

## Poems by Michael Lee Johnson

### *Leroy and His Love Affair*

Girlie magazines dating back to 1972 are scattered across the floor.  
The skeletons of two pet canaries lie dormant inside a wire cage.

Bessie Mae died 8 months ago.  
From her lips, and from her eyes comes nothing like before.

Leroy, her lover, her only friend, the man she lived with for  
over 30 years locked her body in their bedroom.  
He didn't want to part from her.

Leroy has no friends to detect anything that might be suspect.  
He wants nothing between the two of them at all.  
No one comes near to interfere.

Their bedroom is padlocked, stale, and stagnant with mildew, looking  
the way it did before she died.

Foul odors ooze up through their bedroom ventilation ducts,  
Leroy contends that a dead rat in the basement is causing the odors.

Leroy loves to lie about his sacred love affair.

Layers of dust blanket over the mahogany floors, and the maid doesn't come  
here anymore.

Bessie Mae's remains are wrapped in a scarlet housecoat,  
Dried blood sleeps in a small pool beneath her bed.

In time they both will sleep, sole witnesses to this fiasco  
their lives will catch them in; enduring it, holding  
their tongues till time matters no more.

Nothing appears changed, lovers unwilling to depart.

## *Jesus Walks*

Jesus lives  
in a tent  
not a temple  
coated with blue  
velvet sugar,  
He dances within the freedom  
of His salvation  
with the night and all  
days bearing down with sin.  
He has billions of ears  
hanging from His head  
dangling by seashores  
listening to incoming prayers.  
Sometimes busy hour's drive Him  
near crazy with buzzing sounds.  
He walks near desert bushes  
and hears wind tunnels  
pushed by pine stinging nettles.  
Here in His sacred voice  
a whisper and  
Pentecostal mind-  
confused by hints of  
Catholicism and prayers to Mary-  
He heals himself in sacred  
ponds tossing holy water  
over himself-  
touching nothing,  
but humanity He recoils  
and finishes his desert  
walk somewhat estranged.

## *Crazy Old Jack*

Fifty-six today,  
and Jack died  
in his room years ago.  
He still sits there I swear

watches television  
philosopher of sports,  
entrepreneur of sleep,  
dream weaver of single men,  
their dreams, their tragedies.  
Jack never leaves his room,  
seldom shuts his television off.  
Jack seldom gets out of bed, boils  
on his naked body, no need for razors,  
Turkish bathes, for this man.  
Jack's prescription pills, then herbs,  
then vitamins-but he is incurable.  
Jack died in this room years ago.  
He eats toast and jam,  
toast without jam; fingers  
wipes butter from a dish.  
I hear Jack yawning from  
his room, his coffin again.  
Sleepy old Jack coughing again,  
dreaming slowly in, drifting slowly out,  
quiet old room-  
just below a beauty salon,  
Fifty-six today and Jack died here.  
Crazy old Jack.