

Living with Michael

Casey Fuller

Runner-up for the 2022 Thomas McGrath Award in Poetry

The Creative Writing Scholarship Committee had this to say on Casey Fuller's "Living with Michael": *"Frank, meditative, and patient, Casey Fuller's 'Living with Michael' is a portrait of joy and beauty found in the unexpected interruptions of noisy partiers, of labor, of routine tasks. We know that Casey's readers, too, will fall into the rhythm of these reflections as they immerse themselves in this poem."*

I wake up.
I stretch.
It's 5am.
I yawn.
I expect no one.
Although it was loud last night.
But it is loud every night.
Did I hear trumpets?
Did I hear drums?
Little waves thudded my body, sure.
But I had my headphones on.
I could not hear everything.
I open my bedroom door.
Twenty-two people are asleep in the living room.
The refrigerator door is open.

A stove burner is on.
Beautiful strangers are sleeping in unusual ways.
They will wake up sore, I think.
I step on a few walking to the bathroom.
They moan: cursing, whispering jokes.
I pee.
I look out the bathroom window.
A school bus is in the driveway.
It may be stolen.
I don't know if it's stolen.
I don't know who these people are.
They smell like artists.
I walk out of the bathroom with care.
I turn off the burner.
I close the refrigerator door.
I see a guitar case.
I see a brass horn.
They're musicians.
Beautiful musicians.
I do not make coffee.
I do not make lunch.
I do not eat a bagel.
I put pants on; a flannel, a hoodie.
I stumble outside over their haphazard bodies.
I bike to work.
I arrive at the warehouse.
It's early.
I sweep the floor.
I stage some boxes.
I roll the carts by the door.
I unhook the lifts from the chargers.
I make packets in the back.
I wave to my boss.
He walks in front roll door.

He sees I'm early.
He thinks I'm a good worker.
I have nowhere to go.

Casey Fuller is an English PhD student at the University of North Dakota.