

A foaming dog chased me down the street.
I hopped a fence, got down on all fours and snarled back.

When I squished a rabbit in my driveway
I smiled because it was not a child's head.

GHAZAL: 3

A man without hands dances in the aisle
jerks his arms like machine guns.

In the corner a man soaked with sweat
kicks and chops at the wall.

In the backroom an Indian bleeds
broken glass from his forehead.

The bartender keeps the heads of his pet dogs
mounted behind the bar.

Men shuffle their feet like angry bulls.
It is too dark to see the stains on the floor.

-- Jim Daniels

Warren MI

THE MAN WHO SET THE FIRE for Russell Edson

A man comes running into the room screaming that the room next door is on fire and that everyone must get out right away. Everyone goes into the room next door to see if the man is telling the truth. When everyone finds that the man is not telling the truth everyone continues what everyone was doing before in the new room. The same man bursts into the new room screaming that the room everyone just left is on fire and that everyone must get out right away. Somewhat skeptical, everyone leaves the room and returns to the old room. When everyone again finds no fire everyone continues what everyone was doing before in the old room. The same man rushes into the old room screaming that the room everyone is in will burst into flames in exactly 3 minutes and that if everyone wants to be saved everyone will have to get out right away. Everyone bursts out in incredible laughter. Everyone continues what everyone was doing before the man first entered the room. The man now runs down the hallway and returns with

a can of gasoline which he proceeds to pour all over the floor. He lights the gasoline, stands back, and screams to everyone that everyone must quickly move to the room next door where he will soon be showing home movies of the fire. When everyone does not listen to him, he exits as everyone in the room is burned to death. Next door, the man who set the fire is watching the home movie with tears in his eyes since he unexpectedly fell in love with one of the women who was burned to death.

THE HYPOCRITE

The house cat had been chasing the house mouse around the room for hours until it finally trapped the mouse in a corner of the room. All of this time, the house bird had been watching from its perch in a cage overhead. There was nowhere for the mouse to go but upward since the cat had blocked off every other avenue of escape. The bird, realizing it was the only one who could save the mouse from being eaten, quickly flew down and snatched up the little mouse as the outraged cat did somersaults trying to reach the bird's cage where the mouse was now safely lodged. "Why did you save me from the cat?" asked the mouse of the bird. "Because I identified with your predicament. Cats not only eat mice, but also birds. Did you not know that?" asked the bird of the mouse. "I did know that," replied the mouse, "but I also know that there are birds that eat mice, and I am truly hoping that you are not one of them." "To tell you the truth, I am one of them," replied the bird, "and it is also true that I plan to eventually eat you myself, but the main reason why I saved you was because I sincerely felt sorry for you, having to go through such torture before the cat was ready to enjoy you. We are not so barbaric. When we want a mouse, we just swoop down and lift our prey off its feet and devour it immediately. We do not taunt and tease our prey nor inflict any kind of torture on our victims. We are as honest and fair as a predator can be." The mouse was now sitting there with a terror-stricken expression on its face. It took one last look at the bird, then jumped through the bars of the cage onto the floor where the cat was now waiting. After an hour of being chased around the room, the mouse was finally cornered and eaten by the cat, while the bird just sat there on its perch with a scowl on its face.

-- Jeffrey A. Z. Zable

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