

Under the Bed

Bobby Parker

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Cover art~Shadows in the Bedroom Corner, Stefan Johnson

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The Death of Sunny George

We found your dead budgie at the bottom of the cage
his head cocked quizzically to the right side, his little
feet, once pink now blue, still curled for the perch.
You picked him up and placed him on a piece of newspaper
wondering how this could've happened to a baby bird.
You delicately pushed at his rigid body with your finger
but the cold had him; his tiny black eyes were blacker,
his beak half open like split peanut. And ah baby girl,
you looked at me, so sorrowfully, as if to ask, 'Do birds
go to heaven?' and the sun carved through a thin
slit in the curtains like a yellow line separating
us in two locations: a place where I was preparing to lie
and a place where you were preparing to believe me.

The Adolescent Garden

In a garden surrounded by jungles, toy soldiers
advanced through the crisp grass and I lay
with my vacant head by an anthill.

Over the fence pirates buried
gold and diamonds, a girl oiled herself
reclining across a blue lounge as I

casually tossed wishes into a pond.
I wrote the girl a note asking to hold
her hand and walk to the shops to buy

soft dreams, but she offered me
nothing more than a smile, a flash
of sweet embarrassment.

I noticed the blades of grass in her
fiery hair and thought nothing of it.
She told me I was too sensitive to hold her,

too withdrawn and inspired.
When she floated away inside her house
I fell back on my grandparents' lawn

breathing the complicated air of desire
dreaming of bullying the birds so that she might
laugh and like me – rebel poet of gardens.

Now that garden is surrounded by
concrete – gone, the sheds full of rusted
scythes and dirty photographs; gone,
the young me. And I'm so much older
without the girl next-door and her
prize of passion lounging
beneath the heavy sun, driving me crazy.

Spooked

Ghosts sleep in the songs of your hair
while I'm trapped beneath the dumb-wheel
of some merciless machine

And their voices sound familiar
not unlike my own voice
swimming in a confused flutter
of metal butterflies

and while your phantoms continue to
hide like scoundrel spies
I wait for someone to pick up my art
and see too much of themselves there

I wait for my hands to become birds of release
to drive away the whispers
living in the long sweeps of your moody hair

calling me a bloody fool for trying to chase dreams
when I'm stuck fast beneath the mechanism
of a troubled, moving world.

**My Mother on a Summer Doorstep Shouting
for me to Come Home**

Freedom was as much red liquorish as I could eat,
belching at the sun, running until my thin body
shook like a flower and almost vanished. Freedom
was touching Katie's tanned knees with a sticky lollipop.
Freedom was telling lies, quirky lies
that wouldn't harm anybody – telling sweet Katie
I was an alien from Marshmallow-Museum-9.

Now freedom is something between
running and lying, running from what the future
has become, then lying to myself about what it will be –
Katie, you where spot on when you said there
was no leader to take me to; every alien must blend in
and talk like a newspaper, and red liquorice
won't pay for trip to the pyramids.

I awoke with Sunbeams

I awoke with sunbeams pressed
upon my face like warm clothing.
She was gone so I inhaled
her pillow and caught a long
golden hair in my mouth.

Through an open window the wind
roared and flies came in to orbit the light bulbs.
We never had money for bug spray.

In that building we had music
but I sold my records dead cheap for beer
so I listened to its hive and wondered if our
honey was just a sweet metaphor for dreams.

In her absence I have her image; I carry it
everywhere like a miniature statue of a saint.

When she returns I will apologise for
a crumby world, tickle her under
the arms and cross our fingers waiting
for everything to happen to us again.

Seventeen

You've come a long way
from the girl who agreed
with everything
I said – now you're the woman
who makes me prove I can:
wash the dishes
last fifteen minutes
take the rubbish out
put the toilet seat down
be nice
to your stupid mother –
I'm not lying when I say
my heaven is an early
you with flashing
sunshine behind us.

A Fantasy

My hands have come a long way.
These pockets of mine are lucky
to keep them warm. They have
never slapped you. They have never
pointed in the wrong direction.
I sleep with them under my pillow
and in the darkness I feel them
groping the future.

The Seven Stars

Morning coffee at the seven stars as usual, but today thinking about the girl in the library knowing that I shouldn't be thinking about the girl in the library – she seems to be studying equations and I wonder if she can figure out what it means when I stand up sit back down and go crazy if she runs her hands through her hair.

My winning streak at the bookies seems to be holding out perfectly living on my instincts, there's nothing like a fool's mad prophecies taking off and flying, standing up and sitting down and going crazy a real gamble would be to run my hands through her stunning hair knowing that I shouldn't run my hands through her stunning hair.

The freezing air outside hits me like a friend recovering an old debt between the library and the bookies and coming home to love you I am the punishment and the reward, dreaming about hair and numbers when I shouldn't be dreaming about hair and numbers, I should be complaining that the seven stars' coffee gets too cold too soon.

Under the bed

I'm in love with the stuff we keep under the bed
odd shoes chock-a-block postcards broken clocks
post to post photos of ghosts happy in the summer

my high-school headmaster is under the bed
my girlfriend's mum is under the bed
my first boss beer belly bastard with a beard
my childhood so far so good suddenly so long gone

the way I feel when it's raining and I have no money
my life compared with someone else's life
a world boxed up bagged up waiting for validation

words that cannot find a mouth in the dark
kisses crushed into the carpet like jelly babies
the way we look at each other when we're angry
our smiles fading in the ashes of an argument

my collection of chipped sea shells
nautical nursery rhymes
beached in their salty cups and turning
in the past of a cracked bucket

and everything useless under the bed
part of some forgotten secret

hairbrushes sad faces promises shoelaces
tears the pearls of a snapped necklace
chuckles the bubbles in the best champagne
high hopes don't smoke get a job stay afloat
make the most of it don't rock the boat

the way we haven't got much of a choice
the way I feel utterly lost in the novelty of purpose
my life compared to odds and ends under the bed
another world waiting for something to happen.

What a Drunken Neighbour Told Me

A gorgeous girl shook
her wet hair in the corridor
asking for things I did not have
or could not give.

The light bulb moon trickled through
the windows like milk as she took my
cold hand and kissed it like I was priest.

She told me she had dreams of
buttercups shining like sovereigns
and a man appears with a promise of
love as true as the days are long.

I said things will unfold as they should
but I'm not him – I'm too selfish, and with
that she turned on a heel and strode away
leaving me with the scent of her marvellous
perfume as I shut the door and hung
my head in the darkness.

Bobby Parker is a Poet and an Artist from Kidderminster in the West Midlands. He was selected as Small Press Poet of the Year 2008/9 in Purple Patch magazine, and has been published in magazines such as Agenda; The Argotist Online, The New Cauldron; The Coffee House; Curlew; Danse Macabre; Fire; Global Tapestry Journal; Ink Sweat and Tears; Iota; Krax; Obsessed With Pipework; Orbis (he was Featured Writer in issue 147); Rain Dog; Raw Edge; Monkey Kettle; The New Writer, Poetry Monthly, Purple Patch; Quarry; Urban District Writer and Weyfarers.

His first chapbook of published poems 'Pictures of Screaming People' has just been published by Erbacce Press.