

Halloween

Steve Jaffa Brown

I don't like 'scary movies' and I don't really celebrate Halloween
I'm not 'buzzed' by fright, after the real horrors I've seen
Anyway it sickens me to be eating a buttie whilst watching a woman
scream
Rather than a horror film give me a Halloween dream

WHERE;a shaman and a witch kiss, embrace, then separate.

Journey's follow...fuckery and 'watergate'
Silent messages of encouragement magically dictate
In poems, insta-memes, and the sky when it's late

A pact made to meet up again, nearby, under a full moon
With each one that rises, I'm howling "is she coming soooooon?"
So if you see her in the crowd, at your table, on riding on her broom
Wish her 'happiest halloween', then direct her to my room!
Is she anywhere about, she has cascading red hair

(pause...)

Wait a min, Coming here, that beggar who wouldn't give her name,
Sat outside 'Spar', under bobble-hat, locks like flames
Freckles, Salford twang, her eyes familiar; the same

EPHIPANY

...That was her, the witch! concealed, playing the players game
Oh shit, after I gave her some baccy I inquired 'are you on the game?'
Now I remember, she said: 'keep your baccy, right back attcha with the
fiver.'

Where you're going soon, man couldn't get no driver
This could be heaven or this could be hell;
The end for you begins at the 'last orders' bell
And take this fortune cookie, it contains the 'endgame' spell
...A BELL RINGS:

(Landlord shouts)

'Last orders gentlemen...don't make me spell it out'

(Disjointed sounds, panic ensues, fumbles about pockets)

"Where the fuck's that biscuit now, what's in it's shell"

(Breaks it open, reads the fragment inside)

‘ENDGAME SPELL: The audience shall decide it...
Heaven or Hell?’

REVIEWS

TSW Sharman

We’re definitely flexing our submission criteria on this one. Submissions should be the first 600 words of fiction for Young Adults, and yet here we are taking a look at the first 288 words of a poem. Still, there’s some fiction in here, and I’m sure some YA readers might find it appealing

Talking this to a friend I described this submission from Steve as being “like a shot of 90 proof vodka after having been drinking a nice red wine all evening.”

So what’s going on here? I read this as the strange daydream that puts a fresh spin on the well-trod Halloween tropes. The first stanza sets it up well, darkly (“after the real horrors I’ve seen”) and then we launch into this ambiguous and vivid urban dream. A shaman (is that the writer?), a witch, a girl with red hair (who may be the witch), with a denouement at pub closing time (“Last orders gentlemen”) involving a fortune cookie she gave him. It ends with the question asked of us: is this heaven or hell?

For me the answer is neither: this is a modern, urban world that’s sexy, funny, confusing, alarming, gritty.

It’s a shot of 90 proof vodka I very much enjoyed.

(And some clarifications: ‘Buttie’ is a Northern English term for a sandwich, and ‘baccy’ is tobacco. ‘Spar’ may refer to a supermarket chain in England.)

Jeanette

Honestly. I’m not even sure what I just read. Took me a few times, maybe it’s the formatting? Is it a poem? Is it a story? Maybe I need a premise? There may be a concept here but I think working out a plan would be helpful. What story are you telling? Is this about to be an epic poem or are we telling a narrative story. With some work this might turn into something but unfortunately right now I feel like I just read a fever dream.