

Manners
of an
Astronaut

SAMPLER

ALSO BY GIG RYAN

The Division of Anger (1981)
Manners of an Astronaut (1984)
The Last Interior (1986)
Excavation (1990)
Pure and Applied (1998)
“Research” (1999)
Heroic Money (2001)
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Gig Ryan

Manners of an

Astronaut

SAMPLE

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In Blue Craft and Two Minds

1

You turn lesbian in the back-seat of the taxi,
his freak generosity nodding off,
wanting her tall mirror, her head ducks beneath a fan.
At 9 o'clock, being bored
ten times over isn't your idea
as the paralysed meal and her honesty stifles,
edging toward the easiest emotion.

You wake up in a splint of anger, illness, alcohol.
She fiddles with your paranoia till it floods.

2

She dismantles the flagon, it rocks like a ship
on the table.
He makes corrections, is one, and talks fast, apolitical.
She counts the keys and the clock.
His film of hands gesturing forever.

She wears the blind hammer on her chest,
pointing like Cuba at the door.
We have come, say the women,
to cry, and the poet, corny, American, obliges
with his accessible feelings,
his masculine one-way god
invokes Woman—the grave magic cut
where your tears go.

3

On a careless stair, the toy wedding veil.
Below, the endless mother
cleans up, forgives. She is open all hours
until you reek of sentiment like a poor book.
Her hand messes up his hair on television.

A car builds up in the drive
to a fast future where you pick bits out
like a sound-track. You force the clear screen
and want a new one, black and white, realistic.

4

Her head controls the room.
Outside, the second feature, its blue beckoning light cries
like someone else's kid can't,
goes into your mouth like a gas.

.....

In Hyde Park

As if a great sadness
longed in you. Not the small hand
or the desolate empire. Something is streaming
like light through a column of trees
into the brain's opening. That fountain
spills frozen in time, the people banging around, receding,
smile, walk, hold, regret.
That touch of a crowd you've embodied,
that shaky argument now constructs like a wonderful building
to prove a city there.
His mouth contracts like a birthday.

.....

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Train

1

In the train's dressy dark, the smudges on his face
become a creed (Canadian in detail),
the cap swollen in his black central eye
is offering life in a minimal way.

The girl is careful, inconsiderate.
All night her plastic skill manipulates the machine.
She hums into range as sleep divides your head.

Think: down his damp length like an exercise yard,
your fateless likewise lust.

Think: such ashy clothes don't hurt
but the sole retreat gets harder.
This tank of wishing air has you in plural.

2

Her strict resuscitation, how his white mouth,
mending in the car, and the tiled room,
blocks your mouth like a plug.
He nods off in safety, and a kind of bliss.
Her black receding eye is flung at you
for a story. You shed like a friend.

In the car, his head goes down
like a window, and the gush of air, city, calculation
scatters, the poor quarters of another dream.

3

She's got enough equipment for life.
Her precaution rides down the train.
The water system flocks through walls
cooling and clearing. The moon you won't exchange
gives like a rope.

And he, poor thing, useless on his bad side,
is laid down, becomes her dead wood
and her rung. They keep them clean, she says,
like a set of awkward toys. You're fussy
about mountain air
and stay in bed, waiting for them to go away.

4

The irate garden is enough to make you pale.
English, he says, from another corner,
fanning the warm alien air, it's over to you.
You feel your face blacking out. Her huge heart,
urgent on the table, is telling something,
as a drug narrows the world.

These anarchists can't sing, their meticulous chaos
is narrowing a room, and his meditation
gets heavy—(that serene ideal isn't my idea).
He looks out from his worst defect, and waves.
With a bent book and a dreamy bible, you could
say it all backwards.

You want to die in the morning, the bed hurts,
and those voices belong to people who wait
in the kitchen with preparation, sadness, and things.

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Some Sunday

Yachts, and a lunch of phoney memories
keep the chemicals in business,
you reach down to second words, saying what's gone
like the leftovers he keeps greasing in the fridge.
The youngest is sick after. You can take just so much
of raw spinach, his subscribed brainwave
doesn't glow from here. To a cockroach
the room would look smaller, but to me
or your spontaneous friends there's never enough of it.

....

The couple next to me think the photography's wonderful
and giggle through the words and the silence.
They eat the screen's colourful slab, and have found
something to do with the night. It stared like an awkward wall
in a luxury flat.

....

An element of pity creeps into your wet relationship.
You kill yourself with laughing, the fake spot
where we met vanishes frankly.
We haven't died. You re-arrange the room,
but a trendy pointing bone
is in that laugh. The depressed American
wants quiet and protein.
Nothing is ever internal enough.

.....

His Cubist Drawings

You're shivering in the Cross, this mad bar,
with him all dreaming and response.
By the time you get home, you've lost the urge,
but think of him, he infiltrates your head even,
his cold bike taking off and your free hand dream.

Fun is enforced in a moment. It will wipe
most of you out, as you bring him round gradually,
being used to it. Leave your brain on that chair
and let Feelings just kick-start out of nothing.
Ennui is what the rich feel.

His cubist drawings are lying everywhere
between the dripping virgin and his male despair
that suffers, seeing nothing, in this neat artistic house.
Your sense of urgency would kill a car.

He borrows the mirror for hours to prove his clothes
are special. He shows you his delicate jewel.
You're supposed to sigh, and help him
with his coat, but talking about it makes me sick.
His pretty face swooning in the door is interruptive, male,
and the question, curious, oppressive. You will cut
that shiny ribbon to get out.

. . . .

A woman I love falls out of a strange shop
in the middle of nowhere. I want to be better.
Her fast mouth and her hand.
I'm about to have breakfast at 3 p.m.

on his money. I feel like a mess.
Her thin head turning and buried
is a good way to be.

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