

Amnesia & Three More

by [Ted Mico](#) (July 2024)



Not to Be Reproduced, René Magritte (1937)

Amnesia

On the count of five you'll remove lightning
and other sharp objects from the sky

then declaw your kitchen. Soon, you will stop
searching for her photos online.

When I count to three, you'll be unbound
from the constraints of time and halitosis,

see the beast lurking between seconds,
feel his wolfy breath on your cheek,

you will not be afraid to go out at night
and steal the city's blue neon. The warm taste

of midnight arguments will fade and you will
regain interest in eating fruit that hangs

like precedent. There'll be silence—no drums,
no tubas, the circus that escorts you home

will disband. The anarchy of sunrise schemes
for chasing down Julie-shaped shadows

will end. Those pills coloring your hand
will finally be used as directed. When I

count to Tuesday you will unremember
this refill, this voice, bathroom, mirror.

Freefall, CA. Population: 2

You write another dead dad poem, drive away
one last time, all six car rental pre-sets
tuned to the same hard rock station belting

Nine Inch Nails. Those childhood getaways sounded
the same, a squeal that's being pulled backwards
by your hair. Everyone asking if you're ok. Ok?

Yes, it's not the movies, cellars aren't always places
for dismemberment but you hear a rattle –
fruit flies dinging off him and basement walls

just like you did a thousand cocktails ago
when you played games of chance and risk
when thunder and winter met on dad's lips.

In Freefall, ads promise families play catch
without double meanings so you relocate
to a safe house there and change the locks

before your dad's death has time to move in
downstairs. It's the weekend, cheap flights,
no need to take a personal day off work

and he's out of the cellar now. Ok? The radio ad
promises Freefall is a great place to escape
but what remains of dad locks you in the old house

your mouth metallic, that taste of sucked pennies
waiting to be called all the names he gave you then
took back the morning after when you never leave.

The Kindling Act

Pinocchio was not the only one.

Inside Gepetto's lab, cops find cages
packed with stiffness. Beware, signs say
they look the same, feel the same,
they're us but not us. Geppetto
was hanged by his own marionette strings,
but his work walks freely among us,
carved to a human heart's desire.

Congress declares war on wood
and police candle all forearms
to distinguish kid from wooden child.
The air is thick with smoldering.
Banned from playing in public
their hurt feelings leave a linseed trail.

The puppets are coming!

Police dogs sniff them out, snuff them out,
fetch. Mannequin gangs litter the streets
with air freshener trees, pine scent
concealing their secret puppet haven.

Bonfires break out in playgrounds
across town. Larch and oak flame arms
wave at parents, blind with terror, grief
and wild embers. Congress says crackling
is the price we must pay to be human.

When my sister and I are candled,
my arm blisters boy, hers
flames sycamore. It was she
who taught me to paint
against the grain, her eyes

now fixed like a toy tossed on the pyre.

Make them dance, the crowd cries,

Make them burn.

Split the wooden child,

no larksong, no nursery rhyme

releases from under its skin.

My breath filled with shellac and ash,

I hear my sister scream straight through

to dawn. To rescue her I nail the giant

seascape I painted across the city sky—

the huge black gape of a whale's mouth:

open. Under this double-darkness

my charred sister and her puppet posse

escape with me to the safety

of a forest that sways with love

and a most welcoming resin.

The Memory Rattle

I play the memory game nine items spread across our bed
on the same sheet that once covered you.

I recall them all nine stories nine tiny deaths the more
I remember the tighter you grip that buckle

that time I convinced you convertible sex
is the best way to get closer to God top down

the rhythmic jackpot ching your thigh against an ashtray
plump with quarters. I shut my eyes

and listen for the sound of car crashes to bring you back,
crumpled parts memorized yellow car

yellow sheets yellow clocks counted back that bunch
of yellow daffodils in the always-on position.

Etched inside my eyelids I only see these things when I sleep
so sleep more prattle more to recall

some promise of you like a stranger's medicine cabinet—
my ring finger wet with no wind to follow

a dress yellower than you wore with time more blanks
because there aren't enough words for the number of objects

that restore you shaken loose over our sheets
their memories hunt in packs more than forgotten I'm back

on the bed where we were born nine items loud-living things
yes all my mind can hold without breaking

*Polaroid, wedding band, knickers, seatbelt, yellow shift,
petals, a Parliament
unfiltered, 25 cents, 75mg, done!*

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Nolo Segundo is the pen name of a retired teacher (America, Japan, Taiwan, the war zone of Cambodia, 1973-74) who became a published poet in his 70s in over 200 literary journals in 15 countries. Cyberwit.net has published 3 collections in paperback, the latest titled *Soul Songs*.

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