

REPORTED SIGHTING

The suspense is—

From one giant cedar to another
across the gorge. A tight rope.

A highwire.

Gregory “Bullhorn” Gordon
is one of many reporters at the scene.
And perhaps the only one
who appreciates the artistry of the moment.

Pablo “Pebble” Belmonte,
who is about to walk
1,000 feet in mid-air blindfolded, balancing
a martini on his nose.

“The suspense is—”
Gregory begins again,
writing in his stenographer’s pad.

But isn’t this em-dash
itself a kind of highwire?
Gregory thinks.
And the writer, an aerialist?

(If only his editor would
thank him for such insights.)

Just then—Belmonte at his crux.
The crowd gasps.

FROM THE INSTALLMENTS

I am in the sandpit business.
You might say it's a rare kind of enterprise.
Because repayment is rare.
And enjoyment is rare.
Showers and home-cooked meals are rare.

But the sandpits are also rare landscapes of beauty.
Maybe that's their most significant feature,
their main attractor.

You might say a sandpit is a portal,
a doorway into another realm.

If doorways could swallow buffalo
and crush them into diamonds.

SOME VISIT

A solar eclipse emits gamma radiation,
electromagnetic waves, and elements of dark matter
hereto unknown to science.

But I don't know about science.

I was just shucking corn on the street
when this spaceship appeared, the size of
a housefly or maybe even smaller.

I could hear them talking to me
from inside the ship.
The tiny aliens.
They told me facts about outer space,
and lots of other things.

They told me dolphins invented graffiti.

SUIT OF WANDS

I was a test grader.
You were a test grader.
But our tarot card reading yesterday
changed everything.

Now we must relocate to a different place.
One that's prefix is *New*.
New York, New Jersey, New Brunswick.
Apparently, this will signal to greater forces
that our destiny's arrow is well-nocked
in its bowstring.

"Notched?" I had asked the psychic
whose curtained booth was at the back
of a downtown *man-tiques* store.

"*Nocked*. You must *nock* your arrow—
New Haven, New Kent, New Mexico."

We left the booth, walking resignedly
toward the front of the store,
passing by manlike lamps and
repurposed traffic signs.

Outside, the city had seemed strange.
Then this morning, going to the mailbox,
I heard the same funny-sounding
birdcall as I always do.
But it wasn't a bird.
It was a squirrel.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

Arms and legs are
basically what it would
cost, considering your specific
demands:
evergreen
forests filled with
giant grizzly bears and
highly-trained harpooners
installed at major
junctions. Even the
Kaiser himself would
laugh at such a proposal.
Metronomes smuggled over
Niagara Falls have nothing to do with it.
Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet
Popping Corn might
quite possibly
relate to it
somehow, yet
testing this theory is
unfortunately impossible.
Videos of the most
winningest Whac-A-Mole champion
X-Press delivered from fabled
yesteryear. Here, enter El
Zorro, dashing with a rapier.

PSYCHIC READER

The Psychic Reader moved
their clinic from the highway
out of town to the one in,
or however you think about it.
“Don’t think, unthink,”
the Psychic Reader said, handing me
an object meant to assist me—
the Unthinking Orb.
Still, I thought of all the times I had
driven past the Psychic Reader
on my way to or from home.
Now I was here, my bag placed on the table
in the foyer, my cell phone on mute.
I held the Unthinking Orb
(a modified snowglobe) wondering
if my psyche was even legible.
“Don’t think, unthink,” the Psychic Reader said.
“Okay,” I thought.
“Potable means drinkable,” the Psychic Reader said,
“yet no one says *potable*. That would sound stilted.”
I nodded, feeling confused.
“Circus performers wear stilts, as an act;
however, the mind is no sideshow.”
The Psychic Reader, a man with tobacco stains
on his teeth and fractal diagrams tacked to his walls,
exchanged the Unthinking Orb with three
latex water-balloons, their mouths
cut wide and stuffed with bird seed.
“Juggle,” the Psychic Reader said.
“I can’t juggle,” I said.
“Patterns, mathematical trajectories, abstract
destinations, psychic reflexes,” the Psychic Reader said.
“Okay,” I said, starting one ball in the air,
clumsily passing the others behind.
“Yes,” the Psychic Reader said, excitedly.
“Yes, alright,” I thought.
“Don’t think, unthink,” the Psychic Reader said.

DON'T FORGET TO DROP THE LOCKET ON THEM

Baited the cat with the kittens but it didn't work
Difference between *baited* and *bated*
As in you wait with bated breath, bait on a hook,
Or on bended knee (coincidentally what I'm doing in this doorway)
Goalkeeper of the living room grumpy on Planet Express
First it was Husky Planet, now it's Furry City
I told a fib for the story's benefit, a foible
Watching Ducky go bolts again
I could really use my document holder
Not getting the Wow raise
Like every photograph is a report from Earth
I can hear this photo talking
I'm going over here to talk to the beer, that guy Mike said
Or was it Craig?
Striding toward a dull nothing, *obligate* not a real word either
So says Dave the Modernist
Precocious in pink socks, advanced age notwithstanding.

WILL STANIER

Will Stanier is a poet and printer living in Richmond, Virginia. He is the author of the chapbook, *Everything Happens Next* (Blue Arrangements, 2021). His poems have recently appeared in *Annulet*, *The Baffler*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *mercury firs*, and *RECLINER*. He works as a librarian.

Note: *Don't Forget to Drop the Locket on Them* is an English-to-English translation of a poem by Clark Coolidge of the same title from the chapbook "Counting On Planet Zero" (Fewer & Further Press, 2007).