

Someone Who Doesn't Exist by Christopher Winn

Twenty-four and already tired  
Older now than Ian Curtis ever was  
So little to which I have aspired  
Except reading and writing a few books, just because.  
My inborn indifference to all that lacks beauty  
Has lost all its charm, rendered responsibilities burdens.  
My imaginary ideals vivisect reality  
Like a gaggle of unscrupulous surgeons.  
My thinking goes hazy, a stupor sans the high  
When I dream of the future I see only my past  
As though my life, though unending, has already unfurled  
And bounds back upon itself—caught between dual mirrors' glass.  
Such an anemic, myopic physicality  
Coupled with a wildly unpredictable hit-or-miss mentality...  
"You look like someone who doesn't exist," a child once said to me  
And I must wholeheartedly agree.

## Kamikaze Kids by Christopher Winn

Our children suddenly killing  
Each other and themselves  
Is the fault of decades-old products  
On hunting-section shelves.  
A perfectly satisfactory  
Delightfully cursory  
Method to mark  
These ever-increasing anniversaries.

Rap the knuckles of the kamikaze kids  
By giving them their fifteen of fame  
Without investigating why their engines stalled  
Or scrutinizing the factory producing these planes.  
Secretly scared that the responsibility  
For lackadaisically assembled minds  
Falls to the engineers presiding over them  
Who ignored all warning signs.

But please, by all means  
Post more thoughts and prayers  
Keep more cops posted  
Boycott the NRA, elect new mayors.  
Inconvenience these would-be killers  
To the utmost degree  
Clutch guns like pearls and pray  
These kids have no creativity.

Shame by Christopher Winn

Let yourself feel in those tender crevices  
Where shame and stress cluster like fungal spores  
The wrongs you're procrastinating to set right  
An extra twenty pounds or so of weight  
Bulging like a bull between neck and spine  
So that the slightest misstep tips you over  
Spread-eagle before the matador's sword.

When no pleasure goes untainted  
By the vestigial traces of having acquired  
Through unrighteous means  
And the gagged soul's whimpering  
Begging for you to finally fulfill  
Its transcendent desires  
For it yearns to be as light  
As a child's lost balloon  
Ascending past skyscrapers.

Know this agony to be  
An angel's munificent ire  
His tongs would cleanse corroded hearts  
With a coal of pure hellfire.

Dower by Christopher Winn

I love you like slaves love foreign freedom  
Or celibates the brothel silhouettes  
Or deaf-mutes the bombast of their own words  
Or chemo patients their lost cigarettes.

I fear you like the first day of first grade  
Or a shark fin spotted close to the beach  
Or nightmares with underlying morals  
Or the hated gods frightened men beseech.

I anticipate you like ice cream trucks  
Or veterinary kennels before storms  
Or amnesiacs soon to recollect  
Or liquid gold cooling into new forms.

Your absence due to my lack of power—  
I shall know no queen 'til I am a king  
With inner riches as worthy dower  
—Just as the lark finds no mate lest he sing.

Siesta Key by Christopher Winn

*Written August 5<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>, 2018. For my Parents and Grandparents on their 30<sup>th</sup> & 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries.*

I.

So many dead dogs on the road  
Revealing their bellies like samurai  
Man's best friend untallied  
In his roadway fatalities  
What whimpers go unheard  
As, like Samael in Egypt,  
We pass over and by?

II.

In preparation I filled an envelope  
With certain mortal ephemera—  
Passwords, the location of a gunsafe key  
Who should get what if I never  
Got the chance to give it  
Giggling, not at the paranoia,  
But the procrastination of it  
As though death reliably  
Foreshadows itself with telltale signs  
A flight! Oh my. Nevermind  
Daily car rides, all letterless  
Each time I've left the house  
I've been remiss.

III.

Houston Hobby to Tampa  
Skirting the bangs of the Gulf's stormy brow  
Admitted to this temple by the TSA  
Stern angels who guard the gates of cloud  
I have brought only what I could carry  
Clothes, toiletries, and a few friends:  
Ginsberg for poetry, Woolf for prose,  
And the King James for something  
Rather in-between  
I may let the stately barbell  
Collect this week's worth of dust  
But the sterner weight of language  
I perpetually carry  
Like a tinman's oilcan,  
Staving off rust  
Vacations measured in pages  
Drop and give me a thousand  
Poolside, they tense to brittle scrolls  
Boards swollen with humidity  
Softened like salted slugs.

IV.

I've talked more today  
That I prefer to do in a month  
The girl across from me at Gate 44  
Complimented my iPhone case—  
The cover of Orwell's *1984*  
Happily, *Southwest* has no assigned seating  
So we huddled shoulder-to-shoulder  
Splitting an armrest  
To analyze socialism, video games,  
And all the millennial rest  
Then my taxi driver  
In a sleek weapon of a sedan  
While stalking Bee Ridge  
Began to rapid-fire  
Unload his head  
About the ex-fiance  
Dead of an overdose  
The day before  
In the city of my birth—  
Our Atlantean purposes invert  
After refusing rehab  
He had sent her away  
He questions if this was his fault  
I reply, you cannot  
Make another want to change  
He does not believe in God  
So I leave it there  
Preaching to captive audiences is rude  
But prayer...  
Rich and rough as coffee aftertaste  
We sniff the nocturnal Floridian bouquet.

V.

Geckos maneuver like green plastic soldiers  
Turtles breach like stealth submarines  
Nature's total war continues, uninterrupted  
By suburban demilitarized zones  
My grandparents' shih-tzu  
Wrestles himself on the porch  
Simulating violence he has never known  
Domestication is unsure of itself  
Being but newly grown  
While the ancient alligator  
Naps, self-satisfactorily,  
At our frail periphery.

VI.

This sun could sweat out sin  
Rivulets run from my neck like a stole  
Tan this corpse until  
It mimics your burnished gold  
Then I'll stumble home  
As an Asiatic idol  
Clutching an empty gallon jug  
An icon of life imbibed  
And emptiness to come.

VII.

Siesta Key  
Where a siesta  
Is the key  
Watch your footprints in its  
Fine white sand  
Disappear almost instantly  
Witness God flick his watercolors  
At a canvas of encroaching dark  
Cipher glimpsed fins and blubber—  
Manatee, dolphin, shark?  
Eat an Anna's "Surfer" sandwich  
All papered and taped  
A precious parcel so good  
It makes your heart ache  
Play a round of *Pacman*  
At Captain Curt's, the locals' dive  
And if you can do so responsibly  
Raise a beer for a family friend who died  
At the bar in the back  
Though it took many, many years  
And the coroner neglected  
To outline him in chalk.

VIII.

When the last snowbird  
Fails to migrate  
And no more grey heads  
Wreath its beaches  
Or fiddle over its dinner plates  
When its malls are mausoleums  
And its cars all hit their breaks  
When its side-lanes are sealed like scrolls  
And countless fender-benders block each chase  
Then will the American dream be startled awake  
As the swamp repossesses Disneyworld  
And evicts its squatters back ashore  
A Spaniard's voice will be heard  
Ethereally proclaiming,  
"This Fountain of Youth  
Will preserve thee no more!"

IX.

I wake repetitiously  
Amidst Sarasota chic—  
Beds of teal  
Stems of glass  
Florets of seashell  
Nearby, peppy carts beeline  
Across scalped turf  
Syncopating the triune sequence  
Of clubs' clack, thud of grass,  
Clatter of flaghole and flagpole  
Like the Kabbalah  
One must make their wealth  
Before admittance to this field of study  
It calls for a mature palette  
Appreciative of that which  
Goes down bitterly  
And the sweet tooth  
Has yet to be knocked out of me.

X.

I miss my boss  
As, beneath a palm tree,  
I ponder if I own the backbone  
To continue primarily scribbling  
Regardless of respectability  
Ah, first and last poetic pope—  
Kerouac had Bull Lee—  
Accept this palm frond  
In stead of a laurel wreathe  
Soon we will toast verse's  
Chaste fecundity  
Swell to Ingres's Jupiter  
And deign the nymph's plea.

XI.

"I won the war!"  
Oh, really.  
"Want to come hang out?"  
Not particularly.  
"I think he's dying."  
Aren't we all?  
A snapping turtle down  
Pavement crawls.  
It is not that I have  
Too little pity, but too much.  
I also can feel power leave me  
At a single touch.  
Add unto me the sacred heart  
That can pour from dawn to dusk.

XII.

Taking a picture together  
At Tortuga's gulf boardwalk  
Beneath the sentinel of a spruce  
He planted, singlehanded  
Now it stands four stories tall  
With a head as shaggy as God's.

Marjorie, now 102  
Recognizes Pat and Woody  
But not myself  
I must have been three or four  
When first I saw her  
Pursuing rare shells  
Like some pursue love  
As at home along the beach  
As the gulls and the herons  
Ageless sprite masquerading mortal  
She'll surely survive until  
The last sunrise turns  
These sands to glass.

Thereafter, we conclude  
Our magnum opus  
A study in brown  
Swathed about the Florida room  
Will fresh screws, with  
An old-fashioned driver,  
Into our canvas of iron and wood  
Wringing wet, red-of-neck  
We looked upon the creation  
And knew it was good.

Later, at the theater  
With sweet Grandmom  
Viewing 'Christopher Robin'  
I pondered which movie-goer  
Was chopping onions?