

Poems by Michael Lee Johnson

Leroy and His Love Affair

Girlie magazines dating back to 1972 are scattered across the floor.
The skeletons of two pet canaries lie dormant inside a wire cage.

Bessie Mae died 8 months ago.
From her lips, and from her eyes comes nothing like before.

Leroy, her lover, her only friend, the man she lived with for
over 30 years locked her body in their bedroom.
He didn't want to part from her.

Leroy has no friends to detect anything that might be suspect.
He wants nothing between the two of them at all.
No one comes near to interfere.

Their bedroom is padlocked, stale, and stagnant with mildew, looking
the way it did before she died.

Foul odors ooze up through their bedroom ventilation ducts,
Leroy contends that a dead rat in the basement is causing the odors.

Leroy loves to lie about his sacred love affair.

Layers of dust blanket over the mahogany floors, and the maid doesn't come
here anymore.

Bessie Mae's remains are wrapped in a scarlet housecoat,
Dried blood sleeps in a small pool beneath her bed.

In time they both will sleep, sole witnesses to this fiasco
their lives will catch them in; enduring it, holding
their tongues till time matters no more.

Nothing appears changed, lovers unwilling to depart.

Jesus Walks

Jesus lives
in a tent
not a temple
coated with blue
velvet sugar,
He dances within the freedom
of His salvation
with the night and all
days bearing down with sin.
He has billions of ears
hanging from His head
dangling by seashores
listening to incoming prayers.
Sometimes busy hour's drive Him
near crazy with buzzing sounds.
He walks near desert bushes
and hears wind tunnels
pushed by pine stinging nettles.
Here in His sacred voice
a whisper and
Pentecostal mind-
confused by hints of
Catholicism and prayers to Mary-
He heals himself in sacred
ponds tossing holy water
over himself-
touching nothing,
but humanity He recoils
and finishes his desert
walk somewhat estranged.

Crazy Old Jack

Fifty-six today,
and Jack died
in his room years ago.
He still sits there I swear

watches television
philosopher of sports,
entrepreneur of sleep,
dream weaver of single men,
their dreams, their tragedies.
Jack never leaves his room,
seldom shuts his television off.
Jack seldom gets out of bed, boils
on his naked body, no need for razors,
Turkish bathes, for this man.
Jack's prescription pills, then herbs,
then vitamins-but he is incurable.
Jack died in this room years ago.
He eats toast and jam,
toast without jam; fingers
wipes butter from a dish.
I hear Jack yawning from
his room, his coffin again.
Sleepy old Jack coughing again,
dreaming slowly in, drifting slowly out,
quiet old room-
just below a beauty salon,
Fifty-six today and Jack died here.
Crazy old Jack.