

Owed to the IRS

by Neil McCarthy

Sleep is a steep comfort these stock-still nights -
the ceiling an artexed breadth of angst,
the blue power light of the laptop in the corner
exhorting me to turn it on and discover
what playing card I am,
what Game of Thrones Hunk should be my Valentine,
what my ideal job is,
what Disney haircut I should have,
what country I should live in,
what my favourite cuss word says about me,
what I was in my last life,
what kind of dog is my soul,
whether I would die first in a horror movie,
whether my boyfriend is great or just a raccoon,
or whether Joey, Chandler or Ross would be
my perfect friend.

Then there's the TV, just two remote controls
away from warning me that
ISIS is gonna get me,
Muslims are gonna get me,
Ebola is gonna get me,
drones are gonna get me,
Russian rebels are gonna get me,
God is gonna get me,
slippery roads are gonna get me,
Kim Jong-un is gonna get me,
the rhythm is gonna get me,
German banks have already got me,
the NSA are not out to get me but
if I ever do anything wrong,
one way or another they're gonna find me,

they're gonna get me, get me, get me, get me.

The Nordstrom box reassigned to rack receipts,
grins at me to open the window as far as it can go,
to tip it upside down with the ceiling fan on,
then watch eleven months of expenses flutter:
business lunches with my wife,
reminders of business trips fuelled by Arco,
boarding passes for business flights,
photos of the dashboard showing my business mileage,
donation confirmations from Goodwill;
business shirts, ties, shoes;
Barnes and Noble books, pens and cards for business,
Trader Joe's bourbon to get me through all this business,
to get me through the night.

