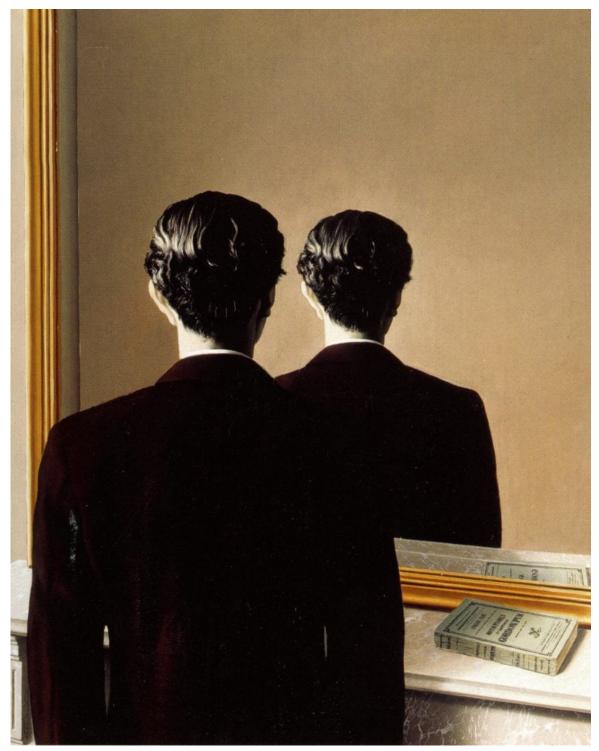
# Amnesia & Three More

by <u>Ted Mico</u> (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!

### **Table of Contents**

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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