

Noah Falck

Noah Falck is an elementary school teacher living in Dayton, Ohio. His work appears or is forthcoming in journals such as *Gulf Coast*, *LIT*, *Barn Owl Review*, *Past Simple*, *Pilot*, *Word For/Word*, *horse less review*, and *Eucalyptus*. He blogs at <http://corporatelibrary.blogspot.com>.

To those who live life like a deer in headlights

Your thoughts are fragile pictorials.
Inky fingerprinted tunnels clinking
with strobe light, a painting in darkness.

You interrupt yourself while shaving.
Cold water song in the sink,
the refrain immediate, constant.

Listen closely and the world
will remind you less and less
of one massive county fair

where you stand motionless in a field
of flannel shirts, a melting snowcone
dying your hand a punch bowl red.

Remembering What Never Happened

Through the cracked window you hear the beginning of rain
and chord progressions dropping in puddles.

You picture voices building a family
on a terrain littered with shotgun shells.

Then some mistreated lyrics arrive
in hotwired taxis on the arms of women
with hair styles that match their mood.

Though, your eyes seem to stop on the man
speaking in echoes. You want to walk over to him
but your digestive system is launching into protest,
a viral popup menu inside your stomach.

You haul yourself outside into fading magic marker light,
the neighborhood is speechless. The air reeks of popsicle sticks
and the minty breath of designated drivers.

You take out your notebook to get it all down:
the story of the story of the story
when it came to you in a puddle,
first the melody, then the lyrics.

So you grind your foot into the cobblestone street
trying to remember, you sound your loud voice into the alley
only for it to return at dawn streaked with liquor.

In the Club of Farmland Thunder

There were lips and flip-flops
and lips and flip-

flops and there were cigarette
smokers French kissing one another

and flip-flops and there were two
large women beneath a strobe light

at a small round table dressed
in bullwhip garments whose hearts

were beating out of their chests,
whose occasional hiccups shook the ground

like a trampled minefield, and everyone
danced around them as if stomping through snow,

as if changing a tire in a thunderstorm that
split open the sky.

High School Basketball

I was reading their lips
the way they exchanged words
to one another was unworldly
and they kept at it through the entire
fourth quarter. This Catholic kid with a golden
cross glinting around his neck, his Irish red
roots pasted down the middle of his scalp
was playing skintight defense, jockstrap
to jockstrap and he was calling the other
point guard, the one with the big nose,
a Christ Killer – and I noticed a slight change
in the boy with the big nose, after he digested
these words. His eyes glazed over like fresh
donut holes but the game went on, back
and forth with more words spewing
from the Catholic kid's mouth –
something about how Jews should play
in Holocaust uniforms, (though it was really
difficult to make out with the lips moving
the way they did.) Eventually, the Catholic kid's face
tightened up much like underwear stretched
during a hallway weggy and you could tell
the full court press was beginning to wear on him.
His skin color blotched to a bright Radio Flyer red,
and the boy with the big nose sprouted a smile
on the side of his mouth, his jump shot was as smooth
as many of the pregnant stomachs that filled
the outer portion of the stands.
And time was running away like an unloved pet.
The court appeared to be a recycle bin
where you could use and reuse racial slurs.
As time expired, I squinted first at the scoreboard
and then at the two boys lining up to shake hands.
The boy with the big nose shook
the Catholic kid's hand graciously
telling him how well he had played.
The Catholic kid called him
a Christ Killing Jew
and they hit the showers respectively.

At the Convention of Farmer Tans

All these people who don't have anything
else to do with an afternoon
make this world a scarier place,

scary like daytime television.

Drivers speed by one after another
like lead footed bankrobbers,
their faces bulging from their helmets
as if crammed with oversized Twinkies.

Twinkies.

There is a man next to me
with a freshly inked neon-orange
Nascar tattoo and I can't look away from it.

I keep thinking of him with his *Nascar* tattoo
out in the world, reading the funnies,
sticking his finger in the peanut butter jar,
kneeling in the cereal aisle, right next to Captain Crunch
to ask for his girlfriend's hand in marriage.

At the top of the stands
not far from the announcers' booth
a leathery group of men have gathered.
They bump against each other, tangle arms during high fives,
and chant obscenities at everything that moves.

We are going nowhere for the sake of going nowhere.

Noise spreads across the drag strip like a breakout of Sars,
beyond half-naked, teary-eyed babies
and those with home-shaven haircuts.

I begin to sympathize with those who live near airports
as the drivers simultaneously cut through the finish line
no one is paying attention, including myself.

To Be A Co-Star

What if it was all a filmstrip slowly unreeling, clicking away
in a dark, dark room where your ancestors advised you
about car maintenance and explained love as an assembly line,
no one part more important than the next.

And inside an afternoon nap you composed dreams
in the color of a brown chemical with the depth of a miner's soul
and glamour of a breakdancer's heart, trying to figure out
where you would be if you were always in the right place at the right time.

Little do you know it would be a few miles down the road
where every face is happy and unhappy at the same time.
There is the music of trapped flies drumming against a sealed up window
and a cranky waitress with another mouth to feed, her apron stained
with yesterday's chili special.

Perhaps I am there and recognize you with a nod
before fading into a background light years away.

The Virgin Figurine

Her attention is constantly focused on her high blood pressure.

She blames her mother, a woman who spends every afternoon working at the church thrift store.

Her father only tells her she needs to find a husband, someone with God swelling up inside his heart.

*

Backing down her parent's driveway she takes several deep breathes then screams the Lord's name in vain.

Joe Cocker suspiciously wails along leaking from the backseat speakers.

*

When alone she puffs unfiltered cigarettes, and coughs unintentionally through the screen window of her bedroom.

Today her computer is frozen on a jpeg of some Beverly Hills breasts.

She zooms in and squints at the scars. They remind her of the early Byzantine arches.

Looking out her window she spots a neighbor zipping up his pants.

She likes the way people forget the basics.

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Uptown her brother smiles at people, a cardboard sign in his lap. Traffic gushes by like a polluted stream. All of his thoughts come to him in song.

*

She met a man in the women's bathroom at the Hollywood South Movie Theater.

He was helping his daughter go pee in the "big girls' stall."

They struck up a conversation about Ewan McGregor. So charming, so innovative, so full of shit.

She checked his finger for a ring and when there was no sign of one she blushed like the tip of an unused crayon.

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In the waiting room she flipped pages, studied glossy celebrity bodies. Everybody's breasts looked dangerous.

She thought about her mother and their disagreements, how she would shut out the world at any moment simply by pressing play on her audio books.

*

She smiled as the doctor led her back to his office.

X-rays of women's chests were framed at eye level along the hallway.

The image of over inflated water balloons flexed happily in her mind.

Childhood Narrative

The parking lot was an island we visited.
Bigwheels imitating life. Wiffleball bats
lined with electrical tape. Pickle and paper
route cramps. We lived our lives in the backyard.
Zach swinging from the birch, loose pages
of an atlas in his back pocket. Sun down.
Record player. Haunted shadows
of the alphabet tree. Then a hallway
with spaz attacks. The street was an alley.
The alley a street, through the window.
Grandpa's shotgun hidden beneath a blanket
in the trunk. A cat with the face of static paranoia,
carpeted floors sprawling with action figures.
Dad's arms drowning in Doberman Pincher blood.
A singular sadness. A backyard burial. The sound
of accidents always trailing between rooms,
echoing down hallways.

*Ohio Plains: A Wallpaper Lullaby
for Jane*

On an unemployed afternoon
beneath a skyline
no one notices
the streets repaved
themselves into a kind
of unspoken history
(summer in the sad suburbs)
where the pop songs
were blaring, into an atmosphere
full of shaken tambourines
and romance West Virginia style
on lawn blankets
so radiant in color
you felt like someone else,
which was what it was all about.
Everything was brimming
with a longhaired energy,
there were tie-dyed
band aides wrapped around
tie-dyed fingernails
and protesters dancing
through sunsets and sit-ins,
convincing people of a new
freedom, a new love,
until the forecast predicted
a fifty-two percent chance of rain,
forty-eight percent chance of falling
in love with a complete stranger
and no chance of knowing
what your America will be.

from *the Dayton Poem*

Those people
who gather
your empty
Coke cans
in the alley
are the same
people sleeping
without pillows
beneath the highway
and they have parked
their shopping carts
before the green light
of Main Street
as a kind of fuck you.

from the Dayton Poem

Monument Avenue copper-coated Orville
the designated smiling circle
between police cruisers and bus stop benches
where the sun will never hit your shoulder
where time slows down
as the classifieds blow and blow
and girls on ice skates form friendships
in front of signs restricting you to set up telescopes,
and more signs prohibiting eye
contact with bicyclist or people without chins
ideas will tug at you until you feed the ducks
dismissing the sign that reads *Don't Feed the Ducks*
you'll stand up and shake your head
then stare into the sunset
but not before noticing the sidewalks
and how they all lead down a hill
and into the river

from *the Dayton Poem*

A tiny hand reaches out
from a pile of roadside leaves
think of the next American body in song
the sound and its trenchcoat flashing
the hills, clouds carving their way
out of morning and later
sprouting from inside a buckeye
with the patience of a camp councilor.

from *The Dayton Poem*

You are outside the shadow
of a little wobbly man

you behind camouflage binoculars
watching something really historic

you are approaching the shoulders
of giants, looking like a failed film festival

you are off camera, out of gas
on the interstate crying

you are a pedestrian shrinking in the rearviewmirror
of a teenager's dream

you are naming your children
after broken condoms.

from the Dayton Poem

The rising temperature had hands
as the hour approached eastbound
through Columbus burning like ozone.

Everyone was singing from the backseat.
*If this doesn't work out, towel off
and meet me forever.*

I'll show you what's really inside.
Rust, Gramps always said,
is a sign of being well traveled.

Can you stop being the center of my attention
and stop with the open-ended dreams,
seasons like test drivers bumping into each other.

The photograph shows you nothing, you need
to look through it, beyond it, to where you think
Wilbur sits nervously with clutched hands & unlaced shoes.