

Tossing Your Room

Tossing your room for contraband,
I find underwear large enough
to decorate a rhino, glasses
thick as plywood, three huge wigs
clumsy as shag carpeting. Whose
are these? Not yours, not anyone's,
but planted to bemuse me.

Light thickens in the window. Storms
approach with their petticoats flaring.
A siren razors the avenue
as police respond to famous crimes.
I've bundled these silly objects
into evidence bags. Evidence
of your improper irony,
your groping, speculative mind.

I've also stolen your sex toys,
whether plastic, leather, or bone,
bagged your bags of marijuana
and the vials of crack and crystal meth
you hid behind the wainscoting
in your spare bedroom where lovers
disgruntled by your humours hide.

The first sheets of rain shatter
against the side of the building.
Your room smells like the closets
where families keep their skeletons.
For years you've expected me
to search it, leaving your door unlocked
and shouting down the hall as you leave
for your wild nights in vodka bars.

Now I'm sorry. The wigs suggest
beheadings, the glasses muddle
rather than correct my eyesight,
and the underwear would transform me
into the saddest of transvestites
if I were fool enough to wear it
even with no one looking.

Magic Easy to Believe

Arguing at the grave of a witch
hanged in the seventeenth century
you deny that magic can heal
the ruptures in the social fabric
and the leaking oil well in the Gulf.
I want to bring back the stigma

if not the fact of black magic
to frighten our smug politicians
into cleaning up the planet.
You deny, but when you spotted
that car parked at the graveyard
with license plate reading ZOMBIES

you doubted your own denial.
A man toting a tripod with no
camera or telescope attached
may have been the zombie-master
who oversees nightly excursions
in search of edible brains.

Voodoo, you agree, is magic
easy to believe. Its followers,
if they actually attempt to live
on brains, would probably starve
in these united states. None the less
I argue that faith can resolve

the wounds the planet has suffered
if the politicians fear powers
that lobbyists can never bribe.
The witch's gravestone bears
an hourglass and a curse to keep
the creature dead and decomposed.

You laugh because I want to claim
her powers had some currency
in her era, but the wind in the pines
speaks her language, and the lilt
of a song sparrow by the river
elegizes us as well as her.

Another Crumb

The smoke of distant forest fires
mingles with rain clouds to form
a dome impervious as cement.

This dome fits me too tightly
to escape. I dreamed that Arthur
returned from life in Pimlico

to tend bar in a singles club.
No beard, expertise in rare books
abandoned, he seemed timid

and unable to recall me.
Yet when a famous British spy
disguised as an art historian

entered in search of a lover
of either sex Arthur recognized
and called him by name. "Anthony!

remember that corpse you buried
at Buckingham Palace? The Queen
has noticed it began to sprout!"

I wasn't amused by this dream
but now the sky seems more indifferent
than usual. Arthur's still thriving

in rare books in London. Cameras
on every corner record gestures
the average British citizen

is hardly aware of making.
No one bothers to record
even my outrageous moments,

those that threaten to deflate
the sky, the collective ego,
the dollar. Here in the woods

of New Hampshire the carcasses
lie unburied and unmourned,
and the vague reek of decay

passes for bad breath in diners
where thickset men brace themselves
to head-butt the onrushing day.

—*William Doreski*