tow around the town,  
In the homecoming parade, as boys and girls

Hammered the broken body without the joy  
Or excitement of tires or glass  
Or an engine's rush of gas.

Candy was tossed to the children,  
The football game was lost or won,  
But the blind eyes of spray painted metal still

Lets the sound come to you.

**More Than a Carnivore Could Bar**  
**(As told by my Grandma about her husband's childhood)**

He had a dog, part-wolf,  
Whose hunger was epic,  
As his family had little to eat.

It had been weeks  
Since they had meat,  
More than a carnivore could bear.

So they collected wages  
To calm their craving.

Upon the block, his family watched  
The Butcher stuff hot dogs,  
And decided on one each.

Mother carried the paper package  
In her coat, and unwrapped  
It in the kitchen.

Imagine Part-Wolf's suspicion  
At the scent of fresh meat.  
Mother took the plate away.

Her trip to the hot plate  
Was smooth, so much that  
She slid and the meat flew

Up and into the eye  
Of Part-Wolf's teeth,  
Snap and swallow, before

A scrum or tug-of-war. So went  
The meat drought,  
Along with the Depression,

Until it didn't matter  
What dog they ate.

Vicki Lorio

## The Last Resort

I went to the Last Resort and ordered a white wine. The bartender served me warm beer. I watched your eyes and gazed at the plaster angels and the crucifixes that decorated your frame.

Scumbags of America is what you called the jury that convicted you. You hitchhiked Florida's highways for prey. Smoker's yellow teeth, daisy dukes so short blonde pubes nested on your hiked-up denim hem. Hiking boots and sweat socks.

You shot your victims. Abandoned them in Florida's forests making a thanksgiving of human corpses for insects and snakes. Some of your men were found with their pants down, others just wanted to give a damsel in distress a ride. All were gunned down with a .22, their cars stolen—modus operandi.

Your father died in jail for murder.  
You were raped and became a homeless mother at 13.  
Nature or nurture who knows.

Captured by undercover cops in the Last Resort, hole-in-the-wall biker bar, cement box hidden by kudzu. Your picture hangs there still.

They executed you in Florida State Prison.  
Did you close your eyes when they started the legal/lethal injection?

Sailing on a boat to Jesus were your last words, no worries, Aileen, you are already a true saint of Florida.

## Because I Love Lucy

I told Jana, my boss, I'd buy the Dos Equis because Desi Arnaz wrote a book called A Book because he came to B. Dalton Bookseller because he wore a guayabera shirt because he sang "Babaloo" banging out the rhythms on a conga drum because we sold his book because he was already blind drunk because he didn't finish all the cerveza because he threw up in the employee bathroom because I volunteered to clean up the vomit because Jana took out a twenty from the till to thank me because I had a new shiny engagement ring because there was left-over beer because my fiancée had a liquid dinner because there is a new movie out about Lucy and Desi because I am almost as old as Desi was when he died because Desi kissed my hand and hoped I would be as happy as he and Lucy were

## Topsy Turvy

The tweet said: Bannon indicted; Britney freed.  
My mother said her mother said it's a topsy turvy world.

We're talking more than a100 years of topsy turvy.  
The Disney Hunchback of Notre Dame movie has a song called "Topsy Turvy."

My daughter and I sang that song when I drove her to school.  
Can you even say hunchback, which sounds like humpback

which sounds a little kinky like sperm whale?  
So much testosterone in the deep blue sea.

At the dinner table when I was young in a topsy turvy family  
(and whose isn't?) I could say sperm whale and chicken breast,  
all other sperms and breasts were verboten.

My daughter has scoliosis. She had to wear a brace to school  
that made her hobble like Scout in her Halloween ham costume.

The kids called her hunchback.  
I wanted to kill those fuckers.

They straightened up when she graduated top of her class  
and made an FU speech that most of them were too dumb to understand.

I take osteoporosis meds so I don't get a dowager's hump.  
It sounds good to be a dowager, hump and all.  
I wouldn't mind wearing a tiara while I shop at Trader Joe's.

The tweet said Britney is free.  
They would never try a conservatorship with a male rock star.  
Can you imagine Mick Jagger under birth control surveillance?

Bannon had to surrender his passport  
then went back into his hidey hole.

His boss is still looking for votes in every pussy he grabs.  
I stay in the dark and watch Disney movies (except Bambi).

## Laura Stamps

### The Quest for Happiness

The current issue of my favorite magazine is in today's mail. There's a Rest Area sign on the cover. I wonder whose bright idea that was? The theme is relaxation. But a Rest Area sign? Seriously? A relaxing beach scene would make me happier. "Marilee, happiness can't be found outside yourself," my mother always says, "because happiness comes from within." I know, I know. She's right. The pastor at my church says the same thing. And he's right too. They're both right. I know. Grabbing my purse and keys, I'm halfway out the door when my cell phone rings. "Marilee, I need you," my friend Jill groans, followed by sniffing sounds. "He did it again, didn't he?" I say. Louder sniffing sounds. "Can you meet me at Starbucks?" Jill pleads. I pull a wad of tissues from the box on the table and stuff them into my pocket. "I'm on my way," I say. When I arrive Jill is sitting at a table in the back, nursing a Praline Latte. She pushes a steaming Peppermint Macchiato toward me. Her treat. Things must be really bad this time. "I'm finished with men," Jill announces, her eyes and nose red from heartache. "Wise decision," I say, giving her the tissues from my pocket. Happiness. For me, it's love. Loving something that can love me back. My neighbor Bonnie taught me that. "My sisters think I'm unlucky because I have cats instead of a husband," Bonnie told me years ago. "But all they do is complain about their kids and husbands. I'm the lucky one. My cats only bring me joy." Thirty minutes later the tissues are soaked, and Jill is still a mess. "We're leaving," I say, standing up. I'm a volunteer for the Denver Cat Rescue League. Today is my day to work in the cat room at PetSmart, playing with the DCRL cats, feeding them, cleaning their cages. I love those cats. They only bring me joy. "Happiness comes from within," I say, taking Jill's hand and leading her out of the coffee shop. "Come and see."



**Gabriel Ricard**

Hello, October 1999

A distinctive set of livewire lips  
slightly parted,  
with crisp, bold teeth holding on  
to her skull like a piece of hard candy  
that should be enjoyed  
with at least a dollop of erotic irony.

That has been the state of her headache  
since 10 AM. About an hour after that,  
her husband reached the threshold  
for genuine interest in being around his extended family  
in a 4H Center in the middle of a diorama  
that goes on for lightyears,  
before you find train tracks, soft warm lights  
bringing you back to home and humanity.

Her children are so unhappy.  
This is her fault. Especially now. Especially today.  
Each throb across her forehead, billowing out of her temples,  
is an entire dissertation on how she failed them  
by making them come to the United States in the first place.

Her oldest son is committed to braving the underworld alone.  
How can that not be her fault?

This migraine didn't start in guilt,  
but that's where it has decided to administer  
the kind of focus that will make sure the trains  
run on time across her spine,  
around her shoulders like a hallucination of a snake  
tightening its intentions  
just beneath the driest parts of her skin.

She knows if she asked someone to take her to the hospital,  
they would.

As a matter of fact,  
the nearest town is only ten or so miles away. That's the real world.  
That's not so bad.

Things are different.  
Things are better.

Even if her husband's father won't stop touching her ass  
when no one's looking. This is still better than two years ago.

Anyone can see that.  
Even if she has clearly and utterly failed her children.

Everyone at the overly aggressive family reunion probably thinks so.

Even if no one can see that she probably should have been taken  
to the emergency room a couple of hours ago.

Michael Hough, prose / Christina Chin, short verses

## Some Things Change

Cars were like religion when I was a young teen.

"little GTO...

You're really lookin' fine...

three deuces and a four speed

and a 389..."

--Ronnie and the Daytonas

Those guys were probably hired by John DeLorean to promote the new muscle car. Who knew it would be a bubble gum music hit? \*shrugs ...

I never took much stock in GTOs or any muscle car.

Q: which came first, the GTO song or the 409 song...

A: If you don't remember, it doesn't matter.

As a young buck I took a dim view of both of these idiot songs, feeling that they should be paired on the air with Deadman's Curve and Tell Laura I Love Her.

But hey, all I had was a bicycle, a used 3 Speed I bought for \$10 at the pawnshop, to deliver my newspapers on. I bought that bike with money I earned carrying golf bags for guys that drove Cadillacs.

a straight putt

on the tenth green

in the bunker

So to get that bike I did save my nickels and save my dimes.  
I used to chant this while cranking my bike on my paper route:  
"You can save your nickels you can save your dimes...  
Giddy up giddy up 409  
You'll never get a 409

Giddy up giddy up 409  
A day at the races watching' all the 409s"  
The GTO song came after the 409 song, if anybody cares. I don't.

I learned how to drive and passed my driver's test in my dad's 1960 Chevy Brookwood station wagon, with straight six cylinder engine, three speed manual transmission with the shift lever on the steering column, an AM radio, a stamped steel dashboard with no padding, bench seats, no seat belts or safety equipment of any kind, retread tires and power nothing. No AC... but the heater worked.

two girls  
squeezed in the bench seat  
the radio blasts  
Heartaches  
by the Number

The expression "roll down the window" came from the hand cranks we used. To turn, you horsed the steering wheel about with a knob clamped on it. The expression "stood on the brakes" came from the drum brakes these cars were equipped with... and the lack of hydraulic assist. \*shrugs  
I've always thought it was a wonder any of us survived. Including the muscle car crowd.

half a dozen kids  
packed in grandad's Holden  
movie night

