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Last Laugh at the Bombay Grille

Kevin Clark

California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, kclark@calpoly.edu

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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.

Clark: Last Laugh at the Bombay Grille

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.

Kevin Clark is a Professor of English. A recipient of the "Distinguished Teaching Award," he teaches poetry writing and American literature. His full-length collection of poetry, In the Evening of No Warning, was recently published.