

PETER JAY SHIPPY

The Devil, Probably

What kind of story is it, watching? Listening?
Faces downcast, hands walking, feet turning doorknobs,

men riding tricycles, car horns, hair moving
like seaweed stirred by currents, a stoop tossed

with lemon peels, a box of free books, yellowed paperbacks, classics,
pizza crusts, a coat hanger

bent to catch waves, the roots of an oak breaking
through the sidewalk, a cart of glass bottles,

a man, his wheelchair, his guide dog, his child
riding on his lap reading about what is snow,

an ice cream truck playing *Cabaret*,
a small garden blossoming with plastic

dinosaurs, a woman in headphones singing
like a deaf woman singing about love gone to hay,

windblown Kleenex, pink, like wet blossoms
stuck to a chain-link fence, crab apple stains

on the sidewalk, hello, grey hoodies hung
from a clothesline stretched between car aerials,

two bulldogs, a semi backing up, a tuxedo cat
in the parlor window of a red Victorian where

apparently, I took lessons, dried flowers,
piano, lavender, a woman with a baby laced

to her chest, a tree limb, its chainsaw, sunshine
on gorse, two girls, one phone, cherry floorboards

neatly stacked in the middle of the road, a truck
backing up, a peeling oriole painted on a wall

selling juice, a clothesline stretched between
two bulldogs, a dry laugh, two smokers holding hands

leaning against the window of the laundromat,
aerials bent to catch hair stirred by currents,

a heavy dresser at the curb full of linen,
a woman with dried flowers laced to her chest,

yellowed paperback, a tree limb, cherry, windblown
ice cream, pink, like wet blossoms, *come hear*

the band, come blow your horn, people riding
lavender bottles, hello, a yellow bus,

a child's face squashed into the back window
of a lemon Victorian where apparently,

I pocketed a mechanical pencil, shh
said the hard lead as it pressed hummingbirds

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Long Gone Daddy

after Monterroso

into my father's graph paper, listening,
hands downcast, faces walking, feet turning doorknobs,

whose story it is, watching, the devil, probably,
a coathanger, grey hoodies, apple stains, a chainsaw

at the bottom of a pond cutting seaweed,
two girls in your piano's middle C, hear

the wheelchair's man, a yellowed dog on his lap,
sunshine in his hair, in his eyes, like gorse,

plastic dinosaurs break through the sidewalk.
What is snow? What is snow? What is snow?

The dinosaur awoke to find that you had vanished.

PETER JAY SHIPPY

The Engineer of Moonlight

he scar on her left breast was Utica,
her lips were Dar es Salaam, cold springs

in Duluth caused that cough, like a cat hawking
songbirds, babblers and warblers, the crow's feet

under her eyes were a walk-up in Iowa City
where we heard Schumann's "Child Falling Asleep"

on a baby monitor, it struck us as sunken
music, the orchestra going down with the ship,

women and children first, the bruise on her hip
was bottle green from her bedroom wall, well,

who hasn't pursued the slow disco, the keen scar
on her right knee was skating rinks in July,

her hair, her mother's and her mother's hair
was New Bedford, Lisbon, chestnut, planted near

her mosaic in the tea garden because they say
hair keeps haints away, her strong legs were nights

swimming the ancient inland sea, from Appalachia
to Laramidia, her smile was *très* nice,

was Nice, where a plummet from a bicycle left her
with a gap between her front teeth, between

the genuine and the acrylic, her wooden leg
was Sears Roebuck, 1867, was kept

on the mantle next to a picture of her four greats
grandmother who lost her limb on a battlefield

in Morocco, it's a long story, she said, one
she never told me, too bad, as it might explain

her skull's camber, which was definitely Fez,
so unlike Assam's liaison with the curl

of her neck, her neck so unlike giraffes or swans,
thank god, outside of a poem who wants to be

inside a simile equation with a zoo,
her shrink ray was Dr. No, her broken toe

was the door hitting my sour ass on the way out,
her desk was apple, barnwood, the family farm

where hers picked sugar beets for years after
they arrived from Beets, thus her purple hands,

her records were from 1963, Memphis and Seoul,
her voice was Little Łódź in South Buffalo,

listening to her sing "Blue Monday" made me
nostalgic for the distant future, her tears

were products of the Argentine, her tears
were Cedar Rapids General, the NICU,

where we heard Schumann's "Child Falling Asleep"
on a baby monitor, it struck us as sunken

music, the orchestra going down with the ship,
women and children first, the bruise on her hip,

her skin was quick, wolf moonlight on a loco-
motive driven by a sleeping engineer.