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The Tin Lunchbox

Feed Your Brain

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Fata Morgana

Brandon Marlon

Come nightfall she kneels amid sedge and peers
into the stream, anticipating her countenance
yet taken aback by the nebulous reflection
and surfeit of driftwood carried along the current,
unsettling the ambience. Looking around, she notes
cob, pen, and cygnet abruptly departing,
as if in flight from some intuited, creeping peril.
Just then from opaque depths uprises the aspect
of an anile crone, her eyelets igneous as gleeds
and her tattered graveclothes ghoulish.
Through her abysmal maw she entices with
honeyed venom, beckoning the maiden
to murmur unfamiliar formulas before
joining her below water where the pearls lie.
Although light-headed, the girl does not budge;
years of charity and chastity have conditioned her
to refrain from the forbidden. As she rises to leave,
a bony, taloned hand breaches the surface
and grasps her talus, reifying fears.
They struggle fiercely till daybreak when light
chars the gaunt hag, who caterwauls in anguish,
her piercing shrieks ascending the ether
as the eddy drags her under toward foul murk.
Cautious waterfowl return in time to spot
blood trickling from the limping maiden's wound,
a memento mori and mark of honor.

Shhh

Joan McNerney

There is a
witch living
on the corner
where the four
roads meet.

Her eye is
evil, her
nose crooked.

She lays down
the tarot
pattern
with wrinkled
hands.

Asks "do you wish
tea of wormwood
or henbane?"

She will enchant
your mind now
into fields of
wild roses.

Deserted Campsite

Brandon Marlon

By Allah! What species of darkness
was visited upon these hapless corpses,
desperate souls face-down in the sand
who tried in vain to outrun gales of wrath?
To the left, abandoned sheepskins;
to the right, putrid collops dangle above ashes.
Nearby, whinnying mares and braying jennets,
their eyes glazed and their moods disturbed,
bear witness to the sinister specter of jann.
The deceased go unsung, for they died as one;
only haunting threnodies borne by the wind
hum their names into the ledger of death.

Watercolor

for Terry Maxwell

Tyler Sheldon

We watch bright lines
crisp as wires shoot
through neon patchwork
on three-hundred-pound paper
stiff like a new language.

Paint is a diet for any paper,
Terry says. Absorbs like
nutrients the paper needs.
From a drawer he pulls a page
the size of a child's hand.
When I paint, he says,
I paint healthy.

On this tiny matted square,
dark tree trunks give way
to oranges and yellows
that flow loose like breath.

Beneath this palimpsest,
heavy paper glows
like a lung in the dark.