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Should the Moons Come Over

Mark Rubin
The University of Montana

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SHOULD THE MOONS COME OVER

by

Mark S. Rubin

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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

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Approved by:

Madeleine De Frece

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

Date
For my parents --
   *Nu, he writes poems?*

Special thanks to Blue
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Sometimes

The young carp sputter drops of air
at a leisurely pace, pop--
a slow day. On the hill north of town, bells
ring with devotion. Eight o'clock
and the loved ones giving thanks
go on for better days I too look forward
knowing where to walk,
to wake small freckles blooming
casually out of place
and take in for a change, as water,
night losses of private moons.
Some people should care less
for their own good.

Reynaldo, Reynaldo, come out to play.
I promise I listen to what you say.

Better unsaid than say yes
I've watered the catalpas,
they should be happy Paused
in the overlay of laughter they wave
and wave, for what are moments
in a foreign tongue. Sometimes
I'm at home with what I've lost.
Stars and starlike fireflies comb
the filaments. Where does that leave me?
Leapfrog

1

From Moccasin Getaway, we name-called their kind Hasidic frogs
But never Tanta Malloff, her pushcart
and one sneaker worn for the little toe peeking out. Her voice, Hot potato, kasha kanishes, stretched out lazy afternoons upstate New York.

In back of Greenspan's Bungalows, men congregated like rows of beets early Sabbath dawns Knee-high in water, they tied thin leather bands to their foreheads and turned their white asses to the gold sun casting dimes in the quiet well.

Nights before knowing one another, the way Adam knew Eve, the standing joke was how the husband takes off his black skullcap. The wife wakes, finds it draping her thighs and him gone, yells, My God, did you fall in?

That long summer, rocks poked up their noses from creekbeds--I thought He did. Cattails bowed their brown, sad heads and we cut them clean, soaking them all day in vats of kerosene oil Nights we blazed open, five strong

walking where owls flew
We were the Golden Bullfrogs.
The jukebox hummed Duke, Duke of Earl outside the casino, fog followed tufts of wind. And we were wind's right hand men. Big kids knew it and left us alone. Weekends,
they cooed amour at the Hole 423——
the back cellar room damp
in chaise lounges, metal ash trays
and half-cans of enamel green,
the green of bungalows Kelly painted
when not fishing the Mayberg,
pant legs rolled up, black skin

blacker than coal, pumping clouds
to beat hell: a Salem cigarette——
nothing French about it.
In bed under a goose-down blanket
and the usual chill,
I wondered what the girls
of Hasidic mothers did beside pray

Faces awkwardly angelic, beyond
where minnows tumbled over and over
the stone path, water frothing,
they'd lie down, sun
down their dresses, a careful weave
of hands, God carefully woven.
And I'd wake to the drone of bullfrogs.

2

Each morning the sun took
from the river, and catfish
fed deeper in stagnant water
Often as not, with no fish
I came home with nothing, but
honest to God, a watermoc
skittered across river to land.

Never owned a gun
But I could pop a rabbit eye
in no time flat by slingshot.
In the meadow cut-over
to school, I notched all those birds
I could have killed,
and the one proud owl who refused,
even with marbles, in a Dutch Elm.
I tied twigs with crabgrass
into crosses I felt bad.
Three rocks above Beaver Dam
Linda Bromberg and I took off our clothes.
We lay there and didn't touch
in the sun, the rocks warmed over
A fly landed new Linda's hairs
combing back and forth and there,
for the first time,
I felt the rise of warm wings
give way floating goldenrod down
the downed wings of grouse.

In my room a school
of elusive goldfish fanned
a nervous pace to keep alive.
I took their nosing the glass
for stupidity, then for hours
wrote down what they never stopped to say

An orange pumplight hummed
and sometimes, I really wondered about God.
Would His fingers look old?
What happened when His friends
drew Him too serious to believe?
I made believe, once, and for all,
our lives important.
Pinpoint

Before their wings give out
Golden Monarchs
parade the wind. Beyond

two rays glide over
a sandbar and from the reeds
hundreds of blue eyes bivalve

into solitude. How far down
before the clouds are colorless
and blind? A King Crab looks up

after millions of years.
Very far
On First Arrival

I gave Reynaldo two bits to kick in
the ribcage of a dachshund floating up
where two angels played tag,

and one said your mother's like us
and the other cried long enough
for stars to imagine the cold

and pull grey blankets up and overhead,
long enough for Reynaldo's beard
to silver and me float along

with a pet dog Crickett poisoned
for looking the wrong places, said Mom,
then she went looking too, said Dad,

to play Mah-Jongg, a game
where you mix and turn over
tiles face down, draw new hands

and start again, said Dad
to play Mah-Jongg, with her friend
Eva Thomas like Reynaldo,

who's one mean angel,
and that is why
no water falls quietly home.
Instructions for Assembling a Collage

Paste on blacktop a class of children all lips drawn in smiles.
One pops a fly ball high center Show him proud, tagging third.

Let Wisdom Through Books bit into brick doorsills, vines well clipped not to wander
Behind the evergreen bush, a child cupping his hands, an insect, his face intent on a praying mantis.

The ball high center disappears in the sun, reappears a pen, falling to earth, an opal
Show live action.

In the far corner of the collage a teacher waves to a child in the bush and he, turning to her, turns again to his empty hands.
Show the mantis, forelegs holding the opal
Entry

Stars fall silver among angels
and Eddie Phillips, who took his grey
Appaloosa the scenic way to heaven.
If he were here now and able to redo
this noble entry into words,
would he tell how a balloon sails
all friends waiting a fresh burst?
There are countless ways to fail.

Brushing the sky's pink belly
nights in Hutchinson, Kansas, those damn
wheatfields and I held on and on.
My kind will go down
nameless, I am afraid,
laughing ourselves nameless In the fall grass
Eddie and I, and the summer cicadas crackled.

I float off on
this red balloon I float away,
Sonray kulili mi asanya,
a second wind inside out,
windway shanti.
In the scheme of great surrenders
my hands fold gracefully
Our Last Time Together

Class, this chapter, we have what is known by generic name Digitalis. Be specific—purpurea. Take note of the showy buds running hit or miss to the end. The dried leaf speeds the heart, in medical circles, well and good of glycosides.

Class, don't confuse Lucifer with luciferin. The former fell from heaven, the latter flies there vis-a-vis. We've nothing to do with rebels. Think small. On the final, don't say you hold a special dark. I'll know you've let slip the object of light.

We came far short this term, class. You used to think redworms mating were fingers holding on for good luck. We now talk clitellum and terricola: they have no teeth, they swallow earth and still, we don't know what they do this for. All in all, school's school and fun's fun.

Fill your pockets with air in pounds per square inch and from the genus Rana: bullfrogs.
Skimming Flat Rocks to Mexico

I am proud to say
we have come this far for no reason.
Content with hotdogs and one out,
bingo at the K. of C.
where women's legs hang
like fresh loaves of cloud--
we have adjusted well

Despite what is said
soured flat with no rhyme
or reason to ring, we still have fun
in obscene diversion, resorting to cliche
and jokes about the alphabet:
the letter b too small
for intercourse, m too nasal
to make headway. A good life.

At social outings
we blurt indescretions with Hiram Walker,
little tips on housebreaking a dog.
When we ask a second helping
of carpe diem, friends turn polite
and mention Mexico: a few live wires,
a marlin or two under the belt--
you'll dream opals forever. For us,
local bedrock. Two blocks and a mile down,
the Palace Hotel on Fridays: Mexico.
Third Wing of the Jewish Hospital

In dim hours of curfew, the pillcart rattles by rooms I fight not to know by heart. Doctor Kokanokas, what does he want to hear? Where words have no use, raw nails, undercoats of grey everywhere. Two days every week, he feels he can do nothing. Tuesday and Thursday, he is right. Blanketed for no one to find her, Marian hides that she is hiding herself, the matinee, the yellow pear on the table, nylon veiling a face and the haze not night. Now harmonized by needle, who combs pin-holes of light, light hair? Meine schöne she hears, go this way then that. Bending her knees, she dances to laugh.

Tommy Ritter does not laugh. His lips wear indentations of an overbite overlooked in shame. I see him zigzagging bush to bush, bowstring taut. The enemy, long not there, a friend, an apple tree cut back for small gains underground.

Sundays, I strap on 12 ounce gloves to pound a punching bag. Once behind a rusted Packard, I flayed a lamb and went to bed trembling. Mr Feingold is asking to play dominoes Our hands are swirling tiles. I am in the recreation room.
IN VIEW OF WHAT IS LEFT
Love Story

1. The tadpole

The happy frog first lived
loyally, it is said,
a tadpole among ferns
and repetitions of itself. Sleek-finned
sunfish fluted their gills daily
in violet display
where salamanders so free-wiggled, some
felt them to surpass the unicell

Deep in the bluer levels, undiscovered
with neither leg nor big gills to speak of,
the tadpole grazed what seemed
a backwash of unimportances: green

moss, a shoe, Red
Devil scars the years embedded.
Wings, not those of angels, of maple
seeds opened and fell. Falling

through eyelets, islands of moonlight
bloomed and stayed the dark. Sun
or no sun, bluegills within
held a sac of continuous breath

that kept them light.
Unable to weave through a shoe's eye
should the salamander, after all
twist and turns are said and done, be held
to this? The tadpole
in a flick could turn
a swivelling dive gracefully down
among flowers de luce, friend to the hawk

dragon soaring the beyond
if that somewhere had been intended
to mean more than a fallen arch
in a size 9 boot off shore.
On shore, slowish on bone haunches, bullfrogs grumped. Mimicking o's of water, the tadpole, its two fans bursting a promise of lungs, the tingle of new legs.

2 The frog

To think one afternoon two frogs met nude to their necks in cress, their yellow throats distended. If either beheld in the other marks of a golden tale, how the one pitted against a moat full of moccasins and crocodiles, bloats and holds firm to some even shore, and there, squat lotus on the oarlock of the boat of the king and queen: Genus Rana.

If either beheld emerald eyes or the honed architecture of lips, the tympanic membrane, the little webs that made them good leapers, he or she didn't let on.

Light fell evening and mosquitoes fell zillion-fold, a megalopolis of whines, a paste of opals to frogs.

Their white tongues flicked out flickered out again then back and their white bellies filled. A light rain cuddled the reeds.

Not as green lumps they mud-hunkered that winter's hell-freeze, a game like hide-and-seek where the buried lose their turn, but as golden minstrels. If those notes frogs give under ice rose forever, who could have seen offhand Spring polishing an old gemstone?

Footpads dovetailed, their eyes puffed open four months of sleep, and they undid themselves in a whirlpool of eddies. A new world to the top, middle, and bottom feeders.
all bumping cavalier on the sandbar.
A spill of eggs jelled away
and the two frogs droned.

Loud,
a song over cattails bent in wind
off the Wallowas--a boy
and his ten year old pet gun.
The weeds crackled the way
people talk to stay alive,
to think how, this afternoon
Is it a wonder then
the two heard only themselves?
Not the boy softly clucking his tongue;
his eyes flicking down a bead of yellow
at the plump legs
that made a good leaper.
The wind tipped its hollow cup,
failng to note on some odd shore
the wonder of one frog
who heard the whine of opals crack--
and splashed into emeralds of new Spring.
The Snow Leaves Impartially

The same woman is biting her nails
on the second floor of my imagination
If not, she ought to be
and I stealing her viewpoint:
a new ecstasy in the Spadefoot Toad,
a cooing of bird names in bed:
my Indigo Bunting,
my Bohemian Waxwing.

Say anything but snow is closing down
in serious ways
on the eighteenth of the wrong month.
Lie that the night lets up—Alaskan,
where there's no shame
tying your wife down naked—

and I'll lie that impressions left
by knowing too much really matter,
that points of view won't die
with impartial grins
on their faces I worry
the snow is that way
It Has Come to This

Happy, like flat chested girls
the night of the great prom,
the retarded from Saint Theresa
believe wholehearted majesties of birds
on earth as in heaven. Somewhere,
starfish are floating light
years behind, and I,
I should be in Caribbean water
sipping daiquiris
laughing the good life in

Vast numbers of people do have fun
though I'm not fool enough to think
this important. In the face of wondrous
miracles, nothing happens, to a great extent.
When it does, They will ask
how are you. I will say fine thanks
and They'll bring lobster thermidor.
Again, the day and I move on
for what is finally in reach.
On the First Day of Spring

In Tucson the paraplegics lean heavily forward. Were they not contained, they'd fall dazed as a covey of quail, in that abusive noon hear faint raspings of ladybugs. Her clicketing paused, I saw a girl place the insect on her forefinger and ask it all things under the sun. One year, two, three, when will I marry, fly away, oh, fly away home. The crippled know a friend when they see one. How accurately they love.

Along the field's edge bouquets of women flower asking the way to Mount Hood, the roses, how big their petals. There in willow grass, quail fly when they resemble themselves, their restive heads no longer bobbing. Sylvia, blue star on the spread of eternity, kissed the earth and made it cry, your house is on fire, your children will burn. Tonight, a covey of girls coo the dust of a spoken name.
Muscadine, a Southern Grape

This evening my beloved wheeled into the arbor and extended a handful of grapes to a bluejay. I do not mind growing old. But who will tend her three-minute soft boiled egg, hold her head and say yes, you are doing much better today.

When the retina holds open the last half hour of life as it disappears, the optic nerve rolling open clouds, you and I again will float down canals, drifting apart, one half moving away so fast it calls the other: follow.

In the shade of an apricot tree, do not begrudge a full-hearted cricket his song, legs formed for leaping Words ill-formed to fit the feeling I take with me. I do not mind growing casually out of range. There fall the bluejays They are laughing a millennium.
A Reason for Butterflies

Sundays, the poor stream
to Port Angeles in their best
and throw bon voyages
to no one in particular
Their kisses live
as butterflies. They fly
great distances
miles in width and many hours,
even days, passing.
Where they come from,
where they go are not known.
I forget why I'm waving.
An Evening of Quail

There is Jamison, sitting in the turn of July laid bare on his face. Should anyone ask, he is fine thanks and the family likewise. Last week a sealgasket blew on the quarter-round and took out a row of butterleaf. And there's Georgiana, proud of her baby cute and baptized Ruth Nicole.

Women shoot free pool Saturday nights Their bodies twist English on the bank shots, along the creeks that run the Ozarks thin, twisting with their lean men. Their children play at being normal and can shoot the eyes off running quail. Everyone is warming up.

The accordion player stumbles a two-step across the floor, his wife, flopping time I call out double rounds and praise the rye, gunny sacks heaped high with co-op seed, and wild seed blazing the field. Come wind or slaps of water on the Joe Bryon plain, a hungry man belongs where there is singing.
PULLING FOR SHORE
The Beachcomber

Days he'd comb what some had given up for lost. A walking lunatic, they said and mummed on, did you hear him night before last mind you, to himself no less?

And we no less were the same, behind the dunes, heaved handful of Arabia. Sometimes I'd make up white lies to friends wanting me in stickball or ringtaw

and wait like a sanderling the comber to pass, to not look my way. Once I saw him uncover a silver dollar, open a window not there and skip it out to sea.

If he heard the fluid cries of two gulls in flight floating off, what then? Anemones wave in unison, hands to water like noontide stars.

Undressed, he hand dug out the sand to bodily form and lay down, one arm alone, one free as a child sifting another land from neck to toe Over this casket he broke bits of toast-- and waited the wings of white whales And they came. They came as he thought they would on warm sand sang softly

you've done well. Sand dollar in hand, a warm wind parted the part of me that woke in that foam wash, and for a moment thought I saw blue gulls, passing into blue.
Rowing through the Fog

Limbs of kinnikinnick
pray like determined monks,
some with capes.
There are no lepers in this parish.
My feet are clean.

Only bats know the truth of shapes.
They fly into waves that don't come back.

The dry croaks of bullfrogs catch
in their throats. They love the moon.
When I was seven, father loved me.
When I was six, he died
and I, the best frog catcher

A rowboat by Mayberg's dock
has a bottom plank gone.
Green algae has taken over.
Minnows feed in the stern.
We climb aboard and pull,
and pull for shore
Jonah, Son of Amittai

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.

Jonah 1:17

In the whale's great belly
Jonah thought, clouds are not loyal,
and rose on the inswill
of cumbersome octopus and herring.
He felt not sure of friends'
to-do pontifications,
peace-be-with you's of hands
for the long drift,
and him overboard holding
the short stick's end. Not where,
but how in the slosh that pulled
him under, he felt the lone
moon, he believed the moon
a breath hole God looked in by.
Stars yawned on the Persian Gulf
Jonah thought of his good wife
selling camel-hair rugs;
his daughter, new buds of fruit.
Stones don't eat food or make it over
into themselves That real wanting
not to want. Not simply did Jonah see
through eyes that see all things
the same, but how.
A minnow in air freed one second gleams
an aqua jewel. The moon, the sun,
the whale's glass eye glistened
and Jonah rose and rose lightly
among countless friends, all held
in a blubber that kep those things
great and small, mostly warm.
Following the Albacore

The older men bolt
themselves in,
their intermittent trickle,
the Tokay wine, and always
they believe in that slight pause
they are flowers of musk
I see them breaking pace
in the cracks of dawn,
men worth quarter-shares
of a tuna run
and know they will never run
the Ivory Coast.
Men who live with bursitis
and a favorite chair

Two degrees port, albacore
running. Tomorrow, I'll hire on,
over dinner brag love came
with ease, the woman in Coos Bay
who thought of angels breathing
a wind we invited.
I can afford to pray
Letter Poem to Griffith

So Dave, give my everything of a kiss
to the cat's meow.
I don't hold it against you
or your damn hundred-fold ways
of making the cat jump the moon
that she believed
her life, you and not me.

Whose idea was it to picnic?
And was it November
La Strada played our lives thin?
Let me guess. You live
in a house, moderately white
with two dogs, a horse
and one normal cat craving parakeet soufflé.

Tomorrow, I fly North Orient.
Clouds will flitter braggadocio,
confetti thrown before my feet. In annals
the world over, my record catch
will be recorded. In China, silkscreened
on the cover of all honorable books.

I expect the earth dreams
the moon white
in some far planetary vision of God.
Tomorrow. I fly Northwest 109, Butte
non-stop to Billings.
I talk on the mating habits of worms,
how their strong upward segments go limp,
turn to wave goodnight. And Dave,
cut short, it is goodnight.
Should the Moons Come Over

In that July we seldom speak of these waters ran more than pickerel past Mayberg's bend. I too wait a strike of clean death dear frog, swimming the backwash off other shores. Even now, reeling you in limp over water stars rise to whisper you home. You are home where ripples bow in the wash of countless pebbles. Here, a bat zigzags for mosquitoes, and what is left, the moorhen sings.

Why won't they close their eyes when they know full well there is nothing more to be said. Craig, I hate you for this, those pupils gaping wide and me finding you where two quarter-moons found your leg among cattails The bullfrog you were after will breathe a slow winter under mud. As you limped across the Mayberg did you notice in stale foam handballs bobbing too dead to bounce? Don't think you know more than me. For an hour I blew air down your mouth and watched your lungs rise then fall. The bullfrogs, Craig. The bullfrogs are calling to one another They are pairing up.