

Wilderness House Literary Review 21/3

Sarah Pavlak
Pocket Quarters

The idea that I could stop loving you
Is as absurd as leaving home without
my pockets full of quarters for
parking meters or cheap bubblegum.

Last we spoke you were trying to collect
all fifty states and if you knew I was
always the answer to your prayers well I'm
double that now because I've been carrying
a double-leafed Wisconsin for the last three weeks.

Some days they weigh me down.
Like I'm swimming through a pool of honey but
I am no parts buzzing or butterflying
And all parts copper and nickel that sink
To the bottom and shine through the water.

Some days their jingle lightens my footsteps.
In the heartbeat between my feet and the pavement
they hang suspended in mid-air for a millisecond,
lifting me up with them as they circle
a bruised partner that they then elect to fall back in with.

I bring them with me to church on Sundays
and it has caused Father Michael to pray for me -
he extends his hands to Saint Sophia for wisdom,
Saint Lucy for light and unwavering faith,
Saint Catherine for her burning heart,
but Father, I am already burning and
did you know a cool quarter can get you
a cool menthol cigarette so how is that for a light?

If I am a false God so be it.

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The juke box heavens that sing for me say:
The most true parts of my being are the parts
That clutch for you one 25 cent quarter
at a time and find balance dancing between
The edges of their ridges.

If they tie my hair with spearmint knots,
Crown me with thorns, tow my car,
Or pierce me with a holy spear,
by the nail marks on my palm and their grace,
I will not stop loving you.

Bring desperation, despair, boldness, salvation,
or need, I will keep you safely
in my pocket, a weighted comfort,
absurdly grounding me, stillness against
the change of the world.

What If

Our forever
is spinning itself
on a top and all we have
to do is reach out and
catch it before it
falls over?
Or
if we try and
try and still can't
catch it at least spin
ourselves dizzy
with it until
we can't
see
the world
that's left when
it's gone?

Shuffling

I am working
seven hours a day.
Generously.
In between
the swings of monotony
I notice the disturbances.
A candlestick is slightly askew.
Dust clings to the edge
of a photo of two people who are dead
and me
who is approaching the answer with disdain.
A monstera is yellowing.
I shuffle it
off the windowsill
and let it hang on the ledge
of the TV stand.
Its cousin is drooping
across the room.
I grab it,
shriveling around itself,
and move it next to the poor sap.
Pleased,
I nod at my handy work.
Here are things
I have given
a fighting chance
as anything else
to get out
alive.