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A Journal of Creative Arts

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Mill Town
Meagan Musseau
Jesus of Rats
Bernard Wills

“Jesus, it’s the Jehovahs!”

For one glorious evening
I was the rat catcher
at the Scanway Restaurant
on Dresden Row in Halifax
circa 1990 something-

escaped the dish pit two whole hours
chasing the thick rats with a stick
handed to me- special- for the job
by crazy Warren the head line-chef,

which I only thought of today
on account of those ‘damn Jehovahs’
(my sister’s phrase)

who pounded on my door
to tell me there were many rats in this world
(which I knew already)
but did I know there was a divine rat-catcher?

Yes by necessary inference
from the presence of rats
it follows that there is a rat-catcher in chief,

all-perfect in his pest-controlling ways,

and it is not Buddha, Mohammed
or Dagon of the Philistines
who catches the rats
but Jesus of Nazareth
who had been a working guy like me

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for years
or Igor v
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“Jesus, it’s the Jehovahs!”

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but did I know there was a divine rat-catcher?
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it follows that there is a rat-catcher in chief,
all-perfect in his pest-controlling ways,
and it is not Buddha, Mohammed
or Dagon of the Philistines
who catches the rats
but Jesus of Nazareth
who had been a working guy like me
and one glorious evening
got a break from scraping melted cheese off pans
and loading cutlery into the dishwasher
to go kill rats
and had gone on from there
to his own full-time extermination business
being ambitious and taking to the work well
(while all I bashed was one old sickly rat
who had the jakes already
from a crooked draught of warfarin)
and so the Jesus of rat-catching
went on to be the Jesus of everything else
and the rest was history as they say
but here’s the lesson,
that working stiff from Nazareth
never forgot the place he came from—
still rolls up his sleeves
to go on rat patrol, those rats
grown too ass-fat from the gourmet scraps
like half chewed pepper steak
or limp asparagus
with moldy turbot bits—
punches his clock like one of the guys—
like Phil who cut the vegetables
for years and years and never caught a break
or Igor whose thick hands
made delicate whorls of pastry—
works like a bastard…still
though he could sit
day-long in his office pondering the books

and that, after many years of seeking,
is finally a theology I can relate to.

Iron M
Bernard

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Iron Maiden
Bernard Wills

The band that is- not the implement- I worked the show.

They put me at the turnstiles-
my uniform paid out of pocket-

instructing me in no uncertain terms
‘not to be a hero’
if anyone should crash the gate…

no, the boss would brook no contradiction
on that one…no heroes…end of story…

and I would like to thank Eagle Security
for their careful circumscription
of my duty
to those good business-folk
who organized the Iron Maiden show

(sandwiched between the Thompson Twins and Cher)

for forty-somethings oozing from their jeans
(no threat of jumpers there!)

or the odd kid who grew up in the sticks
listening to the old man’s half-worn vinyl

for surely, till instructed otherwise,
I would have given up my body-
shed my blood-
if only I might thwart
the pimply, ragged teen
with number of the beast tattoo

from having quite the story for his pals-
much better than the one I’m telling now-
of how he leapt like Balanchine
across the turnstile while the hapless guard
stared open mouthed in horror, impotent rage…

shaking his fist at an assault so bold…
as if at Lucifer himself,
his cool effrontery at Sin and Death,
brazen, before the turnstile gates of hell…
Wildflower
Amanda Larner

much better than the one I'm telling now—
of how he leapt like Balanchine
across the turnstile while the hapless guard
stared open mouthed in horror, impotent rage…
shaking his fist at an assault so bold…
as if at Lucifer himself,
his cool effrontery at Sin and Death,
brazen, before the turnstile gates of hell…
Beside the dry loaf of rye is a note. The awkward scrawl was written with calloused hands. A couple honest lines of thanks and a few quick instructions for the morning. You see, he’s gone to market and there are some things to be done in the barn before I carry my bag to the end of the lane and point my thumb southward. On the bottom of the note he says, “It’s not much, but it might help on a bus ticket back if you need.” He’s referring to the crumpled twenty beneath the paper. I’m suddenly saddened and touched by his sincerity. The reality of trying to make a living growing vegetables alone at the age of sixty puts a weight in the silent, morning air. It’s a weight held by every object in the house. By everything on this patch of land. Unrepaired machinery and uncovered wood is sinking into the earth by the back gates under the gravity of fading vigour. This weight he will no doubt feel when he returns from market and sees my feeble reply on the back side of his note. He will know, just like I know, that despite my promise, he won’t see me again.

He will boil hot water and pour it over course granules of instant coffee, look at the maple through the laced curtains on the kitchen window. Then, there will be boxes to take from the trailer to the cellar. Not quite empty. The goats and chickens will need feeding and the fire in the greenhouse should be started. It’s getting to be that time of year. Today’s earnings from the market will need to be counted and a tally of sales written in the right column.

In another week snow may come. It will cover the garden, hiding the top sides of cabbage, kale, and carrot greens. The rows on the back field will be capped with white, revealing perfectly parallel lines of dark earth at their borders. A transition begins into the November world of black and white, perforated only by red brick, or the yellow of cut-off corn stalks protruding from below.

And I will be gone, carrying this place in my notebook as if I knew just what it entailed. As if I knew what winters alone felt like, reading almanacs and mystery novels and planning next year’s garden. Never watching funny movies for the fear of hearing myself laugh out loud in an empty house. I’m another young hand coming through.
Parting Words
Stephan Walke

Beside the dry loaf of rye is a note. The awkward scrawl was written with calloused hands. A couple honest lines of thanks and a few quick instructions for the morning. You see, he's gone to market and there are some things to be done in the barn before I carry my bag to the end of the lane and point my thumb southward. On the bottom of the note he says, "It's not much, but it might help on a bus ticket back if you need." He's referring to the crumpled twenty be-

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through. Gone again in a few weeks. He has grown used to the feeling of watching them come and go. He knows just what to write on small paper.

If you asked him, he might say that it's much like the sun, or the crop, or some analogy drawn in the cycle of things that grow. Young seeds finding their way through rock and soil, trying roots in unknown places. I'm not sure about this. It's time to go, that's all. So I walk down the lane feeling the weight of my pack in my shoulders. The sensation of having all I need so close is a comfort in the wide prospect of new places. Guilt in leaving. Excitement in going. Freedom in a lack of commitment comes through the clouds and turns the dying leaves brighter shades in late autumn.
Once upon a time, in a place that is further than you desire to go and closer than you wish to know, there lived the greediest man on Earth. His eyes saw nothing but value to be owned. For him, every river flowed with fortune and every rock could be sculpted into a profit.

Monetary power shaped his dreams and supreme ownership was the force which moved him from day to day. He was, however, a man after all. The days accumulated like clouds until they became so heavy with time that they shed themselves of their mortal burden. On a cold night one January, the greediest man in the world died.

He left his accumulated riches to no one. No will outlined the division of his estate. He had no family and no friends. Such things disrupted time, and time was profit, and profit was the man’s one true love. The only instruction he left was for his slaves (he had no servants for servants must be paid a wage) to cremate his body along with all his possessions and riches. The remaining ashes were to be buried on Jayaram hill to the north of town that spring.

This location held no special place in the rich man’s heart (there was no room left there due to the greed that inhabited it). But it was the one and only rocky spit on Earth which was not owned or valued and the greedy man had never found any way of making a commodity of it. It was a desolate, barren, and infertile protrusion of the landscape which, when mounted, offered no desirable view and so no one ever ventured to summit its crooked peak.

The servants performed their task as instructed. They always had and they always would. They did not hate the greedy man. He was never cruel or surly to them. Nor was he friendly or generous. His business and life were focussed on acquiring supreme ownership. All townspeople and citizens were possessions as much as food and gold and they acted as assigned, unaware that any other choices were possible.

As the April chill ran north and May invited the sun to stay long noticed / north co They dec hill to se Indeed, the greediest silver bai beginnin their assi the won When tering re Come th counts uncatch: Since th to assum they alw asked for is that Vive road.

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As the April chill ran north and May invited the sun to stay longer, Jayaram hill sprouted its first signs of life. No one noticed for some time, but eventually the growing silhouette to the north could not be ignored. The city folk began to talk, to wonder. They decided to take the narrow 3-mile road to the top of Jayaram hill to see what strange wonder disrupted the light’s path there. Indeed, a tree had begun to grow atop the very spot where the greediest man’s ashes were buried. Its trunk was covered in a shining silver bark and the tips of its branches held little green buds just beginning to open. As the days progressed, the city folk would take their assigned hour of rest each day to go to Jayaram hill and watch the wondrous new tree advance its journey towards the sky. When the buds fully opened, the leaves were revealed to be fluttering rectangular sheets of paper. They were in fact dollar notes. Come the end of summer, the towering tree bore its first fruit: countless glistening clusters of ten cent coins.

As the seasons moved with the sun and time danced in uncatchable circles, things grew ill for the city folk far and wide. Since the death of the greediest man, there was no one appointed to assume his role. All citizens attempted to continue their lives as they always had but some grew wary of the reasons for their actions and whispers grew across the land. Questions that had not been asked for a long, long time began to surface in the streets and markets. It was in the fall two years after the death of the greediest man that Vivek decided to shirk his morning’s duties and head up 3-mile road.

“With the man dead,” Vivek thought “who will tell me if what I do is wrong or right?”

Vivek decided to go to Jayaram hill to harvest a few leaves and berries from the silver tree. He was the greediest man’s most trusted slave and would attend to the most private needs of his master. Among these duties was counting and bundling money. Bills and coins were familiar to Vivek but he never entertained a query as to their function, or power. Now, Vivek would find out just what this money was capable of and why it seemed to be the center of the greediest man’s life.

When Vivek reached the base of the great tree, the branch-
es hung low with the weight of the glistening berries and they
generated light and threw it in patterns on the rocky ground. It was a stunning sight to behold.

A large cluster of coins dangled just in front of Vivek’s face. He reached out and grasped one between his fingers and gently pulled. To his surprise, it did not come loose. He used his whole hand, and then both hands, hanging his entire weight upon the branch, but not one silver berry even budged. In anger and determination, Vivek ran down Jayaram hill to fetch a ladder and axe from the garden hut.

When he had made it back atop Jayaram hill with his tools, Vivek set to work chopping a branch from the tree. He swung and he swung, and each loud blow made such a sound that reverberated like a bell across the city and land. After the twelfth strike, Vivek collapsed from his ladder in exhaustion. He had not even made a small nick in the shining bark, yet his axe was chipped and dull. The racket of Vivek’s chopping from the hill had gained much attention from the city folk. Many had gathered and begun to ascend the 3-mile road on a pilgrimage to satisfy their curiosity. When they found Vivek with the axe in his hand, much commotion ensued. Many saw that there must be some merit in Vivek’s actions and also took up axes or climbed the tree’s limbs and struggled to acquire some of the berries and leaves or a strip of bark. But nothing came free.

Although the citizens may have collaborated to pull the tree down or dig at its roots, none were willing to function together for each was compelled by their individual desire to covet the fruits of the tree. Eventually the entire tree was invisible behind the swarm of townsfolk clawing desperately at what parts they could reach. None were successful, and anger grew until a great fight broke out atop Jayaram hill.

The violence lasted for days and nights. Everyone from far and wide traveled to Jayaram hill on a quest to gain but one piece of the great tree which was rumoured to offer opportunities of betterment and power. Men, women and children fought amongst the chaos. Their bodies began scattering the hilltop. The 3-mile road was near impassable for the corpses draped hither-thither. It was a ghastly foot of the great bat in silent bud and lying all given-in-nered bone came to but a child travel to man of the empty land for another been successful The nightJayaram blinded led to cold rain. Sor much to cold and dry and snapped cupped blew sparked indeed the dry and the small fru
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Late one fall on a cold and miserable night, a poor traveler came to the land of the great tree. His name was Amal and he was but a child when the people of his town abandoned their homes to travel to Jayaram hill in pursuit of riches and fortune. Now a young man of twenty five, Amal had been making his way through the empty land finding what he could to eat and drink and searching for another like him whom he may share company with. It had been such a long time since he had even spoken a word to anyone. The night was black when Amal made his way up the back side of Jayaram hill. The rain and sleet cut like a cold knife on his skin and blinded his vision. When he reached the summit, Amal was delighted to come across a great tree whose canopy dampened the driving rain. Some of the branches hung low about him. Amal desired so much to have but a small fire to dry and warm himself. With such a cold and damp he feared for his life on this frightful night.

Amal reached out to one of the lowest branches and snapped off a few small boughs. He blew the leaves dry in his cupped hands and used them as tinder. With flint and steel he sparked the kindling alight. It was a small and modest fire, but indeed the warmest Amal had felt. He soon grew comfortable and dry and aware of his pangs of hunger.

Unsure of what tree was giving him shelter, Amal endeavoured to discover if perhaps it possessed any edible fruit. He felt around the low branches and came upon a large collection of berries. Plucking one effortlessly, he placed it lightly in his mouth and bit softly into its flesh. It was the sweetest and juiciest berry Amal had ever tasted. He eagerly began eating more. It was only after five small fruits had been devoured that Amal was surprised to find his
stomach full and satisfied. He lay down comfortably next to the small fire and fell deeply into sleep.

When Amal awoke, a bright sun greeted his eyes. He looked up at the great tree which had guarded, warmed, and fed him the previous night. Its leaves were enormous and deep green in colour. Its bark wrapped its way gracefully up the trunk like dark brown fingers, caressing a blue sky. Small red berries inhabited the canopy in rich abundance. Such a beautiful tree Amal had never seen. All about the hill and down a road on the south side grew lush bushes and shrubs with cloud-white stems (almost the shade of bone), which bore fruit and berries of all colours and sizes. Amal had never set eyes on such a fertile and delightful place.
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The Bassist
Ryan Taylor

The webs of his fingers stretched to no end
the five spider-leg-like limbs of his left hand hit just the right notes

Nobody hears
Nobody ever does
Unless he’s off of course

The bassist stands tall and alone
Not unlike his untouched brown bottle of local lager
Too busy tuning between numbers to take a drink
A watery ring gathers around it

A bead of sweat drips down his forehead
He fumbles and a large man in the front row makes a sour face
His drinks grows warm
He keeps on playing

On a Monday Without Windows

Ryan Taylor

On a Monday without windows
I will sit and stare at the walls
Watching the long-dried paint crack
and fall into the void of the late afternoon

On a Monday without windows
I will pay no heed to the calendar
Nor its apocalyptic rantings of the inevitable days to come

On a Monday without windows
I will barter greatness for mediocrity
I will survive solely on stale bread and room temperature water

On a Monday without windows
I will pray silently for days to come
Grasping at stale ideas until nightfall
withering myself to sleep
and letting that eternal Tuesday wash over me
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I’m sitting in the car. Staring straight ahead at some stranger’s house. What the fuck is taking so long? How long does it take to exchange money for drugs? I’d honk, but the last time I did that Tyson flipped. I scan through the channels on the radio. Nothing on. I flick it to the Christian station. Sometimes AM is good for a laugh. It’s one of those shows from down south that gets rebroadcast up here. A guy who sounds like a cross between Boss-Hog and Jimmy Swaggart is describing hell, the gnashing of teeth, he says, along with a host of other evils, is awaiting fornicators and idolaters in the next life. Bullshit. I turn it off.

It’s hot. But I’ve got to stay in the car. A cop drives by and I slink down in my seat. Fuck. I hate being seen here. This place is sketchy. Big fence, mad dogs, a ton of broken down cars, and the house has moldy cardboard covering most of the windows. A guy got knifed right here last week. I nervously tap out a rhythm on the dashboard.

Then I see him. Coming out of the house. I can tell just by his posture that he scored. He slides into the car. Fuck he smells bad. Like I don’t know… rotten ass? God! I roll down the window and start to drive. “Whatcha get?”

“Couple of those quick-release tens”

“How many?”

“Twelve”

“That’s it? Twelve total? Six each?”

“Yeah, you dick, it’s all he had. You don’t have to do ‘em you know”

“Sure. Yeah right. Let’s just go to my place and get fixed. Do you have some change for me?” I ask hopefully.

“I owed him forty. He wouldn’t have sold to me if I hadn’t paid him what I owed. I get a cheque next week; I’ll get you back. Or you can wait till I get my script.”

“Whatever. You’re an asshole”

“Fuck off. Get your own hook up then”
A Moment of Clarity
Caleb Huntington

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“Whatever. You’re an asshole”
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We pull up at my apartment, and run up the stairs like the Narcotics Squad is chasing us. As soon as we are in the door we grab some space at the coffee table and start to cook. I hate these pills. They're chalky and hard to dissolve. And just as the spoon's getting hot, a bubble forms and pops, sending slushy globs of morphine flying everywhere. “Fuck!” It’s all over me. I carefully get up and go to the bathroom, in the mirror I scrape the drying chunks of powder off my face and clothes, and add what I salvage to the bit that’s left in the spoon. I cook it a bit more, but I know it’s not gonna do it. It was hardly enough to fix me before it exploded. Now it’s fuck-all. I shoot it up. Feel nothing. No glow, no tingle, nothing. I walk out and see Tyson standing the living room. He looks pissed.

“I missed,” he says. I know he’s thinking the same thing as me … we need more.

“Alright,” I say, “let’s clean this shit up and get out of here; I’ve got a plan.”

We head out and get in the car. “That was eighty bucks well spent,” I grumble. Tyson just looks at me. “Okay, we’re gonna hit the hospital,” I tell him. “There is a supply closet near the back entrance. You’re gonna go in there and grab whatever you can.”

“Why me?” he whines.

“Because it’s my car and my idea,” I tell him, trying to sound as tough as I can.

“Alright” he concedes, “but we split sixty-fourty - for me.”

He’s such a cocksucker…
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He’s such a cocksucker…

We pull up as quietly as possible in my piece of shit rusted and rattling ’89 Te-rcel. I park as close as I can to the delivery door without drawing suspicion, then I give Tyson directions to the medical supply. “Just down the hall, first door past the washrooms.” It’s pretty simple, even Tyson should be able to handle it, I think. (At least this score should be quick … as long as we don’t get caught.) I sit and bite my nails as I watch Ty walk up and sit down at the picnic table by the back door. Some nurses come out and smoke. When they leave he grabs the door as it’s closing behind them. My heart starts to pound. It feels like its actually banging into my ribcage with every beat. One minute passes. Then two, then three. It feels like an eternity. I smoke one of my last, pulling on it so hard the sides of the cigarette cave in.

Then all of a sudden he’s there. Getting in the passenger’s door with a box in his hand. “What the hell is that?” I exclaim.

“Fentanyl,” he says. I look at the box. ‘Duragesic: Fentanyl Citrate Transdermal Patches’ is written in green letters across the top.

“I can see that,” I say. “What the Christ are we going to do with those? Plaster them all over our bodies like temporary tattoos? Jesus! Couldn’t you just grab some morphine, Oxys or Dilaudid, or something we can use?”

“You don’t have to do them…” he says.

“Yeah right.”

My girlfriend is home, so we go to Ty’s. He lives in a shitty motel. He opens the door and there’s that smell. Like a wall. It hits me. Cheese and sweat and feet, mixed with a lot of cheap smokes and not a little piss. Helluva bouquet. I step in. It’s a disgusting mess. Flies. Crusty food dried into take out containers. Used and uncapped rigs all over the place. There’s even sprays of blood from clogged syringes dried onto the walls and ceiling. I toss a pile of clothes off the couch and sit down. “What happened to the cushions?” I ask.

“Fire,” is all he says. He hands me a brown paper bag, inside are clean rigs, sterile water, alcohol swabs and a little aluminum cooker.

“What am I supposed to do with this?” I growl, “You got a box of plastic fucking patches remember?”

“Watch and learn” he says, and sets about to rummaging in the piles of crap that are all about – occasionally popping up with something, then throwing it into the mess on the table. He takes his shirt off. I see the big scar from when he collapsed his lung. Looking at his hairy body with its loose hanging flesh, I wonder how a guy can be so flabby while being deathly skinny at the same time.

He starts to cut up the clear plastic patches, throwing a piece of one into a big spoon. Then he pulls out some powdered vitamin C that he “got from the flower shop.” Squirting in some water, he begins to cook up the piece of plastic. A new bitter petro-
chemical smell rises up and mingles with the rest. He’s intent on his work. Looking focused and mad with anticipation. “I’m just gonna fix myself first,” he says.

“Sure,” I say.

I’ve moved to the window. And I’m standing transfixed. Thinking. I realize that as I wait, I’m cursing each second as it passes. I want to escape the never-ending present. But I’ve nowhere to go; I hate my past and fear the future. I remember a line from a poem I once read, “I am made of a changing substance, of mysterious time / Maybe the source is within me / Maybe out of my shadow the days arise, relentless and unreal.” I wonder what it means. Is this all a dream? Can I dream up a new day? A new me?

The clock ticks; a truck drives by. The sun is setting. A river of crows parts the sky, scolding the people below.

I know that someday, whatever takes these fugitive moments will take me. I will become nothing but a memory. ‘…Timeless…’ the eerie word moves through me like a shiver. I imagine my death. The steely jaws of eternity clamping down on me and never letting go. The future’s constant flow into the present will cease. The past will consume me; I will belong to it, be a part of it. Forever. Never again to participate in another living moment.

And here I stand. Waiting for this smelly fucker to cook up some stolen plastic patch and shoot it into my arm. …For what?

Nothing makes me feel good anymore.

I see a family walking their dog in the abandoned lot across the way. An old man and woman shuffle by, arm in arm.

I can’t do this.

I turn around to see Tyson passed out with a syringe still protruding from his bloody arm. “See ya later,” I say, as I open the door to leave.

I hope I never see him again.
Free Agent
Caleb Huntington

No bell. He knocked on the door.

Fuck it’s cold. These rich assholes are always cheapskates. Look at this place it’s a palace.

-Hello?
-Yes,’Evening ma’am. I’m here representing Habitat For Humanity. We-
-No. Thank You. We make our charitable donations through our company. Once a year. And we don’t appreciate people coming to the door. Especially at this at hour!

-Ma’am, If you please, it
-Thank You.
-Uh-huh.

Screwy old bat! Especially at this hour! It’s seven freaking thirty for christsakes. … Oh, check out this beaut. Vines and all! It looks like Harvard University. … The Delaneys. Oh frig! It’s a bloody intercom…

-Hello?
-Good Evening Sir! My name is Matthew, and I’m here
-No. Good Night.

Ah well the intercommers never go for it. … Sweet. Here’s another one.

-Yes?
-It’s Habitat for Humanity.
-No. And I do not like being bothered at home. It’s the dinner hour!
Yeah. I’m sure he’d have been much more generous if I had caught him at work.

it was the same every night. about 75 or 80 houses. maybe five or ten donations. a few small ones in cash. maybe some big ones in cheques. a few renewal cards with info on existing members who live on that evenings’ turf. most of canvassing is just renewing old
members. but it can’t just be that—or you’ll get fired. you’ve gotta sign up some new people. generating cards they call it. but if you’re wise, you’ll also get some donations from new people that you don’t sign up. no cards, no paper at all—except the cash they give you and the free tat you give them—a copy of the magazine, some bumper stickers and shit like that. then you take some of that undocumented money and you cash it out at the end of the night, with your cheques and cash memberships, renewals and new cards. maybe you cobble together a bunch of change and fivers and buy a ‘gift’ membership for your sister or something, just to keep up appearances. but you make sure that you keep a bit for yourself. you’ve earned it -- but you just take a little. you don’t wanna get caught.

She pulls back the gauzy curtain beside the door.

-Yes?
-Missus Gardener?
He holds up his clipboard and smiles.

-Remember me? Matthew, with Habitat For Humanity. It’s been a year already!

sometimes it’s easy. with cards. but there’s no real thrill to those kind of doors. the best ones are when you can get someone new to write a big fat cheque. or better still, they give you some cash and forget to ask for a receipt. somehow you just dazzle them … and walk away with their money in your pocket. that feels good.

He stood at the next door in a daze. Thinking of Tyson.

He got me this job. Now look at him. That’s a bad scene. The street nurse said she’d seen worse, but I’d like to know where. I don’t want to end up like that. I can’t end up like that.

-Hello?
-Hi there. How are you this fine evening?
-I’m well thank you. What is this about?
-Habitat For Humanity. Are you familiar with our campaign to build thirteen houses for underprivileged families down by the site of the old Lexington?
-Yes. I saw a bit about it in the paper the other day. C’mon in. It’s freezing out there.

It was cold. He felt like he would freeze his bag off and his head was banging. His skin felt tight and he had an ache coming from deep down inside his bones. but he had made quota and a little extra and now it was time to call it a night. the best part was, the office was the other side of downtown, so he could stop off for a hit before cashing out.

$175 for the man. And $50 for the boys.

he’d only had a little taste before work. just enough to get him out the door, enough to give him the strength to deal with these douchebags in style, and shield him from the pain of rejection. … and that little taste had worn off a long time ago. He felt like shit, but glad he didn’t need to go into the office sick. He jumped off the bus at sixth and powell and hurried the five blocks to the ratty hotel. He nodded to the guy behind the smeary plexiglass who buzzed him in and he ran up the three flights of stairs with a single thought burning in his mind like the pointed singularity of a butane flame.

a big native with deep pock-marks and crutches answered the door.

-I’m looking for Dave?
-Dave’s not here, man. …Get it?
-Yeah. It was funnier when Tommy Chong said it. Is Dave here?
-Everyone’s a critic. … Dave!
-Let him in. And close the door, heat-fat! … Matty my man, I’ve got a quarter waiting for you right here.
-Sweet. Do you have a clean rig? I want to fix it right now.

He nodded off on the way from the hotel to the office and had to walk ten blocks back. It was quarter past when he got there.

-Where have you been? Everybody’s been done and gone for twenty-five minutes! You better hurry and do your cash out -- I want to go home. And I think Steve wants to talk to you.

-Yeah. I lost track of time. I was signing up a monthly. And...
but it can’t just be that— or you’ll get fired. you’ve gotta sign up some new people. generating cards they call it. but if you’re wise, you’ll also get some donations from new people that you don’t sign up. no cards, no paper at all— except the cash they give you and the free tat you give them— a copy of the magazine, some bumper stickers and shit like that. then you take some of that undocument- ed money and you cash it out at the end of the night, with your cheques and cash memberships, renewals and new cards. maybe you cobble together a bunch of change and fivers and buy a ‘gift’ mem-

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- Yeah. I lost track of time. I was signing up a monthly. And
we got to talking...

-OK, Jimmy Carter would be proud, I’m sure. You look like shit. Go do your cash out, then talk to Steve.

His vision was blurred and he made a huge mess of the paperwork.

Liquid gold flowed through his veins. His eyelids were heavy. He felt distant, itchy, and warm. The world was muffled and muted. A fuzzy shape grew large before him; then spoke…

-Matthew ... Matthew! Wake up! Are you done with that? It’s time to go! ... This is a mess. And look at you. … Matthew, look, I’ve been meaning to talk to you. ... I know you’re dealing with some stuff right now, and I’ve tried to be understanding. But-

-Steve,

-No. I’ve gotta say this. ... Your numbers just don’t add up. And it’s only cheques. I mean there’s no cash. None. And look at you. I can’t send you out like this.

-Steve, man

-No! … It’s over Matthew. You’re done. I’m sorry. I’ll need your ID and your receipt book before you go.

He stood on the street corner outside, waiting for a bus. He hated Steve for firing him, and he hated all those people behind all those doors because they had all said no. He hated Tyson for getting him that job and for showing him the ropes, for giving him that first shot of dope. And he hated himself for taking it.

But as he fingered the receipt book and blank ID card he had swiped on his way out of the office, a strange mix of pride, shame, and fearful anticipation swelled up within him. He was afraid of what would come next, but he needed to eat, didn’t he? And his habits needed to be fed too. And starting tomorrow he was a free agent. He probably had a month before people started catching on. He’d best get to work straight away … doing what he had to do.
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Untitled II
Virginia Mitford
Hair of the Dog
Merrick MacNeil

The graying-haired man with tobacco-stained teeth shuts the van door after me and circles around to the driver’s door. As we drive away, I watch the morning sun creep over the distant country hills. Alone but for the driver, more passengers would come. But for now, I feel calm, private, luxury. It’s early and the quiet dusty talk radio puts me fast to sleep. After some time, I feel the van stop and the driver open his door. The door alarm persists as I try to recall a dream. Out of grasp, but something of its flavour remained. It had the taste of last night’s excitement. Drink after drink, my mind cloudy yet charged: a full-body rush. All friendship, joy, ecstasy magnified with every sweet drop. The driver opens the passenger door for an old woman, my eyes were still shut to shield from the flood of noonday light, but I can smell her: hand cream, expired floral perfume, and old, faded clothing. I’m so thirsty. The driver helps her in and shuts her door. I open my eyes—she is just as I thought. The old girl sits stiff, fingering her prayer beads as we drive away. I wish I had a hobby or even a good book. I have an eternity of time to kill.

At the next stop, we are joined by both a young girl dressed in black with an oversized hand bag and a poor-looking middle aged couple. The man sits beside me, his wife in the back with the girl. I thought they were all together, but when the driver asked their stops he made the same mistake and we were both corrected. She is so young and drunk. Her insistent cheeks flushed red, her eyes sagging, but her breath that left no doubt. She sloppily dug through her bag and pulled out a water bottle. It was full but missing its label; the plastic had been twisted and squeezed. She opens the top and chokes down a swallow. Her phlegmy exhale reeks of fresh vodka.

Memories of debauchery and pleasure overthrow my thoughts. The sun is at its peak; My hands won’t be still. The woman in the front has not looked back. Come to think of it, neither have I. I am sweating; my heart is in frenzy booming against my ribs. I thought fingers clasp the bottle
sixteen.
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Suddenly we were thrashed about—a gash in the road.

“Sorry about that, folks” says the driver.

The old woman broke her beads; she had been holding them too tight. She makes a quiet cry. The man beside me begins gathering the beads for her. The girl behind me undoes her seat belt.

“I think I found most’ya yer beads lady” the man says, tapping at her shoulder.

“Thank you sir, could you put them in my bag for me?” holding her purse open, not looking back. The girl was feeling about on the floor.

“Di-anbody-see’mi-wor-ball?” she slurs out. She throws her hand up on my seat, and pulls herself to her knees.

“Eh, sir, d’you see my bottle?” she asks, touching my shoulder with her thin white fingers. I feel her hot reeking breath on my ear. I look down by my feet.

“Sorry, no.”

The vehicle slows down.

“You guys are getting out at the airport right?” asks the driver to the couple.

The man nods. As the woman gets out, the bottle drops.

“Oh here you go,” says the man’s wife, handing the young girl her bottle. She leans over me, her brown hair brushes over my
shoulder. Resting her weight on my seat with her neck outstretched she opens the top and pours the last of it down. I watch the lump in her throat bob as she drinks. I imagine her already rich blood get all the more toxic. The sun is beginning to set now.

“Hey, can I sit here?” I don’t reply but she navigates her way beside me all the same.

“I jus wan be by the door, my stops come’n up- I’m not weird or anything.”

I can taste her breath now. I fight myself trying not to look at her, I lose. She sprawls out her eyelids heavy. The seat that looked so small for the man, swallows her. Her red lips hang from her mouth. I watch here chest raise and lower, as she pants off to sleep. My knuckles and fingers white with tension, all my muscles in flex. I need a drink. I need a drink. The sky is dark as we come to her stop. I gently shake her knee. She lets out the faintest moan as she stirs. It is a hot night; she props herself up and pulls off her coat.

“Hey, thanks for waking me” she gathers her things and stumbles out.

“Far to go” asks the driver, as she pays him.

“A few miles’ walk, I’m fine” she insists.

“Where are you getting off?” he asks me.

“Here’s fine.”

I get out, knowing it was not my stop. Knowing what I want. The young girl smiles, “Hey, now we can walk together” she says.

“That’s right.” I reply.

I look back at the van and see the old women staring at me, her l | knows w her up a; set her a! her wrist ment. I f | could. tongue o long as I her flesh with eac! in a pile. me, her l

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"That’s right."

I reply.

I look back at the van and see the old women staring at me, her horrified expression confirming that she knows me. She knows what I am. The van leaves.

Me and her alone, in the dark—no one for miles. I hold her up as we walk a little way to an abandoned building, not far. I set her against the wall, her head dangling from her neck. I squeeze her wrists, her drunken eyes glare up at me with fear and excitement. I grip her neck, not choking her, but letting her know I could.

She doesn’t fight it. I tilt her white neck and run my tongue over her skin. I taste her sweat, I feel her pulse. I wait as long as I can, her warm breath on my neck, mine on hers. I bit into her flesh and drink, long and hard.

My veins on fire with her blood. I feel her life drain and with each heart beat an explosion of ecstasy. I leave her cold corpse in a pile.
P.I.
Merrick MacNeil

I sit, waiting in moon light. The street looks calm now, washed over with blues and grays. I can still smell the flowers in her perfume. I was late, I should have come straight here. I got the call at eleven o’clock.

She said “I need your help. Pick me up after work. I’m off at twelve. Don’t be late.” She needed me, and I let her down. I got in my truck and went right to her place. No sign of her. The door has been locked from the outside, probably from when she went to work. I look under the door to see her mail. Days worth. She must have been steering clear of her apartment. She would only do that if she thought she was being watched. Why didn’t she say something sooner? I could have stopped these guys. Now I need to find her before it’s too late. I go back to the scene. The rain’s starting, I’ll need to work fast. Burned rubber strips on the asphalt. Also on the ground a broken bracelet. A parking meter, not far, has a smudged print in blood, still tacky to the touch. She didn’t bleed much, not here anyway. The tire markings give me a direction, east. There’s an old warehouse, storage building down by the docks. If I needed to take someone alive in this city, I’d take them there. I stop a few blocks away in case they’re watching for cars. The bat from my truck comes with me, I don’t know how many of them there might be. I could walk but I’ll swim and come in from the back. It’s more silent. The door’s locked, but the lock is cheap and I know what I’m doing. I make my way through the dark. I see a light coming from down the hall. Foot steps echo, a man and a woman. I’m not too late. He’s breathing deep, and his feet are heavy. He’s out of shape and old. I get closer.

He says, “I can do it in pieces or we can do it all at once.”

She says “Let’s get this over with.” That’s my girl, brave to the last. Never let them see you weak. I’m getting closer now. I can hear her groan and strain. I turn the corner, bat cocked, muscles tensed, ready. But I was shocked.
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“What the fuck Ned?! You scared the shit out of us! What’s wrong with you? Where did you get a bat? Why are you soaked?!?” Her eyes flashed with fear then faded to concerned confusion.

“Sara, sorry I... I’m, um, you’re okay?” I had miscalculated.

“You know this whack job?” asks the fat man.

“He’s just that guy I know with the truck that never showed.”

“Why are you here Sara?” I needed the truth, whatever it was.

“My apartment’s getting fumigated, so I had to get my futon from storage, for at my brothers. I thought I needed your truck but my boyfriend got off work early. Now, why are you here in the middle of the night, like this?”

“I... just wanted to help.”
I took these memories from your kitchen sink; rubber gloves shoved underneath the old, anaemic Dutch cabinets filling our garden with porous convenient stores slather these tender fingernails browned bluntness between sci-fi blockbusters and fuchsia crayons and I remember the boxes pastel tinny lunch boxes - bento boxes - cardboard boxes. I could lie beneath them inside their 90s cleanliness and coffee mugs where our teeth would connect with the base of the damp metro station, indigent empires slathered in birdlime, static snuff. Crenel eyes hum in behind the valet limbs of royal glass rabbit figurines. I didn’t touch the cabinets only attest—ing to pasty bath suds and bacterial scrubs where my fortress lay among the saffron tulips and arthritic soils arching towards a bloodless sky in oblong strips of Indian paintbrush and aerial ferns from Nova Scotia. I took these memories from your idols of purging turquoise luggage and the curative Quebecoise who abstract the carnage of kitsch and coral ceramics and turn it into something worth witnessing.
Birdlime
Marta Croll-Baehre

I took these memories from your kitchen sink; rubber gloves shoved underneath the old, anaemic

Dutch cabinets filling our garden with porous convenient stores slather these tender fingernails

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above the topography of Corner Brook to Stephenville I am leftover cardboard kitchens, appliquéd cut-outs of water colour spill coffins over yellow mornings and you are the enchantress of gridelin lilacs, strewn god awful along the incessant T.C.H., where stippled routes of transport trucks covet the curdled skies and moths’ myopic whiskers whine beneath the mat-ted car lights; anaesthetic, ghosting – easy associations – goldenrods whose viridian skies remind its cascading geography my palms are groundward, shoved under the kneaded mud – purled snow drifts along a stretch of cemented woodcuts– searching, searching, search for your 70s brass ring, years behind the sky hid its garter-blue malt from up above the desecrated convenient stores –oblong strips spill narcotics along the highway where the outcross ends; catacombs beneath the feathery residue of bosky condominiums and Tim Horton’s coffee stretch pink paint streaks across your thin, rachitic face where glossy motorbikes meet the bearded cusp of Western Newfound-land

Rifle
Kyle Curlew

The bullet slid into the rifle with a solid click. It was an old rifle. A relic from an ancient world of comforts and civilization, its brand name long worn off the side of the barrel. Now replaced with various carved symbols: A skull, a fang, and a few other indecipherable scratches. And a name, the Peon, was crudely carved into the side of the rifle. The man holding the gun pulled the pump on the underside and clicked it back, a few rust shavings fluttered like oxidized snow to the ground, he felt the familiar feeling of the bullet falling into place. The Peon focused on a makeshift scope, the rifle poised at a large lion rummaging through some debris on the side of the decrepit road. A road overrun with weeds and long grass growing through its many nooks and cracks The ancient ruins are dangerous, they said. The Peon couldn’t remember who they were, nothing but an ethereal voice somewhere in his head. The crumbling spirals that made up the ruins at one time were called metropolises. He could not remem-ber how he knew that, but he knew it nonetheless. They were full of predators and bandits, some of the worst sort. The kind that hung heads around their territory: a warning for the weary, for the curious, for the dangerous. They were also trophies – broadcasting their hatred and their loss of humanity. Those heads would hang from crude barbwire and chains and bits of debris and chicken wire. They would hang from the tall buildings, covered in broken glass and vines and rust and crud. Lots of blood, most of it coagulated. Some called it an urban playground, not many though. Most of them were foolish scavengers, slinking around the shadows looking for artifacts to trade in the markets. Did I think that? Or hear that? The Peon didn’t relish the thought of bloody play-grounds. You don’t want to know what they do to the bodies; a voice spoke in the Peon’s head. A voice from a distant place, far, far away. He could feel the rifle shaking in his arms, his teeth began to chatter. Another voice was coming in; it spoke over the first one, much louder, and less distant. Get out of here! It cried, what have you done? Another one. You monster! A gun shot.
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The lion in all its golden magnificence dropped into the tall grass, twitching. The mother lion and the cubs scurried off into one of the buildings frightened by the crack of igniting gunpowder echoing through the concrete ruin. The Peon stood up, shaking the voices and haunting sardonic images from his head. They were getting worse, he thought. With the rifle slung over his shoulder, the Peon slowly approached the twitching body of the lion. Finally something to eat, something living and breathing and bleeding. He smashed the butt of the rifle into the lion’s skull, it made a sickening noise – a wet Thunk – but it put the poor beast out of its misery.

The glistening of something on the ground caught his eyes: a rear view mirror with the glass still intact, it was caked in rust but still usable. A rare artefact in these days. He knew he didn’t have much time – vultures were coming. They would have heard the gun shot ring across the ruins like a dinner bell. They would know where to go. It was their hunting ground. The Peon reached down, his blood caked hands wrapped around the frame of the rear view mirror. His face was as overgrown and beat up as the road he was standing on.

Hold him down, a voice said and the Peon was slammed into a table and strapped down with thick strips of leather, faces appeared over him. He felt like he should recognize them, but didn’t. Couldn’t.

Gentle. Another voice said, between sobs. Be Gentle. Quickly, get the drugs – he has been through enough pain, the first voice said once again.

What have they done to them? There was a clatter and a smash, as if someone dropped a glass.

They’ve flayed him. There were more sobs.

The damned raiders! It was a woman’s voice. There was the sound of clattering as someone ran from the room, followed by an echo: The damned raiders!

Then the Peon was somewhere else. The sun was shining, blood, fresh blood all over his hands. The Peon looked down to his feet to the pile of beaten flesh and a large stone. The body was far beyond recognition. His hands began to shake. He turned his heels and ran through the fields of tall grass away from the ruined spires. If would be open sc

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He stared into the mirror at his face; his mouth was gaping open screaming. When the Peon realized this he stopped. No tears. He was overcome by nostalgia, the painful sort, like he was missing something and he had no idea what. He knew he had to leave; he dropped the rear view mirror into the grass. It clattered so loudly he thought he heard an echo. He stumbled his way to the lion, dragging his injured leg across the ground behind him. He wrapped his arms around it. “Quickly”. He muttered, quickly. Vultures are hungry. Vultures are ruthless. Quickly, a woman’s voice whispered, quickly, you have no time.

He was back in that place. He was awake; he was bound to a table. Voices, so many voices clouded the Peon’s head he couldn’t focus. He probed around with his hands blindly until he felt a prick on his finger, it was a scalpel; he shaved away at the leather bounds until they snapped. His first victim, the doctor, the good doctor that gave birth to him so many years ago. He snuck up behind him and carved a new smile across his neck. He didn’t know why. He just did. The voices went silent. The gurgling doctor made no sense.

The lion’s limp body nearly knocked over the shopping cart as the Peon shoved it in with the last of his strength. He pushed the cart inside a building and collapsed on the ground in a smelly heap of torn clothes, sweat and blood. He could hear the distant sound of engines; vultures were coming. They were coming to take the lion. They were coming to finish what they started. They wouldn’t kill him right away, he knew; they would make it as slow as they could. When they lost their humanity the vultures became masters of torture. To them it was an art form. A living masterpiece. A living sculpture: blood, screams, and flailing. They were monstrous – the stuff of children’s nightmares.

How could you? She cried, how could you? The voice was so familiar.

Another voice cried, kill him. Kill the fucker. A rock hit him in the jaw, it was large, and he could taste blood. He was lying in the grass, the sun shining over the dirt and rocks his face just collided with.
Leave him alone. Another voice called out – do you know what they did to them? Do you know what he went through? What he witnessed in the ruins?

Fine. Let’s give him back to the Vultures. The Peon sobbed at this, he would have protested, but the vultures took his tongue. He would rather die than go back to that place.

The Peon crawled through the building, leaving the lion in the shopping cart. He had a trail of blood left behind – the vultures would have him soon. He fumbled for his last bullet and slipped it into the old rifle.

He was no longer in the ruins, but in a barren field of grass and rock. Not so far in the distance he could see the ruins and their decrepit spires through a light haze of fog and dust. Here. A voice said. Drop him here. His wrists were chained up loosely. He can go back with his own damn kind. The voice said. He had been thrown out of the vehicle; a rifle and a small bag of personal effects followed him. Hitting the ground opened up his wounds again; blood slowly soaked the front of his shirt. The vehicle drove off. The vultures would be coming, the watchers would have seen them approaching.

The Peon could feel his life spill out before him, all over the floor. Just a little longer. Just a little more strength. A wave of nausea overcame him, he could feel his head sagging, it felt so heavy on his neck. He bit down on his lip, the pain brought him back to life and he wrenched the pump of his rifle open and back into place. He felt the familiar feeling of the bullet lodging into place in the barrel. Turning the rifle around and putting the barrel into his mouth, the Peon could taste rust as he began fumbling for the trigger.

The voices returned. But they were not real. The Peon walked through an empty city, trailing blood behind him. Relics of the past surrounded him. But he did not care. The voices kept him moving. It was then that he saw the lions, a family of lions. Majestic and strong and golden. The parents and two cubs. The voices disappeared for a moment. A moment of beauty – quiet and serene. The Peon took a hold of the strap of his rifle and slung it up; reaching into his pocket he pulled out a bullet and slid it into the rifle with a solid click.
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Fish Bowl
Amanda Larner
my critical analysis has become overbearing
taking things that aren’t fucked up,
twisting them, distorting them, feeding on the lie of them
that isn’t there.
leaving me with empty hands,
a full-brimmed breast,
and a skull cracked down the center;
but what’s at the center of all this?

well! my education!

i’ve got a brain too sponge-like
absorbing the words that spill out into theory,
a heedless ambition checking out the query
in practical application,
which i practically don’t understand -
evidently.
applying theory after theory to my small-town, tiny life
as if every indecision was a monumental strife
and my friends are looking at me like
“wow, this bitch is crazy”
and i’m defenseless.
a defenseless, crazy bitch
wrapped up in a world that exists inside her head
alone
and no one’s there and no one’s listening to the ravings of a mad-man
because why would they?
that story’s only profitable when we can fictionalize it,
compartmentalize it and observe it from a safe distance.
real life ignores that madman, crazy bitch
because freedom of speech is just one of those
theories.
Bastard Child Born at the Seashore
Samantha Fitzpatrick

I’ve got back-up plans and just-in-cases,
Float away in a sea of faces,
Yet somehow, perpetual stasis has crashed upon my shores,
So that I’m drowning in the heartache of forevermore,
So that I’m wanting more, so that I’m craving more.
This stasis erases the basis of my life-long philosophy.
It’s invasive of the places I’ve been,
Pervasive of every crevice that I am.
But it’s persuasive.
And you,
You are my oasis.
The one last lonely drop that turns out to be a tidal wave, enough
to save,
but also bury
in the darkest depths of the ocean
Black.
But these cracked and thirsty lips can handle that,
All in exchange for
something non-uniform.
This is the reason I was born:
Chaotic love, it’s natural disaster,
so tear my heart out, I’m just a bastard.
I can’t help but think about how my father felt when his feet got wet. I can’t help but wonder if it was really money or wet socks that drove him away from here.

The salt and moisture embedded in my shoes is a bane I endure because I have faith that being here means something. The running water I walk through reminds me that this frozen city thaws with every rising sun. I watch it set in the south west and if I look hard enough I can just see the green of my old home. There things grow across any vacant surface. Grass and leaves paint the landscape with fingers that reach up to a sun that is not so far away. There both the sun and the earth warm you. Your mind can be at ease, your feet dry. You’re free to ignore those little things like slush and rain and wet that bind you to the geography. But here it is still winter and I hang the soles of my shoes over a heater every night and await that renaissance of summer that I’ve been promised. Everything moves slower here, more personal. I’ve gotten to know the snow, the ice, the salt, the sea and the rock. Back home I watched things flourish and die without ever being acquainted. But here, here I know the grass, the wild raspberries, the lichen that clings to stunted trees. I know the rivers and the rippling torrents that my father introduced me to.

I remember when he came to visit at the end of summer. We grabbed his old fly rods and he took me to a river near where he grew up. He told me about how things had changed. He told me about how when things were good they built a highway right next to the stream he would once walk miles to get to. Now the highway is seldom travelled and poorly maintained but remains as a scar across what was once a good place to get a salmon. As we casted at nothing he told me about how fish would once fight each other to get ahold of his hook.

All things change and Newfoundland is no exception, I know this. But it becomes so much more real, more personal, wading in a river listening to the words of my father. “There’s not a thing here anymore that used to be,” he says. There was longing. He
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The Weight of Salt and Blood
Rob Tulk

After the fishing stopped I spent a lot of time exploring my imagination among the boulders, old wharfs, and flotsam that made up the shore line of our little community. My mother told me not to wander around the arm because tides come up and take you with them when they go. She once told me I can learn a lot from the sea, and I still believe that’s true. Now she tells me to fear it.

It’s not true what they say, that when you die you get carried off to heaven. When I was twelve I found what was left of my father heaped up into a rock crevice not far from where we lived, just a short ways around the arm. I was not with him when he was taken from my uncle’s boat, but I still remember the nature by which he was given back.

There is beauty in how death is a return to that which you came from: the sea, the earth. I found my father washed upon rocks, body battered, partly eaten by sea creatures and birds. He was just a shadow or a stain on the rocks where he laid. There were bones protruding through the rapidly fading flesh poorly preserved in salt. And I wondered; will children find pieces of his vertebrae along a beach and imagine an epic fight between sharks and dolphins and mythical sea creatures? A battle that ended in the inevitable mortality of a hero. He would have been struck down by a greater foe, leaving behind a trophy, a piece of his mighty back bone that carried the weight of his people for the noble time he was alive.

I never told anyone that I found him there. At his funeral I was told his body was lost at sea. As if it just ceased to exist. And for my mother it did just that. I never returned to that crevice beyond the arm. There the tide took from me an emptiness, and I never wanted to go get it back.

I never believed that Dad would be waiting for me when
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After the fishing stopped I spent a lot of time exploring my imagination among the boulders, old wharfs, and flotsam that made up the shore line of our little community. My mother told me not to wander around the arm because tides come up and take you with them when they go. She once told me I can learn a lot from the sea, and I still believe that's true. Now she tells me to fear it.

It’s not true what they say, that when you die you get carried off to heaven. When I was twelve I found what was left of my father heaped up into a rock crevice not far from where we lived, just a short ways around the arm. I was not with him when he was taken from my uncle’s boat, but I still remember the nature by which he was given back.

There is beauty in how death is a return to that which you came from: the sea, the earth. I found my father washed upon rocks, body battered, partly eaten by sea creatures and birds. He was just a shadow or a stain on the rocks where he laid. There were bones protruding through the rapidly fading flesh poorly preserved in salt. And I wondered; will children find pieces of his vertebrae along a beach and imagine an epic fight between sharks and dolphins and mythical sea creatures? A battle that ended in the inevitable mortality of a hero. He would have been struck down by a greater foe, leaving behind a trophy, a piece of his mighty back bone that carried the weight of his people for the noble time he was alive.

I never told anyone that I found him there. At his funeral I was told his body was lost at sea. As if it just ceased to exist. And for my mother it did just that. I never returned to that crevice beyond the arm. There the tide took from me an emptiness, and I never wanted to go get it back.

I never believed that Dad would be waiting for me when I died. I didn't think he was carried off to the clouds where he'd be waiting for me, fishing rod in hand. But my mother tried to convince me that he was up there, watching over me. My mother, she was heartbroken when I returned to the boat. For me this life was different, it filled me with identity. When I would haul in my net against the weight of my catch I could feel him on the other end pulling. It’s like he’s looking up to me saying: “Carry it son, have no fear. This is the weight of your blood.”
Be careful for I am creeping past
the bather in the
glow of lukewarm bathwater
we have
written of melancholy reveries that drift past our grasp
I gaze at your alabaster flesh
pearls against the fluorescence of
the tub
freckled with grunge
I've waited far past due for you to
find me here
trembling like a marmot-dragonfly
your hair crinkles near your heavy eyes
pale syringe-like follicles
that capture the darkness
in every corner of this effulgent bathroom
hush now, see it
near the clapboard drawers
on the periphery of your crimson cheeks
reminding me of when red wine stains teeth
where is it now? the dental blue
or the raunchy azure of the bay
that stretches past our eyes
do not divert
every attention
to the umbrage
discreetly waiting for us beyond the door
you sit
god of every jugular vein that pulses with laugh-ter
I've waited for your resolute face since last January
unlike female delicacies and tenderness
this harmonica room
in the fruitful grips of deciding whether
or not
we should recede outdoors
where the hemline of the winter horizon looks like Indian silk
tea-stained pinks and porcelains ripple nostalgic times of thick
cold and easy sun
I have left you
you, me
candid murmurs remain between our time spent in congruency
perhaps you recall when the water splits into shells of oily ice
drifting melancholy eggs
we know that a derisive spirit
lingers behind my features
mute remnants of hidden self
this isn't about my grey-gold curls or my lack of reason-
watching
you
vulnerable, impressionable tides and beautiful thoughts
opalescent hues of evening
the permafrost of this Western town
radio's scratchy chant reels us in
left to cling in fallen dependency of pseudo energy
smoky teas and bitten-down nails bring me here to re

Dental Blue
Emma Croll-Baehre

Be careful for I am creeping past bather in the
glow of lukewarm bathwater we have
written of melancholy reveries that drift past our grasp
I gaze at your alabaster flesh pearls against the fluorescence of
the tub freckled with grunge I’ve waited far past due for you to
find me here trembling like a marmot-dragonfly your
hair crinkles near your heavy eyes pale syringe-like follicles
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near the clapboard drawers on the periphery of your crimson
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opalescent hues of evening the permafrost
of this Western town radio’s scratchy chant reels us in
left to cling in fallen dependency of pseudo energy
smoky teas and bitten-down nails bring me here to re-
call you’ve fallen in this place of apocryphal wisdom plastic faces mirror us both in the bathtub floating like the carcasses of sea anemones or shriveled seaweed.

August imprints its heated sketch marks its identity on the ivy linoleum I wonder why the colours here are so saturated like a 1950’s magazine floating in the murky throat of a puddle birth from last rain when was that? two months or years losing track of the yellow wildflowers that spit themselves along the coast (I cringe at the delicate loss of innocence) haven’t we heard of blue pills red smearing the era of hard rock with elegance regurgitated medication time has left ringing in my ears dim echoes this dust-bowl Western town glistens with perspiration and 47 degrees recall that I left you in Victoria passed the Autumnal equinox farewell Sinatra leers out into the empty spaces left between whiskey and six decades they tell me to reflect on the years I haven’t lived you had hair the colour of rust intellect a sharp violin bow here people give honey to the young caress fingertips and close mouths.
West Coast
Emma Croll-Baehre

August imprints its heated sketch
marks its identity on the ivy linoleum
I wonder why the colours here are so saturated
like a 1950’s magazine
floating in the murky throat of a puddle
birth from last rain
when was that? two months or years
losing track of the yellow wildflowers that spit themselves along the coast
(I cringe at the delicate loss of innocence)
smearing the era of hard rock with elegance
time has left ringing in my ears
dim echoes
this dust-bowl Western town glistens with perspiration and
47 degrees
passed the Autumnal equinox
farewell

farewell
Sinatra leers out into the empty spaces
left between

they tell me to reflect on the years
I haven't lived
you had hair the colour of rust
intellect a sharp violin bow
here people give honey to the young
caress fingertips and close mouths.
Mustangs
Rebecca Hulan

Over field and plain, through groves of trees,
Past sun-brushed meadows and sparkling mountains,
Hooves thunder like grey waves from crashing seas.
Manes shimmer wet, tongues taste cool, wild fountains.
The evening sun shines onto white patched flanks
And warms river-soaked mares calling to foals
That, in dwindling light, dance on river’s banks.
In darkness, far stars glow like little coals.
The tall, grey stallion nickers warily.
He hears only the wolves’ lonely howl,
They would fall on sleeping herd merrily,
And watched by the cold moon and the old owl
Who sits aloft in his old, broken tree,
Observing the herd in a grassland sea.
A Land Lay Bare
Leah Ragoonath

A land lay bare, covered in white.
Silence, so deafening... so loud this silence cried
...of a place losing itself to the demands of civilization.

The black crows flutter in desperation...
For a home, they have been denied...
Forced to live in destitute, they take flight
And away they go, for this village dreams

But at what cost?

A land lay bare, covered in white
The people dream innocent dreams...
And the birds in the bushes bear witness to the price of this progress.

But once innocent dreams and untouched land
Will be tarnished by the works of the people's hand
Darkness approaches this little world...
The birds will say farewell, they will go
...Leave this place that they will not know.

But a land lay bare, covered in white...
The children are filled with mirth and delight.
And the black birds in the bushes prepare for flight.
Dept. 5
Matthew McCarthy

Trapped in this lab’rinth of shelves lined in blue
’Tis here my ballad carries on in vain
Glorified vending machine’s job to do
Merchant of TVs and video games

Beside a reg’ster I am made to stand
At altar of retail fore’er to pray
Slave at thy Plebian customer’s hand
Degradation at a shoe buffer’s pay

Near too painful is this sentence to serve
Products eternally fated to sell
From aisle 3 Dante and poet observe
Minimum wage to do shift work in Hell

Self-assurance must pull me through the dread
Promise myself a real job lies ahead

Atticus
Basil Chiasson

You, on
Are muc
And trag
Has no ḳ

But noti-
How arc
Against ṫ
Indefens
Dramati

Words, t
Have yet
So it is y
Who op

In a wor
I do hon
In eveni
I will pr:
And shal
Before ṭv


Atticus, The Prince of the A.M.
Basil Chiasson

You, on the continuum of life,
Are much nearer to birth than to death.
And tragedy, of the classical strain,
Has no place here.

But notice already how obtuse,
How arcane my quantification,
Against the quiddity of your morning performance:
Indefensible smiles, raw kicks, and sweet coos
Dramatize the force of your will.

Words, time, its clock, and the grown
Have yet to contend as your keepers;
So it is you, sweet prince of the a.m.,
Who opens a space in the mind.

In a world bent on tilting at death in the night,
I do honour you.
In evenings where mornings like this are consumed,
I will praise you;
And shall through you seek a kind of perfection,
Before twilight effaces my self as a child.
Remember when we used to write each other poetry?
Like a debate
Like literary gifts

I find myself debating
With me
With the music in my headphones
or the side notes in that same book I read to you over the phone
Years ago.

But you don’t remember that.
I do.
I know you don’t remember that because you still don’t know
That this poem is about you.

Clouds in my coffee.

I miss finding scraps of poetry and love notes in my laundry.
Pennies
and that silly piece of paper from the cigarette packs
“You can quit”

I think we took turns quitting.
I tend to do that.
I quit you
You quit me
Never at the same time.

How Brokeback of us.

Fear grabs a hold of me and shakes me
It shakes me so hard
I stumble as I run away.
Remember when we used to write each other poetry?
Like a debate
Like literary gifts
I find myself debating
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How Brokeback of us.

Fear grabs a hold of me and shakes me
It shakes me so hard
I stumble as I run away.

We are the same.
We're addicted to heartbreak
It's never over
We beg
Scream
Thrash the world around us

For what?

Pretty little scumbags
Just like us.
Allure
Joey Lawrence

The allure
Breathes
Ignites the crowd
And commands the audience
To breathe and drink the performance
The thrill of the spectacle
The esteem of the act
Sends patrons home with fond memories intact
The pomp and the pageantry
The music and magic
The good and the evil
The triumphant and tragic
The heroes and villains
The wretched betrayers
The trailblazing conquerors
The dragons and slayers
The past fights the future
In the gift of the present
Providing a showcase
Both inspiring and pleasant
Allure
Joey Lawrence

The allure of the spectacle
Breathes life into desolation
Ignites the audience
And commands adulation
The thrill of the performance
The esteem of the act
Sends the patrons home bedazzled
Fond memories intact
The pomp and the pageantry
The music and magic
The good and the evil
The triumphant and tragic
The heroes and villains
The wretched betrayers
The trailblazing conquerors
The dragons and slayers
The past fights the future
In the gift of the present
Providing a showcase
Both inspiring and pleasant
Green and Red
Tessa Graham

Grass, growing, grown
Life at the tips of trees fingers
There it hangs, lingers
For a short while

Poison ivy, lily pads
Street signs, grapes and foreign teas
Jolly Giant on cans of peas
The nauseous faces of seasick lads

Fuzzy north bark, over time
Lovely Goose Bay Northern lights
Eyes in pigment glowing bright
Envy with a mind of its own

Sweater on the back of Freddy Kruger
And shining Christmas lights set ablaze
Opposites do attract in many ways
Like Red Green and his duct tape

Deceit, anger, rage and violence
Love so deep it cuts a wound
Cardinals chirping a melodic tune
Emotions; mortal and human

Sudden rush to embarrassed cheeks
Cherries, fire trucks, fire and flame
The assailant who gave Newton his fame
The ginger who loves tomorrow
Black and White
Tessa Graham

Ink wells and onyx: potent
Lack of light
Purest night
Crush of charred charcoal

Slick grime of motor oil
Unnerving crows with watchful gazes
Procession of suits, veils and a teary haze
Darkened eye of angsty teen

Pasty and pale
Bark of birches
Searing with scorches
Of dark ash wounds

Light and its absence
Mimes and jail cells
Heaven and Hell
Life and death

Jail stripes and Pepe Le Pew
Badgers, chalkboards and boarder collies
40’s photos of long past memories
Devious ice under the shelter of flakes

Clouds on a blue backdrop
Hung crisp and neat
Snowfalls and clean sheets
Blowing in the wind

Silent films with perfect smiles
Pureness of angels, light as can be
Her perfect dress, a sight to see
Dainty weaves of corded lace
Time
Rebecca McCarthy

When I sit still, Time chases me,
Breathing hot, sticky condensation onto the back of my neck, raising my flushed skin,
Grasping at my clothing and reaching for my organs with short stubs of fingers,
Hissing that “all will die. All will end.”
“I will die. My life will end.”
In my eternal attempt to escape,
Life seems fleeting.
How can I live all the lives there are to live, with Time propelling me to where it thinks I should go?
A panicking Time forces me into the simplest choices, the safest life.
With such short time, Time tells me there is no space for mistakes or for living outside of The Box.

But now,
Now I move! I walk, run, skip, jump, dance! All of my own accord, my own free will.
As I walk in my own path at my own pace, time is left behind.
Time can only follow if I pay Its existence heed and listen to Its curt, fearful warnings.
Here.
Here, time stretches out like the Endless ocean’s ripples reflected by the Endless sky.
The Past, Present, and Future curl and nestle into each other like a toddler to its loving parent in the early hours of the mildewed sunrise.
Time exists around me, leaving me to exist as an eternal part of the Earth.
By escaping Time, by leaving Time lost behind me,
I have allowed myself to become infinite.
When I sit still, Time chases me,
Breathing hot, sticky condensation onto the back of my neck, raising my flushed skin,
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Rachel McCarthy
He Loves Me
Michaela Chloe Toth

“He loves me.”
One petal falls to the ground.
“He loves me not.”
“He loves me.”
Another petal falls.
I admire the purity of each white petal, soft between my little fingers, before I turn over my hand, loosening my grip.

I look up to the clear blue sky.
“It must be me, I mean, he let me kiss him at recess, but, but, he’s always Samantha’s partner when we buddy-walk to the Tom Thumb for class ice-cream on Friday’s.”
The moment of truth is here; I ask my question one more time, just in case the flower forgot.
“Does he love me or Samantha Rose?”

I pull off the final petal.
“He loves me not.”

This can’t be right. I look around for another flower; maybe the game isn’t over yet. Second time’s a charm.
I spot the loveliest black-eyed Susan up ahead and run for it.
I don’t make it more than a few paces when I feel a thorn jab its way through my ankle.
“Oww!” I shriek.

Just as I begin to cry, the buzzing starts, it grows louder and louder. Suddenly I am surrounded, being stung on every inch of bare skin.
I jump around a few times, I try to run but I can’t move.
“Stop it! Stop it!” I fall into the wasp’s nest below me.
“Dad!!! Daddy!! Oww! Oww!” I shriek and cry and moan.
I can’t see much past my tear filled eyes, but I look up again shouting past the yellow jackets at the clear blue sky.
“WHY?!” I yell at the top of my lungs; I want God to hear me.
“Why doesn’t anybody love me?”

Just then, arms scoop me up, carrying my swelling body away from the swarm.
“I love you, kid.” My dad winks at me, holding me gingerly as he walks me to the car.
“Time to go home.”

No flower, no love.

I can’t see much past my tear-filled eyes, but I look up again shouting past the yellow jackets at the clear blue sky.

“Why doesn’t anybody love me?”

Just then, arms scoop me up, carrying my swelling body away from the swarm.
“I love you, kid.” My dad winks at me, holding me gingerly as he walks me to the car.
“Time to go home.”

The story of my life, just like the story of my skin.

Louder, me.
“Mom?”
“Yes Monkey?”
“I’m going to go see Ellen, okay?”
“Sure, Monkey-girl, but dinner is going to be ready in a half hour so don’t stay too long.”
I hugged her leg and ran out the back door that led from the kitchen to the driveway.
Two doors down there was a swing set. That was Ellen’s place.
Not knowing much about walking, I ran over and jumped up the steps to knock on the door.

I ran over to the swing set and started doggy paddling.
It was my favorite way to swing; I used my hands and legs to push myself forward. Before I knew it I was higher than I’d ever been before, but it wasn’t enough for me. I wanted to swing up over the house like I did in my dreams sometimes.

I was focused on the blue sky over the rooftop when the door opened, Ellen yelled “Hey!”
I lost my balance just then.
Her voice trailed off “No one said you could go first…”

It happened so quickly. I was flying alright, but before I could touch the clouds gravity pulled me back to earth, head first. I landed on the pretty dark blue stone that surrounded the bushes in Ellen’s backyard.
My dad told me later it was trap rock.

Trapped I was, too. Blood was everywhere. Ellen was screaming at the top of her lungs, that’s the last I remembered as I swirled in and out of consciousness. I entered into a fuzzy haze. I stayed in that place for a good long while.

I awoke to my mother crying.
And I felt a deep pang of guilt, my lip quivering.

She took my hand and whispered so I had to use all my might to hear. “Monkey’s are not made for doggy paddling.”
Catherine Adelaide
Andrew Tremblett

When I was living home in St. John's after an unproductive attempt at University life, I was introduced by friends to an attractive girl who was new to town. Her name was Catherine Adelaide, a sweet, worldly soul who seemed to fit flawlessly into my childish concept of love.

Catherine was working as a waitress downtown when I first met her, she was originally from Northern Ontario and lived briefly in Toronto for a few years of schooling. Her slim pale figure was not short of absolutely stunning, while her face complimented her mess of tangled strawberry hair.

Catherine and I never dated, but we were close. She was one of the only girls that I can recall who was actually interested in me. At the time, I was also a slim pale figure and I attest to you defiantly not as good looking. I usually wore a brown tweed jacket, at the time I thought I dressed like a novelist but now looking back on it I’m sure I looked like a vagabond.

Catherine brought a strange excitement into my life and she enjoyed my company, I felt I had a close companion who I could share anything with. There was one conversation in particular I remember quite well.

As I recall it was after dinner. The Italian pasta she cooked had slowly vanished and all we were left with was an old red velvet couch, pleasant conversation and yesterday’s wine. We sat in her small snug home on Queens Road, discussing passions that were significant then but ended up getting misplaced on the road to old age. Soon enough we hit a point in our conversation that has stuck with me my entire life.

“What do you want to do with your life Oliver?” Her question took me off guard.

“Well, I haven’t really thought about it.” I lied, but she didn’t buy it. I had my entire life planned out, I was going to leave St. John’s as soon as I could and begin my life as a writer in Toronto. First get a few short stories published, then novels and soon I would travel the world. Spain, Italy, France, Africa, I wanted to be a great literary figure, like Fitzgerald, Wilde, Dickens, or Hemingway. She then promptly informed me that although Hemingway was a great writer, he ended up shooting himself in the face.

I looked at her passionately and said “There is so much out there Catherine that I haven’t seen. I feel sheltered here, I’ve been here my whole life and I’ve seen all that this town has to offer. And I just want to see more.”

“What are you thinking Catherine? Why do you want to leave this place?” She asked. I thought about it for a brief second, I had a million reasons but I didn’t want to share, because not one of them involved her.

She shot a stern look, it was cute so I spilt. “St. John’s isn’t the place for me. I feel like there is something out there better and I need to go and find it.” She looked at me in a disappointing silence, so I continued. “Listen I want to write. But I don’t just want to do that, I want to be someone in this world, I want to count. I want people to read my work and get inspired to write their own stuff or to change something in their lives that they don’t like. I want to be a great literary figure.” She then promptly informed me that although Hemingway was a great writer, he ended up shooting himself in the face.

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“Okay, but this greatness that you speak of, what makes you think that you can’t find it right here in St. Johns?” Again I was silenced into thought, “Remember the night Oliver, where we walked the streets of town and we ended up at Signal Hill at around three o’clock in the morning? You had that flask of rum hidden in the breast pocket underneath your coat and we sat there drinking it, undisturbed. I remember that our conversation passed but the time stood still and we just sat there, looking at the lights, listening to the wind, smelling the salt from the sea and feeling the cold but beautiful breeze. You kissed me that night and I will never forget that. You had everything that you ever needed at that moment, we both did.” She stopped her alluring and beautiful rant to look at me
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When I told her of my plans, moving to Toronto and such. She sat there for a moment, sipped her wine and never said anything. I raised my eyebrow and she finally spoke. “You’d give up anything to know your future, wouldn’t you?” I never answered. “Why do you want to leave this place?” She asked. I thought about it for a brief second, I had a million reasons but I didn’t want to share, because not one of them involved her.

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and I stupidly answered her.

“Look that’s beautiful, you are right. But don’t you see? When I travel I’m going to experience more things like that. I need to live through more stories like that one.”

“Not even with me?” Her dark sunken eyes were as green as emeralds. I knew we both loved each other, but she knew we both wanted different things. She was smart and I was dumb. She wanted to get lost and find herself on that rock while I wanted to follow my dreams and try my best to live my life exactly the way I planned it. But sadly at the time, only Catherine knew that our dreams aren’t quite the same as our reality. An unsatisfied smile rose across her face and she spoke, “There is no breeze from the sea in Toronto.” I knocked back the rest of my wine, I didn’t want sobriety anymore, I wanted to be in a state where I could forget all my dreams and problems so I could live my life that night, with Catherine.

Years later I eventually moved to Toronto. After my first play was published I was encouraged to get a job out there. However, I would always find myself reminiscing throughout the day, but most often my mind would cast itself back to the year I hung around Catherine. Her face, her figure, her eyes, like a precious photograph that was preserved in my head.

One morning during a breezy June day, I was walking down Yonge Street with plans of meeting my editor. As I kept to myself and walked through the bustling horde of unfamiliar faces, I noticed a tattered book fall from someone’s opened book bag. I don’t know if it was the interesting cover of the book or the way I was raised, but I picked it up. I glanced at the cover, The Old Man And The Sea by Ernest Hemingway. I thought of Catherine, it was one of her favorites. I turned back and called to the woman who had dropped it, it took her a moment to realize that I was actually talking to her but she soon turned around. She looked like a deer in head lights, like she wasn’t expecting anyone to speak to her. I felt a sense of awkwardness from this good deed. In a meaningless way, she thanked me and we both fixed ourselves back on to the track of morning commutes. It was then I noticed, I had a love hate relationship with the city of Toronto.

I didn’t know what it was. This city was where I always thought my career was going to be but it gave me endless possibilities for my career, but this wasn’t happiness. Now I know that it was the haunting words from a dear old friend. As I walked I remembered what she had said to me all those years ago and I stopped. I stood there in the middle of the sidewalk. I closed my eyes and thought of hers, finally I was back home with Catherine. We were in St. John’s on Signal Hill, looking at the comfortable boats docked on the water. She smiled at me and like waking up from a long night of slumber, she lifted her arms and stretched into the wind. I did the same. I felt the cool breeze surround my body, I was comfortable. Unexpectedly I was nudged by a passerby and as quick as my eyes opened the moment vanished. I looked up at the towering valley of modern concrete that was before me. Catherine Adelaide was right, there is no breeze from the sea in Toronto.
and I stupidly answered her.

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