2016

Hook Man (four sonnets)

David Lee Garrison

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DAVID LEE GARRISON

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1. The Hook

An urban legend of lust and dread, the one about the killer with a hook for a hand, a madman from an asylum on the run. Listening to the radio, two randy adolescents in a car hear noise—a scratching sound—and dare not disobey the deejay’s admonitions. Gone the joys of making almost love, in disarray they disengage. The news has scared the girl and foiled the young man’s amorous plans. They leave in haste the parking spot where they have curled together, unaware of their reprieve:

they find, on a car door handle, the torn-off hook. Fate writes a second chance in horror’s book.
2. The Boy Sides with Andrew Marvell

Fate always has a hand in horror’s book
of night, but scratch the surface of our sleep
and there, between our thighs, a craving deep
as dread. Let’s conquer fear so we can hook
up, carpe diem! Some day all our lust
will turn to ashes! If you love me, show
me now. The chariot of time will blow
its horn and pass us by. The poets must
be right. Why wait until we’re grown and wed?
That’s like owning a guitar and never
playing it until you’re old…whatever,
we can go on waiting till we’re dead!

Instead of wine we’re drinking ginger ale.
“The Hook”? A silly cautionary tale.
3. The Girl Cites Dear Abby

I like ginger ale, and I’m afraid
of wine and sex, of going all the way.
Those lines that tell us we should seize the day
say nothing of the risks in getting laid.

I read that “Hook Man” story in Dear Abby
so there must be something to it. She
says boys don’t marry girls who give in easy—
please don’t pester me, don’t be so crabby.

Sometimes I’ll bet you’re as scared as I am.
Here we are alone in darkness. Life
means nothing to a weirdo with a knife.
What good would all those pretty rhymes and iambsons
do us? Poems in our English book
are fine, but no protection from the Hook.
4. Hook Man Has the Last Word

Kids need protection. I am always scratching doors and windows, clawing on myself. Can’t help it, I’m a continental shelf of loathing. Nighttime always finds me hatching schemes for vengeance. Lovers all alone in cars bring back my childhood dreams of being loved. No chance of that—I grew up fleeing from my father. Day and night he moaned about the wife who cut him loose. He smacked me as a surrogate and would have shot me if I hadn’t run. My hand? Got caught in tractor gears, I’d kill to get it back.

I linger in the dark while they embrace, and long to kiss that girl, caress her face.
David Lee Garrison, a native of Bremerton, Washington, retired in 2009 after teaching Spanish and Portuguese at Wright State University for thirty years. His poetry has appeared nationwide in journals such as Barrow Street, Connecticut Review, Nimrod, and Rattle. Two poems from his book, Sweeping the Cemetery, were read by Garrison Keillor on his radio program, The Writer's Almanac, and one appeared in the Keillor anthology, Good Poems, American Places. The title poem from his book, Playing Bach in the D. C. Metro, was featured by Poet Laureate Ted Kooser on his website, American Life in Poetry. David lives in Oakwood, Ohio, with his wife, Suzanne Kelly-Garrison, author of the novel, Stolen Child, and lecturer in the College of Business at Wright State.