

# Onomatopoeia Magazine

A Magazine of Literature and Whatnot.

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[SUBMISSIONS](#)[CONTACT](#)[DISCLAIMER](#)[FORUM](#)[SUBSCRIBE](#)[EDIT](#)

## Scent on a Mission

by Margaret Eaton

As he got closer she grilled him. "Did you get it? Did you get the Joy?  
"No my friend, I found no Joy. And the bitch in the clogs was no help."

Earlier

"Find the joy my friend." That's what he said to me in the Hungarian aisle of Planet Grocery. He was nibbling on a clump of oily fish fresh from a tin. I gave him a quick nod that could have been mistaken for a twitch, then holding my breath I darted away. I rounded an endcap with just enough caution to avoid knocking down a tower of canned coconut milk, headed up the Middle Eastern aisle and exhaled. I spotted what I had come in for: rows and rows of Greek honey. As I reached for a particularly plump jar his pungency announced his return. It was a distinct odor, a complex reduction no canned fish could compete with, it was uniquely human, uniquely American homeless: piss, puss, and sour mash.

I glanced in his direction and instantly regretted it. He had bad feet. Their feet are always bad. Before I could look away he repeated his plea, "Find the joy." This time with each word his hand moved the fish clump closer to me like a chess piece on an invisible board: find, the, joy. I nodded again, slower than before thinking at least he's got a decent message. It's not 'Jesus hates you for killing American babies', or 'God knows what you did last Tuesday.' Plus I liked the way he carried himself, he had an almost debonaire quality and remarkably good posture for someone with such bad feet.

I put the honey in my basket and slipped away wondering if I had allowed myself to warm to him because I knew I could file him away to some remote corner of my soul reserved for those I only condescendingly deigned to appreciate for their quiriness but had no other use for. Or had some part of him seeped into some part of me, on its own, on that scent, on a mission, without any intention of spending any time in any corner.

Later I saw him shuffling with purpose toward a female version of himself hovering in the exit, her face red and raw from her unprotected life, her body a mass of sweaters holding back the door. I checked her feet, they were indeed bad. One had escaped the confinement of its shoe and was wearing a dark sock for which I was grateful. She had a little dog on a rope who was going in and out, in and out, over the line of permission and back again.

###

Margaret Eaton lives in St. Louis. When she's not dabbling in fiction she helps social change organizations say what they mean, so they can get what they want. She's a contributing editor to [Dowser](#). You can read other stories by Margaret at [Opium](#) and [Rumble](#).

© 2010 Margaret Eaton, All Rights Reserved

### Subscribe via Email

Enter email address here

### Categories

Adam Bertocci (1)  
Anthony Liccione (2)  
art (4)  
August 1978 (1)  
Barrie Darke (1)  
Beggars would ride (1)  
Beige (1)  
Bobby D. Lux (3)  
book review (1)  
BothEyesShut (1)  
Christopher Johnson (1)  
Christopher Woods (2)  
criticism (2)  
Daddio Mick (1)  
Darkness and Storm (1)  
Directing a Monkey (1)  
Donal Mahoney (2)  
essay (1)