

Head

It's two ay em. I hear a key in the lock, I turn and there she is. Full of herself. No Vacancy Eyes. On any other night I might jump the sofa and drive her in the face. But not tonight. Tonight has been good. The tube has given me three separate black and white detective movies, with no overlap.

"Where have you been," I ask her. It's somewhere to begin:

"Out," she answers.
I am now supposed to ask Out Where but decide instead to ask: "Out with whom?"

She says: "Just out." She isn't thinking to hard. Good. I jump the sofa. She is unmoved. Not a breath out of place. A Cool Customer. I decide that now is the time to pull the Forty-Five from my waistband and give it to her in the chest. Then I change my mind. It isn't a Forty-Five. A Forty-Five is too big. It's a Thirty-Two. Yes, it's a Thirty-Two and I'm going to let her have it in the throat so she gurgles as she dies. I reach for the gun real slow so she'll know what's coming to her. She takes one step forward, her nails flash, and I catch her hand an inch from my face. Her fingers smell of popcorn.

"He took you to the movies," I say, proud of my deduction.

"Yes I went to a movie. So what."

"He took you to a movie," I correct. She concedes that he took her to a movie.

"Movies are over at eleven-thirty. You still have to account for two-and-a-half hours."

She rolls her eyes; "Well let's see then. After the movie he took me to a motel. That took fifteen minutes. He fucked me for, let's say, one hour and forty-five minutes. Then it took fifteen to get a cab and fifteen more to get back here. Will that do?"

She thinks I'm a fool and that's okay. But no detective would miss the fact that her wedding band was still on her finger and every detective knows that nobody wears their wedding band to a motel. And when they take it off they never remember to put it back on. I let go of her hand. She'll talk.

The women I come from
are crazy they love
men already taken
jump out windows with
hearts laid low.

Two live on and on
bend like half moons
around me join arms
to make a circle.

Nights they see me come back
my hair wet from being
drowned by men who used
their hands to keep me under.

I am witchy
they point to
things I do with my hips
catch a man off guard
voodoo him good.

Joanne Clark

She takes her coat off and hangs it on the back of the door. Her dress is black. She is The Lady In Black. She is the one I have been waiting for, just like every other detective waiting for every other Lady In The Dress Of The Appropriate Color. She hooks her fingers in the straps of my undershirt and pulls herself to me. She says: "What's it going to be tonight lover?" and I can suddenly feel the stitching in my wallet. I push her away. Ladies in Black are known for eating their mates.

I tell her not to try that again or I'll kill her. She looks real impatient for a second, goes into the washroom and locks the door. I bang on it. I tell her: "Open this door or I start putting bullets through it." She laughs. I kick it in so she knows I mean business.

She is putting lipstick on. She looks at me like I'm a Fact Of Life and says: "Now was that really necessary?"

I grab her hair with one hand and rub the lipstick off with the other. She calls me an asshole when she catches her breath. I wipe off my hand on my trousers. She tries unsuccessfully to push past me. She goes for a heavy crystal cologne bottle. I catch her wrist with my left hand and swipe her cosmetics off the counter top with my right. Most of the stuff lands in the toilet. She gasps. It is very expensive stuff. No dimestore powders for Ladies in Black. A gold lipstick case spins to a stop on the counter. I flick it into the toilet real casual. She's got to understand that I mean business. One step past her and my hand is poised to flush her identity into the sewer.

"Alright," says our Lady. "What do you want?"

Two minutes later she is on her knees with her back to the wall in the bedroom. My balls are bouncing off her chin and her head is bouncing off the wall. I shoot my wad, Ha-Ha-Ha, and stroke her hair. She pushes me away, spits, squints her eyes and says: "Jesus it tastes bad today. You been eating Mexican food?"

I am undressing for bed. She is in the washroom. I hear her fishing her stuff out of the toilet and swearing softly. I am nearly asleep when she enters the room. I feel her standing over me and realize that I have forgotten her good-night kiss. I turn my head to face her and ask: "Honey, where were you tonight, I mean after the movie?"

She will kiss me and give me the answer. We keep no secrets from each other. She will kiss me and explain the two-and-a-half hours just as she had explained last week's one-and-a-half. She bends over to kiss me but instead grips either side of my head and presses her thumbs into my eyeballs. While I fight to disentangle myself from the sheets she presses my eyes into bruises and I am sure that any second they will pop like grapes. Just before it happens I get hold of her wrists and wrench away her hands. I jump out of bed and back away trying to distinguish her from the shimmering red blobs.

I am screaming: "You crazy fucking bitch! What are you trying to do?"

"Foreplay," she answers.
"You could have fucking blinded me you . . . Foreplay? What Foreplay? Today is Tuesday."

I can see her now. My eyes are turning into an incredible headache.

"Don't be such a child," she tells me. "I went all our for you today and you didn't do a hell of a lot for me. I'll forego my Friday, alright? Now be a sport."

"No way. You've managed to give me an impossible headache."

I can distinguish her smile. It is throbbing.

"Yes. I know," she says.

Humberto da Silva



'the noun is in your hands
may you verb forever'

1.

a conjunction an o
an offering

its getting finger & finger
the index little
the middle ring

-give me a ring sometime
i'll give you a hand
my hand husband

a conjunction an o
an offering

husband gives his band
thus bonded
the o
makes all the difference

a banding together
your fingers show it

a conjunction an o
an alignment
as of planets spinning

a bed of roses
your honey's moon
her nose

2.

place the conjunction on her finger
& repeated after me

with this 'and' i thee wed
-with this 'and' i thee wed

swear to love honour & bay
through if & through or

-i swear to love honour & bay
through if & through or

i now mispronounce you
man and wif

may you find
the spell that is right

Gary Barwin

