



Magnolia

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Michael Lee Johnson

In December by **Michael Lee Johnson**

In December Miami sun
stands out on the southern
tip of Florida like a full-
blossomed orange,
wind torn sunshine eats away
at those Florida skies.

Spanish accents echo through
Caribbean Boulevard loud
like an old town crier

misplaced in a metro suburb.

Off the east coast ninety miles,
westward winds carry inward
the foreign sounds lifting off
Castro's larynx,
and the faint smell of an
old musty Cuban cigar
touches the sand and the shoreline.

-1980-

Bird Feeder

**by Michael Lee
Johnson**

Baby,
born
just
a
sparrow—
first flight
from balcony
to tree limb.
A chip of corn falls
from the feeder
to the ground.

-2007-

Poem from My Grave

by Michael Lee Johnson

Don't bring the rosary beads
it's too damn late for doing repetitions.
Eucharist, I can handle the crackers and wine;
I love the Lord just like you.
Catholicism circles itself with rituals—
ground hogs and squirrels dancing with rosary beads,
naked in the sun and the night, eating the pearls
and feeling comfortable about it.
Rituals and rosary beads are indigestible
even the butterflies go coughing in the farmer's cornfields.
Cardinal George, Chicago, would choke on the damn things;
some of his priests would have thought it a gay orgasm or piece

remote found in scripture from Sodom & Gomorrah.
But my bones in ginger dust lie near a farm in DeKalb, Illinois,
where sunset meshes corn with a yellow gold glow like rich teeth.
My tent is with friends where we said prayers privately like silent
moonlight. Farmers touch the face of God each morning after just
one cup of Folgers coffee Columbian blend,
or pancakes made with water and batter, sparse on the sugar.
Sometimes I would urinate on dry matted pine needles,
near the tent, late at night, before the hayride, speak
to the earth and birds like gods.
Never did I pull the rosary beads from my pocket.
It's too late, damn it, for rosary beads and repetitions.

Willow Tree Night and Snowy Visitors

by Michael Lee Johnson

Winter is tapping
on the hollow willow tree's trunk-
a four month visitor is about to move in
and unload his messy clothing
and be windy about it-
bark is grayish white as coming night with snow
fragments the seasons.
The chill of frost lies a deceitful blanket
over the courtyard greens and coats a
ghostly white mist over yellowed willow
leave's widely spaced teeth-
you can hear them clicking
like false teeth
or chattering like chipmunks
threatened in a distant burrow.
The willow tree knows the old man
approaching has showed up again,
in early November with
ice packed cheeks and brutal
puffy wind whistling with a sting.



-2007-

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