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# Pterodactyls Soar Again Reb Livingston

## Delicious Marriage

And it's true you had a wife.  
And you couldn't keep her,  
couldn't stick your weapon up  
the bell tower, you pumpkin eater.

And all the King's horses, roared wildly,  
and not with you, you pumpkin cheater.

Such a screw-up, tried and true.

You had a wife, so you had to beat her.  
Then her belly grew, so you had to eat her.

## Pterodactyls Soar Again

## That's Not Butter

Once upon a time there was a house full of divorced women who did not sew.  
No beautiful little red coats or beautiful little blue trousers.  
The children's clothes, purchased at Sears,  
mass produced, not very unique, but good enough.

Every month the fathers would visit and take the children to fun places,  
like the amusement parks, Chuck E. Cheese and church bazaars.  
No beautiful green umbrellas or lovely little purple shoes  
with crimson soles and crimson linings.  
Only flammable stuffed monkeys and glow sticks.

Most of them time, the children were on their own and passed  
time shoplifting glue and smoking skinny cigars in the woods.  
One day Little Pink Brittany found a jungle and suggested they explore.  
"That jungle smells funny," warned Little Peach Paulie.  
"Not as funny as your mom," laughed Little Taupe Tabitha,  
"Let's investigate, maybe ganja grows wild there."  
Little Mauve Melvin's eyes twisted left, "We could cultivate  
the ganja, become gangsta farmers, start our own syndicate!"

The children proceeded, they proceeded to get lost in the jungle.  
The jungle owls were warming up, one by one the children cried.  
By and by they met a tiger, "Aren't you all adorable in your  
matching little yellow sweats and little yellow hoodies.  
I could eat every single one of you right up!"  
"Who are you?" asked Little Amber Ambrosia.  
"Why I'm the grandest tiger in the jungle!"  
Up above in the treetops the leopards laughed, "Not in those stripes!"  
The tiger shook his paw in the air, "Haters!"

## What Of

What of daisies dying in a woman's hair?  
Why distress for nature's minute cycles?  
On the windowsill the  
Cantaloupe over-ripens  
Unused sexuality  
Excessive waste of resources.  
Tick, tock, tick tonka truck,  
A big spill down cellar stairs.  
Men call it womanish, please hush  
Rather talk of traffic and stereos.  
I hear, tick tock, tick  
Walk me down the aisle.  
Tick tock, tick-never-a-knock,  
What of daises, crumbling at  
My toes?

## *Finding My Gingerbread House*

I followed the sound,  
the trail of steam.  
“Choo choo, you useless slut” cracked the train.  
I ate bread crumbs from the ground.  
“Choo choo, you’ll never survive on your own.”  
I found home,  
never realizing the tracks were so close.  
“Choo choo, go back to your husband.”  
*I hope you derail and all your passengers die!* I cried.

## **If You Have Nothing Nice to Say**

1.  
There was one good man in that steel town  
but he was no Oppenheimer.  
If he subscribed to *Vogue*,  
he would have said,  
*You can put Mama in Prada,*  
*but she’s still Mama.*

Women come and gather catalogs  
ordering nine colors of matching clogs.

And the children of divorce go:  
Sugar gooey hostess cake  
We love Mama’s Shake ‘N Bake.

If Mama read poetry,  
she still would have drank  
divorced and drank and drove,  
crunched the puppy under her wheel,  
buried it beneath her azaleas,  
six short inches under.

Women come and sprinkle fertilizer  
mocking and mooing the Pulitzer.

And the children of divorce go:  
The front of a boy’s butt  
is a wiener and a nut.

2.  
The daughter expected a better life  
but motors grew to monsters  
and were still handled by untrained puppet masters  
ravaging her pristine roads.  
What of the bumpless death of squirrels?  
Does every rodent deem a conversation pause  
on the way to Grandma’s?

## *Holy Transaction*

Straddling a crate of pork rinds, she introduced me  
to a man missing one leg.  
“This man is a prophet.  
Give him all the change in your slippers  
and he’ll share his wisdom.”

Clink, clank the cup bottom cackled.  
“Someone peed on these pennies”  
clucked the prophet.  
“Didn’t your mother ever tell you not  
to put money in your mouth?”  
replied Jezebel and to me,  
“Now ask your question.”

*Please, wise urchin guru, what direction should I take?  
What is my value?*

He thought for a moment and began to recite  
“Unnecessary details slow the plot  
Confused readers demand you stop.  
You don’t know, you have no right  
It’s not yours, they own this plight.  
Read Foucault, shun stadiums  
Learn to play the deep dark oboe.”  
*I don’t understand what that means.*  
“Scram, you’re scaring away my patrons,  
you stinking tart.”

“What did you learn from this?”  
asked Jezebel.  
*All poetry is quite useless.*  
“Funny, your husband thinks the same of you.”

## **What We Say**

You are destined for misery, my husband said to me,  
you’re a rigid, unyielding woman  
with the taste of demons lurking on your stiff tongue.

You eat this can of corn, I said to my son,  
or you’ll be this can of corn.  
You need to follow directions.

My son swallowed the kernels, I told my therapist,  
and chewed the label and aluminum.  
He’s almost perfect.

You should write humor, mother said to me,  
you should write for children.  
You should clip your nails and stop scratching elbows.

It’s not right, I said to God,  
being the one cursed with sanity.

I – wretched, consumed by song.

## Tales of the Smaller Self

### *His Last Effort*

Force-boarded onto a crowded bus  
by my husband  
in the cruel night cackle,  
I cried for my pillow.  
A warm puddle of piss seeped through  
my slippers, I cried for sleep.  
“If you want to be the mother of *my* children  
you need to take responsibility,” he insisted.

To my disgust, his midget version introduced himself,  
gosh-darn-happy-to-meet-me and offered  
a bite of his banana.  
*I don't want to know this much about you!*  
I pleaded to my husband.

“You're the only one fighting it.”  
Keeping silent,  
the rest of the bus occupants groomed  
themselves under the sharp eyes  
of their matching commanders.  
“Not so close!”  
yelled an elderly man's midget  
carefully cutting away his overgrown cuticles.  
A teenage girl methodically flossed each tooth,  
her midget massaged her gums.

My husband shook me straight  
flipping me upside down  
until my hands steadied  
and mouth squatted like a vagina.  
Covered in saliva and stomach acid my midget  
emerged head-first from my throat.

## Sink the Girl

*Water not only can keep a ship afloat  
but can also sink it.*

Chinese Fortune Cookie

1.  
Underwater I see dolls without feet.  
I chopped them off so the dolls

cannot paddle away while I sleep.  
Remember the water and the ship.

There is salvation in transportation.  
Parakeets play hopscotch and rats shoot marbles

while children are inside chatting online.  
Don't blame their parents they were overcome by television

and the grandparents were penetrated  
by undetectable radio waves.

Everyone has an excuse and a solution.  
I drink water with high lead content

like fish it makes me smart.  
Scientists make studies say whatever they want.

I cannot really say what I want, but I do know destitute women  
who live together are destined to sling bacon.

## Muse Vs. Law

But I don't want to be a prosecutor  
sharpening my tight wit  
for bludgeoning the rapists and arsonists.

Oh, I want them to die  
choke on bloody aspirins  
that were once their front teeth.

Invite me to the execution!  
I'll attend, paint a sign,  
start the wave.

But I object!  
Send someone else to paddle criminals.  
I have cats to scold,  
my husband's four inch toe-nails.

Maybe you think he should  
administer his own pedicure?

Just because one can, does not  
mean one should.

3.  
I am thankful for ambulances  
honor electricity

worship glass and wary of anything I can see through.  
Sometimes creeks are just open sewers.

Sometimes pornography hides  
in bushes next to creeks.

Whatever we find we put in the Convent's mailbox.  
The Sisters know what to do.

This is a confession  
about water

and where we travel  
and what we believe.

And some people  
do not understand that.

I am told that there is a seat  
in hell for me which is fine

because I hate to stand  
and I have forgotten how to swim.

I had to rent her out, make her sexy to clients,  
stop giving her  
what was best, turning her profitable and cheap.

My title was Assistant Pimp and I followed all  
the Senior Pimp's demands,  
until I realized: better the creator be the destroyer.

When all that was left was an empty tin can,  
with a shiny label  
I ended her suffering.

A confident mother drowning her babe in the river  
moments before  
enemy troops marched into town.

## Pretty Ugly

1.  
To no one's chagrin,  
the blonde skeleton  
had her lips laminated again  
and that's how it  
goes when tit lifts

and implants are sent  
the university route.

2.  
It hurts as much as waxing  
your mother's mustache,  
the sense's hide tough  
as a dog's turd crusted paw.

3.  
Our imperfections awake  
in a stranger's guest room  
sharing bed sheets  
with excessive masturbators  
discovering ourselves,  
pumping air with lint.

4.  
What a handsome  
couple we are,  
twiddle dick  
and twiddle twat.

*For Chris:*  
*Thanks for not hightailing it.*

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### Evolution From the Other

You grasp for our elegant necks,  
lounging on brontosaurus spines  
like a drunk orangutan slinging shrimps  
at Charleston Heston behind bamboo bars.  
You observe my element: buck toothed,  
cloaked by smoke signals.

Conceive the metaphor, hump your dinosaur.  
Note each chalked crack misstep.  
Think you're intellectual?  
Think your science valid?  
Am I talking about class?  
Are we arguing over sex?

You note: *In an attempt to pass time,*  
*subject plays hopscotch and puffs*  
*ultra light Pall Malls,*  
*waiting for the 79A.*

The statue of liberty  
rebuilt six times.  
Pterodactyls soar again.

“It’s almost night, you kids shouldn’t be here. It’s not safe.  
Climb on my back and I’ll take you home to your mothers.”  
“We’re not leaving without the ganja!” protested Little Beige Timmy.  
The tiger sighed, “There’s no ganja in this jungle, only coconuts.”

But the children knew this was a lie for they could smell the ganja,  
the tiger smelled as if he had been soaking in it from birth.  
Little Auburn Emily pulled out her sharpened toothbrush and demanded  
“The ganja or your hide! You’re not the boss of me!”  
That tiger somehow seemed to know how to think like a tiger,  
like a paranoid tiger stoned out of his whiskers. Instead of gobbling up  
the little children, he ran, round and round a tree,  
faster and faster until he was whirling round so fast his legs  
could not be seen, it was more that just a blur, he was melting,  
melting away until there was nothing left  
except a great pool of melted butter.

“Can we smoke that?” inquired Little Speckled Sarah.  
“I don’t think so, but I bet we could cook with it.” said Little Freckled Furman.  
So the children scooped up the butter in their sneakers  
and found their way home after torturing a turtle for directions.

When the mothers saw the melted butter, they were pleased!  
“Now we’ll all have pancakes for supper!” and the whole family  
sat around a huge big plate of most lovely  
pancakes, yellow and brown as little tigers. The mothers each ate  
twenty-seven pancakes, the fathers came over and each ate fifty-five  
and the children each ate a hundred and sixty-nine  
because they were so hungry.

## Inquiry

If the spine is crooked, does that count  
as disfigurement and does the contract still stand?  
He's no flower, but contends he was her finest hour.  
Beautiful man, lucky wife –  
second to none, even with two sprained thumbs,  
shivering in a ski lodge, afraid of the lift.  
There was a time when smoking pine needle  
seemed a good idea.  
There was always a time.

## The Ease of Sucking

*Predictable as a woman's shadow*, he smirked.  
Indeed, my ass, dear Lucifer,  
dear man-child, teacher's precious pet,  
one who finds love in the cell block  
as others get shanked.  
How like the zoo-caged monkey  
handed a lit cigarette through the bars.

Poor monkey, he thought he knew  
what women, their slim fingers and  
clatter of bracelets, were all about.  
No idea what the shadow hid inside her brassiere.  
Scientists debated on whether he even  
understood the concept of undergarments.  
All his life he observed those outside the cage  
so easy, breathe in, breathe out, vogue pose.

Women come and take meth  
expecting a better death.

And the children of divorce go:  
Mama, Mama, what do you do?  
*I go to the store and buy a shoe.*

Lost in her instruments,  
she switched to vibrate and hum.  
Her appliances.  
Her children.  
Her garage-locked dog.

Women come and taunt harm  
ignoring their car alarm.

And the children of divorce go:  
Mama, Mama a shoe for what?  
*A shoe to shove up Father's butt.*

3.

Her sun room, her three zones of temperature control,  
her cousins crammed in a trailer  
sharing a bed with Grandpa.  
Jell-O cooling in the icebox.  
Who was Mama?

Women come and answer cell phones  
sucking canines from their bones.

And the children of divorce go:  
Mama, Mama why our dear dad?  
*Because he's made me very mad.*

### *My First Venture Alone*

Useless, words were useless so I walked  
opposite of Jezebel's direction.  
*I can find home by myself, I just need directions.*  
I asked a teenage boy mending  
a large net in front of a shack,  
*Where is the nearest bus stop?*

“Why do you ask?  
Are you hunting crocodile?  
If I had a crocodile, I would let it sleep in my bathtub  
and spend its days in my swimming pool.  
I would feed it snails and puppy dog tails  
until it grew fat and tender.  
Then I would chop off its head  
and cook it with sugar and spice.  
Don't you think that would taste nice?”  
*I don't see any swimming pools, in fact I don't even  
see a bathtub in your shack, just a sink.*

The boy's eyes watered,  
“Alas, my crocodile isn't even a rat,  
it's a mouse and it has outsmarted me again.  
Tonight I eat grass and dandelions  
Every night is grass and dandelions.”

## Color of Ass

*for Amy Gerstler*

Aren't I just the cat's ass  
calling the monkey's back bushy?  
Electric blue locks, simply  
not appropriate.  
Who dyes his hair to shock a friend  
who never wakes?  
Who wears his hair like a veil, morbid blue,  
funeral blue, bluer than a wine-soaked tongue?  
Aren't there more appropriate ways  
to mourn? I lost a friend too.  
We didn't speak for years, I read  
about his death in the obituaries.  
I was appropriate, put in a surprise  
funeral appearance, tasteful gray slacks,  
not daring the black envelope.  
Penned a letter to the mourning mother,  
blue ink.  
Who writes in black these days?  
At home I cried,  
green in my proper life,  
the Queen  
squatting in the Field of Asses.

Jezebel toweled her frame, climbed on a seat,  
pulled the stop wire.  
"Say goodbye to your husband,  
it's time for finishing school."  
Off the bus, Jezebel waved goodbye for me.  
"Next time you'll do it on your own."

## *My First Discovery*

I caught up as Jezebel  
paused and pointed towards  
two sisters sitting on opposite sides of a ball.  
Both had one eye on the ball  
and one eye on the other.  
Greed left them permanently cross-eyed.

"Ask the question"  
said Jezebel.  
*Why do you let such a worthless object split you apart?*  
"It has value, a certificate of appraisal and a correlating luxury tax"  
replied the blonde sister.  
"It has a practical use. When it is mine  
I will use it to smooth  
over the grotesque faces of snapper-heads,"  
replied the ebony sister.  
Half of the blonde's mouth snapped at the remark.

"How would you solve this dispute?"  
Jezebel asked.  
*I would cut the ball down the middle and give each sister a half.*  
"Why punish the ball? Why not the sisters?"

I considered cutting the sisters right down their middles  
separating their menacing cross-eyed skulls.  
Jezebel head-butted me in the gut,  
"To graduate you're going to have to demonstrate critical thinking!"  
and took off down an alley.

2.

An escaped convict hides underneath my bed  
and all the pistols are locked away from my reach.

Someday I will have big boobs to distract him  
and finally get in a good shot or two.

My destiny is to collect guns of all sizes and power  
as many as I can fit in my purse.

The girl with the knife should do hard time  
because if she can get away with making a man a little girl

he can get away with making her a creature without a soul.  
Big cities are not suitable places for little girls.

All the rats in New York learn to swim  
so they can paddle upstairs when basements flood.

## Little Buddies

Timid crutch, Anxiety,  
which god placed you with me?

Vomit festering bucket  
feeding trolls beneath the bed.

Clasping our guts, we chuckle.

They understand me, my stubby  
sisters, my brooding brothers.

Ravenous, they plead for more.

## Comfortable Ass Clicking Garments

Our daughters are simps  
sniveling over cigarettes,  
their slim green legs plump

in cubicles, spread underneath desks.  
Lines must be broken.  
The world can't be a vampire forever,

and the winged monkeys  
aren't working for bananas  
and diapers. Our mothers told us so

and stuck us with mirrors  
that wouldn't stop staring.  
No one heeded the reflection.

We need paychecks,  
not more banana wraps  
peeling our skin.

Familiar lice  
comfortably infesting.  
Comfortable arguments.

We only have our daughters  
in cotton slacks  
and steel-enforced heels to blame.

## Meditations on Heritage

1.  
Wide awake next to  
my unconscious mother.  
Dickless, spineless, neckless.  
My manager denied  
my vacation.  
The ding on my car door.

2.  
Unable to tell if my arm  
rested in my drool  
or hers. My manager  
approved a bonus  
of six bananas and a diaper.

3.  
When one is quiet  
one can hear the lucky sperm,  
so powerful, fertilizing  
the sleeping egg.

4.  
Possibilities endless  
at dusk's close.  
Employee, now the hunter,  
cornering him at the  
post office, near the scale  
taping him shut.  
Stamping to dust.

5.  
My mother's drool, indistinguishable  
from my own and I am left  
celebrating in my cubicle.  
The car detailer noted  
"You can paint a turd, but  
it's still a turd."

## Supper Song

As the evening strikes the thirteenth grooming,  
the cat beautician develops severe dander allergies,  
her career rinsing down her fingertips  
making its way to a puddle of fur and phlegm.  
Not understanding, the lawyer's feline passes the bath wailing tunes.  
Cats can't dance, but how they steal songs, ingesting the sources.  
Every good lawyer keeps one  
in case a canary sings on the stand. There's so much we can't stand  
allergies only compound the issue.  
Hives and snot should not be regular occupational hazards,  
even in America, where a cat beautician is a lot less beautiful  
than the creatures she tends  
and much more agitated.  
Whom to shake the swollen fist towards?  
The cat who sprouts propellers, busting through, escaping her bath?  
Or the cat tucked away in a briefcase,  
starved for melody?

## Love, Creation and Carnage

Mother always warned about whores who climbed  
all the way to demise,  
girls more concerned with genital crabs than pregnancy.

Father always cautioned about the steel straw  
used to suck marrow  
from gleeful hard-working fools who love their employment.

But I knew more than my steel-working father  
(who never went to college),  
and more than my mother (who never finished high school).

I not so subconsciously shoved my anxious chest  
through the heaving doorway,  
made a good show with entry-level gusto.

Nodded my head on cue, smiled and memorized  
the company credo;  
valued more than years of seniority and service.

I was pants suits and ambition. Created from passion,  
giving management  
a perfect baby to show off at corporate meets.

Love dwindled from glances in the office gym  
to men offering  
left over desserts so they could leave my lunch table.

My manager became a pimp, but to my horror,  
I was not the whore,  
it was my child, whom I adored. She was too costly.