

all the knives, forks, glasses and various utensils  
are sticky with the poison.  
We must wash our hands a lot on Mondays  
and try not to rub our eyes.

x.

At the Christmas party, held in the Aztec room,  
everyone is out of uniform and in real-life clothes  
and nearly everyone is dancing.  
Maria with Lupito, Alberto with Bertha.  
I dance with Andres,  
a fast two step where my arm rests over his shoulder,  
a basic John Travolta where we sweat,  
and Cumbia where I fumble  
and Andres makes fine patterns with his small black shoes.  
The music is so insistent  
that even Manuel takes a waitress on his arm  
and cuts loose.

Later,  
Andres and I sit in a booth on station four.  
I say that it's strange to be sitting in the spot  
where only hours ago I had been serving enchiladas,  
that it's strange to be relaxing  
where I work.

He nods.

In a day we will be back  
Andres for his tenth year,  
I for my seventh month.  
When a grey roach walks across the table  
we make no move to kill it.  
"Siempre la cucarachas," says Andres.  
"Siempre El Patio."

-- Jill Young

Long Beach CA

THE GIRL WHO'LL SAY ANYTHING

i.

doesn't know how to stink. Every morning,  
all day, and half the night she uses every  
imaginable soap, shampoos full of protein,  
covers herself with lotions and powders,  
takes special pills. Her very sym-  
pathetic, long-suffering, handsome, morose,  
sommambule, tall, coughing, leering, leak-  
ing husband also tries every method in  
his little black book but has been unable to  
make her stink.

ii.

goes up to Leroy at the bar and refuses to tell him the secret. Leroy in return refuses to tell her a joke and then everyone gets involved, refusing to buy beer and wine and pickled eggs and play pool and shuffleboard and punch each other and break the glasses. The bartender refuses to kick them out and this goes on for a secret interval.

iii.

unlocks her refrigerator. She takes out the butter and the tomatoes and the lettuce with brown streaks and the dripping blue yogurt, puts them in piles on the kitchen table and slowly, deliciously counts them. She has nightmares about these treasures shrivelling up and stinking. It took years of work and cunning and scrimping to fill her refrigerator with this wonderful butter and tomatoes and lettuce with brown streaks and dripping blue yogurt, and sometimes she wonders whether that secret pleasure indulged in three times a day is worth it.

iv.

loathed the sight of Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays. Thursdays and Fridays. And on weekends she hated them with a worse passion. They are apparently indestructable enemies, even on vacations. You know the old adages: "if this is Jerusalem, it must be Wednesday," "thank God, it's Friday," and other blasphemies. Because I'm sure God didn't invent Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays or even Fridays. I think it was sneaky old original Adam and Eve who did it. When God caught them disobeying him and made them embarrassed to be naked in public, Adam probably said (trying to make amends) "let's get wed." That's 'wednesday' in Hebrew. And so they left the Garden of Eden by the first tourist bus to Jerusalem and have been killing each other ever since.

v.

I am in this department store and I am looking for a proper fit. Beneath us the sewers travel by, yet everyone smells perfect, like straight out of an oven. Warm and crunchy, the saleswoman points out boots and undies she too might wear. I have a hard time concentrating on all this -- hands wandering off to the jewelry section to see how many diamonds they can fit into my pockets, while the rest of me hangs around the restrooms, tapping the floor, whistling and wearing a disarming hat.

vi.

Some people love to wolf things down and I myself have been known to be a little over-eager when it comes to food -- not as much as an eagle or a lion or a snake, more than a rat or a piglet or a hen or a cat, just about the same as a hog or a cow.

vii.

I'm reporting from a town where they have very reasonable beauty parlors at nearly every intersection and off-ramp. Here people gather in the mornings, sipping coffee and smoking whilst being turned out stunningly beautiful. There is some banter, occasionally to the point where someone gets rolled out or splashed with mascara or lipstick. But in this town where I'm reporting from everything is soon back to normal and there is no sound but the scrubbing, slapping and smearing of faces and sometimes other parts of the body too. I am quite transformed myself. Goodbye.

viii.

Here are ten English sentences:

1. She sat in a nice warm bed.
2. He had influenza.
3. She was a kleptomaniac.
4. He loved her.
5. What does "kleptomaniac" mean?
6. Is it someone who starts fires, steals, or has intercourse with the dead?
7. I don't know.
8. Did she commit high treason in the process?
9. How many bullets will kill her?
10. Or would she prefer a noose, or a severe lecture?

Point out the purpose of these sentences, bearing in mind all the things you can remember.

ix.

Viola has a pet kangaroo called Bruno, who "runs" errands. In fact he hops, like all kangaroos, and beats all the longjumpers at Bon Vista Community College, where he is at on a scholarship. Bruno can say two things: "Viola sent me," and "put it in my pouch," and works part-time as a trash collector. He's very happy and Viola is very impressed, letting him crouch on the back of her motorcycle. But since Bruno's "the man," she's gonna teach him how to ride the bike himself, so he can drive her around.

x.

Medals are falling. They're noisy and everyone's frightened, waiting for them to stop. There's about two feet of them per square inch and the whole town has been declared a disaster area. Soldiers are being sent in to take care of them.

-- Nichola Manning

Long Beach CA

ALL'S FAIR:  
IN RESPONSE TO LOCKLIN'S "THE WOMEN HAVE WON"

there are many who don't approve of my drinking a tree or two, that I know of, personally, and all those strange or estranged people who honked or gestured with upraised finger or even, in one case, a whole forearm, when I made my sojourn from long beach to the wilds of l.a. yesterday

my dinner date, a most iron-willed young man, soon regretted suggesting that I drive, and began by gasping "jeez" once or twice, soon going to "that's illegal" and "I have a wife and baby,"

I responded that people had been honking at me all day and would he please stop, it was making me tired and this could result in a loss of concentration, "jeez," he said again.