

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

David P. Miller

Absolutely No Idea

Sorry she grins to the young beard at her right
after twice rolling toward him. *Sorry*.

The beard smiles, doesn't mind
the low sleeveless diaphanous whatever.
Sorry to the dude with earbuds at her left
after half leaning over his lap. Man Two
scowls toward the off-campus short shorts:
You keep saying Sorry.

Her voice at her friend on the phone
flows toward tears. Doesn't break
though. One, two subway stops, three.
Each time she half leans up, asks
Where is this?
Standee woman in front of her
rides the car floor as if it were
Tuesday Not Party Night. Which it is.
Asks what *Sorry* girl wants, where she's
going. What exactly she's doing.

Harvard Square she wants.
The wrong line. Wrong
direction. Wrong
all of it.

Out, across the next station platform,
having processed more than one
verbal instruction. We hope.
She, unrooted, too easily stripped
by the eye. I want

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her parents. The back seat
of their car. Her, sprawled asleep
in a drive home past her bedtime
after ice cream.

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CHANCE

Nothing other than a fading chance,
but chance favors the prepared mind,
as Louis Pasteur thought. Maybe it was luck
that what she wrote is what I read –
*avowed heterosexual, she said,
seeks an auspicious coincidence.*
Half-inch of newsprint and my scanning sight.
It was either luck or long-gestating chance
that meant I found her writings twice. After
two replies she let me hear her voice.
I had worked hard to make my luck:
overworked, crumbled like dessicated clay.
Came to renounce expectation –
but read the paper anyway.
And found what Pasteur may have known:
chance also favors the prepared heart,
empty of tactics, certainty, and hope.

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How We Lied to Our Teacher

How in chorus we lied to our music teacher.
We were blindsided by his rare anger
as he read us a letter of shocked disgrace.
An American tourist was kept awake
by our teenager chaos unchaperoned
in the boys' and girls' youth hostel sleeping rooms.

One night of our cross-England concert tour,
supercharging our standard hysteria,
two windows were yoked by a balcony.
A his window and a hers window.
One guy had Svengali'd his girlfriend:
she climbed across into our boy lust cave,
joined her paramour under the bunk covers.
Within seconds we gawked him on top of her.

We of course were to think her a trollop,
giving herself in a room of lad-cocks.
I had lunch the next day with her anyway,
inexperienced with Indian curry.
Still the smart, pretty friend of a day ago,
the night's riot too strange to have happened.
Just a teen sex group hallucination.

How we lied in Chorale to our music teacher,
to his face as much furious as heartsick,
too stupid to think we'd betrayed the man
while we hooted and giggled and egged on
our stud buddy using his girl for us.
That American tourist was wrong, we said.
Our teacher looked at us in silence.