A Route Obscure and Lonely

by

LindaAnn LoSchiavo
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By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule —
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of SPACE — out of TIME.
“Dream-Land” by Edgar Allan Poe, 1844

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LindaAnn LoSchiavo
Houseguest

With measured strokes, I brushed defiant hair,
Cascading waves that cancer left untouched.
You’d had enough of hospitals, that lack
Of privacy, imagining your home
Serene, secure, free from intrusive pests.

It would shock you to learn we’re not alone.

At dawn, the presence by the sills crispens,
Emerges as the drapes inhale into
A phantom shape. Infernal company,
Omniscient brakeman, timer in cold hands,
Poised, waiting, exhalations nearly through.

Lost in the territory of morphine,
Deciding to eject your breathing tubes,
You tossed away the life-saving device.

Asleep, I’m unaware — till ghost commands
Arouse me full awake. There’s no choice but
To go rescue you, reconnect the air.

Long shadows darken the stairs, that peek-a-boo
Behind the hooded cloak. I startle you,
Attaching oxygen’s feed properly,
Removing you tonight from danger’s ledge.

A grimace rises from the bedding’s edge
As if to say, “Not now! I’ll tell you when.”
Footprints in the Snow

It’s the same dream. It wakes me up each time. Could it be some ghost family returned?

Asleep, strange shards of memory poke me Like spikes. The walls are melancholy now Since she slipped out that winter, calloused feet Shoeless although it snowed for hours. Chills Came creeping into corners by the stove And stood behind me when I held a knife.

My neighbors said police checked mental wards, All accident reports, and combed the woods. They found no trace. Her husband sold the house.

Neglected properties need TLC, Attract those good at caretaking. It’s strange Quiet arrives in sudden blasts of cold, Announcing it resists all ownership.

I don’t recognize my own fireplace. Who cut this cord of wood, left embers, ash Inside the pit? When I bend to smooth sheets, I sense cool whispering. The window shines, Reveals it snowed tonight and left fresh prints, Small, delicate. The person was barefoot.

I am afraid to be responsible, Afraid to be asked questions. Please, stay away.
A Ghost Revisits a Tattoo Parlor

Like marriage, this will hurt, a sacrament
That marks flesh, inks and needles, an array
Of patterns, birds, begonias, names entwined.

Observing his new bride, examining
Marmoreal fresh skin, I’m noticing
Three hickies on her neck, love’s artifacts.

His rage, suppressed for now, will take that throat,
Stain it with thumbprints, purple necklaces
Requiring camouflage — — scarves, turtlenecks.

Inside a heart, the artist carefully
Inks her beloved’s name, an alphabet
Of dark regrets, as if she’ll be unmoored
Without this simulacrum. Ownership
Of permanent I.D. — — tattoos, birthmarks — —
Is useful when cops find a battered corpse,
Need ghostly guides, a name tag for the morgue.
Embodiment

My sister lives forever in six drawers
Where Mom maintains her clothing, worn, outgrown.

Preserved in cameras, she’s chambered,
Sealed shut like darkroom prints, unmoving face
Still undeveloped as her unspent youth.

Moored on his island of bad memories,
Her boyfriend, claiming self-defense, wears stripes.

Nighttime she’s back, soft stabled in seizures
Of stars or hovering in ghost orb’s mist.

A pinch of lonely air lifts blankets, hugs
Half of my bedding. No heat radiates.

The younger person I still am inside
Peers out. Instead of ghost dents on the sheets,
I see her shuffling the deck, smell smoke
From phantom joints, red lipsticked, decayed dreams
Beyond my line of sight, time’s taut trapeze.

I yearn to grab her wrist, yank heart and soul
From cold oblivion, yell, “Breathe again!”
Hope hops on life support, prepared to drag
Her from the brink and storm the underworld.

Geometry’s shades fade — — by dawn’s dispersed.
Why the Dead Visit

Souls nourish their desires, rascally
As magpies, in pursuit of shiny things.

Dull corpses, carefully positioned flat
In caskets — — dolls in tiny houses — — don’t
Restrict wild spirits, which defy the grave.

Night swerves against them, powerless to stop
Such ceaseless energy extruded back
Into the world to mingle with those still
Alive, though unsuspecting how close ghosts
Grip maybe-dreams, why keys become misplaced,
How wedding rings can reappear. Such signs
Confuse the living stuck with gravity,
Afraid of death, its shadows hovering.

Soon you’ll be weightless, coveting what still
Reflects the light — — loved mirrors looking back.
Invisible Interview

Inquire of the ghost its new address.

Some may reside in the remembered past,
Presiding over torn hearts’ chambers, tranq’d
By nothing soft, in charge of hosting thoughts
Of loved ones who imbibed oblivion.

Inquire of the ghost what it does best.

Wraiths vacate, exiting without a trace,
Remaining restless, unappeasable.
Bats at Bedtime

She dreamt of bats — as unpredictable
As daring trapeze artists, dangling like
A lazy symphony of Spanish moss
Conducted by the wind, escaping from
Mysterious caves, drowsy debutantes
Alert to predators, heat-seeking forms,
Runes darkening night’s alphabets, fallen
Angels illegible in their descent.
Unquiet House

Dilapidated house. The broker’s keen
To pitch the property to newlyweds
From out-of-state, which we pretend to be.

Maria’s chatter is distracting him,
Eyes showing gleams of true engagement, winks.

I slip out — — for a photo, I explain,
Meticulously cautious. Quiet shoes.

How many bargain hunters have been here,
Inspecting dirty cellar walls for clues
Of water damage, not suspecting mold
Is not the worst homeowner’s legacy?

The deck is clouded. Spiders overhead,
Suspended from dead vines, await a broom
Knifing through filaments spun secretly.

Unnatural deeds carry threads forward
Like the black widow spider, breast-stroking
Through gossamer voids under ragged moons.

Sweet blood’s in undiscovered special rooms,
Unconquerable sorrows tendon-taut.

The “For Sale” sign nods back and forth as if
It recognizes me through my disguise.
No longer called a conjuror, my steps
Still carry the pulsations of lost hearts.
The agent doesn’t realize what’s right
Behind him, why he must be sacrificed.

Maria’s eyes meet mine, a message swept
Across in spidery blinks of eyelash.

The undead must have dreams for which to wait.
What’s in the Shadows

The shadow spirits roam when darkness falls.
They’ll lead a drowsy, sly cotillion, fly
Through secret gardens gathering masked blooms
Like belladonna, foxglove, or bloodroot.

Each time you jerk awake, they’re visiting,
Dripping moist jewels of death across your chest.
Rendezvous in the Forest

Night’s canopy dares me to steal away,
Rebellious, jumping that forbidden fence
To gather prized morels, their strong, distinct
Intensity appealing — — curious
Excursions undertaken secretly.

Morchella have a symbiotic, deep
Relationship with trees, though unalike,
Attachments that help growing things survive.

An alien has been observing me.
Where’d you come from? What made me unafraid?

You plucked me from Earth, softening my limbs
In chemical light. I became your mate,
Lit from within, like mushrooms that can glow
In darkness, bioluminescent, strange
Befitting me, the beams igniting flesh.

Your not-hands cup each curve, warm, tenderly,
With extraordinary skill, hoist me
To not-lips that emit erotic sounds,
Transporting me to heights I’ve only dreamed
About till now. My skin looks new but pruned.

Was this your planet’s purification,
My intergalactic, suave gigolo?

One moment floating through thin air
Together, wrapped in not-arms, we’ve escaped
Through time and space, strong currents pulling me
Along. But then you’ve vanished utterly.

My knees kiss forest soil and, fingertips
Away, green glowing fungi grow, as if
Predestined. “Just a dream, a fantasy!”
I think — — except my thumb cap’s been tattooed,
Gold runes encircling it like a ring.
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A member of the Science Fiction Poetry Association (SFPA), LindaAnn LoSchiavo is a dramatist, author, theatre critic, speaker, and formalist.

Recently, her poems won competitions judged by Inkwell Literary Magazine [May 2019], Brink Literacy Project / Dually Noted [March 2019] and Wax Poetry & Arts [2018].


Ms. LoSchiavo is a Lifetime Member of The Dramatists Guild of America. Her plays have been staged in NYC; San Francisco; Melbourne, Australia, etc.

Her theatre reviews appear in L’Idea Magazine and elsewhere.

Her short story “On Cemetery Hill” was translated into Russian for Night Picnic [February 2019]. Her SFF fiction has earned two Honorable Mentions from Writers of the Future.

Her two documentaries on Texas Guinan along with her Mae West Blog and stage plays about Mae West have brought her to the attention of PBS’ American Masters series, where she is a featured speaker in a biographical film that will be broadcast shortly.
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Haunting and harrowing in its portrayal of supernatural creatures, "A Route Obscure and Lonely" explores the road less traveled by restless ghosts, sexually curious aliens, cunning vampires, transgressive angels, regretful mermaids, defiant witches, surly goddesses, mysterious phantoms, fearless fortune tellers, and "goth's Mr. Goodbar" himself — — Edgar Allan Poe. Theboroughs of the dead invite you to approach the gate guarding their abyss. Come look inside.