

CHALK LINES



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Contents:

The Light and the Likes of the Moon

Cookies

coffee in may

Bouganvilla Drive

in that time

Looking Upwards

Stan Smith

rag water echo

Chalk Lines

New White Blouses

remembering

Me and The Dowagers by the Five and Dime

Joseph Campbell by the Aloe Vera Plants

Cantina

4:09 and American Music

Pockets

The Light and the Likes of the Moon

The moon was out. A bouncing ball but suspended. I shall never have a baby, she said. I am not prepared to go through that pain. Also, I for sure would not raise them up if I had them with religion, which is just so much superstition. I'll be a fellow this time around.

You'll be a fellow?

I didnt say that. I said 'I'll be fallow this time around.'

You said, 'I'll be a fellow...'

Dont tell me what I said. I know what I said and I know what I say. Besides, don't you know what 'fallow' means?

I am aware of what it means.

Good.

Sometimes the moon streaked across her hands as she moved them just a bit. Just a bit though, because she was not an animated talker per se. Its light was there but it was the hands that seemed frightened of its power or influence. This was impossible, but this seemed to be the dance the moonlight and the hands exchanged.

My father left anyhow, she said. Well, it was an agreement between my mother and father as they had other things to do in life.

Her eyes were closed.

You are hypnotized, I said, and it seems like you don't know that you are hypnotized. I have never

done this before, and I thought that the subject, which is you, would know that they are hypnotized. I am not hypnotized, she countered. That is dumb.

It's true. You are hypnotized. You agreed to being hypnotized. Dont you remember?

It's not true. Anyhow, the main thing to remember is that I ain't having a baby.

Then the moon withdrew the little light that it had offered. The crowds of people gathered outside of the window waiting for cabs in order that they should go to the innards of cities where they would experience splashes of electric light and strange music and one another. Surely, I thought, they had no need for the light of or the likes of the moon.

Cookies

What was it about the aged and cookies? Here was another one that relished them. Sebastian's grandmother was a specialist. People on the outside thought she was a bird enthusiast. Grandma could be seen refilling the bird feeders at all hours. After the morning fillings, it was off to her soaps, the rag papers, and several decades of rosaries. Ah, just periphery events, adjustments, and sidings. The main things were the cookies. These were on the brain and in the heart as much as Jesus. And who is to say, come to think of it, how one should worship? These cookies- and all cookies everywhere- were regarded as sacrosanct. Well housed in neat cupboards or in special drawers, the highest grade ones placed in neat containers beside china! All varieties colors textures and makes could be found if one looked long enough.

Sebastian's grandmother was perhaps more familiar with the nomenclature, ingredients, packaging, pricing, and various specifications as regarded cookies than the manufacturers of the delectable things themselves. In the mid-afternoons she would bring some out and sitting in front of her there as Sebastian did was akin to waiting in contemplation during an Adoration. And wait he did, because he was both shy and polite. Seb, she would eventually inquire, do you want a cookie? He would nod in the affirmative,

having waited well and knowing she would ask. Receiving cookies was something like receiving Communion and the whole process seemed to require a form of piety. It was a good ritual and the old woman was a good egg. Besides, it was some kind of industry standard that Grandmas were supposed to offer treats. Sebastian had no real worries. The birds gathered around seed outside and the universe with its large and small events proceeded on schedule.

coffee in may

there is work
before w/bearings
welding torches
storm pipes

invoices gather
like orphans
calling for
someone to
attend

but in may
my old friend
we can stain
our teeth
as you mistake
the origin of
the waitress

we have had
blissful visions
while paradoxically
walking melancholy
miles

we will do so
again in the

month of mothers
when thoughts
are storms
and the idea
of woman
as sacred other sits
on tables and
turns like
a lazy susan

in may my brother

in
may

Bougainvilla Drive

blue plexiglass skateboard is holding the light of a
turmeric sun. jacob turns it this way and that and lets
it sit on its side atop parking curbs. denim legs canvas
feet. looking down sign ridden streets and squinting.
sometimes sun showers leak out. cotton shirts wet.
the mexican girl gazing on from chairs faded. bright
flecks in eyes. a cosmic electric light queen. she brings
smoke into her lungs then exhales. there is no god in
the afternoons. but there is no devil either. there only
is what is. reality quietly dizzy with itself, dancing an
unknown and unheard song

in that time

in that time people had gone away and i waited in the inside and looked out on balconies. the ending of the dusk was coming and the details of the railings and brick, the tree branches holding purple plums, the stacked railway ties and a thousand other details became shaded and obscure. there is a gap between when it gets dark in the world and when lights go on and that is what i looked out towards. consciousness can bloom there, can grow, can watch, can see, can be itself, its new self. i thought that in my bones and blood i felt a sense of the future. i did feel it. i could not see its details just as i could no longer see the details of the day, but i could intuit it in a larger way, in an unorthodox way wild and sure with spirit and what i would call an almost other world fortitude. isn't the time before life and after life stronger than life itself? it is the sure bet, the eternal, the great and satisfying void! i felt this- and the future said that it would hold great adventures- and i knew somehow that it was not that i would become an icon or play an important role in a discovery, that it was not that i was special or would intervene in the world in some important manner. no, it was that my personal journey through time and circumstance would be profound because it was mine, that the little things would not be little, that little or small or minute would be words not used at all- because everything

was important on my way and path. when i finished feeling this i was still looking out upon the landscape and the lights came on. spot lights and regular lights all timed lights and even a light from the kitchen window that was beside the room i was in and already lit began to have a chance to shine down upon galvanized grating small yet strong and secondary roof shingles and paths that the racoons had traversed and the spry cheeky squirrels and others had put foot upon in journeying. in that time people had gone away and i waited in the inside and looked out on balconies.

Looking Upwards

Steel beams. Welds painted over green. Yellow numbers of some sort. Old phone booths. Tags on the walls. I looked up and saw where bits of water fall down from the overpass. Pigeon up there. Washing his wings or something like that. Greyness. I was in a truck. Down a hill a stop light. People there with sunken faces. Frowns in the late afternoon and early evening. Not a place that you want to walk through. Not if you didn't have to. Not outright dangerous, but near those parts. A difficult area. Then a curious movement. A figure steps out from the crowd near the corner. She stretches her arm out and cups a hand. To the sky. Black suit red hair. The head looks upwards. The person is testing for rain. It's a natural act. Something of humanity still lives. No actual apocalypse had occurred- just the juice of things had sizzled out of the people, the area, the earth. The earth is the earth but also a corner of an inner city street. Crowd does not notice. They are in Plato's new cave. Pigeon does not notice. Territory tags recede for a moment. As does greyness. A millisecond there. Just a human movement. Tags. Broken phones. The overpass and the pigeon. Steel beams. The stop light switches to the affirmative. Everything changes. The world is always like that. Please proceed.

Stan Smith

Ah we just sat on the flat roof of the school and looked out at what was beyond because sometimes there is nothin' to do but sit on a flat roof of a school and look out at what is beyond. Going up there I had told him to be careful with the bag because if he didn't take it slow the bottles could break.

I threw some small stones out into the cement yard and I sort of just gently tapped my shoe heels against the bricks like I was listening to a slow sad song though there was no slow sad song, only the dangling feet. In those days on my feet all I wore was Stan Smith Adidas, and when one pair wore out I went and got another and started over.

Look there to the left, I said. There are two birds that moves fast across the dusk.

Ya, Jay said, I see em', but they are not so exciting.

Two women, both very similar in a way, had chosen to leave just a week before, and find other venues and other adventures. (I guess their idea of a good time was not to sit on old flat school rooftops and throw pebbles through the air). They had been keepers and lookers. They had names that were strange, yet not too strange, but their names hardly mattered. One was fluent in languages and had great business acumen. She would make a million and more dollars in the years that would follow. It is not known what became of the other one.

They looked like sisters, offered Jay.

I always thought that myself, I told him, but I never said anything to them or you about it. Maybe it was magical thinking, but I did not want to break the great aura that they had. They liked one another.

And they had few other friends, said Jay.

It is sometimes like that with the ones that are that good looking.

Then I looked again and there were no more birds while dusk had taken a darker turn. I threw some more pebbles into what now looked more like a mini-abys than anything else. I knew Jay was struggling about the whole thing but I didn't really have anything to offer that could help.

Loss is loss is loss.

The left Adidas I noticed then as I took it off and examined it, had a hole in the sole. I made a mental note to write a poem someday about the two that were keepers and lookers. I also made a note to go see about getting a new pair of Stan Smiths. I got the shoes but never wrote the poem. You can't, as they say, be all things to all people, and you can't even be all things to yourself. Instead you gotta know how to be happy with the shoes you have chosen.

rag water echo

It was in the good and strange middle spring and the rain kept announcing itself on the doorsteps and the railings of the town. As it bounced off of infrastructure and the top of eighteen wheeled trucks, rather than die little deaths, the drops found their way into the streams and sometimes even shone like amulets brazen and precious. A small area of the earth can be a world, and the electric lights sing lonesome and of particulars like just the few square feet around them.

It's a lonely spring night in the world but we are okay and do our duty shining in the rain, say the lights.

An old man sits in a window that is now all peeling and cracks and moisture. Old cloths once stronger soak up a leak and the man drinks sometimes coffee and sometimes tea. He counts the hours but for no reason and once and a while the radio is turned on.

When he listens to the news of the world he thinks, *Such excitement. So much looking at the world. So much dizziness in the world. The people are caught in something. It sounds as if they are jumping up and down they are always so excited.*

It goes like that. Always. Sometimes the spouse dies decades before....

Oh world, oh word, thinks the man. And he checks the rag and wipes the sill a bit. Then he goes to the sink and wrings it out. He looks up again, out of

habit, to the window that sits like an old bird above the sink. Outside of it he sees parts of the storm rushing down past house lights. He hears it all echo somehow. Maybe it is in his mind. Old sheds down the way get shot up by drops. Going back to his chair he sits and waits and watches the outside. The water rushes like the secular rush. The storm drains overflow and threaten the boulevards.

Oh world, or word, oh world, softly says the man.

chalk lines

i park carefully between the white demarcation lines in the contractors lot where thoughts of screening crushing gradients quarter-round utility knives saws-alls deck screws galvanizing paint window wells lag bolts hex nuts seals primer gypsum board sweeping compound tie wraps 3/4 horse power sub-pumps metal and plastic garbage can yellow level ear plugs marrets copper elbows hand-tampers and thresholds fill up the spaces while the checkout chick has the word

love

inked in light blue on the inside of her finger and i like it but remain silent because there are 'more on the outside than there are on the inside' my godmother told me (meaning crazy people) and if she is not then I just might be and even in the midst of utter sanity saying anything could in actuality be, or if not, at the least, be perceived, as a sort of 'boundary crossing' and most chicks don't have any jam (that is a very geographically-specific colloquial word circa, well circa a long time ago for true fun and crazy bright not-all-talk look at coy me character) and so the only other lines dreamed of are chalk lines will you please get blue and let's get outta here that is the color i use

New White Blouses

always thought you'd show up with a good friendly
grin,

your heart full of gnosis and the rest of you dressed
in denim or terrene hues,

back from across the world to honor our sacrosanct
thing

maybe it would be in the wind chiseled afternoon,
or the dusk by tables because I want to think of
tables,
of how they would catch the departing light

you navigate the earth so well; you would swing your
hip,
we would kick Saturn out of the sky with hardly an
effort,
but it wasn't to be and the nightmare continues

tell your children to view lots of television and read
rag magazines,
tell them to keep their hair neat,
to go to church with the monotheistic set,

tell them to observe both norms and the newspapers,
to watch plenty of sports,

while lauding their favorite team with the other
millions of morons

instruct them to brush for a full two minutes,
and rinse thoroughly,
in order to get out anything untoward

yes, tell them to stay with situation comedies and
grade point averages,
to remain acutely aware of the regular rubric,
to run in circles with other mediocre minds,

make clear that nobody arrives past the edge of
witching hours
wearing miracles,
or with love in their pockets

state plainly that such odd terrains are not romantic,
or fruitful or lyrical,
making clear that hours without light are not really
for them

but most of all tell em' to stay away from the abyss,
explaining carefully that nobody comes dressed
w/autumnal hued skirts,
summer denim,

or new white blouses

remembering

I remembered because the man took us to see the horses. I didn't see something that set off a series of memories. I only saw the stables and the moon sitting pensively below the firmament. I looked at these and there was spaciousness between the moon and the stables and the treetops and other things besides. I guess this spaciousness allowed for memory. We fill in empty parts for better or worse. We fill in empty parts when we can and how we can. I remembered then because that is what is done and because that is how we are built. First I saw an old man drying dishes on a balcony and the Goodyear blimp going past in the sky. I, said the old man, would like to fly in a blimp. The next thing I saw was a couple and one of them said, Your name was Mark. Usually you change it. Besides, there were other Marks. We thought lots of 'Derrick,' but there was a Derrick too. The third thing that I remembered was a girl. The girl turns to me and says, I tried killing someone in the mountains by cutting the brake lines on their car. But I cut the wrong lines. I didn't say anything one way or the other to the girl. My fourth memory was of marginalized person. He says, I am suffering from ennui. I ask him where he learned that word. He says, Since I suffer from ennui so much, I read the dictionary and sometimes it helps. Then, in the fifth memory, an old woman on a morphine drip

proclaims that she went to the other world to visit her sister. In the sixth I see an S.U.V. is on fire by the side of a highway and I wonder how the flames could light up the darkness that much. For the seventh, though I did not count them when they were taking place but only long after, I remember that I had a vision in which Osho appears and grants a darshan or a blessing through a gaze. Then it all stopped. I was back at the stables with the moon overhead and the horses inside of their walls and the tree line that pronounced itself darkly against a lighter backdrop of night.

Me and the Dowagers by the Five and Dime

It's been twenty years since you left.
I should call it a day.
Even the Obeah woman said as much.
But I don't listen.
Instead I sit with old and proper ethnic widows in
black,
waiting for your return.
One of them translates my story for the others...
A voice from the crowd says, *So young to die.*
No, I say, she didn't die.
Then why she left away?
I clear my throat and announce to the lot that,
She needed some time for herself.
This group from the old country,
made from a different mettle,
is puzzled at that one,
but they try to remain polite.
An operation! calls one of them,
victorious in the eyes for having found the answer,
and happy now,
because she is one who doesn't like me,
but would try and find a way,
if possible,
to like me a little bit.
No operation, I say.

One of them whispers to the group in hushed
sorrowful ways,
the sound of death news or at the least a dire
telegram...

The dowager group has become grave,
and they also stare away,
concentrating on the streets, the cars, the parks
beyond.

It is middle class recoil,
a body language that says unless anyone objects;
we have resolved this one,
and are now ready for the next issue at hand.

I shall only get a brief mention by the minute taker
of life's meetings.

What's the problem? I ask the translator. *What did
they say?*

Hesitancy and concern,
like a doctor delivering a difficult diagnosis.

The one told the others, said the translator,
that your beloved does not love you.

Joseph Campbell by the Aloe Vera Plants

There was man from antiquity that sat next to me. His belief in the healing qualities of Aloe Vera so pronounced, that the house brimmed with such. He had no use for modernity in any of its forms but was fond of supermarkets. When in one he was overwhelmed with an agitated joy. He ate whitefish from a frying pan with garlic and onion and strange salts too. If I was taken ill he gave me apple cider vinegar.

Well, we sat there in long afternoons. He with not much to do because he was old now. Me with not much to do because I was wayward, a lost soul.

There was a bible and books about the lives of the saints. We watched Joseph Campbell on public television. I was mesmerized and had a book also, a biography, called, *A Fire in the Mind*. In between sessions a lady would appear amidst telephones and talk without pause.

Public television relies on your support my dear friend. And we cannot bring you these wonderful programs that are seen nowhere else, without your support.

We are relying on you and your kind and generous donation.

The old man never said anything most of the time, but one time he spoke about the woman...

Boy she can taaaaaallllk. She can talk allllll the time. EEEeeeee.....

And he had a great way, because his tone did not condemn or praise her, though if a judge had to decide it would be more of an indictment than not I suppose.

Boy she can taaaaallllk.

And the woman talked and then Joseph Campbell talked and the man tuned out and the world was quiet, strangely quiet those afternoons even for all that talking.

Modernity would never get us.

This I knew if nothing else. I and the old man were cut from a bit of the same cloth.

The apple cider was bitter and waited in cupboards for someone to become ill.

I liked it better than the world.

I continued to watch and watch and watch that old television that was more of a place to place aloe vera plants on than anything really.

When Campbell was done, I noticed that the old man had fallen asleep. I put a thick blanket over his arms and chest in order to keep him from catching a chill. He had a condition and was in his ninety second year.

I pressed the off button before the yappy broad could reappear.

Then I sat staring at the plants and the silence they made.

Cantina

It's good enough. Spacious. Then the cards but I am not for cards. Sasha directs the people, helping them, at ease and happy even. Strangers that have found a common denominator in games. A brotherhood and sisterhood I can't understand. I watch. I see green limes somewhere. I wonder for a second if I am a lime green alien in disguise since I never join in on the games. At certain intervals they pause to ask how come I don't participate in anything. I have to think up a polite answer. It's like there is a larger game that just never quits and everyone, like it or not, is on the roster.

The woman at the bar is drowning herself in Coronas. Too fast. She is self absorbed in a peculiar way. She has done this before but doesn't care, can't care, or won't care. Not thirty minutes later she has drunken four bottles or more. Then she wavers. She gets up and loses balance, a balance she never really had. She hits the bar chair with her head but instead of succumbing bounces back like a jack in the box or resourceful pugilist. Nobody sees it but me. I judge her or observe her and she seems not well.

I walk out for air. I break my own rules and walk alone to the far edge of the parking lot. A car pulls up with five people, all male. They get out. Souls with a look and aura you would immediately avoid. I watch them in a middle way, meaning not in a confrontational manner but not so as to appear meek

either. Besides, I want to know their whereabouts foot by foot and inch by inch. One walks too fast in my direction. I watch his hands and it is the second rule I have broken in minutes.

Sometimes habits learned in sports can be useful in other arenas besides, such as how in hockey one learns to watch always the chest of the opponent, the middle of the chest, because the stick, the hands, even the arms and legs and shoulders can fake you out, but the centre of the chest cannot and has to go where it goes. But here I want to see what is in his hands. There is something cupped in his left hand and the fingers of his right hand are open and normal. He is perhaps a lefty. As he gets closer there is a climatic point of sorts but it recedes. I realize he is just a fast walker and it is only his wallet or something pedestrian in his hand. They pass.

I swing around the other way and look to the lights of a gas station. Then I glance back nonchalantly just to see if they keep going, to make sure nobody is doubling-back, because I am still alone with only the quiet one note song electric lights sometimes make. They disappear behind the door and there will be no trouble. It's good enough that drama has let the night alone. Let things be what they are, says the night. But the goals are dull, the aspirations too low, and the evening whiles, well they wile watch wait and wonder without a real promise. I am an itinerant palm reader searching for clues and kismet but the hours have no fate line one way or the other.

It will have to be good enough. Constricted now is the night and somehow devoid of the original spaciousness. It will have to do, this empty adyton that shows nothing and tells little. It's good enough.

4:09 and American Music

If you knew everything, you would not be able to sit on tropical balconies at 4:09 A.M., discovering a book and then the world for the first time

If you were part of the spiritual set, and could astral travel far and wide, but neglected to open the door for a little old lady, well that would be worse

If you were rich and entitled, you might forget your Adidas and yourself, choosing to wear a silk scarf made for men while on the bottom leather shoes remained unblemished

If you understood the vagaries of things, you'd find yourself with the haughty and prideful, and walk right on past the Burger King and your people, searching for happiness in something less pedestrian but never finding it

If you had a driver, the flora and fauna would embark upon new journeys w/out you, and though they and a thousand things call out, your ears will have fallen deaf and your soul dumb

But if you knew the soft blonde that wrapped herself in army surplus jacket, American music, and sometimes a determined and pensive sort of sadness, well that would be okay and even better

pockets

That place was on a summit and hardly anything grew there and it wasn't for lack of turning over the earth or tending the loam and it wasn't either for lack of sun because the violent storms had felled anything that could block the light years and even decades before. On figurative paper and on the ledger that the man kept scribbled notes it should have all made sense and some form of crop or even wild plant might have flourished fully or else and at the least shown some motivation towards life and to 'catch' as it were.

Nothing caught and hardly anything moved save for the wind that came coldly even when spring was supposed to have broken open and that wind did not have a poem or song and if it said anything at all it only told and told quickly that there would be no bounty or future fortune of any sort, this was all that was being given, this cold wind and no more.

The heart of the land there had been hardened and the man wondered what karma he had accrued or sin he had committed though he did not think or talk in such terms and did not really write or even read at all. His scribbblings were pencil markings with lines and a few dots designating only things he was trying to figure out and even when one of the three young ones

or the female adult glanced in the cool mornings or difficult evening hours upon the pages of the peculiar self-made almanac, the vague markings and haphazard diagrams could not be deciphered.

The three wore the same clothing every day and there was no water but there were two containers, one in front that observed the barren fields below and one in back that looked further up the summit as if for a sign and the summit never said anything back in all the years the group lived there.

The young were two boys and the girl and the girl was the oldest and she stood awkwardly because she did not know what to do with her height or quite how to manage herself other than to help with the most ordinary tasks. She was not deficient in any real or pronounced way but had not had any interactions with the larger world.

There were no books and there was not even a requisite Holy Book and instead there was only the man's strange sheets of paper with the poète maudit - like pencil markings that were a try at some kind of order but only and always resulted in a broken friendship with responsibility or worse, what had become in the recent years only a personal codified chaos.

The mother had deep set eyes and once someone said

in passing that she must have had Indian in her history. The three young did not know what this meant one way or another and they did not know what an Indian was. Once the woman was what people would call pretty, and her movements in a few of those brief years before had contained a certain agility and grace that the young, healthy, or happy often inherit.

Now she did not have any of that save for perhaps a remnant of part of a light fleck that could be discerned in the eye if one looked at the right time and looked fast enough. But she herself hardly was conscious of such, and the man only scratched his head and gazed out towards the bottom fields and sometimes higher up the summit waiting for something that was not going to come.

There was no oracle and not even a belief one way or the other down at the core of the group. They only and always just simply were, the way the summit was, and nobody talked of the place or who made it and the four didn't really even know if the man had such knowledge. Sometimes something in the girl made her stare out the window at the side that had no glass and wish for something. Her eyes clenched tighter at those times, like teeth, and she wished with a good and true type of fury and might.

When she opened her eyes again nothing had

changed and she did not even hold an emotion like irritation or disappointment because those things were not true things at all but instead constructed luxuries of spoiled citizens in a falsified world. She did not know this. She only continued to stare placidly out towards the place in the middle distance where the sun was beginning to descend as if into a pocket someone had sewn in the earth.

