



## Big Flat World

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

A father keeps a cricket in his wallet. The cricket is alive, but flat as a dollar bill. It's a rare little insect worth fields of gold. No one knows about the cricket, not even the father's wife nor their thriving brood of children. The father and cricket rejoice in their secret wealth. Many seasons wing by till one day finds the father out farming his modest patch of bons mots. He is startled by tiny lilting music apparently issuing forth from his loins. The father whips out his wallet from which leaps another cricket. This cricket is also flat, but round as the wildly unpopular Susan B. Anthony dollar. *Who are you?* the father asks. *I am son of the cricket, off to see the big flat world in all its grass and glory,* it chirps. While the father falls prey to silence, the son smiles and rolls away shining down the road, soon vanishing. A cappella, the fathers drone a sorrow-song to the horizon, so empty now of value.

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# Instructions

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Directions for use:

Apply product generously to all extant areas.

Enjoy!

Do not use product if:

- 1) you are the weak man.
- 2) mice appear blind.
- 3) there are tongues lolling about.
- 4) there are riots afoot.

Use product if:

- 1) butterfly strokes through the sea.
- 2) deer ticks in a clock.
- 3) you are the strong man.
- 4) there are mysteries afoot.

In an emergency:

- 1) stop, look, and don't noodle around.
- 2) catch a falling nuthatch. Repeat.
- 3) eat apples for they are the friends of horror.
- 4) exclaim: "I am the rocket man!" Ascend

For more information:

feel free to consult our trained killer bees.

Warning:

running will not make product go away.

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# Song of the Angry Swan

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

In the faraway land of Norway lived  
a beautiful white swan named Oscar.  
He was a proud and angry swan given  
over to icy narcissism and sudden virulent rage.  
He was a mood to avoid.

Oscar had a fine palace of sticks and decaying  
matter on the most desirable fjord possible.  
People from far and wide would come to gaze  
upon his proud and angry form. They always  
kept their distance, of course. This went on  
for longer than anyone could remember.

Perhaps there were over six hundred generations  
of Oscars. Maybe Oscar was an obscure god  
cursed by a better-known god and awaited the  
end of time to regain his original divine shape.  
There is precedent.

But one spring morning in the terrible age of  
exploding airplanes, an old woman from unknown  
lands came upon Oscar. She came alone with  
nothing but the mystery of countless green summers.  
Oscar was seated proudly upon his fine palace  
still as an alabaster obelisk.

She crept closer than the shadows.  
He was a ray of iron sunshine.

No one knows if the crone ever saw him.  
In a flash, Oscar dashed and  
swept her into the cold mouth of the sea.

Perhaps one might imagine a nubile Leda and her  
supremely aroused swan, but this seemed all wrong.  
The people rose up against Oscar with stones, sticks  
and decaying matter.  
The fine palace was no more.

And Oscar, the last of the ancient gods, or the last of  
a line of animal monsters, vanished from sight.

Then all that remained, was a strange lady who sang  
on the shores of all the fjords  
and sings on still.

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## City Lights

At night the bats  
flit erratic

tickling the deepening  
blue Chicago streets

eliciting light  
from the forlorn faces  
of huddled buildings  
streetlamps and lost cars.

All day  
on the road  
I thought of you sleeping  
curled up in a corner  
of my darkened heart.

Flicker awake  
fleet city spirits

I've strayed so far, and  
only you can  
show me the way home.

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## Written by the Mississippi River

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

Translucence is  
the most beautiful  
quality a body could have  
it's the movement of  
light  
the promise of safe passage  
through a sunlit river  
with aquamarine eyes  
for the open sea

Compared to an ocean  
or a stream  
the voice of the river  
is low  
a lullaby played  
with longing  
sliding over warm sand

The river is almost  
like a lake  
just as deep  
with murky dreams  
of lost loves  
but the river  
she moves on

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# The Man Who Died and Went to Minnesota

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

Big Joe Shiroma out of Tucson,  
Arizona opened his icebox  
one summer morning for some eggs  
and instead found a duck.

Or so he thought.  
Actually, to Big Joe's surprise,  
it was a common loon with  
lovely, bloody-red eyes.

The loon called and called  
its haunting cry and  
Big Joe cried and cried.

It was so beautiful and unexpected,  
you see. Because nothing ever happens  
on summer mornings except for  
cold rice, scrambled eggs and rusty  
grackles squeaking through the trees.  
(Big Joe's life was as plain as his face.)

The loon stopped calling and  
looked into Big Joe's eyes:  
red eye to red eye.  
Big Joe knew then  
what he had to do:

he closed the door,  
opened his mind, and  
jumped right in.

The federal, state, and county governments  
never found Big Joe ever again.

But on some early mornings,  
Minnesotans tell of being woken  
by a large man with red eyes and  
the sunrise for wings who  
laughs and laughs for all common things.

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## Sins of the Hermit Crab

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

A hermit crab spends the day thinking untoward thoughts.

Mostly this involves coveting its neighbor's lustrous shell.  
Coupling with its brother's voracious wife.

At nightfall, below the echolocating whales  
and radiant squids  
the remorseful crab tortures itself on the ocean floor.

O bad crab, purify your soft flesh in lacerating sand.

Perhaps I should find religion, it considers  
as it has since the beginning.

Then again, I am but a hermit crab and crustacean sins  
are but plankton wings in the rollicking mind of the sea.

## Kiosk Made of Whispers

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

A man once crossed the road  
to put lip balm on his bill  
but that is another story.  
The man crosses the road  
for the kiosk on the other side.  
A kiosk made of whispers.  
A man seeks  
a vial of insinuations  
and this is the best place  
outside of Nantucket.  
Everyone knows that  
including the priest, the rabbi and  
the duck  
but those are different stories.  
The man wants more zing  
in his pear-shaped world  
but is ill-equipped for debauchery.  
Inside the kiosk, a shadow flutters  
towards a man who rises  
as smoke from the fire  
of another story.

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