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**Excerpts from *Knitting***
Rob Tulk

**Blood and Bone**

The skies yellowed and turned red most evenings.
A good August in the bay.
The cod came in in droves,
not small neither.
The mackerel seem to come later and later nowadays.
No doubt, come September, they’ll be thick,
dolphins too, some pretty.
We’ll get the smoker going then.

Bonnie’s raspberries came out the size of your thumb.
The blue berry patch, plump and ready by next rain.
The gardens’ fixing well.
Capelin and kelp, blood and bone.

S’pose I’ll head in over the highway, next few days.
Go into town.
Get some jars.
‘Magine,

nearly run out of jars.
Excerpts from *Knitting*
Rob Tulk

**Brewis**

Caught by a shiver
lifted the tint of sunglasses to see
shadows crept into the valley

how hungry
rubbed my neck—stiff, raw
how long it had been since breakfast

blew life back into coals
some bottled fish, caked tack
pot of tea on the fire.
Excerpts from *Darning*
Rob Tulk

**Dregs**

Sat up, turning  
late into another night.  
Saturday.

One shaded light  
wooden chair  
cold tea bottoms and old words  
cup of years gone cold  
and the kettle in the corner waiting.

**Tangle**

Page after page of someone else’s life  
margins of pencil etchings old and new.  
Tangling  
things unknown or forgotten  
perhaps deliberately perhaps not.

Words slip and catch  
set and pull.  
Clenching  
things unknown or forgotten.
rural i
Jane Walker
35mm film photograph
rural ii
Jane Walker
35mm film photograph
Ef isl (for Catherine)
Kyle Howe

The streets and people around my home town are the ones you cannot forget no matter how hard you try: Hampered houses filled with the music of life and the waves of the past, some of which forgotten were planted here long ago. A dozen old churches stand here still, unchecked and left teetering over our heads like some poor forgotten giants. The roads are red from the clay in the ground mixed with the salt carried in the air from the harbor. There is not much else here besides the elders who have lived, loved and fished here their whole lives and know nothing but their niche in this ample community; and the young adolescents who feel the opposite. And the fog. You’d be blind at least two days a week, not counting the liquor. The fog would often be so dense you could not see the church tower light above the city, I often felt it was also so thick and present that it could even block the sound of the bells from traveling across town. The large boulders weathered as if they’d been sitting on the bottom of the ocean and were heaved up and laid in the backyards just yesterday. All and any additional land and space in this town, the town of Ef isl, was taken up by these rocks, they filled in the space between the churches and the houses and the harbour.

Holiday Heaven they called it, although I do not ever recall anybody calling it that, it was just home. Home is where we lived. Home was a stone field away from the oldest, relative to me anyway, and most staggering building I had ever seen. Rumour had it the only reason there were so many was that when the first few generations lived here there was very little to do apart from drinking, so naturally they drank and built churches. A garden of rocks and blueberry bushes, and certainly
empty bottles of rum thrown into the bushes by god-knows who, was the only thing separating my house from the only Catholic church still operating in Efisl. It is hard to see these things as they actually are here with the naked eyes, or the naked lips, or naked hips.

No, there is something else here, something that was not here when the people who first came and settled (Who they were or how long ago they did or even why the hell they came here, I don’t know) could see. Something was here before. Somebody has watched these waves before, you can see from the way the waves come in. They won’t act like they don’t know you, hesitantly they roll now like they are timid. Someone, or ones, have lived off of these berries and these fish. You can only imagine who it was because even the land and shores can’t remember who it was. Long forgotten like the empty shattered bottles and lonely rocks, they lived and rested, watching the same skies and same shores.
Shoe and Tulip
Jean Wills
charcoal & acrylic on paper
For Those Who Climbed Mt. Washington
Margaret McKeon

Pittsburgh your palace is river moated periodically floods, flanks and train station ballrooms run with coal-blood veins of world’s new-borne industrial revolution

Your gently greening hills, with

- contraction soot-black machine scream
- contraction poor's bloodied sacrifice
- contraction chasm rape of the blue, green

inhaled breaths of righteous creation, Napoleonic zeal
birthed the modern world

From which I step, scuff your coal dust climb Mt. Washington from the hell with the lid off industrial river bank up, up alongside cliffs to raven perched houses

Ride the ride-atop box of Monongahela Incline 635ft of belly anchored steel track and cable a balance hung to swallow the walk of those who climbed Mt. Washington
For the Prophets (after Edward Burtynsky)
Margaret McKeon

Dawn steamed
spring hills
fill my cup
overflow. Rivers high
swollen
As early-sun, still
water
I will don the poet’s hat
reflect topographies
of beauty
fearlessly
Totem
Lorraine Matthews
120mm film scan
The middle of the night. Twenty miles inside Bulgaria. There was no going back.

Our bus groaned and then slammed to a halt. It had been huffing and puffing since we left Istanbul hours before as the citrus sun slipped beyond the horizon.

Everyone – backpackers, migrant workers, nuns in streaming black robes – tumbled out onto the road’s soft shoulder. Finally I figured out that we were at the oddly-placed border. The air was cruelly frigid but, as I joined the haphazard queue, it dawned on me that there was probably worse to come.

“Seventy dollars,” the gun-toting guard demanded when I reached the head of the line. All I could answer was “Huh?”

“Seventy dollars,” he repeated, his face grey and drained of life by the dryness of decades of Soviet communism. “United States dollars.”

My stomach fell out of me. I had only about $100, which was all I needed for several satisfying days in Sofia, proclaimed Let’s Go.

“That’s crazy,” I muttered before reminding myself that the relative security of my North-Atlantic island was a long way away.

“Seventy dollars . . . United States,” the automaton reminded me. The rise in the pitch of his voice was barely discernible. But I heard it—and I put a small roll of bills in his hand.
Thanks to the Bulgarian government’s decision to empty the wallets of every arriving tourist, my sojourn in Sofia was cut drastically short. I had only one night instead of three or four to enjoy the peculiar odor that wafted through the damp corridors of my hotel. There is a point at which even blue cheese goes off and somehow this Bulgarian hotelier had found and stuck with it.

Entering Turkey from the Greek island of Rhodes hadn’t been a picnic either. The thieves in uniform at the port of Marmaris wanted only $5—“United States”—a modest demand compared to that of their neighbour. The trouble here was the juxtaposition between my urge to giggle and the grimness of Ankara’s representative as he carefully processed each grubby $5 bill.

That time I had been brave enough to say “It doesn’t say anything in the guidebooks about having to pay this money. And there’s nothing about it in the ferry offices in Greece.”

The guard straightened his back and drew his dark brows together. He looked into the distance. “It’s the Greeks,” he said. “The Greeks and their shitty tricks.” He shook his head in disgust and, straight-faced and dignified, flicked his fingers across my $5 bill and stamped my passport.

There was no dignity on the border as I crossed into Haiti years later. Our Dominican bus driver tossed a package of cigarettes and a few notes at his country’s sentries and then raced through the verdant forests, alive with rainbowed birds. Suddenly, without even a hint, the greenery ended. Now the land was arid, yellow, crusty, and bare. There were no trees, no bushes, no birds. No water flowed. Almost as
strikingly, there were no stiff men in uniforms eager to flip through our documents; there were no customs buildings, no gates, no signs with a reassuring “Bienvenue à Haiti!” This was, in effect, an unmarked frontier.

The reality of Haiti hit me like a sharp blow to the head. I had read about the country’s faltering struggle to provide its people with one meal a day. But the absence of a border made me quake a little inside. I had crossed dozens of national lines and had never seen what I saw in Haiti.

In a nearby market town women sold used hair bands, starving goats wandering dull-eyed and pot-bellied children imploring “Donnez-moi quelque-chose.”

At the height of the Irish Trouble, khaki-wearing, pasty-faced young men with Northern English accents ordered you to pull your car over. They carried cocked sub-machine guns. A few yards away, little girls skipped rope and sang songs in a brogue I could not understand. I was driving straight up from Dublin in a Toyota bearing Republic of Ireland license plates. At Belfast’s Falls Road, they told me I had risked my life going through Portadown, an Ulster Unionist hotbed where local Catholics were terrorized during the July marches. It seemed to me that no one in Portadown or any other “Protestant town” had given my car a second glance. But I had spent years going from the edge of one country to another and I knew that all wars create a landscape indecipherable to outsiders.

In England, Passport Control officers seemed to regard every solitary
traveler as the potential kidnapper of the queen. No explanation seemed to satisfy them. There was a monkey’s fist in my tummy whenever I came to the head of the long turtle-paced line.

Crossing some borders is glorious: fleeing from the barbarous Newfoundland winter into sunny climes; crossing from lonely New Hampshire roads to bustling Massachusetts streets; moving effortlessly from Germany to France to Spain through the frontier-free European Union.

As I approached Passport Control at Pearson last summer my muscles gave up the tension they’d silently held during a month in the heat and sweat of a New York June. Across from me in the next queue was a man in a blue turban, tattered at the edges, a backpack trawling behind him. A woman in a sari stood at his side. She shivered a little. She held a sleeping child on her shoulder. She looked around jerkily and we locked eyes. We looked at each other. Ahead of her was a uniformed Passport Control officer, questions at the ready, pen in hand, entry forms piled high. The border that’s hardest to cross is the one that takes you completely into the unknown. Her gaze wandered away from me.
Baby Black Bear
Melissa Tremblett
35mm film scan
Stonehenge
Melissa Tremblett
à la poupée intaglio print
Grief
Rachel Fraser

she enters the room
all clicking heels and subway chatter
as if their presence is caught
in the wake of her gravity

passion fit for raging storms
crawls deep within her tired frame
a slow tempest leaves its taste
of loss and brine upon her tongue

old tumult fades, new gales sweep in
conspiring whispers gather strong
present in their haste to pact
deals of absent memory

his death was shapeless fog
drifting through empty city streets
nearly forgotten save for the few
witness to his voyage
The view from the storage room (74 Broadway)
Emily Critch
acrylic on mylar
Only a Lifetime
Rachel Fraser

sunlight through dewed silk
leaves descend, falling slowly
dusk falls without pause

horizon’s stars wane
winter’s dawn is breaking soon
who will sort my bones?
Eternity Comes in One Moment
Rachel Fraser

feel the sharp air
strike raw down your throat
accept each invasion
force it back out

the cadence of the heart
conversing with the blood
and the creaking laughter
of muscle on bone

toes to pavement, cut through air
pavement – air – pavement – air
for a moment
glide

for an instant
the heart stops
the blood silent
the briefest glimpse of time and space
not understood but embraced –
pavement
Paint on a radiator, plants on high shelves, worn wooden tables. These are the details I tend to write and remember: not people or conversations, but visual impressions of place. *Esperanza*. Rereading ten years later, I see a wistfulness in how I describe the café: how worn things are, how set apart, how fragile. *Teacups on an empty table*. I had moved to Montreal with someone months before. By the time I wrote this we had parted ways, and I was living alone for the first time. Twenty-something, trying to find my place in the world, I wandered the streets with a notebook and camera. I projected myself onto my surroundings and read the reflections that bounced back, infused with distance and longing. *Edges of the table worn bare*. A kind of echolocation.

Lately I’ve been wondering if this habit of observation fails me somehow, as if it might be symptomatic of why I sometimes feel disconnected from the place I live in. As if, absorbed by light, landscape, weather or architecture, I distance myself from people, from the blood and breath of a place. *Well-lived furniture*. Sometimes I feel as if I’m
skimming the surface of the world like a stone. As if writing is a clever trick that keeps me from connecting more deeply. I lived in Montreal for two years. Was I ever more than a tourist?

What I remember most is how bright it all seemed at the time, and how keenly I felt everything. I walked all winter without a hat. A heartfelt conversation with Clara on the afternoon I quit the call centre. Sneaking into an abandoned warehouse with friends, losing each other in a labyrinth of graffiti and icicles. *Daffodils in a glass jar.* Finding a garbage bag on the sidewalk full of tarnished silver knives, taking one home. Filling my notebook's back pocket with found photographs, other people's grocery lists, hand-drawn maps. Anything that thickened the notebook was worth preserving. *A small toy horse.* I thought myself quite the archaeologist.

*A radiator painted avocado green.* I remember the heaviness of the paint in my apartment in Montreal, layers of acrylic softening the edges of windows and wall fixtures, rounding the corners of the room. A mattress in the middle of the small single room, as if I slept inside an egg. *With plenty of room to grow down.*

I walked often to the Grand Chalet in the park on Mount Royal. On a sunny winter day, all the tables would be full and I’d sit on the floor in the opposite corner, sun spilling through the window behind me and across the long wide hall. I’d read *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,* watching a carousel of winter coats push through the heavy wooden doors. *Plants on high shelves.* Sometimes people would carry spare chairs from the seating area over to the far window where I was reading. They’d sit down facing the window, close their eyes, and let the sun land on their faces. They would stay there for a long time.
learning to draw in public
Jessie Donaldson
micron pen
A secondhand bookstore sinks easily into shipwreck. Each week brings droves of disowned novels, which quickly barnacle every receptive surface. As calciferous fictions cement themselves in rows or overlap into stalagmites on the floor, an untended bookshelf solidifies into coral reef. The aisle labelled Authors–S is usually the most treacherous, sometimes offering only a single navigable floorboard between stacks of Shakespeare and Steinbeck. Capsized by neglect, an aging bookstore is invaluable as a portal into the past, but difficult to visit without a breathing apparatus. Its rate of decay is multiplied by the number of resident cats.

Each corner of the shop dilapidates in its own way. The front window gradually diminishes in size, crowded by gardening books leaning into the light. Beneath the windowsill, photography primers unsold for years lose their colour and pale into illegibility. Only the most persistent light reaches the floor of the shop, where darkness and disinterest coalesce into dust over a bedrock of forgotten geography texts. Cookbooks from the sixties slowly go stale, while a discerning mouse, concealed beneath a pile of dictionaries, prefers to chew its way through Ulysses. An antique map adorns the wall above the back staircase, where self-help books stack themselves in a concerted attempt to find air. In the corner furthest from the door, the science fiction section has been colonized by an unidentified mould.

Plunging into the depths of the wreck, I dredge the poetry aisle for potential treasure. More than most genres, poetry exhibits a distinct regionalism. Every shop will have Sylvia Plath, Rumi, Seamus Heaney,
but always interspersed with slim volumes from the smallest of presses. There is rarely more than one copy of each book, lending the titles a certain preciousness. Publications by little-known poets tend not to travel far, and perusing a few provides a quick tour of the region’s poetic preoccupations and vernacular subject matter. More often than not, the covers of poetry books are about as nuanced as postcards, awash in painfully cliché imagery: a flower, a flock of birds, water on rocks. A rounded stone sculpture, an impasto oil painting. Or, most foreboding of all, a photo of the author.

Poetry books are almost always small and intimate, but secondhand poetry books are also frequently personalized. Sometimes it seems the poetry aisle is a trove of relinquished gifts, its volumes littered with tiny valuables, like ancient coins waiting to be dug out of a seabed. In a shop in northern California I discovered an endpaper scissored into a Celtic cross, accompanied by a vow of love. Inside Denise Levertov’s *This Great Unknowing*, a birthday card enclosed one of the poet’s verses typewritten on rag paper, its edge charmingly zigzagged to accommodate a rambling stanza. A remarkable number of second-hand poetry books are signed by the author; I found one signature in a self-published volume of travel poems followed by the note, “I hope we meet in person someday.”

In Montreal, one thin anthology shed a bookmark as I picked it up, placing it at some point in the provenance of a seller of rare books in Tucson, Arizona. Another relinquished a red-haired boy, who peered from a photograph the size of a thumbprint. I love finding flotsam between pages, and admit to occasionally transferring treasures from a book I do not intend to purchase into one that I do. A small card with a prayer to St. Francis of Assisi, a polaroid of an ornate armchair, a
shopping list on a heart-shaped post-it, a postcard from San Francisco. I once bought a copy of *The Emigrants* and later found inside a newspaper clipping announcing the death of the author, W. G. Sebald. In Halifax, a bookstore proprietor showed me a box behind the counter filled with bookmarks, clippings and photographs. He claimed to have five more boxes at home, twenty years of plunder. He let me keep a bookmark from the box, a detail from Klimt’s *Tree of Life* printed in gold foil.

On my most recent expedition I was hoping to find Paul Muldoon, or perhaps Sue Goyette, but neither turned up. Wandering from the poetry section, in an adjacent aisle I picked up John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*, a book I’ve meant to read for years. I opened it to find this passage underlined, and it resonated with me as well: *We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves.*
Riggin'
Lorraine Matthews
120 film scan
The Open work: A Meditation/eine Meditation dedicated to Yves Kleins

Marta Croll-Baehre

at a young age, you are taught to kill. Sie lernen, zu töten
red hands grate dirty; sliding in easy like seal fat
crocheted tendrils into the pink ossicles of small mammals—

you tell me that they are just animals. Ich kann Sie nicht hören
they can't feel you as you touch them.
bowed heads dumb like cattle;

they stare upwards with reverent blankness—
disjointed eye sockets, cat mouths agape—rooting for their ambivalent
mothers.
ich konnte es nicht ertragen Sie

Sie sind nicht Gott! But these ones are no apostles
they have no real value—just a small child;
your hands did this. You did not know where to touch them

you have crouched many a time; down, down—
calves flexed and stinging—under a heavy pile of nettling wood—
whinging softly under the damp, black pine—

der Glauben; a consciousness, a mindfulness—
a bareness that regurgitates into the Nordic gust—
you quiver, exposed below the hushed silver snow dust

Der Zeitpunkt. We are seen with the searchlight boater
black bay waters that churn over, our fat legs submerge twenty-two
digits—
after searching, search, search—

cigarettes and minarets that chuff out smoke like the ugly soviets
screwed up tight in a red tin can
the black man was never our father

Nature can not be numbered—
to quantify the space between our lips and our eroding tongues—
spread out thick like marmalade

over cardboard bungalows with the blanched stippled walls and seventies shag—
my feet root for Eastern soil as I drag them
heavy over this neighbourhood

I found a black balloon on the greyhound rocks back home
my palms beat to an ancient pulse—below stout, primordial spruce bows—
bowed to the shushing steel waters;

and I the destroyer of foregone language
language of universal consciousness. On the Metro with a goddess.
transitory, transience, transit systems—die Vergänglichkeit—

I saw you there in the metro station, smelling of cumin and diesel oil.
my memories sind imaginäre;
sucking a long drag—
gauloises embers trickle down over your scuffed black Doc Martens—
over the stained walls and ceramic tiles—
hands stuffed disjointed into the shallow pockets of an old flannel
shirt.

I could not reach you. This is not materiality—
an actuality deep-rooted in our phantasmal consciousnesses
I tried to tell them that you were not a ghost

I can not tell them so they don’t listen
sloppy finishes to bowled over words that droop like clotted bal-
loons—
a lifeline, in my mind leftover

_Ein Leben übrig._
the silence feeds our natural reticence
I see you outside on the bank

digging, dig in the snow—you tell me “Lassen Sie mich in meiner
Schritte sterben”
that was long ago.
before the spring
Marta Croll-Baehre

I saw the last snow come from out behind the primordial mountains
in formless sheets of camel tusks, husk tundra above morning’s amber
blush, light fall beneath the ice-covered fields—I did not open my
mouth
to hush the moth birds, pinned to one another’s breast—sun dance to
heaving
sunrise sprouts babes before a mother’s nest, I saw the last snow fall
still
onto the gelled crocus bed, stiff periwinkle petals peel streams
down onto the half-buried roadstead—I saw the last snow steer bleak
sails
out into the green ocean whose waves whisk slaughter, the Sami
daughter
calls out only to memorize the moth bird’s counter before its drunken
noontime slumber on the long, tawny hillsides—I did not open my
eyes
then to watch the birds hover, spill spittle onto the swollen soil
down moist below, to boil over into lavender crystal light—I saw
the snowfall—touching my tongue, run, runs across the white, anaemic
landscape
I slouch to clutch the moth birds’ frigid feathers in my fat palms, prying
at its vanes like a forensic—my thick fingers prod through its psalms
of a primitive nature beyond London’s borders, sick Sunday mornings that regurgitate flat feelings onto the undulant murmurs as the moth birds spring up from their reverent winter slumbers.

**memento mori**

I have listened to the crude oyster beatings – beat glorious swathing over a Labradorite winter sky whose nighttimes bear bloodless residue

clumps of silver-skinned caribou mourn – cries sever the dry paper gusts washing above the oil-red saggy arm chair, chalky pebble drapes over its edges

I see you – livid woman harnessing an ecru shawl around your swollen hips; a shale-gas goddess you bequeath the dry blood of cod tongues in a frigid rigor mortis.
Solitude
Melissa Tremblett
35mm film scan
Wilderness North
Melissa Tremblett
acrylic on canvas
green thumb
Stephan Walke

put your bow flex, your bench press
and punching bags
outside, on the deck, in the sun

leave them there all summer
never use them, only sit on them
to read or drink tea

leave them for the rain
to wash old spice, sweat,
dance beat cacophony from memory

just when the music has faded
when the sun ventures further
and further south

when the punching bag's leather mouth
contracts in cold autumn mornings
painted in thin coats of frost

leave the machines to bathe themselves
in winter's freeze-thaw rhythm
opening cracks in plastic plating

barbells rust under dapple ice
and building snow. foam innards
bloom in the cold—swell and grow
when the sun returns
the machines will know
bolts will have seized

cables eased their tension
seeds will begin
sprouts of plantain and hardy grasses

reaching tendrils of mosses
peaking from openings in steel plates
and between braces

nurture them
read to them
love them

they are your flexing muscle
they are your garden
Shag Cliff
Virginia Mitford
ink and graphite on layered mylar
at play in a whale’s beach grave
Stephan Walke

children, young and old
are cutting buckled folds
of the beast’s cavern jaw
to see if there is, in fact
a school bus inside

crude symbols and tic-tac-toe
graffiti tags grow on rotting
stink. lines widen like
designs on rising dough

we dissect a mass of warm fat
and storybook dreams,
covet bones and buried treasure
from the festering heap

like the people of Lilliput
we pepper the shore—bewildered
sand flees tickling infancy
dizzied by how small we are

it was an ancient legend
before it spilled its lifeless bulk
to the sand and stones
and children of Trout River

when the sun sets on the horizon
of its bloated and chiseled abdomen
a pong will have carved its eulogy
into your skin, your clothes

every night you will lay
in a beach grave. you will dream
from a beach grave. you will feel
your vertebrae exposed, counted,
a spine of bleaching days

counting back fifty million years,
before whales, when you held a dead
squirrel by the tail and could think only
of closed eyes and stiff, mangy legs

back when that ungulate first
dipped its hoof in the ocean
conceived a notion of swimming
we’ve been testing the waters since

carving our names into mountain tops
and dead whales before they’re peeled
away in rectangles of decay
wasted muktuk and melting muscle

before bones are disassembled
transported inland to rest on museum stands
custom made, chrome and white paint
before the sign that reads
–DO NOT TOUCH–

the children are at play
writing their names in blubber
Foggy Stand-Off—an Eastern Western
Stephan Walke

In the fog we walk wary—one hand on an empty holster. After all, the fog consumes. It has eaten the sun; chewed it and spit it out in a spray of lonely little bulbs. Clint Eastwood comes into sight. What’s he doing so far east? He’s bloated and salty. All the ragged edges rounded by a tumbling surf and kelp-strewn rocks. Although he’s maggoty and sun-bleached, crawling with rock crabs and sea lice, I recognize him by his walk. That sultry swagger with a stiff hint of hemorrhoids or too much horse riding. And I know I’m in trouble.

Looming strangers and nosey shop owners gather faceless on the periphery. Perched on fire escapes and leaning into Long’s Hill and Prescott—hunched and hairless like vultures waiting for the carnage. There are buskers too. One guy with a harmonica that sounds like a fog horn, but he wouldn’t dare in this tension. We all know where the wreckage is going to be. It must be lunchtime. The Water Street crowd come down from their stunted towers to check it all out, shoulder-to-shoulder with hands in suit pockets or fiddling with tight skirts. Rex Murphy is there too. His beak as sharp as his tongue. Archaic and hungry.

In the fog, wannabee cafes and wannabee restaurants fade into haggard saloons. And there’s a terrible thirst on people’s lips. The stink of fear and fish and unmet needs cling to collars and carefully fondled hair. We sit in the touch-screen glow, waiting for the mail ship to come in. Waiting for a six-horse thunder down Duckworth. Waiting for the fog to clear. Waiting for Clint to turn his briny back and tuck himself into the bedrock. But here he is, hand hovering over a Colt .45, waiting for something bigger.

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Four Flakes in the Box
Tessa Graham
120mm film scan
**lead**

Stephan Walke

down rabbit run
down down
sound – less
bound all legs
bound a white coat
white world – white hope
four-footed dints
a triad print
path bound to certainty
bound bound
through tangled passages
willowed tuckets
underfoot
untold understories
undone fold of spruce boughs
depression of a resting moose cow

run!

down, down
shivering twitches
switches of dried grasses reach
for solitary stampedes of passing muscle
clean cut through brambled alder
young, tangly spruce
a suspended moment
bound to belief
we must all breathe
bound    bound

stop

breath caught
there’s a wire shine ‘round the neck
crease in a soft coat
soft arteries – the body is a soft thing
    snow a soft thing
death is hardness in falable flesh
    a tooth, lead shot
    thin wire
taught – and the foot, bound
headlong into fear
    caught
ailment
Emma Croll-Baehre

--resilient lichen--
I have carried you into musky loins of quivering, frigid air dispersing our breath
a black hair embedded in my rabbit sweater blue-grey sky and the silver Subaru slinking up the road like a half-starved wood creature encompassing death shrouds leaning from exhaust frozen eyelashes, nostrils trapping bare skin and brooding, wandering pupils marbled sundog dried mushroom snow banks tip toeing earth goddess over yellowed ice people have been weeping anti-land gurgles and burns our throats they walk as anonymous from the seedy tenements institutions hovering like winter ghosts
introspection on porcelain
Emma Croll-Baehre

china blue gleams from umber ocean waste
enveloped in boreal beach
glass pastel rose pistachio ultramarine
maya grey its fray
sucking thick water
slopping like gasoline from uneasy lips in late December

we drive esoteric
undulant like the copses
over glaucous mountains in bare light
his freckled nose quivers rabbit-like
as seven years ago spits half-moon pools beneath our armpits

my damp eyes catch your distorted sallow skin
flicking like a silver fish I search for you
in periwinkle waves like summer fields
darkened
wet from evening rains

my toes clamp the quay
numb
splayed in thick red socks
clammy moths fall white
spit nipping my anesthetised cheeks
weeks shake and slip away

four queasy months
in a dream you stood figurehead in the cerulean
iris of the Atlantic
dripping with pink velveteen
brine encrusting your cuffs
saltine skin strained in august sun
arcane

how I remembered you
Untitled - video still for *Interior Erosion*
Virginia Mitford
lithograph
Innu Tent Stove
Melissa Tremblett
35mm film scan
Contained Nature
Ashley Hemmings
watercolour and ink
“I have such respect for what you do!” Norm says as a giant key chain that says ‘Norm’ dangles from the ignition. I’ve just told Norm that I work up the hill. Fortunately he doesn’t ask me what I teach. I couldn’t explain that to my parents let alone a cabbie. ‘History’ is my backup answer but today I don’t need it because Norm would rather talk about himself.

“I keep my cab clean and myself clean” he announces with a flourish of justified pride (OMG he’s Travis Bickle!). Norm’s siblings are, by his own admission, losers. His sisters just smoke weed all day . . . his brother is no better . . . he sweeps the floor at Target and drinks his pay. Not Norm though. Norm is out there hustling . . . he loves them sure but Norm has goals, he’s motivated, sets high standards for himself. Those slutty nursing students he picks up may flash their boobs, offer him three or even foursomes in lieu of cab fare but he won’t budge an inch. He’ll buy them a rose, take them out to the Big Stop diner sure . . . he’ll be the gentleman he is but that perverted shit? No way. He drives a cab god-damn-it, a REAL cab. No time for bull-shit from conniving little whores.

He won’t go back for seconds either . . . his kid’s mom wanted back with him . . . he’s not bad looking after all but when Norm is done he’s done . . . like dinner. He sent her packing and took custody of the boy. He works to buy him four wheelers, snowmobiles, anything he wants that will keep him out of trouble. As a cabbie he follows one simple rule, a prime directive . . . he’s the Kirk-Picard of Cabbies. “I take you home or I don’t take you nowhere!” Case in point: Norm gets
a call from McHugh’s Bar. Buddy is shit-faced, sloppy drunk. He can’t stand up. No problem Norm says except buddy, it turns out is 6’8, 300 pounds. It takes Norm and a gang of five drunks even to jam him in the back. Still, they do the job. Norm sets off, finds the place and everything but holy shit, the guy has now passed out. Norm can’t budge him for love or money. ‘Take the fucker to the lock-up!’ the dispatcher says but in times of crisis it’s principle that kicks in. Norm wasn’t paid to take ANYONE to the lock up. That was never the deal. So it’s back to the bar with Buddy because if Norm doesn’t take you home then Norm doesn’t take you anywhere.

By now I’ve had enough of Norm. Good. Deer Lake. One last thing though: do I want his number? He repeats “I have such respect for what you do.” At this point I’m dreading an invitation. Making awkward small talk to Norm and his sisters at a family barbeque and turning down all offers of weed. Turns out, though, he wants to give me moose meat. Moose meat rains down on Norm from all quarters. After all, people like Norm. He has a freezer full to give away. ‘Sure’ I say taking down the number, noting as I do that Norm’s cab is indeed, just as he boasts, immaculate.
Nostalgia
Danika Bath

remember when our worries
were grass-stained jeans,
trekking dirt in the house,
broken butterfly nets.
each night we would

on the stars because we still
believed in magic. each day,
when the bell cried freedom,
we would run until the sky
turned pink, and even then

would ignore the persistent
calls of our mothers claiming
dinner was getting cold and
it was time to come in and
i’m going to count to ten.

were we really that carefree?
we’d play wedding and house,
trying to fill adult shoes,
impatient to grow up.
we didn’t know adults envied

until we grew up and discovered
the world far from perfect and

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a broken heart is worse
than a broken butterfly net.
somehow, we pick ourselves up

again

each time we fall. childhood
taught us that a skinned knee
shouldn’t keep us from playing.
traces of childhood do stay with us:
i still watch for shooting stars.
the hungry herd
Jessie Donaldson
micron pen
Clown Doll with MP3 Player
Jean Wills
charcoal and acrylic
Black Water
Stephanie Purchase

The open-backed truck rattled across the crater-filled road. Dust billowed in thick clouds, filling my lungs and burning my eyes. The truck finally sputtered to a stop on the outskirts of the small community of Agua Negra, Dominican Republic. As I jumped off the back of the truck, the relief that the bumpy drive was over was soon replaced by a feeling of intense shock. Agua Negra lay on the shore of a lake that was black with sewage. The stench was so overwhelming that my stomach lurched and bile rose up in the back of my throat as I tried to control the overpowering desire to vomit. The fact that people could actually live here was an unthinkable reality. It was so full of raw sewage that the smell bore into my eyes and nose like a potent acid.

The bright, blazing Dominican sun seemed to hide its face from Agua Negra. The usually dazzling turquoise sky cast a dark shadow over this little community, as black as the water that gave it its name. The heat however, was even thicker than usual. Heavy and sticky, it made me feel like I was walking through a haze of unquenchable, rancid smoke.

I slowly walked through the rows of shacks that formed this small community. Pathetic little structures housed families of up to eight or ten people. One in particular was so pitiful that it managed to stand out in the midst of its woeful environment. The frame was skeletal, with walls so thin that it seemed as though the slightest breeze would knock them down. There was no door and numerous uncovered windows. The roof was a concoction of cracked, hand-mixed cement and loose, rotten boards. As I ventured closer I looked inside and saw half a dozen pint sized little children that called this broken down hut their
home. I reached up to brush my hair out of my face and was surprised to find my cheeks wet with tears that I had no idea I’d been crying.

A group of children began to follow me as I walked through Agua Ne-gra. Despite the incredibly poor conditions that these children had to live in daily, they looked at me with bright smiles that awkwardly filled their gaunt little faces. I felt a slight tug on the hem of my shorts and looked down to see a little girl clad in a worn, pink dress, clutching a small doll made of dirty cloth and ratty pieces of yarn. She looked up at me with big, glistening eyes and reached for me with her tiny hands. I bent down and lifted her into my arms and she immediately clung to me, wrapping her skinny little arms around my neck.

We didn’t speak the same language, but we were able to communicate without the use of mere words. Words mean nothing when there is no feeling behind them, they can be shallow and even empty. The smile on that little girl’s face when I held her told me so much more than words could have ever revealed. The tightening of her thin arms around my neck told me how starved for love and affection she was.

As much as I wanted to stay, I knew I had to go. The rickety old truck pulled up and it was time to depart from Agua Negra. I gave the little girl one final squeeze and gently put her down. I looked down at her sweet little face and watched her once happy smile fade away. I swallowed as a hard, painful lump formed in the back of my throat.

“Adios,” I said softly.

“Adios gringa.” A small tear rolled down her cheek. It was then that I knew that Agua Negra hadn’t seen the last of me.
You called me and told me to put on my adventure boots.
Told me you would be at my door in ten minutes.

I had no idea what adventure boots were,
But I grabbed my rubbers and a hat and waited.

You picked me up and we drove and drove
Until I no longer had any idea where we were.
Until you no longer had any idea where we were.

You stopped your car and we got out on the roadside.
The half frozen bog made me glad for my boots.

We walked until we found a dry patch of ground,
Then you pulled a sleeping bag from your backpack.

At 2am in the middle of nowhere
We climbed into your sleeping bag together.

It would have been different with anyone else.

But you, you pulled a textbook from your backpack
And decided tonight, you wanted to teach me quantum physics.

I am an artist, but tonight you made me a scientist.
You taught me all you knew about quantum physics
And I taught you all I knew about love.
I may not know much about atoms and molecules,
But I know how it feels to hold your warmth in the dead of winter.
Legs intertwined, with our adventure boots sticking out into the night.
“Fifty dollars? Fifty FUCKING dollars?”

Shane pounded his fist on the counter. Essie winced, pitying the garbled voice on the other end of the telephone.

“If you charge me fifty fucking dollars, I will sue,” Shane continued. “My mother is a multi-millionaire and I’m a law student.”

“We should call the police,” Essie whispered, resting her hand on Shane’s shoulder. “We shouldn’t—”

Shane shrugged her off, his face reddening. “Why would you charge ME fifty dollars to get something back that was fucking stolen? What kind of fucking cocksucker moron are you?”

“This is illegal. The cops—”

Shane turned his back to Essie, snarling into the receiver.

“I don’t mean any disrespect, sir. But my girlfriend’s wallet was stolen at your bar and you shouldn’t charge us fifty dollars to have it returned. My mother is a multi-millionaire and can sue your bar to bankruptcy! I will take legal action!”

He slammed the phone on the counter and swivelled to Essie, his fingers still clenched at his side. His expression softened as his eyes travelled from her long-lashed blinks, to her pursed cherry lips, to the
pink floral print stretching from her collarbone to her knees. Shane enfolded her in his arms, hands reaching down her backside as he kissed the top of her head. Essie winced as his snakebite snagged in her ebony tresses.

“I’m sorry I brought you to that shady bar, babe. I know you didn’t want to go.”

“It’s the only bar you haven’t been kicked out of. We didn’t have much—”

“For fuck’s sake, I’m trying to apologize here, okay? It was a mistake. Now, I owe some sleazebag bartender fifty dollars to return that fucking wallet you didn’t keep track of!”

Tears glistened beneath Essie’s eyeliner.

“Aww, come on babe, don’t cry!” Shane lowered himself a foot to her eye level, pressing his mouth to hers. “I didn’t mean to make you sad.” The small cleft in his tongue lapped her lower lip, but Essie didn’t yield.

When Shane straightened up in defeat, he looked just like a clown, with lipstick smeared across his mouth and saltwater mascara smudged on his cheeks. Essie struggled to contain her laughter at such a sight and re-engulfed him in a hug, forgetting, if only for a moment, that her clown was more of a Pennywise than a Bozo.

“It’s all right, Shane;” Essie sighed against his chest. “I only had a twenty. And I can replace—”
“We’re getting that wallet back for free,” Shane cast her away, black eyes blazing once again. “I’ll bust that fat motherfucker’s ass before I give him fifty dollars!”

“Why don’t we go to the–”

“Fuck, Essie, how many times do I have to tell you? We are not going to the cops! I can handle this on my own.”

Essie dimly remembered the last time she heard Shane address her by name, unconsciously tracing the scar on her left hand. That time he had also been quite angry—angrier than usual that is.

Shane rifled through his jacket pocket, extracting a pack of Lucky Strikes. “I need a smoke. Go take off your clothes: I’ll be in in a minute.” He slammed the door behind him.

Essie exhaled as she heard pounding footfalls on the stairs, swallowing another eruption of tears as she padded across the mottled carpet to Shane’s bedroom—their bedroom. She unzipped her dress, hugging it to her body for a split second, before it collapsed onto the floor. She removed the gold circlet from her head and slid her long, slender legs out of her pantyhose, taking care not to snag her nails in the delicate threads. Then she eased herself onto the bed, feeling her well-developed backside sink into the emerald sheets, her only relic from her bedroom in her old apartment. She smiled, relishing the warm solitude of Shane’s bedroom— their bedroom— with the owner outside in the cold, daring cancer with each drag, a fact which Essie knew better than to divulge.
As the minutes ticked by, she could feel her body relaxing for the first time all evening. She no longer had to listen to Shane yell at the bouncers and threaten them with legal action from this mysterious multimillionaire mother whom she had never met, even though they’d been dating for nearly two years. She no longer had to smell Shane’s marijuana-tinged breath as he whispered profanity-laced compliments in her ear and fondled her chest in front of strangers with raised eyebrows. She no longer had to feel the pulsing heat of the dance floor, the jostle of bodies, the grip of Shane’s arms around her middle as he rammed his pelvis against her backside, glaring at every man that had the misfortune to glance her way. As if someone would take her away from him. Essie snickered aloud.

“What are you laughing at?”

Shane entered, kicking off his Timberlands. They banged against the wall that Essie had spent all afternoon scrubbing, scrubbing away the grime and the finish of Saturday nights long past.

“Nothing.”

“You’re laughing at my new tattoo aren’t you?” Shane held out his inner arm, pointing to a black blur on his wrist, rearing its head toward the topless woman above it.

“No, I’m not.”

“I know it looks like a fucking beaver. You don’t have to fucking laugh at me.”
“I’m not laughing at you!”

“I already have all the guys at school cracking jokes, I don’t need you to smirk at me too.”

“I’m not smirking. It looks like a Rottweiler. See?” Essie grabbed his wrist, tracing the tiny ears and the spiked collar on the growling, buck-toothed animal. She agreed with the guys at school that it looked more like a rabid beaver than a Rottweiler, but it was a fact that she knew better than to divulge.

“You’re right. You’re always right, babe,” Shane climbed on top of her, removing his shirt and exposing the rest of his tattoos. There was a yin-yang symbol on his left pec, a Marilyn Manson quote on his left side, and a jackal over his pelvic area. There was also a rose on his right bicep, featuring an “E” so small that Essie had to squint to distinguish it in the petals. This was the body of the man she had to love.

“You’re so fucking gorgeous,” Shane’s tongue ring scratched Essie’s neck as he unclasped her bra. “I have the most gorgeous fucking girlfriend in the world.”

Essie caught her reflection in the mirror. A pair of sky-blue eyes blinked at her. Her black hair unfurled beneath her like wings, contrasting with her smooth pale skin. Beneath Shane’s body, her double-Ds heaved over her flat stomach. She wasn’t ugly. But Shane had been the first non-relative to tell her so. The only non-relative to tell her so.

“I’m going to fuck you so hard tonight.”
Essie tried to smile and moan as her panties slipped off her legs. Women were supposed to smile and moan when men slipped their panties off. But to Essie, it was an effort more gruelling than the completion of her Master’s thesis. Nonetheless, Roxanne told her that she had to keep it up, lest Shane continue to pay late-night visits to the biker girl next door.

Roxanne knew all the rules and regulations. She’d had a couple boyfriends a year since she was 11 and several one night stands a month since she was 15. Roxanne, with her toothpick body poured into bralettes and her bleached-blonde hair hanging lower than her hemlines was a favourite with the male populace. Whenever they entered stores together, the male greeters always chatted to Roxanne, leaving Essie to hastily pull out her phone. Whenever they window-shopped downtown, men always rolled down their windows to holler at Roxanne, leaving Essie to recede into the background. Whenever they went clubbing, men lined up to rub their bodies against Roxanne, leaving Essie to dance alone, completely ignored and feeling uglier and uglier by the night.

Then one evening, a slim, olive-skinned man staggered into the bar, cursing a “fucking bitch” over his shoulder about the $5 cover charge. His fauxhawk had flopped to one side and a gold ring was threatening to dislodge from his eyebrow, but he seemed to gather the auras of those around him, exuding confidence that illuminated his whole body and vastly multiplied his attractiveness. The whole dance floor parted as his six-foot-five form pushed past bodies, even pushing past Roxanne, before stopping in front of Essie.
For a moment he stood there, examining her like a small child before a candy display. Then, his face morphed into a sly smile.

“Damn,” he pulled her against him, grinding her pelvis in time to the music. “What’s a rack like that doing all covered up?”

She had never heard any man tell her she was fucking gorgeous. She had never felt a man place his hands on her hips and bury his face in her neck. She had never been kissed on the lips, with or without tongue. And while Roxanne and all the men that had brushed past her without a second glance gaped on, Essie danced with the man whom she would come to know as “Shane,” a name whispered in her ear as two thin fingers reached beneath her skirt, initiating the exultation from which she had formerly been excluded.

Shane asked her to go home with him and she said yes. She bled all over his sheets and fell asleep in his arms. She was 21 years old. He had just turned 25.

Shane liked it rough, no matter how many times Essie told him to take it easy. But after he had crushed her torso and stabbed her cervix to his heart’s content, he would lie down beside her with his arms around her and kiss her so tenderly that she could forgive the stench of cheap beer on his breath and the throb in her lower abdomen, revelling in the physical love that had been denied to her for the flowering of adolescence. So, after two years of training, she lay still with her legs spread apart, occasionally uttering a moan so he wouldn’t be disappointed in his fucking gorgeous girlfriend. His fucking gorgeous girlfriend that nobody else had ever wanted or would ever want.
Hours later, Essie jerked herself awake. Shane was lying half-draped across her, his mouth gaping as he snored against her chest. He looked so peaceful and helpless in these moments, like a little boy divorced from maternal affection. Without his swearing, his drinking, his smoking, and his raunch, Shane was not that different from herself. Just another flawed human being who needed to be held and comforted. And loved.

Kissing the top of his forehead, Essie pressed him closer to her and willed away her fatigue. She had been dreaming about Roxanne’s flavour of the week again, the supply teacher with the honeyed voice and perpetual Colgate smile. He had always laughed at Essie’s jokes and asked about her PhD applications, but he had never looked at her the way he looked at Roxanne. He had never looked at her the way Shane looked at her once he had busted his load over whatever part of her body he chose.

Maybe she was too shy. Maybe she was too smart. Maybe she intimidated other men with her fucking gorgeousness. Or maybe she repelled them with her fucking ugliness. Whatever the reason, Shane was here and all the other men who slept, who wakened, who tossed and turned, who held other women’s bodies against them, who blinked away their nights alone, were there. And Essie was here in a double bed with another human being breathing beside her, instead of there, in a single bed, with only silence to keep her company.