

JUDGE LO KWA MEI-EN had this to say about Samuel Piccone's set of poems:

In these poems, the chosen formal conceits are as crucial and as subtle as oxygen. The varied formal works present the subject of marriage—the breathing thematic thread of this collection—as inseparable from its own formal traditions, inherited expectations, and procedural paradoxes of creativity and constraint. I admire the poet's dedication to both sensual crafting of language and philosophical inquiry. I admire how they wrote both with and into the form of each poem, and how each poem therefore sings of both poetic agency and human surrender.

SAMUEL PICCONE

Epithalamium Domestica

There are many forests that will find you lost and naked.
Guidebooks say to look for pine beetles staving dry-rot
and in that soft darkness, dig in, be still. The hollow space
two creatures share is called a kiss. Our tongues carry splinters
like kindling. Every passion needs its chastity. What is marriage
if not the first thread of smoke that rises from a grove
when the valley dims her light, the distant glow
always spotted by a tired woodsman? He'll pry us out.
He'll shoulder us back to the village. I promise.

SAMUEL PICCONE

Holy Card

O Saint Anthony of the Desert,
should I find myself in the Hustler Club again,
may you forgive my failed marriage
of spirit to flesh; the parlor's nightly sermon
promises bliss beyond neon keyholes of light.
I still believe in heaven, how it saves
those who keep asking for salvation
in back rooms too pink to ignore, hard up
and waiting for a charitable hand. If God can't
hear all the whispers of His name trapped
between the ceiling fan and the disco ball,
show me how to find pleasure in the black fire
of a shadow. Take my wallet, now and forever.
I'm broke anyway. My blankness is yours
to fill with a kingdom, the darker the better. Amen.

Haibun Domestica

The Gods keep laying backyards at my feet that can't be tended. All my nights are vigils spent thumbing the raised letters on another exterminator's business card, the broken stockade of each word: *Home, Scorpion, The Best Defense Is*. A neighbor suggests a black light and a mallet; his lawn looks like a sky of splattered stars. Sometimes the heavens bless the Vegas valley with rain, and I slip my wife's heels off when she comes home from work, dance barefoot with her in the wet grass. My father told me on my wedding day to promise safety even when I knew better, that husbandry is a vow all men must fake now and again. Even the good Lord lies about how many floods it would take to rid this earth of all the venom it leaks. A shepherd knows silence is the oldest kind of protection

the bug man's secret—
beneath every house there's a flock
grazing untended