

## RAIN GRAVES: POETRY EXCERPTS

Brown Hair, Brown Eyes, And I Left Once  
By Rain Graves

(why did you touch him  
the gods asked)

I touched him because  
he was starving  
his pelvis moved  
in that natural way  
of hunger and thieves  
but it was innocent  
of greed  
just wanting  
just needing

I had to give  
he had to take  
it was the scorpion  
on the frog's back  
and so  
the prick was inevitable

(why did you leave him  
the gods asked)

I left him because  
he was starving  
his mouth moved  
but formed no words  
just lips cavorting  
over me, my body  
towards speech  
it was not innocent  
of the lie  
he did not love me  
did not like me anymore

I had to take  
he had to give  
it was the frog drowning  
taking the scorpion too  
and  
the break was inevitable

(why did you go back  
the gods asked)

I went back because  
he was starving  
beckoning in rivers  
undertones of radio waves

reaching out across a desert  
so vast and open  
nothing but dunes  
and his soul,  
watering the sand  
with his tears  
and the sound said  
I love you  
as they dried in whispers  
from the harsh sun  
and the glare  
in my eyes, last seen  
the shock value  
a priceless peace accord

we had to give  
we had to take  
I was a stinging woman  
holding a green thing to my lips  
knowing it was not aruse  
but a princely wart upon my hand  
that somehow grew  
into something beautiful  
before my eyes

it was inevitable;  
finding angelic truth  
in the sin of lie upon lie,  
we are not the liars  
only hidden in ourselves  
only finding the truth  
we each, to each other opened  
Will they let us into heaven, now?

#

San Francisco: Broadway & Kearny  
By Rain Graves

where was I the day you fell in love  
with October and pumpkin carved spice  
melted like butter and cinnamon sweat  
on wind-chilled skin, warmed by sweaters  
and hot mulled wine, that we didn't drink  
but kept our hands warm with?

Where were you when I painted that picture  
just now, in my mind, of us--?

were we together, in thought  
some where in time?

I think we got interrupted.

#

Anna's Nine One One Prophecy (as drawn in pictures)

By Rain Graves

I am a woman king, said she  
balancing a needle on a finger  
with-which she used to play billiards  
with rocks in the sun, over pavement  
somewhere in Brooklyn  
with the ghosts of Incan children  
she draws circles on the sidewalk  
fingers the chalk and rubs the skin raw  
getting her blood into it, the act--  
then digging up flowers from the roots  
and placing them in her funerary garden,  
freshly made for passers by, a-w onder.

coiling a steel coat-hanger  
she lifts it to her head and declares  
her coronation, with squirrels at her feet  
dripping in the rain, waiting, always waiting  
for the lightning to hit, maybe twice  
for in storms there are visions, says she  
the crops will be dead, dead, dead  
with mothers foraging for children on the subway  
and the wires will wind down with no electric  
no pipes bursting in winter over iced metal, no water  
only the cockroaches and crows will thrive;  
we have lost our way in the world, she says  
and we will die.

#

A Meeting With Kip

By Rain Graves

I am on Santa Monica Boulevard  
I have no coat, and the rain is sticky  
but the dim red of the Formosa  
looms shadows over my shoes  
and Kip will be there  
with his convertible  
and that ponytail

supporting what little is left  
on the sides of his headskin,  
sweating in white shoes, Hawai'ian shirt

we'll weave baskets with words  
mingle over the plastic olive cups  
and pretend it's not four pm;  
early for martinis but  
not for entertainment

he'll tell me the weekly called  
and I should try that new movie mag  
maybe do the mini-series, or that porn script  
and I will nod and decline,  
ask him why he chose the Formosa

It ends when the glass is empty  
just lucky to have work, I'll say  
I'd have more if you did scripts  
he'll say, and ask if I want another  
no, but maybe next month - same time

and not at the Formosa.  
frowning, I go inside, and  
I'm suddenly dry.

#

### The Rosemary Bush By Rain Graves

put the pictures in a drawer  
leave behind the eyes a'veiled  
think no more on yesterday  
that images no longer burn  
as memories do, so often.  
Take the hairpins off your table  
dress no more in willowed sorrow  
fear no more the image dark  
inside the liquid looking glass  
paint a face so gay, instead  
that speaks of warm summer days--  
flowing cherry-wine with orange peel garnish  
hens dressed in honey sauce  
merry women with hot breath  
telling stories across a table-cloth;  
mist your cheeks with tears like dew  
rouge your lips and set your hair  
go out into the chilly air  
and look not upon feet but stars  
keeping up with the dreams of many,  
yours are lost - but who knows?

only the foolish rosemary bush  
you bent to caress and pick at  
as he said goodbye.

#

Ugly Man's Tango

By Rain Graves

I am an ugly man  
and you are beautiful  
oh, so beautiful  
that I hate you  
and  
cannot tear my arms  
away from you

I am an ugly man  
but I can dance  
oh, so beautiful  
that you love me  
and  
wouldn't give a second glance  
if my legs were broken  
what then, about my heart?

#

Buenos Aires: 1932

By Rain Graves

how'd that gay song ebb and flow  
was it a vals, milonga, or tango--  
did we dance it, writhing like pain  
did we wax it, til' it waned  
I know I hid you somewhere, darling  
somewhere in my coat of cards  
you wrote your name so delicate--hardly  
a letter out of place or marred

how'd we meet that night my love  
was it your eye or mine; the light above--  
sparkling like champagne bubbles on lips  
tickling your hair, your nose, your hips  
I know I hid you somewhere, inside  
somewhere beyond my foolish lies  
but you drank them in so calmly that I  
couldn't do anything but bide my time

how'd we get into that lonely room  
was it the promise of shadow or gloom--  
breath sw eating on your neck, like dew  
as you sang a whisper of what you'd do  
I know I hid you somewhere deeply  
and yet you said goodbye so neatly  
that I forgot I didn't love you, forgot, forgot  
Your silhouette in the doorway fading-- lost.

#

The God of Leather and Leaves  
By Rain Graves

the god of leather and leaves  
keeps children locked in ovens  
gingerbread smells in skies of blue  
frosting; licked from the tongues of saviors

the god of leather and leaves  
knows pain in ashes of war  
like that German-Jewish rain  
closely wept, with a yellow star badge

the god of leather and leaves  
holds the diaries of vagabond lovers  
once rich, gambled poor, then rich again  
banished to France; no Venice death a-more

the god of leather and leaves  
keeps psychiatry alive, heavy weighted  
with self-help and dieting frenzies  
Oprah clubbing on TV with you and me

the god of leather and leaves  
is soft and supple, aged and worn  
with curled and folded, oft gilded edges  
dusty clouds awakening worms, and me alike

the god of leather and leaves  
keeps worship service day and night  
best loved with fingerprints and souls  
pulled forth, out of eyes seeking knowledge

read on, they chant, read on, read on  
I'm gone into the valley of kings, the valley of god.

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## **RAIN GRAVES: FICTION EXCERPT**

"Marilyn" (as published in *The Gossamer Eye*, Meisha Merlin, 2002).  
by Rain Graves

It wasn't often they tore down a building in San Francisco, much less often that they replaced it with a brand-spanking-new one. The woman was a blonde with bouncy platinum curls that edged around her chin just right. Definitely a dye-job, and she was one of the lucky ones, with rounded hips that fit well into her 1950's retro red dress. When she stepped off the curb to cross the street everyday, construction workers stared and were too spellbound to whistle.

It was a shock to find her body on the fifth floor of the unfinished building one fine, foggy morning. One of the men found her on a makeshift dirty mattress, facedown, arms askew and she was naked as the day she was born. A soft white sheet had been drawn lazily up to her hips; covering her lower extremities...he'd moved it to look. He ogled the curve of her breast that peaked out from beneath her arm, so milky white.

There was a milk-crate with an empty bottle of Tylenol knocked over, and a dirt-caked phone, which probably hadn't been touched. It was just for show. The body was clean, it seemed. She had been the first, but not the last. Certainly not the most elaborate. It was crude work at best, but it had been enough to make the man who found her pull his hardened cock out of his pants and stroke it. No one was around...no one would notice. The cops found his semen in the footprints. He'd tried to scrape the wet spot off the lumber with his boot, and for a moment he was a suspect.

Until they found the second body, and the third. He wasn't smart enough to pull off this kind of delicate crime. Just effected much like the rest; she looked so much like Norma Jean.

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