



*I am grateful, violins, for this day
of four chords. Pure
is the sound of the sky,
the blue voice of air.*

Pablo Neruda

Cardinal Sins

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Julie Zapoluch Dead Ladybird Medium: Lino Cut Original Size: 4.5in x 6.5 in

Spring

Eric Nisula

Yesterday, someone took soap and pail and washed the world,
and then to celebrate had limbs
of leaves unfurled.
He washed the window too--a huge
blue pane, the sky;
and everywhere, on grass, on tree
the clean light lay.
All this when but a week ago I'd seen
grey dusk intrude,
and now it seemed a never-ending
day. My mood
was sadness. Here upon my lap
was placed a feast I could not touch, but shunned like some
suspicious beast
who will not eat what fallen flesh
it has not killed.
Or had I by my own creations
been too much filled?
I made retreat into the palace
of the mind,
still stunned by brilliant light
though I was blind.

La Novia

Guillermo Casteñón

Es la vida ¿celebración?
Contigo ¡Sí!
¿Es musica y canción?
Contigo ¡Sí!
¿Es bella sensación?
Contigo ¡Sí!

Es romance y adulación,
es sincera con ilusión
tú le das significado
pues me tienes enamorado

y aunque es simple poesia
te la brindo en este dia
de novios y novias,
vida (güerita) mia.



Julie Zapoluch, All Souls Night, Medium: Lino Cut Original Size: 10in x 9in

Material Objects*Eric Nisula*

After many years I have finally realized
 that material objects are very beautiful.
 They have just gotten a bad rap
 from those who bawl about love and other insubstantial things

Think about it: your home, your nest.
 That old blue chair
 in which your mind leapt, reading.
 And that chess board--
 how many ghosts of hosts hover over the squares?

Consider too
 the pristine lakes of Grand Teton Park,
 the Western night sky full of stars.
 Are these not material objects?
 Are these not things?

And my lute,
 giving off music as
 lilacs give off the odor of lilacs--
 should we bad-mouth the lute,
 or the lilac?

And lastly, my friend, material objects
 hold no truck in faithlessness.
 No refrigerator ever lied to you repeatedly.
 No set of tools has ever called you stupid and inept.
 No oak table has ever pretended to love you.

Likewise, you cannot break the hearts of dishes.
 And when you turn in that old t.v.,
 it will not weep.

A Prose Poem About Spring
Laura Taggett

A routine errand takes me outside the windowless office
 and into the sun. Disregarding etiquette, decorum, I am
 surrounded by strangers and grin like a fool at being
 shined upon, at feeling the still faint warmth of April
 blossoming. I can mask the foolery some in a squint
 against the brightness, but still there is a difference between
 perturbed squint and a joyful, nay, goofy grin that makes
 it okay to talk to strangers. An it's-spring-I-survived winter
 and-I'm-so-glad-I-did grin. A grin that inspires me to kick
 my heels in the air. (Which I don't do--decorum kicks in
 at last). Warmth, partly manufactured in my mind I am
 sure, floods me, I wish I was eight again swinging on the
 jungle gym (and am strong enough to propel myself along),
 or hurtling down the slide into the sand that gets in my
 shoes. Perhaps, I bang my head and try very hard to keep
 crying all the way home in order to elicit some sympathy
 from mother. For now, I will merely continue back to my
 office and dream of childhood summer nights and seeing
 the fireworks outside my bedroom window.

The Sand People

Bob Cassidy

When my grandfather was a very old man, some say older than the Hunter Who-Walks-In-The-Sky, he told me how his people came to be called The Sand People. We sat together on the hill above the river where grandfather lived. The brown clay rolled slowly away from us toward the tall thin trees standing just below at the river's edge. The hard dry ground was cracked and broken like an old mirror. We listened to the music of the water as it splashed against the rocky bank. The wind carried grandfather's words to the river and made them dance as he spoke. His voice was gentle and patient because he wished me to hear all that he had to say.

His long brown fingers wrapped tightly around the old gnarled tree branch he used as a walking stick. Its surface was worn smooth by the strong touch of his large hands. He looked down at the twisting blue river and nodded his head, as if he were directing his words to it rather than me. Softly he began to speak...

Long ago, before I was here, and before my father or my father's father was here, other people were here. These other people did not belong to a name, or know where they had come from. They only knew that they followed The Great Black Eagle as it pushed clouds filled with thunder and rain across the sky. As the clouds bumped together, lightning would flash in the sky and the thunder would tell the people where to follow. They hoped to catch the rain as it fell and store it in their clay jars for when it was needed. The jars were tied tightly to their backs with belts of soft leather as the people hurried after the eagle and his clouds.

One day, when the warmth of summer had almost emptied their jars, the people saw lightning in the clouds of a distant mountain top. The mountain was very far way and they were very tired, having walked far to get where they were. Some of the people said, "Why must we chase after the rain clouds? Certainly the eagle will see where we are and push the clouds to us if we wait right here." Others heard their words and nodded, for they were very tired also. They made a place for themselves on the hard ground and settled there. After a while young and old alike were thirsty. The water they had carried with them was almost gone. The people decided that someone must be sent to speak with the eagle, so that it would know to bring them the clouds. The swiftest runner was chosen and soon he was headed toward the faraway mountains. After a day and a night had passed and the runner did not return with the eagle or the clouds, another person was chosen. This time it was someone who spoke many languages. The old people thought that the eagle needed to hear certain the eagle needed to hear certain words before it would help them. Soon this person was also headed toward the mountains while the people waited. Again a day and a

night passed, and again they did not see the eagle or his clouds. The people were sad because they thought these two men must have become lost in the unfamiliar mountains.

When the people awoke the following morning, they heard thunder rumbling in the distant mountains. They sat together on the ground of the hot dry desert and wondered aloud what to do. A boy stood up and spoke to them.

"Let me go to the eagle, I will speak with him and he will bring his clouds to us!" the boy said. It was suddenly very quiet where so many words had been heard before. The people were staring in wonder at this boy who stood so calmly among them. He said he could speak with the eagle! How could he make such a claim, they wondered. He had never been away from the people, so he knew only their language! How would he speak with the eagle- He wasn't a very fast runner and he couldn't fly, so he couldn't catch it' What made him think the eagle would bring the clouds?

The people sat on the ground and listened patiently as the people told them how he would convince the eagle to help them. They nodded their heads as they heard his words, happy at the thought of fresh water in their jars. The people slept well that night, confident that the next day the eagle would bring them water.

Early the next morning, before the sun rose from its sleeping place, the boy who said he could speak to the eagle was gone from where he slept. He had a heavy clay jar tied onto his back and was walking swiftly toward the far off mountains. The weight of the heavy jar pulled the boy's shoulders back as he walked. He held his head high, ignoring the rising sun as it began to burn his bare head. The soft leather belt used to fasten the jar to the boy's back was growing dark with sweat where it pulled tight against his brown skin. The sun climbed higher in the sky.

The Great Black Eagle was gathering clouds at the top of a very tall mountain when he noticed the boy walking far below him. He was walking with his head held high in the scorching desert sand heat. Flying to where a high rock would let him sit and watch, the eagle studied the boy for a long time. He noticed the heavy clay jar tied to the boy's back and wondered what the boy could be carrying that would make him walk so proudly. The eagle moved closer so he could get a better look at the jar. He called out to the boy in his high pitched voice, "Hello boy." the eagle said.

The boy pretended not to hear him. The eagle moved closer still and spoke again.

"Boy, did you not hear me? I said hello."

The boy kept walking. The eagle stepped even closer, thinking the boy didn't hear him. He asked in a loud voice, "Boy, why are you walking so proudly when it is so hot in the desert? Don't you know that soon the sun will bake your bones and the coyote and buzzard will eat them?"

The boy continued to walk as if he didn't hear the eagle speaking to him. He pretended not to feel the sun's hot rays beating down on his

brown skin. This made the eagle even more curious and he stepped closer. He asked in a friendly voice, "Boy, what do you carry on your back? Why is it so special that you tie it to your skin?"

The boy stopped walking near a large boulder where the eagle had landed. He stood in the eagle's shadow looking up at the great bird. The eagle's shiny black feathers fanned a cool breeze over the boy. The curious bird moved anxiously back and forth, craning its neck from side to side as it tried to look over the boy's shoulder for a better look at the jar.

"This is a jar of clay," the boy began slowly. "And what I have in it would be of no interest to you, friend eagle." He looked down at the rocky ground as he continued speaking. "It is just some special sand that I have gathered for my people. I carry it to them so that they may celebrate the coming of the summer rains." As the boy said this he looked up at the eagle standing on the rock. "I doubt if you would have any use for my sand," the boy said, and he turned as if to go.

The eagle had become so filled with curiosity that he jumped down from the boulder and blocked the boy's way. "I must see this special sand of yours!" he demanded. The thought of the sand in the jar made the eagle forget the clouds he'd been gathering. But the boy hadn't forgotten about them. He could hear their rumbling thunder as they bumped against the walls of the mountain.

The eagle spoke now from his friendliest voice, his bright black eyes gleaming with excitement, "I would like to see this sand you speak of! It must be very special sand if you carry it from so far only to give it away!"

The boy stood silent, pretending to think about the eagle's words. Just as he was about to reply, the eagle surprised him by jumping into the air, flapping his wings angrily at the boy, and then flying away. As the eagle flew over the top of the mountain and down into the canyon where he had left his clouds, the boy heard him holler, "I don't care what's in your jar! I'm very busy and I have important work to do!" With that said, the eagle flew out of sight and began gathering up his clouds. The boy just shook his head as he adjusted the jar's belt and set off down the path. He knew the eagle would come back soon.

The suspense of not knowing what was in the jar was just too much. The eagle quit gathering the clouds together and flew quickly back over the mountain toward the boy and his jar. He landed in a cloud of dust. He was out of breath and his high pitched voice cracked as he spoke excitedly, "Boy, if you will show me your sand, I will show you how to make thunder!" He said this so proudly that the boy was impressed, though he tried hard not to show it.

The eagle paced nervously back and forth on the path directly in front of the boy, asking him quickly, "What color is your sand? Is it really special sand? Where can I get some special sand? I think I would like some

special sand too! Would you show me where I can get some special sand? Show me this special sand of yours!" When his curiosity had become too great to contain any longer, the eagle started shouting at the boy, "SHOW ME YOUR SAND! SHOW ME!"

The boy just shook his head patiently from side to side and said, "There is no more special sand! I have the last of it in my jar and I need all of it for the summer rain ceremony. If I don't return soon the rains won't come and my people will die! I must go now." The boy tried to go around the eagle but the great black bird stretched out a large feathered wing and kept him standing where he was.

"I must have your sand then!" the eagle cried anxiously. "I will trade you for it! What will you take? Will you take some of my feathers to shade your people from the sun's hot rays? Yes! Yes! That's it! My feathers will keep your people cool and then they will not need your sand to bring the summer rains! Then you can give me the sand!" the eagle was laughing to himself as he thought, "Of course my feathers for the sand would be a good trade, for me! Every few days my old worn-out feathers fall to the ground and are replaced by the new ones, so the sand would be free!" The eagle kept on laughing.

The boy held his chin in the palm of his hand, as if he was thinking about the eagle's offer. His hand hid the smile that was slowly beginning to spread across his face as he stepped back from the eagle's wing blocking his path, he rubbed it from his eyes. The sun was very long in the day and its strong light made it hard to see. Its heat was also making him tired. He felt the leather belt rub against his skin and was reminded of the jar's heavy weight. It was getting very heavy but he dared not set it down. The eagle might snatch it up from where he set it on the ground and fly away to where the boy could not follow.

"I think that your feathers would be a good trade," the boy said. He paused before continuing, hoping that the eagle wanted the sand as much as he seemed to. "But it is a good trade only for you. My people are not strong enough to lift your beautiful feathers. They would be of no use to them. You must trade me something they can use and then I will give you my special sand."

The eagle looked puzzled. "What else do I have that your people could use?" he asked the boy. "I have only my feathers and my clouds. Would my clouds be a good trade for your sand?" He wondered aloud. "Would you trade your sand for my clouds? Would your people like that? Would that be a good trade?" the eagle asked.

The boy nodded his head thoughtfully. "That would be a good trade," he said as he smiled brightly. "I think my people would like your clouds very much. I will trade you my special sand for your clouds!" The boy pointed to the nearest rocky peak as asked, "Friend eagle, would you do me a favor? Would you put the clouds on that mountain top over there until I can return for them? Your clouds are so very big that I will need help from my people to take them." The eagle was so happy to make the trade, that he clapped his wings together and almost blew the boy off his feet with a strong gust of wind. While the boy set the jar down and returned to his people, the eagle flew up to push the clouds onto the mountain top. As the boy headed back down the mountain path to the

flat dry land below, he could hear the eagle singing as loud as he could up in the bright blue sky.

After several hours of pushing and pulling, all of the eagle's clouds were stuck tight to the mountain. It was difficult to see the top of the mountain because there were so many clouds piled there! The eagle flew higher and looked down on the mountain and the clouds to admire his work. "I have done a good job of pushing these clouds," he said, pleased with himself. "They are piled so high that it will be difficult for the boy and his people to take them! Maybe they would trade for something else if I did it for them!" As the eagle thought about this, he flew down to where the boy had left the jar of sand. He landed on the large boulder next to the path, laughing once again and continuing to speak to himself. He was used to being alone and often spoke this way.

"But that is the boy's problem. After all, a trade's a trade and now his special sand is my special sand!" The clay jar was setting next to the boulder where the eagle had spoken with the boy. He had set it there before returning to his people. The eagle sat on the large boulder and stared at the jar. Now that the boy was gone, the eagle slowly realized that he didn't have hands to uncover the top of the jar. How would he open it? The eagle talked to himself as he walked anxiously back and forth in front of the jar. As he was turning around his tail feathers knocked the jar over and it broke apart, scattering the sand into the wind.

The eagle flew frantically around the canyon trying to gather all of his sand as the wind blew it around. He flew faster and faster, catching as much of the sand as he could before it all disappeared. Suddenly he stopped! He looked closely at the sand that had become lodged in his feathers. He stared hard at it, tilting his head back and forth to get a better look at the sand. This special sand looked just like plain desert sand! He stuck his yellow beak into his wing and quickly pulled it back, spitting sand out in disgust. It was plain desert sand! He'd been tricked! The sand's brown color covered his black wings and made him look brown. He shook his wings but it wouldn't come off! He began to shake both wings into the air as he cried sadly, "No..., oh...no." The sun was starting to drop behind the mountain top as the eagle's wings became browner and browner in the fading sunlight. Suddenly the eagle looked up and began screaming angrily, "Boy has tricked me! Boy has tricked me for some plain desert sand!" The eagle was so mad that he began to hop up and down. He continued to scream even louder, "Well, he's not going to get my clouds! Not for some plain desert sand, he's not!" The eagle shook his head angrily and said to himself, "I know where to get plain sand anywhere I want! After all, I live in the desert!" No, he thought, he wasn't going to get the best of him! He would fly to the top of the mountain and take back his clouds before the boy returned. The boy would be sorry for tricking him! The eagle would take his clouds away and the boy's people would be without rain. Without the rain the people would have to go away. They wouldn't be able to hold their rain celebration. What would the boy do then? The eagle laughed to himself once again as he flew up to the clouds. He felt better thinking that he would outsmarted the boy.

While the eagle was busy chasing the sand and discovering that he had been tricked, the boy had returned to where his people were waiting for him. They had given up hope for his return, thinking that he had become lost like the two men they had sent before him. The boy walked proudly among them saying in a loud voice,

"Pack up what little you carry with you!" He said. "Soon there will be much rain in the mountains. Rain like you have never seen. It will come down to us and when it is done there will be a river in the desert. A river that never quits flowing, so that we may live beside it for as long as we choose!"

The people did as he told them. They quickly packed up their few possessions because they were used for moving. Often they had been forced to travel far in search of the eagle and the rain. They had learned to carry only what they needed.

While the people did this the boy stood looking at the mountains. He smiled to himself as he waited. When the people were finished packing they gathered around the boy. They listened and nodded as he told how he had used the sand to trick the eagle. The boy told them how the eagle, in his hurry to make a trade, had pushed the clouds onto the mountain top. They could hear the thunder as the eagle struggled to take them back. All of that pushing and pulling would make the rains come.

When the boy finished his story, he began to walk with the people toward the mountains and the distant thunder. They could see the lightning flash high in the sky and they knew that the eagle was about to fulfill the man's promise. The thunderclouds had become black with the eagle's anger and they began to break apart, sending their rain down just like the boy had said they would. The rain fell swiftly onto the mountainside, carving a wide path into the dry ground. The rain poured into the path and created a river where none had been before. It was toward this new river, and a new life, that the boy and his people walked.

The sound of grandfather's voice rose and fell, like the branches of the trees I had been watching as he told his story. The trees stood by the edge of the water trying to catch the wind as it sailed out across the river. I could hear their scratchy rattling over the gurgling of the river as it splashed up onto the rocks strewn along the bank. The rocks had washed down from the mountain over the years and was the reason this part of the river was called Talking Rock. Grandfather lived here and he told me that the river had spoken to him ever since he was a small boy. That it had shared with him the history of our people and their many adventures. It was the reason he had stayed here. He gathered many stories to himself and told them to those who would listen, so that our people would like again with each retelling. I looked up into his eyes from where I sat at his feet and I could see that he was getting old, the lines around his face were deep and hard while his voice grew soft.

Grandfather started to walk toward the river and the trees while continuing to tell me stories from the past. It was a past that he had been sharing ever since he was a boy and now he wanted me to share it. He wanted me to

share it. He wanted me to listen to the river, to hear its many voices, to collect its many stories, and to share them with anyone who would listen.

That is how my grandfather came to live on a small sloping bend of Eagle River called Talking Rock and why his people became known as The Sand People. It is also how I came to live there, and how I learned to tell the stories of the river and its people. The brown eagle still live in the mountains nearby. They haven't forgotten boy's cleverness! As they fly through the clouds still perched high on the mountains overhead, they try to pull them loose. In their frustration, they call out to one another, "We've been tricked! We've been tricked!"

Three Days in April

Jim Geistman

April 27

She lay there, her shorn head propped
on the pillows. Her neck wattled, weak from
years of holding that head high, full of
blonde hair.

No more. Gray now, chemo-ravaged, ash gray, merging with
the faded pillowcase in pale April afternoon light.

The constant IV, another vein,
guiding the saline that dripped,
dripped, dripped
into her--that lifeline to what she no longer
really had.

Only her breathing said life. Huge inhales, short exhales,
washing over us hour after hour, soaking us in the exhaustion
that had become her, drenching us in her years of pain.

We composed the scene like painters, distilled
its essence into the pictures we would hang for those moments
when making our personal petition,
when walking idly along a stream,
when gazing into some pale April afternoon.

April 28

The vigil drags on. Her rhythmic pant.
The room bright. The view over Bliss Park.
Bliss Park. Bliss. In the spring sun, people
sprawl on benches and blankets, turn their faces
and bodies to the new sun, blossom in its glow.
Children scamper down the shaded paths, bustle through
hedges, kick a ball through the open field.

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Winter 1997

April clouds, misty gray, filter early
spring light and bathe the park with the
joy of green months. Easter months,
months of getting the garden in,
of taking down the storms.
Months when hard
ground and stern air are infused with
warm wafts of air, and a softening
happens, a relaxing. Bliss.

Her poor wasted body
twisted in the single sheet,
the long draw of the inhale, the short burst
of exhale.
She labors in a place I
cannot go, a place not here,
not now.

29 April

I have this picture of her with my sister,
circa 1943. Dad was overseas. They'd
walked to a photographer on Hamilton Street
and had this made for him.

She's on the right, smiling that smile that
knew nothing could go wrong. That same
smile I saw in a dream, five months after this:
a face in a crowd, nondescript, until her voice whispered
"It'll be all right." For a moment I was where she was,
I saw her, she smiled, moved away.

Dad gave me this picture two hours after she died.
"You should have it," he said.
Outside, the rain on the windows,
the sky pale with tears.