

Prayer to Ray Bradbury

by Justin Hamm

Dear Ray Bradbury, yesterday
 was my thirteenth birthday, and I could not stop thinking of
the
Mennonite girl in the milkwhite bonnet,
 the squint of her eye, the twitch of her anxious finger on the
trigger,
sudden holes blooming in paper
 ducks in a gallery at the center of a carnival's motley swirl.
They say you are very old now
 and only hold court with presidents, but there is no real god,
sir,
and so I believe we must all make our own.

It was either you or Janis Joplin.

Mr. Bradbury, my prayer to you:

 You see, recently I've become privy to the inevitable asteroid
of our doom
and it has caused me to reassess
 the general landscape at present. Hunkered down in nearby
houses
are methamphetamine chefs;
 kindergarteners carry needles, hide eyes with dark designs.
And yet my dearest wish is nothing
 more ambitious than to pluck out the thump of my lovestruck
heart
on the strings of an alien harp.

 I want to live gently these last months, to forget about war
drones,
social media, copyrighting my own tainted DNA.

 But Mr. Bradbury, please, I'm terrified
of large corporations, of superviruses, my mother and father

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consume too much aspartame.

I beg you, sir, consider the Mayans. There isn't much time.

Won't you send m'love and me on a rocketship deep
 into the charming black of your enchanted universe, far from
this
day-to-day science fiction facing us down?
 Yes, I may in truth be forty-six, a liar, but in this I've spoken my
soul.

Let us marry at some somber Martian altar,
 let us rise hand in hand to brave your quirky cartoon dangers
good-naturedly, our tongues pressed firmly into our cheeks,
 much as we might brave the high kitsch of the next family
Christmas,
the quaint heartbreak of a shuffling old 50s country song.

