

Tea Leaves

| Corbin Parker

Tonight, at nine-thirty,
I realize that my earl grey has gotten cold.
I look into my cup,
and find that my tea bag has burst:
soft leaves, floating, held captive
by the remaining liquid.

I get on my laptop
and Google fortune-telling
in hopes that my tea leaves
will not have gone to waste,
and perhaps I can find
a rabbit or a key
in the remaining green mush.

Like any good journey,
there are roadblocks.
I first find that traditionally,
women did the reading
and fortune telling.
But my online mentor,
Serena, assures me
that being male is OK.

Step one
is where I prepare the tea:
Kettle boiled, the old-fashioned way.
I figure a microwave will do.

Step two
is where it gets exciting.
I strain the excess liquid in my cup,
and swirl the moist leaves.
Now I search for symbols.

Serena lists all the possible symbols
I could see in my cup.
Some seem straightforward:
The pistol means danger
and the curtain means secrets.
Others I don't understand:
The cabbage means
that I will cause jealousy at work,
and the shoe means inertia.

I take a breath, and look into my cup:
Two bison, or buffalo,
and I think they're having sex,
but Serena knows nothing about this.
I search for similar symbols,
and happen upon cattle: prosperity.

I decide to move on.
Anyone can find "prosperity" in his leaves.

By step three,
I must check the surroundings
of my tea cup.
Bubbles mean peace
which I see none.

"That's OK," I tell myself,
because I am to also check
for teaspoons on my saucer,
which there are two:
one for my cup
and one for my wife's.

Twins.

I look over at my wife
who is reading a knitting magazine
and looking for baby sweater patterns.
She is curled up on the couch next to me
in her favorite socks: pink and fuzzy.
I reach over to play with the wisps of loose hair
floating outside her ponytail
and then tuck them behind her ear.
She smiles, and absentmindedly
rubs her swollen belly.

"Honey," I say,
"We're going to have twins."
She looks at me with delicate surprise,
and softly says,
"I know."

Corbin Parker recently graduated from Mercer University with a B.A. in English and Theatre. He will be spending next year in Oxford, UK, reading, writing, adventuring, and bussing tables.