

2017

Kids

Miles R. Hay
N/A

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/toyon>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hay, Miles R. (2017) "Kids," *Toyon Literary Magazine*: Vol. 63 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/toyon/vol63/iss1/11>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Toyon Literary Magazine by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact cyril.oberlander@humboldt.edu.

Five Poems

Author #1

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/toyon>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

“Do you remember me?”

Just in from the rain, next

to me,

“Do you remember me?” she asks,

as if the whole thing never happened.

I forget what I said, but it was at least fifty

miles south of brilliant. All I could do

was swallow stones, pray for Wild Turkey

while trying to look like a one-man glacier.

Quickly as she came, she left.

Carrying two glasses of too-expensive

pinot noir,

but not before telling me

that she had been reading my e-mails

from...a long time ago, with a wistful tone

that I might be imagining. But then,

maybe not.

A century or two, dear. That's what

it feels like. Except when it feels like

six months or so. But I was speechless.

And now we're talking again.

Did you commute my sentence

from precarious silence

and feigned indifference

to convivial chit-chat in bars,

which is how we first met anyway?

How nice of you.

Or is there

a statute of limitations on this

sort of thing?

If so, I wasn't

informed.

But then, you didn't inform me,

which is how it all began, against

reason and decorum and whatever else

makes up the unlikely acquaintance

of two smiling, wounded animals

so accustomed now to a resonant,

cavernous, yet soundless echo...

While your husband watches

from across the room.

Rx: A Personal Prescription List

Bring me a cure for every hangover I'll ever have.

Bring me screenwriters for the dull moments

To work in some ink-stained revisions.

Bring me more tangible truths to cling to

In the merciful medicating night.

A cure for sleep, some beautiful breathy diversion

In a thinking man's neon-inflected metropolis

To fill those interminable hours between the shadow

Of thought and expression.

Bring me someone, that rare co-conspirator

Who runs not from the night

But with it, as in dreams that flee from me.

Bring me anything, anyone from anywhere

To keep away the slow, burning, gentle cult of domesticity

The cracked plastic grins, the sickly platitudes, the ever-retreating mirage of perfect bliss

The downhill slope of passion amidst the leftovers, the electric bill, the freezing bed

The fairy tales that cannot be, born of banal greeting cards,

Tragic missteps toward the moderate

Deadlier by far than my most overwhelming decadence.

Bring me a room with three good walls, a window, a door

Open to the possibilities of tomorrow, a path

To start anew from,
To pace while I plot my next moves, all the while
Trying to laugh at the past, looking towards
Light amidst the darkness,
Someone bearing some subtle silent clue
To bring me a line
I can scrawl or spill upon a page
Without first feeling altogether too close
To a tortured sixteen year-old girl
With no date for the prom.

Snapshots of the Mind, 3 A.M.

Sitting bleary and warm in a room with bad lighting

Looking at myself, I am moved to wonder if indeed

I am the Narcissus of our plugged-in age

Or just some guy in sore, pressing need of camera and shelf space

To freeze time desirably, decoratively placed alongside

A certain wealth of collected wisdom in prose.

This cannot be right. I see not myself nor anyone else in reflection but rather

Row after row of books, papers, envelopes torn in fearful, shaking haste.

Assorted dancing fleeting, tragic, wasteful reminders of foolish and wise endeavors,

Their aftermaths a muddled inglorious mess of tragicomedy, chaos, missed connections.

Hotel keys unreturned two years on from two hundred,

Two thousand miles away,

Loose change, endless receipts

But no photographs, only snapshots

That film cannot hope to capture

Unless they sterilize the colder truth of experience

Which I'll not have them do.

What kind of life must you feel the need to lead

That you dare not or choose not

To put it to permanence

Outside yourself?

This conspicuous absence is terrible. Something has to go on that shelf

And I'm open to suggestions.

Kids

I sometimes wonder
if someday I'll meet
the woman who talks me
into having kids.

Or maybe we've already
met and things just haven't
gone that far yet.

I've watched untold multitudes
of harridans and oafs
dragging their spawn
down the street, into
grocery stores, restaurants,
emergency rooms, movie theaters,

home from school,
with a practiced look
that is
(not for lack of trying),
quite unlike relief.

Always crying, redundant lumps
of protoplasm.
Small tragedies with parents
who wear sweatpants and bunny slippers
in public.

Of course,
practicing for it
is always fun.

But the world
is dangerously
overpopulated
as it is. Civic duty
demands that the family
name dies with me.

The family name almost

died with my father,
in no rush to have children
of his own for the best of
reasons having to do with specters of
cocktail parties, tennis, and blank-eyed
debutante-puppets whose own fathers
owned a vinyard somewhere and wanted
to nuke Vietnam.

But, as will happen now and then, somehow
my mother eventually inspired him.

Or wore him down.

I still don't know which it was.

All I know is that the condoms
somehow made it into
the waste basket one night.

So...does this go on?

Me perhaps playing the distant father
retiring to my study with book and bottle,
at least until
the kid gets old enough
to be worth having

a conversation with?

What, for that matter,

would we even talk about?

I suppose if I were to go far enough

to give advice,

I would say

that they should love openly,

somehow,

no matter what the neighbors think,

being generous enough to assume

that the neighbors can think at all.

Embarrass yourself, laugh.

Most things are accidental,

like a bird flying into a window.

Although

just maybe

some things aren't,

like a meeting of the eyes

across a room nearly empty

at an hour

when all respectable people

should be home in bed.

No one asks

to come to this sideshow,

whatever it is.

Far fewer get to choose

how to leave it.

Though maybe with a modicum of honesty,

they could.

Beneath screaming neon,

around earth's imagined

corners, I suppose

that we're all just here

to help each other through

this thing, whatever it is.

Now then...

off to bed.

A Partial Elegy for San Francisco

The Greyhound bus pulls out just before
ten o'clock that morning, heading south
leaving behind the acrid tang of pot smoke
and coffee too weak to defend itself
at the terminal,
the air something like cat's breath within.

No matter. Better things are coming. I'll be there
in time for dinner. Panacea to ease the minute wounds
inflicted by the mother and child picked up outside
a gas station convenience store in Santa Rosa,
the latter just an inconsolable cacophony of noises
like freshly broken glass.

He and I may have something in common there.

But I'll be out of this soon:

Gone to the simple, knowing
smiles and sideways glances
of varied acquaintances with couches for talk, for sleep,
or dalliance uphill westward to Valencia, or North Beach
depending on the day, the hour, the prism and the light.

Or maybe we'll all just get drunk and lamentable
and go out somewhere for corned beef hash and ice water
around noon
the next day, our overwrought bones afterwards
rattling up the stairs (yet happy in that weariness)
to an apartment where the lock on the door
barely works and the off-white paint
eternally peels beneath an unconquerable sun.

In the end, it came down to one old friend
casually juggling nectarines on a balcony
apartment overlooking Telegraph Hill,
tossing them to me between
sips of beer one afternoon
just short of summer,
talking of his moving south,
talking of why every president
should read *Julius Caesar*,
and why I should make a living
reading it in my mellifluous voice,
talking of long odds in Los Angeles,
and old girlfriends. All this folly to the world, of course.

Since then, the waves break as ever
against the Golden Gate: Talismans
like a slew of gleaming butter knives in the kitchen sink.

