



# Moonlight on Moloch

by Luke Buckham



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20 Redneck Symphonies  
by Luke Buckham

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*"He will pave you with ice"*

—Nostradamus



**Moloch**, *n.*: 1: a tyrannical power to be propitiated by human subservience or sacrifice: "the great Moloch of war"; "duty has become the Moloch of modern life" --Norman Douglas

2: god of the Ammonites and Phoenicians to whom parents sacrificed their children

"(The idol) Moloch, which was made of brass; and they heated him from his lower parts; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out; but the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved." --Rashi

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## Your most intense opening

That clover honey between your legs,  
clowns in alleyways waiting for it,  
spaces between treebranches seen  
by little human dwarves lying in the snow  
on their backs, tiny gravity, little grains  
of rice stuck to the earth, all fly open  
like a door kicked by police. You produced them,  
squeezed them out through your waist,  
your thighs, your hips, and finally through  
your most intense opening. Now someone  
with a microphone and lots of cash  
wants to send them off to eternal warfare.  
The numbers given them at birth  
have come with knives to kill them.  
Should you have hidden them in your attic?  
Your basement? Your womb? A burning coffin?



## **A street to paradise**

A recluse can escape the state  
sometimes. A hermit can be safe  
from worried friends, informers.  
Everyone who wants a life of freedom  
must live it mostly alone. Clover honey  
between your legs calls children forth  
from me who cannot live in this valley.  
The new swords, extended into nation-razing blades  
of flying fire, pave towns much like yours  
with flattened debris, a street to paradise  
for some, oblivion for others. And here  
the dark children crying, here; unguarded windows  
through which an ancient toddler's face  
with bleeding eyes stares solemnly  
at a weeping soldier.



## **An arsenal of jokes**

Against the makers of world-wide death,  
a stroke of paint, a trumpet's mournful blast  
through ragged amplifier, an arsenal of jokes.  
Hills ripple toward like ocean waves  
a yellow outline around your frigid body--  
on the ocean bright of green you float,  
arrows of fire arcing toward you on the sky  
like racing constellations, the orbits  
casting off rings of red dust, every planet  
on display. The dust from certain bombs  
drifting in is an aphrodisiac, human forms  
huddled together, humping for warmth.  
This morning I licked concrete dust  
out of my girlfriend's eyelids as we limboed  
under the arcing fire, the hills rolling  
in a broken tumult. Now if children come  
the dust will find them out and stop their growth,  
our house of pills is willingly plowed under.

## **The man-shaped world**

A purple erection protruding from the curtains  
of a voting booth. An escape from obligation,  
social security numbers riddled with bullet holes  
winching like eyes in every wall, bullet holes  
become outlets for pleasure, oozing in the brick.  
A populace insane for pleasure in these last hours,  
the man-shaped world  
receiving a blowjob on a crashing plane.

## **A highway juts into the sky**

How can moonlight mellow these newspaper stands,  
these broken bricks, these young bones leaking marrow  
of bad thoughts on the salty pavement  
as a highway juts into the sky, plunges into precipice,  
an eighteen-wheeler truck that once moved the world  
now a barren castle in the mild light?

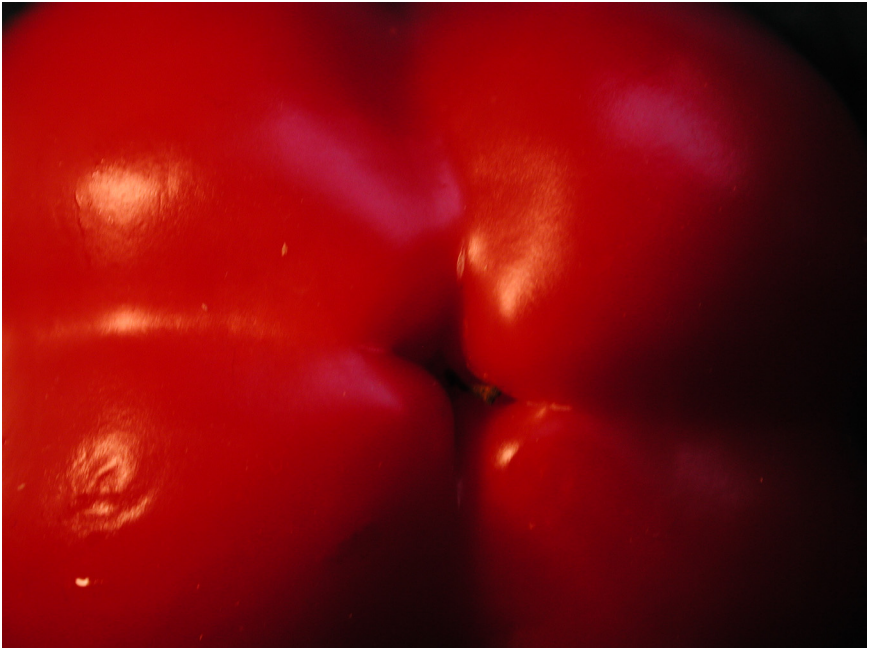
How can the sidewalks be inviting under a hovering bomb?  
A girl is reading a newspaper in the park--a bird dies  
and plummets through the pages, leaving  
a winged hole. She yelps in fright, stops reading news,  
her life gets better.

## **The sea goes out like an excited woman's breath**

Somewhere a ledge slides off an island, a wave  
two world trade centers tall heads for my home New England.  
Old England is already obliterated. A bomb shook  
this huge splinter of rock loose and moved the sea.  
Two people walk on a desolate beach, the music of evacuation  
fluttering dimly in the air as they turn toward each other  
to make love standing up above the surf. The sea goes out  
like an excited woman's breath, surging off the drop-off ledge  
like orgasm, the two turn toward a long bare beach  
of glass-smooth sand, the skyscraper-size wave  
comes moving in. They both wet themselves  
a long moment before the ocean clears the coast.

## **I fear I am not that man**

Maybe if someone believed in total reversal,  
and had a spirit of great power, a prayer from them  
could wrap the world in glowing cellophane  
before our cataclysm. I fear I am not that man--  
and try to believe that great spirit lives  
in someone else, in an even smaller town.



## Behind shattered constellations

As the oceans yawn and mountains sag,  
as the bitter souls crowd supermarkets  
for a last lunge at preservation, a star by day  
stands out against the sky, glowing  
over infinite parking lots, painted battlefields  
and vacant baseball stadiums: a girl goes back in time  
to leap in bed with me, our stove still works,  
the sunset infected by bombs looks more  
spectacular than before, and multitudes of crazed  
musicians, sober in the aftermath, make melody  
with raging discord in the broken parks, fountains  
spouting rusty water sideways  
under the bright morning star. We all bow to the ground,  
a furnace mouth chews human beef  
behind shattered constellations,  
a tiny meteorite smashes a satellite's face  
to blind it for one much bigger.

## **Its broken dimensions**

Out of a tiny void a leaf blossoms  
from a wall of water, a branch reaches  
from the aching gelid void  
and makes rows of green fluttering children.  
The old world whispers from behind  
its broken dimensions, its active cities  
burning to get out into the silent kingdom.

## The clacking of grey wings

Intricate apocalypse is wired into every human form--  
don't look too close at me through cigar smoke  
here in the dim orange light, perched on our stools;  
if you turn and step into the crowd, it's off a ledge.  
The eyes blinking in the restaurant are pilot lights  
for an oven burning races in its grip. A glitter  
like broken glass under setting sun  
winks at us on our little cliff, the bartender  
has the extinction of the human species  
under his wet counter. A rag full of chloroform  
sweeps in his hand, polishing a wooden mirror  
for our faces, placing us in Auschwitz.

The streets between tall buildings  
fill with tasty locusts, street vendors catch them in baskets,  
then the shipment buries them, a cemetery of their goods.  
The wings packed into alleyways in multitude  
slow their movement. The clacking of grey wings  
and the little brown mouths screeching  
at the crooked traffic halting with half-open doors.

We are like locusts ourselves now,  
a plague but without wings,  
trapped between four walls.  
Don't look too close at your dozing girlfriend;  
napalm eyeliner, a womb full of helicopter blades.  
A fingernail floats dreamily through your tequila.  
Don't turn around to see them face-down in their food.  
Don't turn around to see your favorite bassist  
impaled on his guitar. He made a few good notes  
toward his end. That is all that's asked.  
All that was asked, his electric fingers gave.



## The bloodied markets

Charles Mingus saved my life, headphones  
against the sound of all the world avalanching.  
His ghost ran through my streets  
finger-painting on shop-windows steamed  
with dying breaths. The bloodied markets  
and roving mobs could not bother him  
so far outside his body as he played  
deep in my head, where a strange color  
still makes noise.



## **I haven't cut the lawn in months**

A girl opens her legs, the local newspaper  
closes its doors, unneeded. The world is blinded  
by the purity of honest human gestures  
in this house, a barracks set up against  
its tides with music and painted doors.  
I will not trim my hedges anymore, but let them  
lace their long brown fingers over my entrances.  
I haven't cut the lawn in months, let crickets drown  
all the reports of war, a tent of leaves holds a slug  
with our trailing secret.

Do you know how I lasted through the end?  
I hid in a basement making prayers in paint.  
Do you know how I became stoic against  
the rainstorm of fetuses? I held the brush  
in my hand a little tighter, painted my dead love  
from memory, and felt warmth for an extinguished race  
glow from my bones, painting an archway  
into a second earth, though none was left  
to share the frame or model for me  
in my dying hallways. Whether you lived  
or died, you always burned.

## He will freeze your groin

A redeemer full of shit has come, he will freeze  
your groin, he will shut up your clinics, glue your eyes  
and pull your bodies into taffy, boneless toward the brink,  
until you shove him like a floating pillar  
through the swirling seas  
over the lunar edge  
of his own oblivion. Those following him over the cliff  
will tell you enthusiastically  
that he's a good man. If you believe them  
you will be forced to share  
in their horrible record collections.



## Nuclear Christmas

They cut up the moon into advertising logos,  
that was the last sign of the end. No poet  
could look at the sky anymore without screaming  
in pain. Oh Kelly, hold me beneath the fall  
of billboard cities, the house of cards  
collapsing with their slogans.

That which cannot become immortal must fall  
under the lash of a blade of grass.  
The tired red globes circling, diverted meteorites  
glow with nuclear Christmas, our new satellites,  
eccentric menstrual cycles, a planet of crazed women;  
I grow my red wings in the shade of a new cliff  
after a volcanic summer. A prophet's throat is secured  
voiceless somewhere in the stone, nothing frozen in lava  
aches to get out of its skin again.

## **A whore won't lie until you give her money.**

A man with a crown of leaves  
won't come out of the woods  
when they bring him a woman to make him  
one of their own. She says I'll bring you back  
to the gnashing cities between my legs;  
a whore won't lie until you give her money.  
Leaves and shade his only currency,  
she tells him the truth since he refuses.

He says My long beast of a thumbnail against  
all your soldier's throats, I will not come out ever.  
He's an astronomer but his lens is cracked and blurry--  
he pretends the rivulets it makes in his longest sight  
are the star-trails of flamboyant galaxies. She smirks  
and says They're waiting for your next prophecy  
I never believed you were a prophet myself  
But I bet you want what I've got and I know you won't  
Take it by force, they say you're always  
softer towards the women.

He says I've got a kettle of god's breath  
here in the woods, it evaporates  
every time I take a step toward town. She says  
Let me have a drink myself I can see you're not coming.

## Running over the spine of things

Inside the President's hollow head, a child burns their feet  
as we all pile wood for the fire  
under the golden calf of his dreams. A sky is rustling somewhere,  
remembering good witches and their calloused fingers  
running over the spine of things.

I watch hangings and beheadings on television,  
while eating potato chips! A mouse scurrying  
in the wall distracts me. If our violence  
grows strong enough to push wholly through the earth,  
then we'll be safe from its backlash.

Otherwise our violence will return to us.

The ground under our feet holds us to our target.

A sky rustles somewhere and a maker of spells  
cries with bitter joy as we all come to join her.



## Looking over my own shoulder

The rain comes to join me  
the trees grow to surround me and protect me  
the earth rises to sleep with me  
the buildings fall to make my ornaments

then the rain goes to join someone else  
and that someone comes to join me on the earth  
the sidewalks run like rivers toward Ocean National Bank

How can the twilight  
make a beauty of all this corruption?  
Is a streetlight  
just a costly wildflower  
or an abomination?

The blowing curtains of rain come to join me  
as blood joins a puddle  
that a child played in all afternoon  
and in its curdling reflection  
looking over my own shoulder I see a new world

## **Moves down Main Street like a dream**

A crazed fat man muttering to himself about monsters  
moves down Main Street like a dream  
through shopfront windows.

A big catfish swims in the murk of his eyes  
when he's gone off medication.

Sometimes he paints the metal teeth  
assaulting us, exorcises our nightmare onto a canvas  
with car paint on scraps of junkyard metal.

Some suffer more for our evils.

The catfish smacks its rubber jaws  
churns poison stingers to make paint  
all autumn, extending into bristles through his arm  
to save him from the murk of his mind.

Then turns and swims away  
toward a deep December.



## **A good world the moment before he collapses**

A man in a crumbling apartment looks out  
his toothless window, and sees a good world  
for the first time the moment before  
he collapses in the smoke,  
coughing out his life

a cat prowls on his windowsill  
a long shard of plaster falls on him  
and pins him to the floor he thinks It looks  
like a good world out there he says Hi Cat  
he strokes the cat with a bloody hand the cat  
arches its spine and purrs  
leaps out the window landing  
nimble on the sidewalk as the building falls

its tiny padded paws, so perfect  
he wonders what it would be like to land like that  
he hopes that death is a soft landing, like that  
he lowers his head onto the dusty floor, chokes:  
I'm sorry I didn't treat you better, cat

## **My torn skies**

The factory smokestacks prettier than young tits  
in the false light, black smoke against the backdrop  
of my torn skies, makes me yearn for a city  
somewhere in my spirit.

The image is false but the urge is real. That is why  
moonlight on Moloch makes such a stir in my hurt brain,  
breaks my back toward making it a paradise; Shoveling gravel  
for bad roads with pictures within of glowing plateaus,  
planting seed in the chocolate cake of seething tar.

But in my mind those glowing mountaintop farms:  
and a woman wearing eternity's clean face  
walks through my rows of corn, topless in a white skirt,  
barefoot and showing the growing bulge  
of four month's pregnancy,  
and her belly with its navel turning inside-out  
is the sky, and a brand-new moon.





**Luke Buckham** lives with his girlfriend in Keene, New Hampshire, where he is currently and proudly unemployed, having quit his job at a local nursing home in order to have more time to write, believing that the 40-hour work week is the principle weapon of demonic forces that strive to destroy the human mind (the second most important weapon of said forces being television, and the third-most important the daily newspaper). He is determined to coast for as long as possible on his tax return. He wonders what he'll do when it runs out, since he has never wanted to work for anyone but himself. Since he has sworn never to take full-time employment again, more books like this one will be forthcoming.

Photographer **Kelly Hoffman** suffered through 6 years of college for a useless degree, but at least it gave her the chance to travel to all sorts of countries and places that most of her family and friends disapproved of, and usually weren't ashamed to let her know it ("Paris IS nice, isn't it?" Now she lives in Keene, New Hampshire and, against her better judgment, serves lots of beef-based foods to people who, in turn, give her pocket change. At least it's not as stressful as school. Nobody asks her WHY she does these things, or just what she plans to do next. She suspects half of them expect her to announce at any moment that she's moving to a yurt in Mongolia. She's not against the idea.





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