



Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams

Sylvia Plath

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Renowned for her poetry, Sylvia Plath was also a brilliant writer of prose. This collection of short stories, essays, and diary excerpts highlights her fierce concentration on craft, the vitality of her intelligence, and the yearnings of her imagination. Featuring an introduction by Plath's husband, the late British poet Ted Hughes, these writings also reflect themes and images she would fully realize in her poetry. *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams* truly showcases the talent and genius of Sylvia Plath.

Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams Details

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From Reader Review Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams for online ebook

Jordan says

Ignore the hideous, 90s, "multicultural" cover applied to this text in an effort to make classic female authors hip. Hard as it is, pull your eyes away from the horror.

Instead, focus on the meticulous, suffocating power of Ms. Plath's prose. Her poetry in Ariel and The Colossus and Other Poems evokes images of women scorned, scorched, and yet lulled into complacency and love by their micro-worlds.

The same is true here, but it's spelled out for you, in shocking detail. Plath gets you nice and comfy, with a hot toddy or a walk on a Spanish beach, and then she takes a baseball bat to your shins with a single line.

After Ted Hughes's informative-ominous introduction, the stories are published in descending order, from newest to oldest, all the way back to Plath's freshman year at Smith College. It's as if you are peeling away the layers of Plath's mind, and approaching the core of what makes her so brilliant. But you never quite get there.

I am especially fond of the titular story, *Johnny Panic*. An office assistant in a hospital compiles the dreams of psychiatric patients in the "Bible" of humanity's drive, the one true God, Johnny Panic. Our narrator hides her task, but discovery is imminent. And that discovery has all the blood and vinegar of a Flannery O'Connor novella.

I am also fond of Plath's nonfiction, her documentary "writing exercises" from her journals that catalog all of the minute details and idiosyncrasies of her neighbors, as well as all of her hate for them. Love, love, LOVE the darkness, the sarcasm, and the bile.

In all, a dark and variegated collection that will entertain a broad spectrum of readers. Yes, read The Bell Jar, because it's canonical and shocking. But also read this collection, the dark underbelly of her life's work.

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Sonny says

I just re-read this book. It was my first foray into Sylvia Plath and totally got me hooked. Although her topics are ordinary, it's the way she writes about them. I feel like we learn so much about her through her characters and storylines. I really enjoy her unique way of looking at ordinary things. It was definitely a memorable read.

Libby says

As a huge Sylvia Plath fan, this book was interesting to me for a multitude of reasons. Several of the stories,

especially the title story, are fantastic stand-alone short stories without any previous knowledge of Plath's work. However, for me, the really interesting part of this was reading some shorter works and seeing themes and motifs that come up in her poetry and *The Bell Jar*, such as numerous references to Lazarus. *Lady Lazarus* is a masterpiece and one of, like, three poems that I can actually remember a sizeable chunk of. That was definitely interesting.

I felt like the journal excerpts were perhaps redundant given that there's a huge tome of Plath's journals published now. I did enjoy the few excerpts from when she studied at Cambridge, as well as the Cambridge-based short story, because it's my home and it's so lovely and slightly weird to think of one of my absolute favourite writers walking the same streets that I did.

Overall, an interesting collection that I think is important in establishing Plath as a significant writer and not just a poet hugely overshadowed by her suicide.

Ashley says

I love the title story; it is by far my favorite. I just love how I feel like I'm tagging along silently next to her as she works in the medical office. Her words just roll off of the page here, and I can feel all of the hard work she put into making her descriptions perfect. I also feel immense envy, as I wish I'd written the story myself, so painfully real are her descriptions of her waking life.

Next up, I admire 'The Comparison' for its concise description of the differences between a novel and a poem. I think of all the stories compiled here, I go back and reread this one the most.

'Context' kind of falls into the same category as 'The Comparison' for me, but again, I do go back to this barely-more-than-one-page rumination quite a bit.

I enjoy all of the short stories that feel like they are real anecdotes from her childhood and adolescence, which of course they are. Namely among these I prefer, 'The Daughters of Blossom Street', 'Ocean 1212-W', and 'Snow Blitz'. Part 2: Other Stories carries on with more of these childhood centric rememberances.

Lastly, Parts 3 and 4 are a slightly different story; I consciously tend to avoid them, as we all know how her story ends. I really feel her reaching in these stories, and sometimes when I read them, all I can imagine is the perfectionistic writer beating her heart out trying to shape her life into beautiful prose.

More than any of her other books, I find this one the easiest to pick up and read time and again.

Dustyn Hessie says

I am sad to hear that people think "*The Bell Jar*" is a better work of art than this collection of short stories, calling it "lackluster" and "mediocre." I think people read Plath's short stories incorrectly. You have to really read into them in order to really grasp these stories. Not all of these stories are amazing, but some are incredibly unique, unlike any of the other short stories I've ever read. "*The Bell Jar*" was a fair piece of work, but there are plenty of authors who have exceeded her in the "explicit-depressive-novel" category (see: Fernando Pessoa, Celine (original translation), Sarte, etc.).

Lets take "Tongues of Stone" for example. In this story we follow a young woman who has a mental problem, and is eventually committed. We find out that she has this envy for nature: "She envied the green grasshoppers." Because of her ability to observe nature closely, she exposes herself to one of her limitations as a human—the lack of freedom. Our protagonist's disposition is: Why live if you are really, in fact, like a farce to all of these free creatures around you? When our protagonist attempts suicide, she expresses her malcontent with her very own nature; her "dumb instinct in her body that fought to go on living."

Another one I really enjoy reading is “Superman and Paula Brown’s New Snowsuit,” which I think has that same kind of literary resonance. Except that in this one she touches on immortality. Superman was this metaphorical character, like a dreaming walking America in those years back America was basically Superman, seen as immortal. And she closes out this story strong too:

“I lay there alone in bed, feeling the black shadow creeping up the underside of the world like a flood tide. Nothing held, nothing was left. The silver airplanes and the silver capes all dissolved and vanished, wiped away like the crude drawings of a child in colored chalk from the colossal blackboard of the dark.”

“The Wishing Box,” “The Sunday at the Minton’s,” and “Among the Bumblebees,” are also some of my favorites from Plath’s collection of short stories. I can easily see Plath on that short fiction tier with the likes of Angela Carter, although seeing as though Plath had not lived a long life, that comparison is seemingly absurd. Ten more years and that would’ve been that!

Plath gets more creative in her short stories than she did in *The Bell Jar*. She even admitted herself that she did not want that particular novel to be representative of her work; it’s not clever, or even imaginary; it’s just sort of, well, there. In her short stories she creates some unlikable characters (according to some people) and puts them in their own little selfish hole of turmoil. From there, she builds worlds and manipulates them to elicit meaning.

If you want to read a poet who is similar to Plath, although not as dense, read Ingrid Jonker. She is so understated (and by the way, she committed suicide also). If you want to read someone who has that intense lyrical severity that Plath does, read Sarah Kane’s play *4:48 Psychosis* (and by the way, she committed suicide also). If you want to read a memoir that is literary and very intelligent read Elizabeth Wurtzel’s *Prozac Nation*. I know it might sound ridiculous to some, but Wurtzel’s is a very gifted woman. Plath’s prose is what brings me in. And these short stories bring out a little bit more of that, especially more than, say, “The Bell Jar” had.

Kirk says

Reviewing this collection of posthumously published ephemera in 1979, Margaret Atwood called *Johnny Panic* “a minor work by a major writer.” Unfortunately, that perception has stuck for nearly thirty years now, leading to the rather unfortunate conclusion that Plath was less than successful in her attempts at the short story. That presumption does a real disservice to the stories in this collection, which by any other standard than the towering accomplishments of Plath’s own poetry, are accomplished, varied, experimental, and compelling. We would do well to remember that Plath launched her career as a storywriter, winning the *Mademoiselle* creative writing contest in the early 50s with “Sunday at the MINTONS.” While only a contrarian would argue that these stories equal the poetry, a valid argument can be made that, if we can accept *The Bell Jar* as a classic coming-of-age novel, then we ought to make a place for Plath in the short-story canon.

To that, however, would require a reinvention of this collection (which differs anyway from the 1977 British edition). First, get rid of Ted Hughes’ introduction, which doesn’t mince words when informing readers that what they’re about to delve into is mediocre. I suppose that in the 70s, amid the rushing to market of Plathiana (including *The Bell Jar*, which, lest we forget, nobody ever heard of in America until 1971), such an argument had to be made for the sake of Plath’s reputation. Now that she’s an uncontested major, however, it’s time to allow the stories to stand on their own merits rather than compete with her other efforts.

Second, the book needs reorganizing. The original British version presented the stories chronologically; this version presents them in *reverse* chronological order. Either way, readers are urged to consider the fiction within the arc of Plath's career and biography, which already are far too dominant in assessments of her. I would recommend a thematic organization (Marriage, Motherhood, Family--Dreams and Visions---Life and Death in America, etc). That way a solid effort like "Tongues of Stone" can stand on its own instead of being considered a precursor to *Jar*, and a genre exercise like "All the Dead Dears" can be read formalistically.

Finally, the diary passages excerpted here are redundant since the publication of Plath's journals; their presence only serves to undermine the autonomy of her stories. Same for the smattering of journalism, which would more profitably fit as an appendix of the journals.

Until something along these lines happen, I doubt *Johnny Panic* will ever transcend its "minor" status, which will be unfortunate. The title story is brilliant; at least a half dozen entries here are top-notch ("The Wishing Box" especially); and even the weaker ones have some thematic relevance to Plath's trademark issues of creativity, domesticity, and emotional discontent. They deserve a fairer reading than they've thus far been accorded.

Ludmilla says

baz? öyküleri iyi, baz?lar? kötü. plath'i yak?ndan tan?mak istiyorsan?z, güncesinde bahsetti?i baz? olaylar? öyküye nas?l dönü?türdü?ünü merak ediyorsan?z okunabilir.

Liisa says

Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams is a wide collection of Sylvia Plath's short stories and a few of her personal diary entries. My reading experience of it was quite the roller coaster, it has stories I absolutely adored, paragraphs that I read dozens of times and will read in the future, but most of the pieces were simply okay. Brilliantly written, yes, they just didn't make feel much and some went way over my head - I couldn't figure out what was the point of them. The stories started to feel very similar, Plath clearly has her own style in short story writing, which unfortunately didn't amaze me apart from the few exceptions. I also wish there had been more extracts from Plath's diaries. I found it extremely interesting to read about her life and thoughts. Though I was a bit confused with all the strange, un-introduced people that were mentioned, which is of course what you get from reading small bits of someone's journal. So rating such a collection is quite hard and I ended up giving Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams pretty neutral three stars. I was never hating what I was reading and as I said, I came across some amazing examples of what astounding things can be achieved with words.

Mercedé Khodadadi says

Steven Godin says

"Every day from nine to five I sit at my desk facing the door of the office and type up other people's dreams. Not just dreams. That wouldn't be practical enough for my bosses. I also type up people's daytime complaints: trouble with mother, trouble with father, trouble with the bottle, the bed, the headache that bangs home and blacks out the sweet world for no known reason. Nobody comes to our office unless they have troubles. Troubles that can't be pinpointed"

My second Plath in a week, but this time have put the poetry to one side, and gone for this collection of short-stories, journal entries, essays, and lesser known prose writings, some of which were published posthumously by Ted Hughes. Many featured give an insight into Sylvia's life, thoughts and feelings. Any serious Plath fan would find much to like here, although a few stories are a little bit unusual. Some pieces are witty and lively, but the darkness that plagued her mind always appears to be hiding around the corner. At least, that's the impression I got.

One thing is for sure, it's easy to get addicted. She had the ability to take hold of readers at the flick of a switch.

My Highlights -

'The fifteen-dollar eagle'
'Sweetie Pie and the gutter men'
'Johnny Panic and the bible of dreams'
'The day Mr. Prescott died'
'The daughters of Blossom Street'
'Widow Mangada'

Emily says

Oh, Sylvia. Thank you for showing me that talent isn't the same thing as genius, and how some people have to struggle for the former until they fall into the latter. And how is it that you were just as effective at throwing me headlong into writing now, at 24, as you were at 15 when I had never before tried? I'm sad to put you down, but this is the last work of yours there is for me to read in the world. Now, more than ever, I wish you hadn't put your pretty little head in that oven. I want more of you.

Paula Bardell-Hedley says

Collaborative Book-Blogging

I enjoy taking part in book blogging jollies, but seldom find time to give them my wholehearted commitment. This year alone there have been tempting readathons and readalongs for Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, Agatha Christie and Persephone Books, to name but a sprinkling. Sad to say, I haven't signed up for any – until now.

I recently spotted a post about the forthcoming 1977 Club; an event hosted jointly by Kaggys Bookish Ramblings and Stuck in a Book from the 16th-22nd April. Participants were asked to read books published only in that year (there had previously been clubs for 1924, 1938, 1947, 1951 and 1968), and a helpful list of eligible titles was provided to make the challenge easier.

A day or two later I noticed a photograph on Karen's blog displaying a pile of books originally published in 1977, among them *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, a short story collection by Sylvia Plath. This title had been sitting unread on my shelves for a very long time, but until that point I was unaware it had been released in the very year required to take part in this challenge. I had my book, so why not join in the fun? Voila!

The Book

"I'm a wormy hermit in a country of prize pigs so corn-happy they can't see the slaughter house at the end of the track."

Although Sylvia Plath died in 1963 at the age of only 30, *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, a collection of short stories, pieces of journalism and extracts from her journal, was published posthumously by Faber & Faber in 1977.

Her estranged husband, the late Ted Hughes, had complete control over her unpublished work. He selected thirteen stories for the anthology from manuscripts found among her papers after death, including those, he claimed, "she wished to keep," plus "others written during her last two years in England."

I no longer recall how or why this book came to be in my possession, but it's likely I picked it up from a second-hand book shop with every intention of reading it shortly thereafter. Doubtless other books came along to lure me away, and *Johnny Panic* was set aside for another day.

Finally reading this volume of Plathian ephemera over the course of a weekend was at times a bizarre experience. I discovered her prose was sharp, sinister and oddly surprising. Her narrative had a jittery intensity. It was filled with foreboding and had a uniquely mirthless quality. Some stories were stronger than others, but the selection as a whole offered an insight into her development as a writer.

I wonder now why it took me so long to read this collection. I've always admired Plath's poetry, especially *Ariel* with its free-flowing emotion and ambiguous themes. Perhaps I was waiting for the right moment in my life to fully appreciate this particular work. More likely, I was overwhelmed by the growing number of unread books in my library and, like Johnny, I panicked.

Roxana Dreptu says

As haunting as ever, even if in short installments, Sylvia goes out to reach me in unfathomable ways.

Magdalen says

Ted Hughes warned in the introduction "This collection does not represent the prose of the poet of Ariel, any more than the poems of the Colossus represent the poetry of the poet of Ariel" and of course he was

right (after all he did know Sylvia better than you and me)

This collection of short stories is a slap to everyone who considers Sylvia Plath *just* a great poet. Here she proves that she is capable and extremely talented at writing something other than poems. The writing is so unique and distinguishable among a thousand. Her vocabulary is splendid and even if we are talking about short stories there is something poetic in them. She uses so many similes and a huge variety of adjectives that it feels as if images could pop out of the book all of a sudden. Plath manages to do so without becoming boring or tiring. Also, memorable quotes can be found in those short stories as well. Some of my favorites were:

“The door of the novel, like the door of the poem, also shuts. But not so fast, nor with such manic, unanswerable finality”

“Surely the great use of poetry is its pleasure- not its influence as religious or political propaganda”

“So many people were shut up tight inside themselves like boxes, yet they would open up, unfolding quite wonderfully, if only you were interested in them. And really, you don’t have to belong to a club to feel related to other human beings”

I wish I had the chance to meet Sylvia Plath and ask her which were her favorite stories. To ask her about the “In the mountains” & “Among the bumblebees” She was such a promising writer. She had such great potential.

Moving on to the excerpts from her journals... At first I was tempted not to read them, but then I gave in and read them. I am thankful that I did. Plath showed me that struggling is something human like. It was so relieving (and heart-breaking too) to realize that even someone as great as her struggled with writing at some point. Sylvia Plath is one of my favorite poets/ writers and knowing that she could offer so much more to the world (than she already did) saddens me... She was -at least to me- one of those people you wish you have met and hanged out with...

“I am dead to them, even though I once flowered. That is the latent terror, a symptom: it is suddenly either all or nothing: either you break the surface into the whistling void or you don’t. I want to get back to my more normal intermediate path where the *substance* of the world is permeated by my being: eating food, reading, writing, talking, shopping: so all is good in itself, and not just a hectic activity to cover up the fear that must face itself to duel itself to death, saying: **A Life is Passing!**”

“...the poverty of life without dreams is too horrible to imagine: it is that kind of madness which is worst: the kind with fancies and hallucinations would be a bosch-ish relief.”

PS: There were only a few stories that I didn't enjoy as much as others. (Snow blitz I guess was the only one I didn't fancy at all)

Mariel says

Maybe a mouse gets to thinking pretty early on how the whole world is run by these enormous feet. Well, from where I sit, I figure the world is run by one thing and one thing only. Panic with a dog-face, devil-face, hag-face, whore-face, panic in capital letters with no face at all- it's the same Johnny Panic, awake or asleep.

Dream by dream, thief by crook into the book. While I sneak onto goodreads to read an update or two before the creepy turtle that plagues me figures out he has something to rat me out on (only in my dreams is it not

okay for absolutely everyone else to watch youtube all day) this girl is cribbing dreams when she is supposed to be doing whatever it is she is supposed to be doing. I mean ethically wise to collect her paycheck. Into a book these privileged documents go into the bible of dreams for Johnny Panic. I thought she should have had an hourglass to test the sandman's time but instead she listens for the tell tale walk of the cripple over her. There are false alarms. The keeper of the patients dream records isn't the only cripple in the building. It is her day time dream to have unfettered access to the fluttering pages of the book. She keeps one lidless eye on the book in the vision in her mind and the other webbed on her own night-time wanderings above a nearly transparent lake. It reaches every direction and has no shores that she can see in the confined dream world. If you make that face too long it will get stuck that way. Dream of suspension over the dream lake enough and you will have the dragon legs of the beasts that live inside of it. It might be like if you stay in the tub too long and your hands become prunes. Your mind will shrivel into a packet of brain ramen noodles. Dehydrated and disused. You died in your sleep. Her dream lake might have rivers into the minds of others. I don't know if she hoped to find their land of the dreams brain embryos in the place you go before you were born.

Connected to her one big dream. The only dream she knows.

Her pride in her job as Assistant Secretary in the Adult Psychiatric Clinic reminded me of the optimistic girl Mary portrayed by Kirsten Dunst in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. I don't understand their invisible therapy and someone could have come up with an analogy like "on par with a heavy night of drinking" to explain it to me. I have a sense of a facial collapse when the assurance that the great work is as elusive as a real life counterpart to your favorite white knight and horse sex dream scenario. She is attached to the owner of dreams in the figure of Johnny Panic. What if there was one dryer above all dryers that stole all the pairs of your missing socks. There was once a patient- you can call him Harry Bilbo because that was his name in the story. I think that's an unfortunate name if he were a real person- cured of the panic-light guiding his sleeping life. I can't help but feel she's talking to herself about the pride and joy of her office that would be in direct opposition to this Johnny Panic if there were such an overlord of collective primordial fears. The day comes. It has to come. The day dreams take over. The cripples banged the dinner gongs with their steps on the tiles. She could have been like the little boy in *The Neverending Story* who eats his packed lunch and talks aloud of Atreyu and saving the world of stories. She doesn't have the lunch. An apple will have to do and I felt her longing for the apple in the safety of her desk keenest of all. The face must fall of the invisible safety clinic. The two legs must collapse on pins and needles. Her legs have fallen asleep. A dance of shaking would be in order but she is taken in by the eclipsing appearance of the clinic director. I do not believe in his authority. It is time to take the cure from bad dreams. I wonder if the barren lands of no dreams stretch out in horizon less worlds of the fruitless trees of other dead lands of the no dreamers. Don't forget me, Johnny. HO! Who is that? It is Johnny Panic himself. He flips off the machine and says to the white coat lights of nothingness: No one puts baby in the corner. Of course he did. I never believed in the white coats. Shut your eyes and there's a bad dream. That's all they would ever be there for.

What I fear most, I think, is the death of the imagination. When the sky outside is merely pink, and the rooftops merely black: that photographic mind which paradoxically tells the truth, but the worthless truth, about the world. It is that synthesizing spirit, that "shaping" force, which prolifically sprouts and makes up its own worlds with more inventiveness than God which I desire. If I sit still and don't do anything, the world goes on beating like a slack drum, without meaning. We must be moving, working, making dreams to run toward; the poverty of life without dreams is too horrible to imagine: it is that kind of madness which is worst: the kind with fancies and hallucinations would be a Bosch-ish relief. I listen always for footsteps coming up the stairs and hate them if they are not for me. Why, why, can I not be an ascetic for a while, instead of always teetering on the edge of wanting complete solitude for work and reading, and so much, so much, the gestures of hands and words of other human beings. Well, after this Racine paper, this Ronsard purgatory, this Sophocles, I shall write: letters and prose

and poetry, toward the end of the week; I must be stoic until then.

This I want too. The silent language of hands, laying on. Words inside and building up everywhere. The worst thing that could happen is to not care any more about stories. This I fear too. Plath wrote this in an early Cambridge journal. I felt this in her stories. That the incarnadine sky of the mind was pushing back against the worst that could happen. I think about this all of the time. It meant something to me to see it written by Plath so long ago. It feels like my own skin is too small when I'm with others and when I'm alone I feel like it will disappear into me completely. I don't feel that about writing, though. It is the reading that helps me feel the solitary and yet not alone completeness I don't know where or how to find anywhere else. (I've written about this to a disgusting degree on goodreads. I write about the same things all of the time.) That's the cold shock of finding this from someone else. I don't want to keep saying the same thing and here I am saying it again. The only thing that makes it better is it isn't my own voice I'm so sick to death of.)

I cannot say that I had a least favorite story. I don't want to say that because it isn't true. It is more like if you read a story or watched a film and it made you kind of smile. The warmth doesn't fire you up inside to last the whole day. If you walked on the ocean you would have to grab a life preserver of another story or drown. Something like "The Fifty-Ninth Bears" was like this. A married couple have this bet going. The other holiday amusements are feeling like the holiday is already over and only the bet of who guessed the right number of how many bears they will see is still going like an advertisement bunny. I knew that she was going to see that fifty-ninth bear as the last thing she ever saw. I always knew it and the triumphant I was right imminent death was something like hearing a joke from a family member who is fond of the joke and repeats it to every new person you meet. You might be prompted to fill in parts because you tell it better. It was comfortable and, well, not my favorite. I felt the same about Sunday at the Mintons'. Oh, Plath can describe anything and I could trace over it in my mind. Something would keep me afloat. I liked this:

Hers was a twilight world, where the moon floated up over the trees at night like a tremulous balloon of silver light and the bluish rays wavered through the leaves outside her window, quivering in fluid patterns on the wallpaper of her room. The very air was mildly opaque, and forms wavered and blended one with the other. The wind blew in gentle, capricious gusts, now here, now there, coming from the sea or from the rose garden (she could tell by the scent of water or of flowers).

Elizabeth has relinquished her freedom to the blustery dominance of her brother Henry. Henry has a big mouth to devour other's words and desserts. When she confesses that she never paid attention to the direction she is going to he opens wide and sucks in her confidence to take in as she senses. I would draw him as the cartoon of the blowing cloud only his would suck in her dress. I am all for her floating above him when he topples into the ocean (I guess the ocean would say he was blue because the ocean was blue, not the other way around). But could she have floated above I would have been happy. I don't want to feel resigned that is how it happened, that she comes to him again, and I need another story now. If she could float she could float above another sea and maybe take the arm of a different person. Walk with me a while. Does it have to be blustery big mouths all of the time?

(Between you and me I love to read short story collections. I dread reviewing them on goodreads. There is the temptation to write about every story. I feel guilty for what I've left out.)

My favorite story maybe was Stone Boy with Dolphin. Does anyone else have to destroy everything they write? I had this idea that American Cambridge student Dody felt that way about this stone boy with the dolphin. She sees his face on the boy Leonard. Leonard was already claimed by the other American Cambridge student Adele. Adele who has the right things to say. The right things to say that you couldn't imagine what the rules were. You don't know what the game board looks like because her pristine blonde face will give you the look that you are from another planet. Sweetly, somehow. You broke the law and are suffered. I hate girls like Adele. I wouldn't want to know someone like Leonard even existed anymore if he could belong to someone like Adele (who wants someone who could belong to anyone at all?). I wish she had wanted to break his stone face for this reason but I don't think that's why she bites his face when finally she gets close. If she could break this statue. She doesn't know what it is supposed to be. She could be cured if her foot could break its face. Now that I think about it. He is a prince of pebbles if he's broken down. The Johnny Panic dreams share grinds of sand in the dream pool. There is sand in her poetry too. It is grit in the eye and storms. An irritant, too small to notice. Something to be bigger if apart of something else. Glass blown and beautiful. If she could destroy the statue she could destroy the world that is in her, her art and her soul. The sand is glass after all in a window and the pavement stone. I liked the destructive urge. It feels like that when you don't like how you feel about what you could make.

The five boys surrounded Dody. They had no features at all, only pale, translucent moons for face shapes, so she would never know them again. And her face, too, felt to be a featureless moon. They could never recognize her in the light of day.

Plath writes about the nihilism of belonging. Schools, desks, trips, cake, competition and children smiling in rings. The nuns tried to wipe the smile off her face when she wasn't the tailored image. Behind those injustices and stoic day to day grinds are the descriptions of what everything could look like. At least something it could be, if the grit could be glass and you could see your face in it. I am surprised that more people haven't read this collection. I was happy to have them. I had them when I couldn't sleep and I repeated what everything looked like to myself. I didn't feel like I was drowning. Tongues of Stone reminded me of an Anna Kavan story from Asylum Piece or I am Lazarus. The glass breaks into shards in towel hidden under your foot when you stole the glass of milk from the other patient. I used to like picking up green bottle shards as a small child. I'd forget about the dirty Alabama school playground. You don't remember when you had your first glass of juice when they give you your second. They've been waiting for something for a long time and your everlasting rising of the sun are alarm clocks of doom. I think "warm and round, like apples in the sun" is a great way to describe the poisonous words of the nurse. She thinks you'll sleep tonight. Sometimes I forget there's a down side of staying in the world of stories. There's something else that could happen to you while you're asleep. Sometimes the book is just like that.
