

burning tide

james robison

BURNING TIDE

Eight Poems by James Robison

For Donald Trump

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

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by James Robison

For British Petroleum and the EPA

I

The surf gasping and crackling,

Sizzling, heaves tons

Of shattered shells, broken crockery,

Here, and back and there.

.

II

We are so burned, as if

From the inside out, and our

Fire comes in us to the

Cold and dark, the beach kitchen.

III

Rental bricks, ceramic turquoise,

Varnished wood and ruby walls, paring knives,
Ours for a week. Some high petro
Diesel stench shrouds the porch.

IV

We are so burned in the kitchen
Our tender tightened backs
Blaze. The industry of the surf
Is blackened, the white sand charred.

V

We are burned, renting this
Site, with the glued pelican, the drowned
Grouper, the greasy gull, dead
In our Gulf view, our vacation.

VI

We shiver with blisters, scalded lungs,

Simple shock. We're trembling with news,
All bad, from the iridescent crowblack
Surf, working dumbly, innocently, to heave shells.

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Vocabulary

I know, sir, you dread utterance and quite right.

It is an arsenal

And landscapes seething with bad dudes may be

Blown to smithereens with no collateral damages

(that means no Number Ten babes nor golphers die)

No fear of reprisal (never mind)

Plus

Sentences may be RPG'd to the heart of the enemy

Verbs burst like IEDs

Or road flares, igniting your

Talk so that it flashes and foams luminous spangles

Scary and strong

And you may inflate an adjective as with helium

to make your talk floaty dreamy or

Weigh it with adverbs or things big and hard as

crossword clues

To make it important.

Here's your ticket to Everywhere, Right Now.

*

History Is The Work Of The Dead

Our lives are stolen by others and
We do not live them, Rule One, but we
Are lived by thieves whose avarice
Or generosity in some simplest
Matter, once upon a time, wrote our
Existence. We don't own so much as
A mood, a Tuesday, our face, any
Part of our future. So history
Obsesses Godard, who laments the
Designs of memories as if they
Belong to anyone, or could.
Rule Two: History is pubescent,
Hysteric, fictive, transient,
Divided into chapters which are
The ghosts of spaces, empty as rooms
Unremembered by whoever dreamed

Within once. These are its chapters.
Memorize them, or try, for the test
On Friday. Nothing happened in a
Billion variations at any
Time. And Rule Three: Ghosts write the
Upcoming but not by writing but
Erasing. The long ago dead steer
The car over the cliff, or onto
The Channel ferry, or straight across
Texas. A phantom drove you to an
Office, you do not comprehend.

*

Benelli Nova Pump Shotgun

For the NRA

You can squeeze the shot and eat the futureless future!

Flying bits

Of mirror will white the rug, the Whitehouse lawn.

Snow

Wedges corners and plumps the security fence.

I have no cultural identity. Or racial identity.

Ask me if I care. By noon, rain throttles the little

Creek of Sea of Pennsylvania Avenue. Rum burns all its
way down

To my heart of your memories, dull ones, even seared
with

Coal. Your legacy is Lucky Strikes, whittled ribs of
hungry kids, guts

Blown on a screen.

In this movie, we are not orphans,

We new Americans

But have a family called mercy.

Banon urges you out,

She and you whipped and soaked in ten steps toward
Marine One,

Your ashy breaths coming hard by the plastered
guardhouse. Drifts model the day.

Its wadded hills are blind.

In some dark room, prying off shoes, shaking the
anorak,

You have nothing but that you want an end before they
catch you.

Only do you have the force to swallow that

Blast whole? Donny wants food, a long nap.

*

How Can You Hate Everything?

How can you hate it all here on the Paradise coast?

The shrubs shaved into kettle drums, okay,

An over-determined landscape, maybe,

The python twined trunks of Banyans, maybe, and

The street's precisely prissy floral décor,

Arranged firework of the placed vermillion

Poppies, foxglove, uxoria.

Tourist season,

And sure, even the beach, starfish

Sandcastle stuff gets weary.

Still, you got golf and the beach.

Regard him this morning.

He is heroic on long legs, in his

Balletic pose, the curve of his neck

Tapered head aloft, face in its stage make-up

Its Pharaoh's eye treatment, eye bead in amber ring,

Ignoring

The overlapping ovations of high tide,
His feathers various hues
Of the best sky: the Great Blue Heron.
In his thrall and elegant shadow,
A tubby, neurotic, groundling,
The Least Sandpiper, colored as common as stone and
the foam,
The boiling spittle he skitters to escape.
And as the ocean tosses gifts at the Heron, (black
ribbons, lacquered coquina
Crabs to eat) you think this is injustice?
Or is it that you are a teenager and hating is your job?
Anyway, you have Reichstag tattooed across your chest
Skinned head, swastika inked on bicep and you're in
emerald water
With Ivanka and you don't know that blowing
Around you like a leafstorm are rays
Winging, Cow Nosed Rays,

Timid, but with enough hurt in their trailing tails to kill
you

Or her

So do I warn you that the shapes that you might

See, the swirling formations of scatter rugs, quick as
cloud shadows

Are deadly?

Do I let you learn about courting hate and its result, all
by yourself? Does your daughter/wife, white and red as
a Titian, deserve

To be slashed, stung? Or is it too late,

Is she already envenomated?

*

Red Tide

For the EPA

Using an alphabet of light and bubbles,

The sea makes sentences understood by everybody.

Its rotten breath crackled the blue paint on my wooden
chair

On my sand patio by my seal black wetsuit and hula
girl

Towel and red rum. Everybody understands electric
clouds

With dragons and voltage,

Shaped like kimonos or detonations

And we all risk Great Whites and rips, reminded by

The tapered bodies of the sleek and gray dead fish,
drowned in shit.

Fear,

Halos, fire on water,

The mirrors of summer gone to sewer rot.

*

Mully

For the NEA

her blackmoon one eye

she's 10

fauve painting

stringy cirrus plumcolor over

popcorn stratus, violently green

a kestrel carves air, mirrored beside wine-tintd

oak leaf spinning dwn shellack-ed creek fuschia

"may I ask whatz wrong with her eye,

? she didn't hear that did she? what is that may I ask?"

"some boys chased her and were mean --frever after-
she was 7"

"o boys! can I follow you 2? that's not sumac?"

"naw miss, s'not, hang on, to tht branch? s'blue like a
horse? there?" slick

sluicing spillover checkerberry on heads of virgin's
bower

EASTERN KINGBIRD

WITH RED CROWN

“ok lookit does she hate all boys I’m askin?”

“NO NO, just wants to kill them and she will she will,
she is celt”

RED HEADED WOOD PECKER it hacks and throttles

EURASIAN WIGEON AND COMMON LOON

boreal owl

GOD IS MAKIN an apology to her

little wrists-her tiny feet--with seraphs- buff and gold
birds spin with i-beads and beeks

hooky bird nails

her father michael at home brewd dandelion wine,
mead, in picklejars

buried coins in backyrd by
hedge and herb garden, tomato stakes// 4 the state fair
zuchinis pumpkind striped squash

i am sorry mully

for cruelteez done thee: here

- Thimbleweed
- nodding pink onion
- wild geranium
- wild lupine
- creeping wintergreen
- 3-lobed coneflower
- Black eye CREEK
- take the mud track 2 doctor's office in the pines
on red road. rusty old fox spurts. sydney's new 55ford
brutally blue

ticking clackity bugs in the august hipgrass, mully will
wade thru whiteweeds

yung weekdy mothers, smoking camels in the
greenglades with kids wingsets slide pool

cokedark sweetapples

MARS bars cherriez

cedar chips path "HI wanna see te int cave of the
deepwoods?" where water matching deer drink. the
fawn. buck. doe.

1. "watz wrong with her eye she's such a sweety
does it hurt"

2. it IS the blackmoon eye...your ittle boy joe, dennis
jimmy look fuckin out/

whitewashed rocks line counsel house path dot dash
dot dot dot dash dot, buttercups.

water making spangling jumpropes off the
park's sprinklers mully , her gray T, -

"mine was sick you know? all night poor little thing."

" mine had t last week."

"mully's been fine and kicing."

" is she yours?"

"my son's."

"don'tell me you're granpa!"

"my privilege"

heavy doors swing mully wears kite yarn bracelets

I think

ecru grass

fever pink boughs

lime rabbit draws fast zvz line boing

In a plywood white painted stall by the pool the juke:

stagger lee Molten rain clouds splush on pimples
gravel

torncloud hair converse

yellw bitterfleyes flitter. She spits clean. her treers got
bark onnit, fuck me if it don't

*

James Robison has published many stories in *The New Yorker*, won a Whiting Grant for his short fiction and a Rosenthal Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters for his first novel, *The Illustrator*, brought out by Bloomsbury in the U.K. His work has appeared in *Best American Short Stories*, *The Pushcart Prize*, *Grand Street*, and *The Manchester Review*. *The Mississippi Review* devoted an issue to seven of his short stories. He co-wrote the 2008 film, *New Orleans Mon Amour*.

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