

# LAST LAUGH AT THE BOMBAY GRILLE

Kevin Clark

“...a fact is a thing confirmed to such a degree that it  
would be perverse to withhold provisional assent.”

Stephen Jay Gould

We sucked three deep hits  
    of Mexican green  
        as the car lashed the road's curl  
like a black water snake  
    living out its hunt  
        for four-legged meaning.  
        We were off to tiny Monticello in  
            backwoods Florida where  
panhandle accents mash Indian curries  
    at the Bombay Grille, the night  
        become beatitude, a best  
            and most elusive plane of breath,  
our red-faced wives turning from our spittled heavens  
    of laughing  
    when in our ripped vision  
        the light blonde waitress  
            with the candescent green sari  
                and a third eye bright as Max Factor's best red  
                    handed us our menus  
of enumerated Indian meals  
    and returned to ask  
the impossible question: *What would y'all care to order up?*  
    Today, m'am,  
        I would care for more  
moments unagitated by the probable truth of it all.  
    O if not for Gould's brave "provisional assent,"  
        a mantra term I can't stop

flashing  
 from the rear view of my skull,  
 the old necessarily-so. So how often  
 do I turn the quotidian corner into my glass living room  
 to hear the light sing  
 its betrayal:  
 I'm nothing, sweetness. Nothing. How often it goes on  
 revising itself like a neurotic  
 bent on the finest exactitude:  
 errant protons firing out of orbit  
 through a secular space  
 in a sequence long ago  
 ordered, where  
 a helix shall spin a waltz turn  
 through the testicles  
 of my grandchildren,  
 a simple past where the blastworks  
 of uncountable atoms  
 sent out their ancient path  
 to the redneck owner of a kudzu town  
 who came to think what the locals need  
 is eggplant vindaloo  
 and a tamarind chutney  
 with chapitas on the side.  
 Help me, television.  
 Help me, wife. Help me, weirdness.  
 And they do! O Week-in-Review! O sexual love!  
 O Bombay Grille! These opulent tastes  
 of divinity! But soon enough  
 the light's voice  
 enters the select items  
 of encounter: the chipped coffee table, the remote,  
 the slash of breeze  
 on the broken screen door,  
 summer starlight on my wife's back –  
 and I'm left with  
 Gould's incontrovertible most-likely-has-to-be.

Imagine

the longest, emptied exhalation of your hopelessly  
given-over comic moment,  
the tiny wisp  
of atoms lunged lightly out  
at the very end of their lunatic gasp from your mouth  
as the waitress waits with her trace memory  
of one hysterical pre-marital day  
in young Jake's jowly arms  
called O Lord forth –  
then says *it's time*  
*to pull it together now, boys.*

Imagine

those airless seconds when the comic, stretched end  
of a breath  
marries the good life  
and by god you will have  
on this night of useless and likely physics  
just exactly what I,  
locked in the sunlit backyard  
at the electrical end  
of this long-mapped journey of a thought,  
would yes at the very least  
care to order up,  
my blonde messenger of transient and perverse withholdings.

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