

CHARLES RAMMELKAMP

Plus, I Really Have to Urinate

Late for work,
I throw on a coat
like Superman cloaking himself,
stuff my tie into my pocket,
a circus clown's prop,
fly out the door,
the image of the hurrying man
in the Beatles' "A Day in the Life."

Half a dozen intersections down the road,
yellow melts into red;
the Toyota ahead,
instead of plowing through the light,
stops suddenly at the corner,
abrupt as a stubborn child.

Having envisioned myself
swept through on the Toyota's slipstream,
I am not prepared and slam
crushing as an anvil into its rear end;
hissing noises erupt with the air bags,
chemical odors and broken glass.
Fumbling for my insurance policy,
registration, driver's license, cell phone,
I unpack my apologies.

Plus, I realize there's no way now
I'll get to that urgent office meeting.
Plus, I remember promising my wife
we'd go out for dinner that evening
to celebrate our anniversary.

Time Is on My Side

On the music video channel
blasting from half a dozen giant monitors
suspended around the cavernous gym
like enormous unblinking rectangular eyes,
a baby-faced Mick Jagger
in an artless beatnik sweatshirt
sneers, "*Tiii-yiii-yiii-ime is on my side.*
Yes it is!
Oh, tiii-yiiii-yime is on my side...."

It's footage from Ed Sullivan
or some other early 1960's
television variety show,
not a scripted music video.

Nobody in the gym watches,
however, wrapped in his own struggles
with the effects of time,
not on anybody's side here.
Age the real weight we lift,
pushing down on us, relentless
as a rock and roll beat.

Backseat Blues

I hated the way Nick always made me
sit in back with the posse
while he sat up front like a prince,
Wayne his chauffeur.

“Don’t worry, you’re my girl,”
he’d coo, when we were alone,
usually in my bedroom
when my mom and dad were out,
Nick not having a car of his own.

Another Friday night with his pals,
me, Chuck and Mikey in the back,
Nick up front blowing smokerings at the windshield,
twisting the radio dial,
playing drums on the dashboard.
I could see the fantasy in his head:
drummer for some rock group,
girls dying to be with him.

That’s when I noticed Chuck,
sipping his beer beside me,
eyeing my tits with a sidelong glance,
thinking I wouldn’t notice.

I put my hand on his leg, as if by accident,
left it there, scooped ever so slightly closer,
so Mikey wouldn’t even notice.

Chuck got the idea.
It wasn’t five minutes before
he’d tugged my blouse out of my pants,
slid his hand like a snake,
up the front of my body.

I won’t deny it felt good,
the way he stroked my breasts,
as if pet cats, squeezed, gentle
as only a lovesick boy can be,
but it was getting even with Nick
that really turned me on.

Roadkill

My brother and I always wanted to believe
the stories our friends Vince and Tony Bernardo
told us about the Fletchers,
their upstairs neighbors.

Once, Mr. Bernardo had to call the cops
because blood was dripping
through their ceiling.
Turned out the Fletchers
had found a deer on the roadside,
hit by a car but still breathing,
beat it to death with heavy rocks,
then took it home,
ate the flesh raw.

“What a bunch of bullshit!” we cried,
beside ourselves with envy,
afraid we might be tricked
but wanting to believe the story,
just as we wanted to believe
the stories about Jenny Fletcher’s promiscuity,
the older daughter who’d babysat them
when they were twelve and thirteen,
did more than just tuck them into bed.

The stories were so obviously exaggerated,
but when we read about Paul Fletcher
going to the state penitentiary a decade later,
all pimped out with earrings and a blond hairdo,
like some latter-day Richard Speck,
we hoped they’d really been true.

A Flasher in a Previous Lifetime

Bored at work, I cruise the internet,
stumble upon a new “poetic form”
called “the Aragman,” invented in 2005,
involving anagrams, as its name suggests,

I try to conjure anagrams
out of my own name,
fertile ground, I figure –
rabbits from a hat –
but I can only scramble random words –
mama, champ, pearl, mark.

Ready to give up,
I click another internet site,
plug in my name,
press the button,
and *voila!*
Twenty seconds later,
the computer spills a list
of 61,148 anagrams!

My favorite?
Mammal parks lecher.
Sounds like something
I could be arrested for.

What Adult Diaper Companies Don't Want Men to Know

The ad in the sports page caught my eye.
Serious health risks,
high out-of-pocket costs!
Over four million men
in the United States alone
suffer from urinary incontinence.

The diaper companies *don't* tell you
diapers trap moisture, causing
Urinary Tract Infections.
the dread UTI, known killer
in the aging population,
insidious as cancer,
pervasive as pneumonia.

The ad promoted an unspecified alternative,
a “non-invasive external product
that allows men
to improve their lifestyle at work
and quality time with family,”
along with a toll-free number and a promo code.

Otherwise, what exactly
did this thing look like?
What did it do?
No matter:
Hablamos espanol! the ad reassured.

Charles Rammelkamp's latest book, *Fusen Bakudan* (“Balloon Bombs” in Japanese), was published in 2012 by Time Being Books. It's a collection of poems about missionaries in a leper colony in Vietnam during the war. A chapbook, *Mixed Signals*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. He also edits an online literary journal called *The Potomac* - <http://thepotomacjournal.com>.