

CHRIS CARRIER

ALMOST 30

Marry me, Britney Spears,
calendargloss in a Hagerstown Exxon,
plastic doll with comb & microphone.
You're a Pepsi poster, screensaver, a bookmark on my browser.
First time I saw you on MTV I shushed the room.
I was nicknamed oo-la-la.
People laughed because they didn't understand our love.

Marry me, schoolgirl uniform,
white blouse, plaid miniskirt, kneehigh socks.
Glitter eyeshadow, hiphugger stretchpants,
your midriff is an island,
your diamondstudded bellybutton a city I want to get lost in.

Nautilus arms, Siren neck.
Marry me for the tent I had in the backyard
where I spun the bottle with preunderwire breasts
& fell on the birthplace of thighs.
Where kissing with tongues meant in love.

Marry me, tanningbed skin, tender clavicle.
You're in checkout aisles on *Rolling Stone* & *Teen Beat*.
For *Glamour* you wore a white dress & pearls
sang from your ears.
My skin is becoming a trinket, my fingers twigs.
Rhododendron flesh, foxblaze on Balsam cliffsides,
know I'm far from home & dreaming
of the lighthouse on Cullowhee Mountain.
You, its conesweep of light.

Marry me, snowcover melting, kudzu that swallows mountains.
The girl I last kissed was a girlfriend who wasn't mine.
It was at a party, behind the house.
I used my tongue & kicked over a bowl of grapes.
She had your eyes & sang "Hit Me Baby."
Marry me for my tongue
or its disappearance, its never-having.

Angle of deflection, figure
accessorized with dark skull necklaces,
marry me in Greece.
Marry me before night bleeds death.
I want to carry you across a threshold,
be burned (or rescued) by lace, your corset & princess sleeves.

Corinthian pillar, barefoot,
locked in a cage with a tiger.
Marry me, while an albino python twists your shoulders,
& while you're dancing an encore dance.

TOMAZ SALAMUN (IF YOU EXIST)

I saw you
You were on the back
of a squirrel
When it reared up
on its hind legs
you were swallowed by
the grass It ran
across the street you
hanging dear life its tail
It stood on the porch
I saw its white chest
its small frame
I threw it sunflower seeds
A cat startled it
When it broke for a tree
I saw you'd disappeared
It made me thankful

*

TOMAZ SALAMUN (IF YOU EXIST)

Something happened today.
 Something I can't explain.
Yes, a good thing.
 It was because there are
no words to give it.
 It made me believe.
Sure, faith needs renewing.
 It's human & so am I.
The something was
 white & burned,
like light or steam or both.
 It was shaped like
a pupa & it pulsated.
 It made me dizzy.
I wanted to call it poetry,
 but that wasn't it I think.
It was probably only god.

*

TOMAZ SALAMUN (IF YOU EXIST)

You are glass
A fly passing through it

You are hydrogen
molecules
a colonnade

Khlebnikov's ghost
passing through them

Wind meeting glass
Wings ivory

You are autumn
Me passing through it

You are grass
You are as it catching fire
You are it passing it

A leaf landing
soft & upsidedown
where I'm breathing

*

TOMAZ SALAMUN (IF YOU EXIST)

I'm talking a lot
these days
what it's like being
a monster.

It ain't easy for
others to take
seriously.
Or love it & show it
to their parents.

Can't even show
the elected
officials. If
you can't trust them,
who can you?

*

TOMAZ SALAMUN (IF YOU EXIST)

You'll be converted to
html, digitized, suspended
in a disk, a silverbath
written by a laser.
Looked as though it was
happening already last time
I saw you.

The Internet
will get fat, people will
stop trying to train dogs
to run beside them.
Only wine & blindness
will remain.

Would that
be enough to raise
children with or keep
the tongue exercised?

*

TOMAZ SALAMUN (IF YOU EXIST)

I've been telling people
about your hands, how

when you spoke of snowfall
or steam in Rumi's

poems, you'd tear them
in strips like cotton,

humptydumpty them,
as is done in cartoons

or propheticism. They
never get there always was

light leftover. Did you
see it? I never say

it's a vial around my neck
& that most nights

a figure shows up,
pesters me for one glance.