Big Flat World

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

A father keeps a cricket in his wallet. The cricket is alive, but flat as a dollar bill. It's a rare little insect worth fields of gold. No one knows about the cricket, not even the father's wife nor their thriving brood of children. The father and cricket rejoice in their secret wealth. Many seasons wing by till one day finds the father out farming his modest patch of bons mots. He is startled by tiny lilting music apparently issuing forth from his loins. The father whips out his wallet from which leaps another cricket. This cricket is also flat, but round as the wildly unpopular Susan B. Anthony dollar. *Who are you?* the father asks. *I am son of the cricket, off to see the big flat world in all its grass and glory*, it chirps. While the father falls prey to silence, the son smiles and rolls away shining down the road, soon vanishing. A cappella, the fathers drone a sorrow-song to the horizon, so empty now of value.

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Instructions

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

Directions for use:
Apply product generously to all extant areas.
Enjoy!

Do not use product if:
1) you are the weak man.
2) mice appear blind.
3) there are tongues lolling about.
4) there are riots afoot.

Use product if:
1) butterfly strokes through the sea.
2) deer ticks in a clock.
3) you are the strong man.
4) there are mysteries afoot.

In an emergency:
1) stop, look, and don't noodle around.
2) catch a falling nuthatch. Repeat.
3) eat apples for they are the friends of horror.
4) exclaim: "I am the rocket man!" Ascend

For more information:
feel free to consult our trained killer bees.

Warning:
running will not make product go away.

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Song of the Angry Swan

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

In the faraway land of Norway lived
a beautiful white swan named Oscar.
He was a proud and angry swan given
over to icy narcissism and sudden virulent rage.
        He was a mood to avoid.

Oscar had a fine palace of sticks and decaying
matter on the most desirable fjord possible.
People from far and wide would come to gaze
upon his proud and angry form. They always
kept their distance, of course. This went on
for longer than anyone could remember.

Perhaps there were over six hundred generations
of Oscars. Maybe Oscar was an obscure god
cursed by a better-known god and awaited the
end of time to regain his original divine shape.
        There is precedent.

But one spring morning in the terrible age of
exploding airplanes, an old woman from unknown
lands came upon Oscar. She came alone with
nothing but the mystery of countless green summers.
Oscar was seated proudly upon his fine palace
still as an alabaster obelisk.

She crept closer than the shadows.
He was a ray of iron sunshine.

No one knows if the crone ever saw him.
In a flash, Oscar dashed and
swept her into the cold mouth of the sea.

Perhaps one might imagine a nubile Leda and her
supremely aroused swan, but this seemed all wrong.
The people rose up against Oscar with stones, sticks
and decaying matter.
        The fine palace was no more.

And Oscar, the last of the ancient gods, or the last of
a line of animal monsters, vanished from sight.

Then all that remained, was a strange lady who sang
on the shores of all the fjords
and sings on still.

First appeared in *Double Dare Press*; February 2002, #6.

City Lights

At night the bats
flit erratic

tickling the deepening
blue Chicago streets

eliciting light
from the forlorn faces
of huddled buildings
streetlamps and lost cars.

All day
on the road
I thought of you sleeping
curled up in a corner
of my darkened heart.

Flicker awake
fleet city spirits

I've strayed so far, and
only you can
show me the way home.

First appeared in *Free Verse;* January 2004, #70.

Written by the Mississippi River

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

Translucence is
the most beautiful
quality a body could have
it's the movement of
light
the promise of safe passage
through a sunlit river
with aquamarine eyes
for the open sea

Compared to an ocean
or a stream
the voice of the river
is low
a lullaby played
with longing
sliding over warm sand

The river is almost
like a lake
just as deep
with murky dreams
of lost loves
but the river
she moves on

First appeared in *Free Verse;* January 2004, #70.

The Man Who Died and Went to Minnesota

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

Big Joe Shiroma out of Tucson,
Arizona opened his icebox
one summer morning for some eggs
and instead found a duck.
  Or so he thought.
Actually, to Big Joe's surprise,
it was a common loon with
lovely, bloody-red eyes.

The loon called and called
its haunting cry and
Big Joe cried and cried.
  It was so beautiful and unexpected,
you see. Because nothing ever happens
on summer mornings except for
cold rice, scrambled eggs and rusty
grackles squeaking through the trees.
(Big Joe's life was as plain as his face.)

The loon stopped calling and
looked into Big Joe's eyes:
red eye to red eye.
Big Joe knew then
what he had to do:
  he closed the door,
        opened his mind, and
                jumped right in.

The federal, state, and county governments
never found Big Joe ever again.

But on some early mornings,
Minnesotans tell of being woken
by a large man with red eyes and
the sunrise for wings who
laughs and laughs for all common things.

First appeared in *Double Dare Press*; January 2002, #5.

Sins of the Hermit Crab

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

A hermit crab spends the day thinking untoward thoughts.

Mostly this involves coveting its neighbor's lustrous shell.
Coupling with its brother's voracious wife.

At nightfall, below the echolocating whales
and radiant squids
the remorseful crab tortures itself on the ocean floor.

O bad crab, purify your soft flesh in lacerating sand.

Perhaps I should find religion, it considers
as it has since the beginning.

Then again, I am but a hermit crab and crustacean sins
are but plankton wings in the rollicking mind of the sea.

Kiosk Made of Whispers

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

A man once crossed the road
to put lip balm on his bill
but that is another story.
The man crosses the road
for the kiosk on the other side.
A kiosk made of whispers.
A man seeks
a vial of insinuations
and this is the best place
outside of Nantucket.
Everyone knows that
including the priest, the rabbi and
the duck
but those are different stories.
The man wants more zing
in his pear-shaped world
but is ill-equipped for debauchery.
Inside the kiosk, a shadow flutters
towards a man who rises
as smoke from the fire
of another story.

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