

## NOTHING OF THE MONTH CLUB

Tonight let the finish line slide beneath me of its own accord and let the sky's panoply, dumb with stars, cease its brilliant winter. Tonight the Soup of the Day at my favorite restaurant is tequila and, so very hungry, I'm 14 minutes sober—what to do, what to do? Tomorrow will be another morning—let's call it a life—spent searching the medicine cabinet for aspirin and finding instead cheeseburger wrappers, half-smoked cigars. And the future a dream I had last night, one I'll never remember. There's a sickness in me, I'm sure. From a mile away you can hear me smile. A sickness.

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Tonight you're a lukewarm bubble bath while eating a cold caramel sundae while live tweeting the 1973 Academy Awards telecast, the one where Brando won Best Actor for *The Godfather* but declined both the award and the invitation to show up at the ceremony, Sacheen Littlefeather instead appearing in his place. After refusing to take the statuette from Roger Moore she implores the audience that only when the film industry's treatment of Native Americans is changed will Marlon be able to accept his Best Actor Oscar; only when "our hearts and our understandings are met with love and generosity." Seeing this you tweet three ☹ ☹ ☹, followed by the mysterious admission, "Life is too short & art is too long." Your 694 followers understand the point all too well. "The Beatles are bigger than Jesus" you say out loud to the dissipating bubbles. "But would you let your daughter marry a Rolling Stone?" Suddenly, slowly, the bathwater is so tepid you can smell your heart, its soggy ventricles, moldy recesses. Black shampoo, black shampoo. "I'm more fucked up than a soup sandwich," you plead to the bathroom walls. "More fucked than a sandwich made solely of slippery soup."

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Summer. We switched the colors in our town's traffic light to blue, pink and purple, lo-card country-grade acid. A sun-soaked caramel apple, festering, steady the hour settles on my coffin's cover. Loving freely and boring easily, I changed my phone number to CALIFORNIA. (The stupid screen's still cracked, the screen's always cracked.) Death is the one and only law with no flaw. Dust into dust. Don't call me. Don't text.

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*Look me in the eyes when you stab me in the back* the woman thought to herself, slamming back a 32-oz. bottle of Pepto Bismal, naked, absently staring at herself in the bathroom's fluorescently-lit full length mirror, her bloated stomach a pot of fool's gold, barren, pregnant with guel and bile. Belly button the size of a silver dollar. She felt fine she felt fine she felt fine.

*They tasted better when they weren't New & Improved* the woman thought to herself, humbling her teeth against the brittle, stale crackers she'd bought the day before at the Cash & Carry. Her cheetah skin print tank top was colored purple and blue. Welcome to Paradise, the city that God forgot. Welcome to Cleveland.

She typed *how to fold a burrito so the filling doesn't fall out* into the invisible engine filled with quantifiable numerical codes analytically transformed into linguistically readable searches and *how to fold a burrito so the feeling doesn't fall out* appeared on the screen instead. She scrutinized her finding, decided burritos were none of her business. Outside the library's computer lab the world was filled with shapes and colors constantly rising and falling in size, stature. The expression on the woman's face might best be described as glowful. She still needed to go to the market. She needed to make salsa.

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Studying the bones in a blade of grass, squirms in a cube of ice, I've finally begun the major work necessary to finish my novella *I'm a Man of Few Words, None of Them About Myself*. I've resigned myself to the cold storage world of America, everhard. I've committed myself to a constant erection of the heart, everlong.

Living in the moment before dying into the past, living in the moment before dying into the past, living in the moments.

“A BAD BOY IS A GOOD BOY WITH A SAD STORY”—MAC  
WELLMAN

Certainly I've torn starlings apart  
with my bare hands,

while smoking a cigar  
watched a pack of ravenous wasps

methodically inhale a horse's head  
until only remained

that glorious desecration.

Color always wins.

Color wins always.

Color always wins.

Color wins always

but some blood lasts  
long past

midnight's red.

Clockwork,  
when I was an abortionist

I used to whiten my teeth  
every 3rd Thursday of the month.

In the summer when it's bright out,  
flesh flowering everywhere

in sight,  
I miss that job.

At my back the sun  
flaws against

the evergreen grove  
like some

fore-  
suffered

pre-  
destination

and I'm suddenly fussy.

Surely my mother loved me  
too much or never enough.

Get back.

How  
matters

more  
than

what.

## HOPE

Triumphance of emptiness,  
back to the sun;

hope weighs a ton.

Still and forever,=

by its own light  
firefly blinded

and yet

skying bright;

home is how

I want to go back.



## JEFF ALESSANDRELLI

The author of a short poetic biography of the French avant-garde composer Erik Satie, a short essay collection focusing on The Notorious B.I.G. and skateboarding, and a poetry collection—*THIS LAST TIME WILL BE THE FIRST*—that *Rain Taxi* deemed “immensely fresh and playful...rooted in a childlike antiquity,” **Jeff Alessandrelli** lives in Portland, Oregon, where he also runs the vinyl record-only poetry label Fonograf Ed. and co-produces the music/writing radio show/podcast *The Steer*. Recent work by him appears/is forthcoming in *The American Poetry Review* and *The Hong Kong Review of Books*.