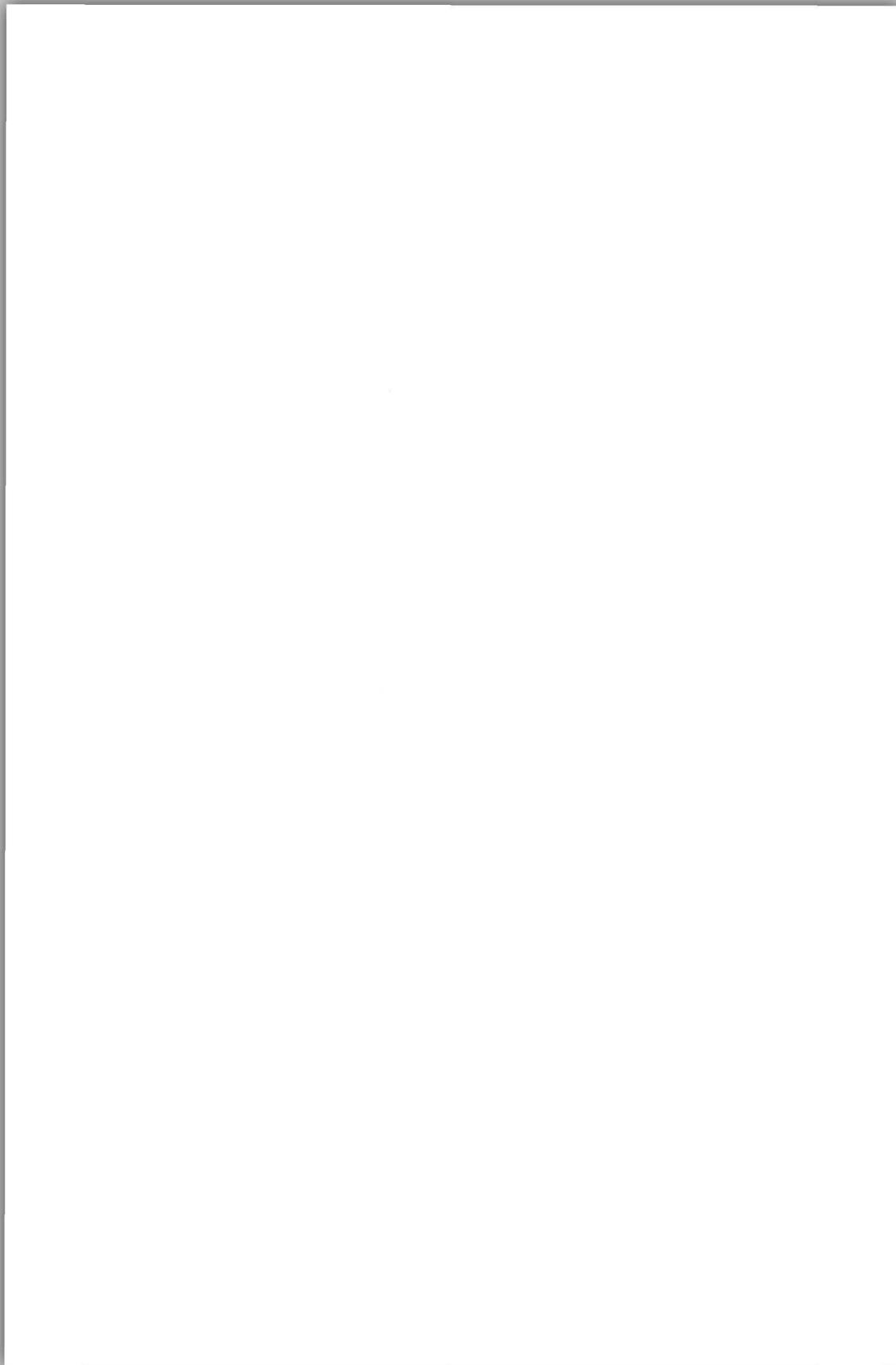


# PRISM *international*

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WINTER 1995  
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PRISM *international*



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7. Works of translation are eligible.
8. **Entries will not be returned. Winners will be notified by or before March, 1996 and published in the Spring Fiction Contest issue. SASE for list of winners only.**

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# The Road to Port Divine

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*Colin Garrett*

**T**he first time I heard about Mary was around a campfire in the ruins of the Colorado statehouse. The second time was in Durango at a weapons auction—a place I'd gone, not to buy weapons, but to be around people. As it turned out, the people who were there weren't the ones I particularly wanted to be around.

From Durango I rode west through the pass, then descended into the desert and came within a few days to the interstate. Two more days brought me to the landmarks I had been told about: the bomb crater and the burned-out school bus lying on its side. Turn left at the bus, they had said, and ride until you hear a lady singing.

The sky was a bright ruthless blue, but there was no reflection of it in the bus windows because they had all been broken.

I rode around the bus, imagining the people who might have been inside it that day. A coiled rattlesnake eyed me from the shade of a wheel well. I drew rein by the back door and looked in. At first I thought the gunshot interior would reveal nothing but stacked-up tumbleweed, but curling through the centre of the bottom most clump of brush was a joined pair of miniature human ribs.

I rode off a ways then turned and charged the bus, trying for all I was worth to approximate the flappy, noisome vigour of a man with two good arms, but Soldier wasn't fooled and veered off in a huff at the last minute.

It had been the same story for two and a half years: as long as I just had the one arm, he wouldn't jump things for fear I'd fall off and get hurt.

"You'd do me more good roasting on a spit," I said, rubbing his neck as he galloped in a slowed down arc, tossing his tail from side to side like the Queen's best broom. But I was still angry at his paternal streak, and when we were turned at the bus—in a direction that equalled left—I held him to an overfast pace and handled him a little roughly until several minutes had passed and a more mature part of me rose into ascendancy.

Three days later, during which time the only singing I heard was by

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coyotes, I reined up outside a flat-roofed adobe house with two dead crows hanging by their feet outside the front door. Visible from ten miles off, the house was situated in the middle of flat nothing like a houseboat floating on a sea of dirt—though this impression was dispelled somewhat from close-up. As I rode in, I noted a patch of weeds that suggested an attempt at a garden, a collection of rusted household appliances, and the back half of a white limousine sticking straight up out of the dirt like a walrus tusk.

“Anybody home?” I asked, pulling up at a respectful distance from the front door.

After a moment, a middle-aged woman parted the bead curtain and looked out suspiciously at me and the horse.

“Tie him here,” she said finally, pointing vaguely toward the scattering of junk gleaming in her front yard. Then she walked across the dirt and kicked the side of an old white enamel range-and-oven unit. “Here.”

She was stocky, brown, and fortyish, and wore her black hair down her back in two long braids tied together at the bottom. Her attire consisted of a pair of red high-top sneakers and a flouncy low-cut Victorian undergarment without sleeves. Her eyes were sleepy and shy and cradled in wrinkles, but her forearms looked hard as trees and she was carrying a sawed-off shotgun in her left hand like she was accustomed to using it.

“Are you Mary?” I asked.

In reply she walked into the house through the bead curtain, which swished and shimmered in her wake and gradually fell still.

I rode Soldier to the range, dismounted, and tied him to its long chrome handle, then hugged his neck goodbye. “Sorry to leave you in the sun,” I said, “but I guess I had better do what she says.”

Not at all sure what I was getting into, or that I was even in the right place, I walked nervously to the front step, stopped short of the bead curtain, and knocked on the door frame. The passing seconds were marked by the idle spinning of the two fat crows, which hung beside me at eye level with their wings down-splayed, and which may well have been the most extravagant provender I had seen since Soldier and I swam the Mississippi two months ago—and almost since we left the East Coast four months ago.

Suddenly the curtain opened and the woman looked with hard eyes from me to the crows and back again. Then she stepped back and gestured for me to come in.

Narrow tunnels of light bored in through the glassless windows in two adjacent walls. In the same corner, a small cookfire burned smokily in a cinderblock firepit. On one of the walls there hung a crucifix, a small dim photograph, and the minor surprise of a two-tone vinyl bowling-ball bag

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suspended from a wooden peg. Finally, in the corner opposite the fire, a hospital gurney was pushed flush against the walls. Tall, narrow, and shiny-legged, it was all the room offered in way of a bed.

"They told me you'd be singing," I said.

"Not anymore." She gestured to the gurney. "Sit down."

The white sheets were starchy and taut. I brushed off the seat of my pants and sat politely on the edge, covering my stump by folding my arm over my chest.

Mary, meanwhile, was rummaging in the drawer of a small night table. I knew it was the pliers she was looking for; on that matter, the story had been the same in both Denver and Durango. Running my tongue over my smooth, sound teeth, I suddenly wondered if I was prepared to see them vandalized. But then I imagined leaving here without what I'd come for, and noticed the deliberate shuffle of Mary's sneakered feet, and realized I no longer had much choice. But what relief I felt when she turned around with nothing in her hands but a flashlight and tongue depressor. I swallowed spit and opened my mouth, hoping nervously that I'd pass her muster.

She was capable but brusque: pinning my tongue down firmly and poling my cheeks out away from the gum. The depressor tasted like a popsicle stick and Mary's hands like lime juice. A complex exotic zing, in other words. A merciful tumble of flavours from buried pasts.

While stooping to see my upper teeth, she inadvertently pressed her side ribs against the end of my stump, and I thought: *Well, if she didn't notice before, she's noticed now.*

A moment more and she pulled her tools out without expression and put them away. I became aware that I had drawn a few folds of white bedsheet in my fist and was hanging on as for life.

"Are you going to do it now?" I asked.

"Afterward," she said. A silk-soft grunt.

"Which one will you take?"

This might be naive, but I still hoped I'd be happy one day, and I suppose I didn't want her to ruin my smile.

"Which ever I want," she said. "Now get up." But the abruptness was softened by her putting a hand on my shoulder and trying to flush me out of the way with quick intimate taps of her fingers.

"I think you would do it before, otherwise some fellas might cheat you," I said. "Your name's going around some pretty rough circles up in Colorado."

"If anybody cheats here, it's gonna be me," she said, glancing back at the shotgun on the night table. Then she pounded with increasing force on my shoulder until I had no choice but to move.

---

And then I watched in awe as she leaned forward on her elbows on the bed, reached back with one hand and gathered up her skirts, then pulled the white flouncing around in front of her and held it there.

And I could not help it: I was a man, and things were rough in this department for a one-armed guy, and I found the sight of her a paradise—the paired, rounded loaves of her rear end; her fleshy, goose-pimpled down-tapering thighs; the recessed, shadowed, and fur-tufted demi-place where she was inviting me to glide.

I was respectful, tried to be quick, though for a moment, I own, my concern for her was swamped by concern for her insides.

It was a place like a warm damp cloth laid over the forehead of a fever patient, only it wrapped totally around, and was tight as a fist, and was something I hadn't had the benefit of in a long time—the slippery, tight-woven ecstasy, the three-minute lunge away from the broken-glass rattlesnake barrens and into the realm of birds.

And, after it was over, I felt toward her a lot of gratitude.

We put our respective attires back in order, me bashfully, her eagerly, then she sat me down and reached in with a pliers and pulled out one of my molars on the bottom left side.

She rinsed the blood off in a tin cup, then held the tooth in two fingers by one of the roots and inspected it in the sunlight that lasered though a window. "Not so bad," she said to herself, sounding pleasantly surprised.

This eased a little—not much, but a little—the squished-grape pain that was pressing over and over into my jawbone like a paneling nail. I walked through the bead curtain and into the yard, leaned on my knees and spit blood, then stumbled back inside and sat down on the edge of the gurney, holding my jaw.

Mary was still turned toward the window light, polishing my tooth with a striped cloth.

"I don't guess you have anything for the pain," I said.

"What?" she said, without looking round. "No, I don't."

I ripped an inch-wide strip off my handkerchief, balled this up, and wedged it gingerly into the wet hole in my jaw.

The tacked-up photo I now saw to be a faded snapshot of a small boy and girl sitting in a plastic wading pool, somberly staring down the camera as though they already knew what their future held. Elsewhere, smoke from the cookfire hung lazily in the tubes of sunlight, a reminder that the day was still proceeding and Soldier waiting.

I was gathering myself to leave when Mary glanced at me guardedly—taking in my empty gunbelt, my pinned-up left sleeve. She reached past the snapshot to the brown-and-white bowling-ball bag and lifted this unheavy item down to the dirt floor. Squatting and facing me over the bag, she undid the clasp, pulled back the sides, reached in from directly above

---

with both hands, and lifted out a roundish cloth-wrapped object about the size of a land mine.

When she set it down and pulled the cloth away, I saw the object was somebody's skull—a dust-stained relic of the sort to be found rolling around on the old freeways. There was the turgid cranial stitching, the Halloween eye sockets, the nose like the hoof print of a deer. The only thing unusual about it, as I found out when she swung the rope part of the thing back and rested it dome-down on the red bandanna, was that the lower jaw was still attached and could move. The present movement revealed that the upper and lower jaws, two mirror-image U's, were each bristling with a mismatched assortment of variously coloured teeth. Pursing her lips intently, Mary reached in and inserted my own tooth root-first into the appropriate hole on the lower jaw, twisting it this way and that until she achieved a fit that satisfied her. Then she took her hand away, rocked back on her heels, and released a sigh that was as fat, sleek, and satisfied as a walrus in the sun.

Then, so to speak, a cloud passed over—Mary's brow creased slightly. Wetting the tip of one pinky-finger, she reached over my tooth and groped the hole that seemed to be the one remaining empty place, the one thing standing between her and a complete collection.

She withdrew her hand and glanced up at me cagily. "You want one more time?"

She was bending toward me and her neckline was low. Her radiant brown breasts formed a soft-sided cave. But I knew that having two teeth pulled might leave me too weak to do what I had to in Port Divine.

"I can't," I said. "I need them to eat."

She thought that over a moment, caressing the spiteful socket, then said: "Your horse has teeth?"

I laughed at that, then whipped my hand toward my jaw at the unexpected pain. "Why do you—ow, damn!—why do—Jesus. Why do you want them?"

She closed her skull's mouth back up, then rotated the head so it faced her. She gazed at it soulfully. "When I have them all, he might talk to me."

*Oh, Mary, I thought. And then I wondered: If I begged my Soldier, could I get him to jump me over this house?*

No.

Not yet, anyway.

Not yet.

"Well, that's why I need my horse," I said, getting up. "For somebody to talk to."

Mary stood up and dusted her hands skeptically. "A horse can't talk."

\* \* \*

---

Outside, we stood together in the late-afternoon sun, looking at watchful Soldier, at Mary's spread of junk, at the upright limousine and the backdrop of endless sagebrush flatland. The story on Mary's limo was that it had fallen out of a plane and landed here, sticking out of the ground like a palm tree. Mary had come across it in her travels and decided that it was as close as this country would come in the way of offering an oasis.

The shadow of the limousine reached almost to Soldier now.

I went to and untied him, then mounted up and rode back to where Mary was standing by her doorway, in front of the crows with their out-splayed wings.

From my saddlebags I gave her an orange, a pocket mirror, my Walkman. The only station left around here was the aviation weather out of Flagstaff, but the unit was solar-powered and would last as long as she did.

She put on the headphones and burst into a smile.

"That's to keep you company in case your boyfriend doesn't learn to talk," I said.

She pulled off the headphones: "What?"

"That's to keep you company until your boyfriend learns to talk."

"Where are you going?"

"To Port Divine. It's near where Los Angeles used to be. Supposedly there's a man there who makes artificial limbs, if you have enough money."

"Do you have enough?"

I shook my head. "Not yet anyway."

Mary turned and lifted down the crows, bit the cord in two, and handed me the larger bird.

"Maybe you can give him that instead of money."

Obviously it had been a long time since she'd gone out in the world to try to buy anything, but I said, "Maybe," to be nice, and then, "Thank you."

But what did I care just then about distant worries: I had Soldier to talk to, and the knowledge I would eat well tonight, and the memory of the taste of lime juice on a stranger's fingers.

On the way out of the yard, I rode around the limousine for luck, then kicked Soldier up to a trot, waved to Mary, and turned us westward toward Port Divine.

*R.J. Powell*

*two poems*

---

## What Is Here

1.

Sleep dies  
in a gunfire of weather and world, light  
shooting through the eyes,  
the hands open, all  
sound bouncing  
from the centre.

Deep  
in the paved brain  
the truth sinks slowly,  
home under seasons,  
children gone, bequeathing  
memory and photographs,  
those lying ghosts:  
death by progress.

Sleep dies  
with sea launch,  
timed paths,  
domesticity, stars,  
and the spectacle  
of history,  
its last cry very like its first

the hungry gesturing  
in the distance next to the skin.

2.

What is here  
is held delicate under vast  
pressure  
like a fish, a cloud  
a dream, or  
any other body.

What is here  
is gently balanced,  
slips into day, night,  
with too much ease and pain.

What is here above sleep  
will not be ruled,  
cannot be added, subtracted,  
filed in megabytes, melted  
in the mouths of politicians,  
gathered on a tray at autopsies,  
replayed on video.

What is here  
will not be calibrated:  
this would be like  
costing a womb  
or measuring a cry for help,  
like weighing  
the spill of blood  
from a wound,  
or the tonnage of dawn.

# Other Air

Dusk, its flesh  
blue and luminous.

From the familiar  
direction of the woods  
night is coming.

To the left  
a river,  
a patient tearing  
of the silence.

To the right  
a pasture  
where sheep graze  
deep in space.

Then  
the path evaporates  
and feet stumble  
into other air—  
the place that is always waiting.

In a house  
high on the road  
a hand draws a curtain slowly

perhaps  
in the previous century  
perhaps  
in some other eye.

*Catherine Greenwood*

---

## Feeding Time

In the paddock  
rams and wethers  
run to the rattle of the pellet bucket,  
all prattling and stammering  
one muddy tongue  
in voices ragged as winter fleece.

Nearby a new lamb practices the same flat syllable,  
tasting over and over  
its first and only word,  
a creamy curdled stutter  
maybe *milk*, maybe *mother*.

*Sharon McCartney*

*two poems*

---

## Under the Abdominal Wall

The visible incision  
is slight, a thin  
red line where my abdomen  
ends, grown over  
now with new hair,  
the trail fading  
as if no one ever stumbled  
there, no finger  
ever bore down hard  
as regret. But under  
the dermal layers,  
beneath the peritoneum,  
the surgeon bit into me  
and left a cross-hatch  
of running stitches,  
handprints, the curve  
of a palm, the weight  
of circular needles  
and nylon thread, sterile  
steel pulling the lips  
of my womb into a kiss.  
I rolled away,  
glittery, green  
with blood loss, with vomit,  
the taste of morphine  
like wind in my teeth.  
The Recovery Room nurse slid  
me into a bed shaped  
like an eraser and I  
hid there, riding the sinus  
wave of yellow milk  
in my son's sharp mouth,  
bending my new body  
to his, the two of us

climbing each other,  
like pines treading  
the timberline, growing  
into gravel and edges.

# In A Room The Colour Of Flesh

The surgeon draws crosses  
and arrows on a napkin,  
describing my body,  
how my arteries snapped  
and wagged like broken  
kite strings, how frightened  
he was, my heart  
a dull speaker  
turning page after page.  
I remember him shouting,  
the anaesthetist's green  
chest waxing and waning,  
the purple infant  
with cobalt eyes wrung  
like a sodden sponge  
from my womb. I watched  
the surgeon's muddied hands  
rising and falling over  
my numb limbs, telling  
myself this is all  
I will ever know,  
all I will ever become,  
until I became a tired  
nurse's cart of groceries  
bumped down the hall  
from Recovery to a bed  
of worn sheets. Now  
I stare in my son's  
new eyes and see the pain  
that leans over me  
like a TV on a long  
black arm, the sea-monster

that curls with me.  
My throat is shallow, tense  
with the weight of fear,  
a heavy tool buried  
in my chest. The surgeon  
is kind, but when he declares  
another child could kill me,  
I can't help crying  
in my newborn's thin hair,  
salting his dappled skin  
with the scent of stitches  
and gauze, of openings,  
closing.

James Gurley

two poems

---

## A Temporal Bestiary

*Beautiful is the stillness of night.*

—Georg Trakel

We're held by the rhythms of light,  
like the fruit bats who fly out to feed

every dusk, rising from the trees  
in a grey-brown fury of wings.

Somehow we carry these time signals  
through our bloodstream, the body's own

clock predicting what happens.  
That in the yard behind our house

tonight fireflies will swarm,  
their lunar mating rituals triggered

by the synchrony inside each flash,  
each insect seeking the harmony

of others, instinct telling them  
just this moment of light, that is all.

I sit beside you on the damp grass.  
It's late, we should be asleep

but a whippoorwill starts up, a dark  
portal as his calling grows near.

What we look upon we take into ourselves,  
the pollen-drenched blossoms shut

for business, our cat prowling  
the flower beds, her curious chattering

at her prey. My trance is broken  
by the whirl of moths

around the patio lights,  
by your voice as you tell me

office gossip, jokes, that our car  
needs a tune up and how your plans

for the weekend include sleeping in.  
What of those creatures like us

who take their bearing from the sun,  
emerging at dawn from pupal stage,

these cousins of darkness and light,  
those birds who migrate to subtle

changes in the seasons?  
We are bordered by the earth's

steady pull, by cool breezes,  
so you long for a sweater

and wonder why we are out here.  
The fireflies? The summer night sky?

We walk back to the lit house.  
The muffled suburban noises engulf us

until our voices are mere echoes of what  
we've seen, satellite headlines

of war or disaster. Our lives  
flare up in these earthbound days

the early hours when I can't sleep,  
can't stop the great curve of light

its strange powers, its radiance  
edging through our bedroom window.

# Driving Around

I'm embarrassed we'll be seen, some guy  
and his son in a Ford LTD casing the neighbourhood  
like Sunday robbers or lost relatives who can't  
decide which house is right.

My father points out how the blue trim  
complements the grey siding, how the slope  
of the roof hides a second storey dormer.

This wisdom he passes

on to me

bored with the slow circuit, the endless  
houses with their porches, garages, chimneys,  
shutters, doors, their owners unaware  
we have taken possession, adding another  
house to our listings of possible lives:

where we enter at will, rearrange furniture,  
tear up the torn linoleum kitchen floor,  
repaint the den to suit our tastes.

Each house we see becomes the one  
my father wants to build.

I drive around like my father sizing up houses,  
the perfect architecture to encompass a family,  
a blueprint we spread out for the builders,  
planning each floor, each room like scenes  
in a movie. But in these houses my family  
is not my family.

No one I recognize.

This existence isn't mine, I didn't  
choose it. The picture changes.

A new relativity spins me back to my car,  
the comforting radio, another stoplight,  
a neighbourhood of rowhomes and storefronts,  
where *for rent* signs multiply, the parked cars

are old and need paint jobs, and kids play ball  
in a vacant lot with the city behind them.

Lost. I ask directions from a gas station attendant.  
I am not where I thought I was. Miles from anywhere  
I know. The way out is a few blocks over,  
he tells me. His idle neighbourly chatter  
as he fills my gas tank is a belonging he shares  
like the weather

or a city map that charts  
the districts between us, obscuring the lines  
of houses before dark, when the temporal light  
is veined with dusk, and my father gazes  
down the end of the street.

*Cellan Jay*

---

## Prehistoric

The shoeshine kit was my father's,  
exclusively; it hung on a hook  
in his basement workroom, where each  
Sunday before church it was my job  
to shine the family's shoes,  
never failing to place the four pairs  
in marching formation, in descending order  
of size, the better to admire  
their lovely purposeful air  
before taking them back upstairs.  
The oak-handled brushes with their  
boar bristles gummed with polish  
originated in the prehistory of my father's life,  
before he had me, before he'd met my mother,  
when he must have wandered over the earth  
with the canvas bag of brushes tied to a stick  
he carried on his shoulder,  
fording dangerous rivers,  
roasting small animals on his open fire,  
sleeping under the stars.  
And sometimes, in the torrential rains  
of those days, he must have sought  
shelter in the mouth of a cave, watched the  
savannah grasses flatten under the downpour  
and, taking out his brushes, polished  
his shoes, surely hoping we,  
or people like us, would find him soon.

# The Smallest Things

---

*Greg Gilbert*

## I

**T**hen it was Tracy: "Dad, my legs are really sore."

He ignored his daughter and looked over at his wife. She had a black t-shirt wrapped around her head, covering her eyes. Through her blindfold she talked. "Honey," she said, "your dad's the one who has to drive here."

"But we haven't stopped since Sudbury."

His wife pulled the t-shirt from her face. She squinted in the sun. "Todd, I think we should stop now."

"I think we can push them another half hour."

"It's been over an hour. They've been crazy now for over an hour."

He looked at the clock. Two thirty. "Wawa's only half an hour away. We might as well wait for Wawa. There's nothing until Wawa anyway."

She shook her head. "Really," she said. "Really. What's the point?"

"Mom, I have to go to the bathroom." This time it was Mark.

Ella looked across the seat at her husband. She put her hand on his knee.

"Just a few more minutes," he said, as he put his hand on the stick shift.

She watched as he turned to look at her. "This is crazy," she said. She put the black t-shirt over her eyes again. "This is just crazy."

Tracy pushed on Mark's stomach. "Time to make you pee," she said. Mark laughed.

Todd looked at his wrist. Only five minutes had passed. "Can't you two keep still for twenty five minutes?"

"They've been in the car for six hours," said Ella. She turned around to the back seat. "Tracy, don't make your brother pee his pants."

"Six hours," said Tracy. "We've been in the car for six hours? Dad said it was three hours." Mark was still laughing.

Todd shook his head. "Good one, Ella," he said. He turned around to

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the kids. "Let's sing a song," he said. Mark started crying. He said that his stomach hurt. He said that he really had to pee now. "It's only twenty minutes. If you two can't keep it down then I'll drop you off on the side of the road."

The car quieted down. Tracy sulked and Mark looked out the car window. Ella picked up a magazine from the floor. It was one of Tracy's *Seventeen* magazines. Ella couldn't understand what an eight-year-old wanted with a *Seventeen* magazine. She put down the window a crack and let some fresh air in. The wind was cold and loud. Todd turned on the radio. He was stuck behind a slow moving camper. There was nowhere to pass on the highway. He turned up the radio some more. It was mostly static. Ella put up the window.

"Really," she whispered. "It would take two seconds. What's the problem with stopping for two seconds?"

Ella didn't get an answer.

Tracy was whispering in the back seat. Todd couldn't hear what she was saying, but he heard Mark. He heard: "He did not. He said *both* of us." The kid was so damned gullible.

"Shh!" said Tracy, and then her giggle. "No," she said. "Just you."

"Mom, Tracy said Dad was going to leave me here."

"Leave your brother alone, Tracy."

Todd pulled out to pass, but a car pulled around the corner ahead. *With this traffic, we'll be on the road until midnight*, he thought. There was no getting around the trailer. He honked his horn once. His wife looked at him. "It was an accident," he said.

She saw his jaw muscle was set. With Tracy singing in the back seat, there was nothing she could do. She looked around for something to distract him, but there was nothing there. The road, the trees, the trailer in front—she watched it all as though it was in a movie. He put his foot on the brake and cut over to the edge of the road.

The kids weren't paying attention. Tracy was singing a radio song. She didn't notice the car was stopping. "God Tracy, Shut up!" Ella said it loud. She said it and then thought that it was no way for her to talk. *It's not Tracy's fault*, she thought. *God, this is insane.*

A car passed by going the other direction. They were pulled over. The trailer in front of them wasn't going over seventy, but it was pulling away, around the corner. The car was stopped.

When Tracy noticed, the whole car got quiet. "Out," said Todd. The kids got out of the car and he got out too. "Over there," he said. He pointed up a hill at some evergreens. The kids walked over to the trees. Todd got back in the car.

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Ella saw the kids watching them as they talked. She thought that they couldn't see her hand on top of her husband's—fighting over the gear shift. *That's one small blessing*, she thought, but then she wondered if it was. As the car pulled away, she made a point of looking back at the kids to show them that they didn't need to be worried. She saw them and then she couldn't stand it. She looked back at the road.

*Five minutes*, Ella thought. *It was only five minutes*. She pulled the car over where they'd dropped the kids off. She was the driver now. She looked at her husband and he got out of the car. She killed the engine and saw her children standing up the hill, away from her husband. Tracy came running back to the car, but Mark stayed on the hill.

"He peed his pants, Mom."

"Why didn't he go in the trees?"

"He was too scared."

Ella looked up at her son and her husband walking down the hill. Her son had stopped crying. He had a dirty face. She saw no resemblance between the two. In the rearview mirror she watched Todd undress Mark and put fresh clothes on him. She saw how Mark looked, standing on the side of the highway with no pants on. He was shivering. She thought about going back there herself, but it was Todd's doing. He had to be the one to fix it.

"Don't make him stand out in the open," she said. Todd didn't hear her. Either that or he ignored her. She saw him take Graval out of the cooler. "Don't give him Graval," she said. "The smell will make him throw up." Todd put the Graval back.

Todd got back in the car. From the passenger seat things were different. The kids were hungry and he was too. The bag of apples didn't look like food any more. "I'll be glad to get to Wawa," he said. He looked over at Ella. She didn't take her eyes off the road.

"We could've been there by now."

"I'm past arguing," he said. "I'm hungry now."

He turned around to the back seat. "How you guys doing back there?" Tracy stuck her tongue out. Mark looked like he might cry again. Todd said, "How about pizza for lunch?"

"Just cheese?"

"Just cheese."

He looked at Ella. She didn't look back at him. He knew that she could feel him smiling.

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## II

Five on the nose. The pizza box was empty except for the two pieces they were saving Ella. Mark was asleep on the ground with his head on Todd's leg. Tracy did another cartwheel. Todd wished he'd been counting. They'd be in the thousands by now, he was sure. He looked at his watch. It was still five.

He watched as Tracy did another cartwheel. *These are the things I notice*, he thought. And he thought he was lucky for that. For seeing so much in the smallest things. He pictured Ella in the car somewhere: still mad. He thought of her with pity. It was a mean thing she was doing, but she was only hurting herself. He felt sorry for her. *If only*, he thought, *she could see things the way I do, without being hurt by them.*

He watched when she pulled into a parking space by the picnic table. To Todd she looked like she always did. Nothing had changed.

He put Mark in the car and then Tracy got in. Ella climbed over to the passenger seat. Todd gave the pizza box to her. She didn't look at him.

"Where were you?"

"I don't want to fight about this."

"That's fine," he said. "Me neither. But what was I supposed to tell the kids?"

"I'm not going to fight about this."

"I know what you were trying to do," he said. "You were trying to teach me a lesson." She didn't say anything. "Two hours was a little excessive though." She was looking at something in the side mirror. "It didn't work," he said.

He looked at her sitting beside him. She wouldn't look his way. He knew she wouldn't say anything now. All around them were things to talk about. (Tracy must have done a thousand cartwheels. . . .) These were things worth noticing. If you're ignored by your family, then who the hell is going to pay attention to you?

"It didn't work," he said.

"Obviously."

"But it didn't work," he said.

"God."

What had she said earlier, to the kids? "Your father's the one who's driving." *That's right*, he thought. *I'm the driver here. I'm the driver here.* He turned it over in his head. *Can't she see that? I'm the one who's driving.*

"I'm driving," he said.

"Yes. Yes, you are," she said. She laughed.

Todd turned red. Then he laughed too.

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### III

They were all sleeping except for Todd. He drove past the turnoff to Sibley Park. He saw the lake now in glimpses. *Big Lake Superior*, he said to himself. The sun wasn't dead yet. In the evening light, the lake looked warm. He watched out the windshield for glimpses of all this that was passing him. He thought about waking up Ella, about her seeing this too, but he couldn't. He felt frozen and ecstatic, like in a dream. He saw the signs for Amethyst Beach and Sunnyside Beach and MacKenzie Beach. He thought about pulling over and camping somewhere along there. He was frozen to the road though. He drove until the sun started setting. He was in Thunder Bay. He didn't know where. It was still a long way to Winnipeg. He pulled over on the side of a street, near a big field and a school. He watched as the sun went down. Something was electric.

It was almost dark when Ella woke up. Todd was sitting on the hood of the car. They were beside a big field. She got out of the car. It was cold out.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Just watching."

"It's getting chilly out. Aren't you cold?"

"No. Not at all."

She watched him as he looked at the scene. The sunset was going away. Something held him here . . . the school or the sun or maybe the field. It could have been anything. He'd been dreaming. She knew that when they got back in the car. But there was something that made her want to touch him—to reassure him when he stood fixed like this. He really was delicate.

"We should get going soon, don't you think?" she said.

He looked at the school. "Have we been here before?" he asked.

"No."

He looked at her and she looked at him. Nothing looked familiar any more. She got into the driver's side. She put the car in gear and drove until they found a main road. They followed that until they got to an ice cream stand. Todd got out sweatshirts for the kids and Ella ordered ice cream. She called her parents from the pay phone to tell them they'd made it as far as they had. "We should be in tomorrow," she said.

The kids ran around in the dark. Ella knew that they were on some high right then, the ice cream or the nighttime air. She watched as Mark spun in circles and Tracy did cartwheels. "We should put her in gymnastics," she said.

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"She's good, isn't she?"

They watched the kids until Mark got tired. He came over to them. "Let's go," he said. "This is boring." Ella put him on her knee and Mark watched as Tracy danced to some private song. Then Tracy put her fingers into pistols and shot at Mark. He jumped off of his perch and ran after her. Ella watched him go.

"We should go soon, before he gets cranky," she said.

"I was thinking that it'd be nice to camp out tonight."

She didn't answer for a minute. "No," she said. "It's already dark out."

"It's nice out though. I'd set up the tent myself."

"No, there's no way," she said. "We've got to get the kids washed up, and Mark's pants have to be cleaned."

"I think we could do it," he said.

Ella walked to the car. She called to the kids. She watched Todd sit on the picnic table. She held the door open while the kids got in and then shut it.

"Just think about it," he told her.

"No way."

"Let's just see if there's a place we can go."

"No way."

"I'm just going to look it up in the phone book," he said. He walked over to the pay phone. "Just let me see how far away they are," he said.

She started the engine. She looked at him standing there, at the phone, with his back turned to her. She backed up, but he didn't look. She drove out onto the street.

#### IV

He'd seen her drive away. He sat on the picnic table. He knew that she'd pulled into the hotel down the street. But he thought that if he waited here, she'd be back. He was sure. When she came, he'd sit on the table until she got out. "Real mature," he'd say. "Good thing we can solve things by talking them out." She'd be upset and then he'd say, "I'm sorry this had to happen. I'm really sorry."

When she came, he'd say this: he'd say, "It's a nice night out isn't it?" He'd say, "Why don't we go out tonight and leave late tomorrow? We could still make a good night out of it." She'd be surprised, off guard. What could she say then?

He imagined the hotel to have a pool and a sauna. The pool would be closed by now, but they could sneak in. They could sneak in and swim

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quietly, just the two of them. Then they'd tell the kids in the morning, about how they'd broken the rules and gone swimming while everyone else was asleep. Mark would open his eyes wide and Tracy would pretend not to care. They could take a sauna after the swim.

There was this possibility: he'd walk around and find a flower shop and bring her lilies. He knew that she'd love the lilies. It was something he'd had to rely on in the past. Of course there wouldn't be any flower shops open at this time, but morning wasn't far away. He thought he could just walk around until morning. Neither of them would sleep that way. But there was the possibility that if he sat there all night, he could freeze to death. The dew was set. The night was cold.

This could be it, he thought. This could really be it.

## V

Ella pretended to be sleeping when she heard a noise at the door. She saw Todd walk in and look at her, at the kids. She saw him sit down on the ledge by the window and look out. He didn't look like he had looked before. He looked beat. She heard him whispering to himself. "Swim?" he said. He laughed to himself.

She watched him for a while before she said anything. "If it makes you feel any better, I haven't slept a wink either," she said.

"It's a nice city," he said. "There was a strip club just a few blocks over from the ice cream place. There was a fight outside. I was walking by."

"Are you alright?"

"Are you kidding? I was like a shadow. No one saw me tonight."

She watched his silhouette. It was all that she could see. "You can come to bed now," she said.

"Have you seen all the trucks here?" he said. "There's more trucks here than anywhere else I've been. Big trucks too, with the big lights on top."

"I'm sorry I left you there."

"I don't know who's going to drive tomorrow . . . what is it four a.m. now?"

"Three thirty."

"Neither of us is in any condition."

"We can sleep in."

"Maybe we could let Tracy drive tomorrow, how's that for an idea?"

She looked away from the silhouette. The clock radio was one thing, and the converter on top of the television was another. Really, there was nothing else to look at but him.

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"I'm sorry I left you there."

"I'm not going to be taught a lesson that way," he said. "That's no way to learn a lesson."

"I know. I said I was sorry."

"It's okay," he said. "There's still tomorrow to contend with."

"I don't know if I'm up to it."

He walked over to the bed and stood there for a minute. He watched as his wife rolled over so that her back was facing him. She was just a lump under some covers now. He took off his shoes slowly. He took off his socks and sat on the edge of his bed. He took one foot and then the other in his hands. He rubbed them in circles with his thumb.

He started to take off the rest of his clothes. As he unbuttoned his shirt, he saw his thumb. He considered it. He had just massaged his feet with it. It was thin. With only the lights from outside, it was almost a bare bone. He thought about how his body was made up of all those little pieces. He crawled in beside his wife. He thought of all the little bones. *This is a gift*, he thought, *seeing things the way I do*. It was something to remember.

Under the covers he felt his hipbone and then his ribs. The picnic table and the strip club were far away. They were getting farther. He followed his collarbone to his neck and then his jawbone to his ear. *Aren't the smallest bones in your ear?* He considered this too, and looked at the ear of his wife. It was almost transparent. He wanted to touch it, but he didn't. She was sleeping. He was past fighting, but he wanted to touch it. He thought instead that he should take the time to remember what he was thinking. *Bones*, he thought. *Thumb*. He had the image in his head and then he didn't. It was gone.

## VI

Todd and Ella slept in fits. First they were too hot, and then the morning came early as the kids woke them up. That day and the next, were long days.

David Winwood

two poems

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## Circus Rounds

The knife thrower's aim  
in life is ill defined:  
a shadowy outline of punctures,  
the blank in the middle

ever changing.

The lion tamer's zeal  
so much easier to understand.  
Each swish of her whip  
proves her control. Only

her husbands keep changing.

The ringmaster is urbane, even  
in out-of-the-way places,  
for the numbers trekking across  
his screen ever point

to success in chances

taken. And he has also wisely  
divested. So why contemplate  
the two windows to suicide?  
The one is the cheek flat

in the never changing

dripping of last week's roast  
at the bottom of the gas oven, or  
the noose, or the pistol with  
its inscription *decent thing*

on the butt. However you change

the means, it's all the one. But  
there's the other, the other. Oh,  
the other. The knife thrower points  
it out: *we all long to lie with*

*the lion tamer without changing*

*into one of her lions. Don't!*  
*As my whole life is dedicated*  
*to missing the point, I know*  
*there isn't any.* Then it is

the clown's turn to chance

the ring. His craft one of continued  
digress—fully fledged aggression  
with painted-over smile. How clumsy  
the cardboard-debonair man offers

his love his red nose. Fat chance!

# Summer

Summer now, no fog to offer you, my nonborn  
daughter, toddling space, only a windy  
clarity showing how pliable the fields  
are. Behind dry stone walls, dishevelled

as a bag lady's fur, cows and sheep are  
cowed, their heads earthbound. Buried here,  
grass would have covered you; all round  
the ragwort buds already shake like babies'

fists. In the ruined orchard there is  
a mattress the children of the former owners  
used for a trampoline, overgrown with a fury  
of stinging nettles. Finding it a sore

question of hit and miss. Wait! Surely  
these must be springs groaning  
underfoot. A metallic squelch. Echo of  
that other, definite sound of instruments

rinsed and cleared away. Yet I  
can jump anywhere from here.

*Alfi MioDrag Kojadinović*

*two poems translated by the author from Serbo-Croatian*

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## Until the Measure of Time Was Fulfilled

On my way down, at lunch break, with a giant magenta towel around my neck, I would go through two bullet-proof doors featuring various codes I had to remember. The garage smelled of petrol, grease, middle-aged men's sweat . . .

I'd drop my clothes off quickly, as a doe-girl would her skin, a shaman his tiger pelt, as if peeling my Helena Rubinstein mask off my face.

My personal Cashmere shrine-pond, there awaited my Bethesda pool and indeed did Raphael go down to trouble the water. Like Moby Dick, I snorted, splashed, swirled like old Neptune amidst a circle of naiades.

Scales of filth (that I was showered with, daily) would fall off in an instant. Chakras would open under a lukewarm jet pointed at my spine. On the other side, where it was deeper, water ran off through two sucking gorges at which plastic lids flapped, sluggish, unceasingly.

Over the high roof-window sailed swallows, pigeons, clouds, once, I suppose, even a stork. Boughs stuck out towards the sky, immobile, hoary.

When the old British man would come at the same time, I could choose either to let myself be touched (purportedly incidentally) in the sauna, or to wait my turn to go in. He had a long pale-tanned member, a semi-brogue accent and a little towel the light blue colour of many baby diapers. Natalie, on the other hand, used to swim so mechanically that I began to suspect she was a robot. The punctuality of a Virgo/Ascendant Capricorn irritated me, forced me to compete, to try and transform an obvious pleasure into a mere WASP-like futile "practicing" of swimming.

Yet I was mostly alone. A spinning top in the ocean, a spiral live coal, Calypso at Ogygeia (without an Ulysses). At times young Arthur, exercising in a pond, Thulean horseman, Hyperborean, Aphrodite who clots out of sea foam, young samurai in a hot o-furo, Nyal at a geyser . . .

The pool in the Canadian Embassy, the white dove, healed and comforted me. Swimming, I maintained the harmony of the cosmos, as the Whale Who Is Ere Brahma. Water was gurgling and draining out. A few pots with pale palms stood around.

I was dreaming, as usual, of Amsterdam. Delighting in eschatological thoughts. Sometimes erotic ones too (twice I masturbated in the womb-like humid heat of the sauna). I was repeating the lament called Family History.

When an hour had elapsed, I would have a quick shower, put on (like a dusty theatre costume from an indecorous show) whatever (and I mean *whatever*) was laid down in my locker and rush to type into a computer a simultaneously-translated-into-English bunch of nonsense that the radio announcers read in an unseemly lofty tone at three p.m.

That was a minor role, a price I had to pay for 60 minutes pleasure per day. God, of course, loved (and still loves) me. Death was magnificently closer each day. And I was almost happy.

# Then, Again, on a Rainy Day

I held them on my outstretched palm last night. My beautiful ones, small ones. My mighty pills. Pills white and orange and pills blue.

It'd be so easy. I smelled them. A distant memory arose: Lily the pharmacist, asleep to Eternity in the valley of Neckar.

Cleopatra's droplets awoke within my veins and the venomous spider's eggs glittered shinier against my rosy skin. So, that too was a lie—thought I, eyeing the elongated, if twisted, lifeline. I am but three decades old, after all.

Silicium graphite twinkled on the side-clock. Never again the odious buzzing to drill with a powerful rationalism into the bubbling safety of my drowsiness. For that one reason it would be worth.

Or rather—just. A good thing to do. For I do not expect to reach, achieve anything through suicide. Just to be detached fully, relieved of all responsibilities. *My will be done*, one time at last; I've had enough of yours.

But then the dog barked again and I knew it'd been too late all along. It should have come at 13, at 17. At 20 at the latest. Like Heliogabalus, who, covered in saffron and gold dust, descends into a lapis lazuli tiled pool. Like a miraculously youthful ephemeral In-the-King's-Stead to be sacrificed after a week's rule.

Like madness, which was flowing out of my body through vicious wounds while humans lapped at its puddles somewhere beneath. Like a beauty bygone. Forlorn. Like yesterday.

# Sophomore Year

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*Adrienne GreenHeart*

I became an orthodox Jew because Avi is, and we search for God together. We keep our food kosher, and I keep my arms and legs covered, and I learn about Talmudic law. For example, swallowing semen is forbidden during the Yom Kippur fast.

Over summer break, Avi and I study Hebrew in Jerusalem. We spend eight hours a day in class. Afterwards we're so exhausted that we never see more than two square miles of Israel. Avi's roommate goes home on the weekends, so we spend the time together in his room, having eighteen-second sex and eating a lot, because in Jerusalem everything's closed on the Shabbat.

After three weeks, I'm sick of Hebrew. I'm sick of Jerusalem. All I want are books in English. Avi won't buy me books in English, because he thinks I should be studying Hebrew. He thinks he's my father because he has all the money. I can't believe I came all the way to Israel for this.

So I start stealing books from the English bookstore, which is particularly scary because the army lurks everywhere with its loaded machine guns.

I want to leave the fucking fatherland—land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—but all the flights are full, so I teach myself to masturbate from a book, and stop going to class because Avi's phony Hebrew accent makes me sick.

When I'm not perfecting my masturbating technique, and sometimes when I am, I retreat to a study carrel in the library on Mt. Scopus. There I achieve the unbelievable feat of mastering the last of the thirteen tenses in the Hebrew language, each of which reflects a different mood or feeling. But I wonder how anyone could ever use all those emotions, even if there were people to talk to.

# What I Do When I'm Not In Bed

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*Adrienne GreenHeart*

I can't sleep and I feel like I'm wasting my time in bed. I look over at the clock hoping that it's time for class, but it's only 4 a.m. There's no way I'm going to fall asleep again.

I take the path from my dorm to the convenience store. It's only a five minute walk, but I go slowly, thinking there must be some way to avoid starting off another day with such complete lack of control. I keep walking.

When I get to the store, the clerk says Hi. He knows me because I come here at least twice a day.

I love bagels, but they're hard to throw up, so I can't buy them now. I grab a box of vanilla creams and a box of chewy chocolate chips. Then I pick up a pint of whole milk. I like skim, but whole milk is like stomach grease which makes everything come up more smoothly.

I glance down at what I've collected. I worry maybe there's not enough food. I snag a tube of frozen sugar-cookie dough. I think they invented the stuff for people like me—I don't even need milk, it comes up so easily.

Sometimes I steal the food, because it upsets me to think how much money I spend on food. But today I feel like paying.

I eat some cookies on the way back to my dorm, which makes the walk seem shorter because every task is easier when I'm eating.

When I get back to my dorm room, I sit down at my desk and eat. I kill all the cookies and finish half the tube of cookie dough before my stomach starts to hurt. I bring the remaining food to the incinerator and I sit back in the chair to wait out the pain. Right after my stomach stops hurting is the easiest time to vomit. The food is mushy enough to come up smoothly, but almost nothing has had time to leave my stomach. This waiting time is the most depressing. I can't eat to distract myself, so I become disappointed with myself for wasting so much time and money and for having so little self-control. I tell myself that I'll never do this again.

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The best part about these early hours is I can use the bathroom down my own hallway without being seen. I take off all my clothes so I won't get them dirty, and then I lean over the toilet. I stick my finger down my throat as far as it will go and wiggle it around. The sugar-cookie dough comes out. I throw up until I think I've gotten almost everything. I reach down into the toilet and squish my hands through the vomit to assess what's come up and how much more I have to go. I'm always careful not to heave too many extra times because I read that extensive vomiting can ruin the esophagus. My worst nightmare is that I'll have to go to the hospital with a torn esophagus and everyone in the world will discover I vomit.

I heave a few more times. I can tell I'm finished because the last heave is mostly bile. My body has a feeling of relief and my head feels light. I feel very accomplished. I brush my teeth twice and rinse off my body in a cold shower. I go back into my room and crawl under the covers. I feel calm and peaceful.

# Marblehead

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*Adrienne GreenHeart*

I'm doing research: the politicization of the masses in New England seaports between 1773 and 1776. This is hot. This is cutting edge history. This the topic that journal editors have dreams about, the topic for which the university has given me eight thousand dollars worth of "Most Noted Undergraduate Scholar" research money.

In my grant essay, I wrote that studying the past is a way to better understand the present. But let's be real. Understanding the dynamics of town meetings will not change my life. The overriding historical need here is that my professor's last book is getting trashed and he's depending on my research to resurrect his arguments. My professor is an expert in this area and he's thrilled that the darling of the history department is under his tutelage.

What he doesn't know is that I've spent five thousand dollars on a stereo system and two thousand dollars on Prozac, and I don't know a fucking thing about New England seaports.

The school shrink, who keeps upping my dosage, says that I should be able to do the research fine—now that I'm on medication. I tell the shrink that the Prozac gives me spontaneous diarrhea. He tells me to sign-up for more independent studies so that I don't have to worry about shitting in classes.

My parents are thrilled with my academic achievements and send me plane tickets to Illinois as expressions of their pride. But when I use the plane tickets, I have to take extra pills to make it through the weekend. My Dad keeps up with the ongoing debates in the *Journal of Social History* so that he can talk to me about my research. At this point he understands my research better than I do.

The attention I get from being an academic powerhouse should be soothing, but I wake-up every morning terrorized that my professor has figured out how far behind I am.

I'm in the Salem, Massachusetts archives reading the 1773 tax records from the major seaport towns in Massachusetts. I get dizzy. My head spins and I start drooling. I don't notice the drool at first, because the dizziness scares me. And when I do see the drool, it's too late because I've

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already drooled on a page of the records and the curator has noticed. I don't want the curator to scold me, because I have to come back tomorrow, so I pretend to pass out. This provokes extreme concern and compassion in my fellow researchers, and the curator becomes Florence Nightingale. She lifts my head and wipes the ink from my face, but she can't get it all off, so she uses lanolin oil—the stuff to treat leather bindings—and tells me to go lie down in the shipping records room until I feel better.

# Independence

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*Adrienne GreenHeart*

**A**fter graduation I announce that I am no longer accepting money from my family. I go back to Illinois to retrieve the last of my belongings. My parents want me to live in the suburbs, near them, but I move to Chicago. My apartment is a small room and a small kitchen with a closet big enough to put my mattress on the floor.

I spend the first three weeks in my apartment making collages out of old French magazines and leftover Halloween glitter, and buying Tibetan fast food from around the corner. The fourth week, I start thinking about the rent. I look through the want ads and find that the best-paying jobs are those asking for nude models. When I inquire, they tell me to send some snapshots of myself nude or semi-nude, "Because some girls are naturals and some need lots of training."

On Friday, I take the train back to my parents' house. After we have dinner and say the prayers for Shabbat, they try to convince me to take their money. I tell them that I am absolutely going to model nude to pay my rent, and if they don't want to help, I'll find someone who will. Mom tells me they're really happy I came home for dinner. Dad says to go to the upstairs living room with him and he'll take the pictures. He says he thinks what I'm doing is wrong.

In the living room, he fiddles with the light switches to create a sort of sci-fi atmosphere. I take off my clothes and he starts clicking. It occurs to me that if I kill him now, and run with the camera, the sale of the camera could pay my rent, but that would count as taking money from him.

"Let's do this fast," I tell him, "I wanna get out of here."

He gets frustrated. "You're always in such goddamn rush with everything. You never do a good job. The agency wants to see creative poses, so for once in your life why don't you try to do something the best you can?"

I feel bad—he's probably right. I remember the swimming team I quit because I was too nervous at race time, and the chemistry class I dropped because I thought I'd get a bad grade. I feel bad that I am disappointing him again. I want to do something well, and I can't imagine it ever happening.

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Dad sees that I feel bad and he gives me a hug. The buttons on his shirt are cold against my body. His hands are warm on my back. He pushes me away gently and picks up the camera. He gets this really calm voice and he tells me to touch myself. He starts telling me that I'm doing a good job, and he knew I could do it, and I should part my lips a little more.

Soon I feel comfortable—like I've been doing this my whole life. I start hamming it up. We try lots of stuff: standing, sitting, hanging. He tells me he's running out of film, which is good, because I'm having trouble thinking of more stuff to do. So, for the last shot, he ties my arms above my head with his belt and I pretend that I'm struggling to get loose.

While I'm getting dressed, Dad points out that we've gone fast enough that I can still get the 10 p.m. train back to my apartment. But really, there seems no point.

# Two Very Strange Beasts

*adapted and translated from the Italian by Michael Bullock*

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*Luigi Malerba*

Peterkin had heard that when you travel you see new, strange things. He was very keen to see new, strange things, so he went off on a trip and didn't stop until he came to a city that was far, far away.

Here he began to look around in the hope of seeing something he could tell his friends about. He was already beginning to get discouraged and say to himself: "What shall I be able to tell them about when I get back? I'd be sorry to have made such a long journey for nothing."

Finally, one day, as he was walking along a country road, he saw something that very much surprised him. To tell the truth, it wasn't a thing but a pig. A very strange pig that looked strikingly like a horse. In fact, it had a long, thick tail; short, upright ears; a fine mane; muscular legs; a shiny coat; sensitive nostrils; and lively eyes exactly like a horse's. Peterkin climbed over the hedge, and walked into the field where the strange pig was grazing, and tried to get close enough to have a good look at it. The pig noticed and galloped off with a neigh, its mane in the wind, until it disappeared behind a hill.

Peterkin walked on along the road and, after a while, he saw a horse such as he had never seen before in his life. It really was a very strange horse, because it had pink skin covered with sparse, bristly hair; a curly tail; a round face; and a big, fat backside exactly like a pig's. It was also strikingly like a pig in size. Close by this horse were also two colts that each had pink skin, bristle, a curly tail, a round face and a backside just like a pig's. Peterkin tried to go up close, but the horse and the two colts that looked like pigs ran off across the field grunting.

Peterkin was very pleased to have seen these strange animals and decided to go back to his village, because he finally had something very new and very strange to tell people about, in fact he had two things.

# The Hypotenuse of the Elephant

*adapted and translated from the Italian by Michael Bullock*

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*Luigi Malerba*

Caspar was top of his class. He was very good at history, English, gymnastics and geography; but, above all, he was a champion at geometry. He knew how to work out the square of a circle, the area of a straight line, the circumference of a sphere and the square root of a semi-colon. One day his parents took him to the zoo and Caspar got it into his head that he wanted to work out the hypotenuse of the elephant. The parents were very proud of the little boy and promised him a cake in the shape of a dodeahedron if he succeeded.

Caspar shut himself up in his little room and started working with a ruler and a compass, filling page after page with numbers and lines, but then it dawned on him that this time he had picked a very difficult task. "Don't give up, Caspar," said his parents. His parents' friends came along to encourage him from time to time as well, because, if he succeeded in finding the hypotenuse of the elephant, all the newspapers would talk about it.

A year went by, then two and then many more. Caspar remained shut up in his little room doing one sum after another. He stopped going to school and devoted his whole life to solving this problem which was going to make him famous. His parents waited confidently, but in the meantime they grew old. Caspar became a lad and then a man. The first white hairs appeared and he still couldn't find the hypotenuse of the animal whose name he wouldn't even mention anymore. Even today, when his hand trembles with old age, Caspar remains shut up in his little room for several hours a day, doing sum after sum. And, if anyone asks him what he is doing, he says he is working out the elephant of the hypotenuse.

# Swear Words

*adapted and translated from the Italian by Michael Bullock*

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*Luigi Malerba*

Little Otto had the unfortunate habit of using swear words. He used them at table during meals, on the street, at school, in the morning, the afternoon, the evening, when it was raining, when the sun was shining, at the seaside, in the mountains and, once, he even uttered a swear word in church while the priest was saying Mass. When he learned a new swear word he would write it down in a notebook so as not to forget it. He told his mother he was making a collection. Other children collected statuettes or stamps and he was collecting swear words.

Otto was a very good, kind, studious boy. He was studying geometry and arithmetic, history and geography. But every now and then, between a segment and a right angle, he would slip in a swear word. Or he would put one between Cavour and Napoleon, or right in the middle of the Gobi Desert or on the top of Mont Blanc, which, as everyone knows, is the whitest mountain in Europe. His schoolteachers sent for his mother and told her things couldn't go on like this. One day Otto said a swear word right at the end of a Christmas poem.

Otto's mother was at the end of her tether. "You're a dirty pig," she said, but the little boy started saying swear words even at night in his sleep. Otto's mother thought that words are formed in the mouth and, as so many dirty words formed in Otto's mouth, she decided to wash it. She washed his mouth with soap powder. She filled his whole mouth with the foam, then she rinsed it out and washed it all over again, and Otto cried, and in crying, he swallowed some of the soap. But, in the end, his mouth was as clean as could be.

From that day on, Otto said no more dirty words, but he didn't say any clean ones either; he didn't say anything anymore; he stopped talking altogether.

"Talk, Otto darling, say something," his mother begged him.

But the little boy remained silent; he never spoke day or night.

The poor woman was very sorry for having washed out his mouth with soap and tried giving him candies, ice creams, cookies. It was no use. She tried telling him stories to amuse him, but Otto was amused and still said nothing.

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One evening before he went to bed, Otto's mother took the notebook with the swear words and started reading them to him. Several evenings in a row she read out the swear words from the notebook and went on reading them until Otto fell asleep.

Finally one evening, as his eyes were closing with sleep, the little boy opened his mouth and said "Shit." His mother wept for joy and next day she called all her friends and relatives to celebrate the fact that Otto had started speaking again.

# Sneezing at the Bend

*adapted and translated from the Italian by Michael Bullock*

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*Luigi Malerba*

A few hundred metres from the viaduct over Cold Valley, the paved road ran alongside a rock wall in a long curve. This curve had been baptized by motorists Dead Bend because of the large number of accidents that had happened there. It's true that there are "death bends" all over the place, but this was the most famous and dangerous of them all and it had been studied, without result, by the technicians of the Ministry of Transport.

A certain policeman named Furman, a member of the Highway Patrol, had set his mind on finding the reason why so many accidents happened on this stretch of road that came under his supervision. It's because they drive too fast, a colleague told him. It's because their minds wander, said another. It's because they're drunk, because they don't hold the steering wheel firmly, because they drive while reading the newspaper, because they light a cigarette, because they drive while smoking a pipe, because they're eating nuts, because they're kissing their girlfriend.

Furman went and stood at the bend every day to study it from close up, but in reality it was a perfectly ordinary bend, neither too wide nor too narrow; the asphalt wasn't too smooth or too rough, visibility was normal and so was the rock against which cars from time to time crashed.

But Furman had noted that almost all the accidents happened to motorists coming from the viaduct across Cold Valley and not those going in the opposite direction. The Cold Valley got its name from the fact that icy winds blew down it even in summer, but it certainly didn't occur to Furman to connect this atmospheric phenomenon with the road accidents.

One day, when he was standing there at the bend closely watching the passing cars, Furman heard a violent sneeze come from an egg-yellow car and then saw the car skid and scrape along the rock. Fortunately the man at the wheel had managed to get the car onto the roadway again and avoid a disaster. The policeman, who was very bright, didn't put the blame on the egg-yellow colour of the car, but from that moment, instead of watching intently with his eyes, he decided to listen intently with his ears, and he noticed that at least half of the motorists who came from the viaduct sneezed once and sometimes twice as they reached the curve.

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And at every sneeze the car swerved dangerously. Furman linked the cold drafts from the viaduct with the sneezes and the sneezes with the swerves and the swerves with the accidents. A sneeze on a straight road is unlikely to cause an accident, but a sneeze at a bend in the road, thought Furman, is highly dangerous.

The policeman had a great deal of difficulty, but finally he succeeded in convincing his superintendent that sneezing on the bend was the true cause of the accidents on that stretch of road. So they had to immediately prepare a road sign to be erected before the bend in order to warn motorists. The superintendent proposed writing "It is forbidden to sneeze on the bend," but Furman timidly suggested that this peremptory order might seem like an infringement of democratic freedom. Since sneezing on the bend had proved homicidal, it would be enough simply to advise against it without prohibiting it, which might not look good in the eyes of tourists passing through and, above all, in the eyes of the Ministry of Transport, who would have to approve it. So they devised a new sign reading "It is not advisable for motorists to sneeze on the bend," but who was advised not to sneeze? Everyone? Even pedestrians who were not at the wheel of a car? It has to be more precise, said Furman. So the superintendent proposed a more precise wording that said, "It is not advisable for motorists to sneeze while driving on the bend." But now the wording was too long. After much discussion, the wording finally sent to the Ministry of Transport for approval read simply: "Do not sneeze on the bend!" with an exclamation mark and a picture of a man letting go of the steering wheel as he sneezes.

The wording of the sign, together with a statement signed by Furman of the Highway Patrol, had the effect of a bombshell at the Ministry of Transport. The minister immediately instigated a wide-ranging enquiry which revealed that many accidents, which would otherwise have remained unexplained, could probably be fitted into the new theory of sneezing on the bend. Constable Furman was promoted and called to the Ministry of Transport to head up the Committee supervising all the bends in the land.

*Miranda Person*

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## Falling in Love

I lie in the bath  
hilly as a Henry Moore  
and I admire  
I admire  
the sheen of my skin  
stretched as eggshell  
over my belly  
the parcel  
the big egg

I am falling in love  
with my silver shoulders  
as they support these breasts  
blue-laced  
floating  
like swollen planets  
    I hardly recognize them  
    they have become  
    so  
    useful

I am falling in love  
with my stranded body  
in empathy  
with the old and obese  
stupefied  
by pregnancy

I have always suspected  
this was my true self  
emerging  
from hesitant bones  
    Queen-sized  
    undisguised  
    by vanity

Sue Nevill

---

## countries too wide for us

1.

the slippery plastic and cramped hands  
of long distance love paranoia  
in the pauses no way to search the other's face  
for important lies

and what can you really say  
that matters freshly after a dozen calls  
to/from someone whose life is hearsay

*i love you*

*lwyababy!*

stretching

for different ways to purse the lips  
in fibre-optic kisses

and the call that doesn't come  
the tense conjugations  
those lines may have been  
down  
this phone is certainly  
out of order

2.

i'm flinging this faint hope at canada post  
(how are you where are you)  
because i have nothing to lose except  
the price of a stamp or maybe  
i am in no great hurry to exchange  
suspense for certainty

but mainly because in this large cold land  
where deerfly and heavy clothing are  
the last straw crosses on love's back  
i need an impersonal entity to blame  
and do not believe much in god

3.

this table seemed so narrow  
when we sat down at it  
now you are as far away as  
florida and i  
am in yellowknife

it is cold here  
but more temperate than  
the latitudes you inhabit  
    choleric full of hurricanes  
    with men's names

4.

sorry  
it took you so long  
to call sorry

it took you  
so long  
to answer

Karen Connelly

three poems

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## Buried at Sea

*I have small hands, especially for a sculptor.*

*Very small hands. Can they span the earth?* —Alex Keim

Chocolate almonds on two tongues, grass beneath four elbows.  
Love drips from us like the sap dropping  
from the trees to the backs of our thighs.

You have a letter from London.  
I have poetry from the coast.  
Last night your father quoted Pablo  
as we sat in the garden:

*Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche.*

*Es tan corto—el amor, es tan largo el olvido. . .*

But this morning we eat almonds and tell  
each other: the gods exist, remember all.  
Holiness is here, poetry on the rug,  
a dozen books under the lilacs, on the grass,  
marble and glass breathing,  
waiting for you in England.

We lounge in our underwear  
reading, arguing about mathematics,  
the luminous, terrifying equations  
of distance and love.  
Wind heaves the high trees  
like an ocean around us.

I want to be buried at sea,  
you tell me.

It's a very complicated procedure.  
You have to start years  
before the day you die  
(*in my beginning is my end*)

I want to be buried at sea,  
you tell me, and explain further:

Did you know that when they heave  
you over, you're in a cage of mesh, metal  
or plastic, as you prefer.  
They bury you in a cage  
so your limbs don't float  
up to the surface,  
so you don't frighten the fishermen from Peru  
or ruin a young couple's honeymoon cruise.

Who wants to see an errant skull  
bobbing in the moonlight,  
the smile flashing fishes  
and eye sockets a dazzle of anemones?  
Who wants to meet a ragged leg  
sauntering through the waves?

You want to be buried at sea.  
I want to live there.  
But we have nothing  
but this morning,  
everything, alive on the land.  
Our bodies have become  
a mysterious territory for the ants,  
who do not comprehend polished acres.

You want to be buried at sea,  
and a cage must be used  
to keep your arms and legs  
from swimming back to the sky.

I laugh.  
Surely you know your limbs  
already float through the world.  
Over the mongrel back of this country,  
southward, to El Palacio de los Corazones

eastward, over seas, to England,  
where the silver dragon's tail  
roared from your fingers

northward, where in St. Petersburg you wove  
a wing for a Russian angel

westward, to Gotland, where the Swedish stones  
tell riddles of ancient snails  
and wolves' teeth bite the tide,  
and fish plunge through the cliffs.

Already, you are buried at sea,  
you are buried in earth,  
even as you rise above me, laughing,  
your hair dropping darker and sweeter  
than the coffee you've spilled on your wrist.

No cage could imprison those hands.

Believe it:  
Already your limbs inhabit  
the lands, swim the infinite seas.

# My Body Sowed This

The sky unbraids her oyster-blue hair,  
hurls rough pearls of hail at my skin.  
One man flees over the flesh  
of a continent surging in spring.

The other man is here, the man I crush  
like the mad one who slams the door shut  
on her lover's fingers, who cannot stop  
slamming the door, cannot stop.  
He cries now in the small room.  
He opens a plate glass window with his fist  
and walks into the rain.  
He will wander this city for hours,  
wearing my old coat.

I cannot wear it myself now.  
The nerves of his pain still spark  
and snap inside it.  
Fury clings like a gargoyle  
to the shoulders,  
the long sleeves,  
the rain-whipped back.  
The man feeds this gargoyle  
like he once fed me, a famished lover.

A wild acre in Brazil is a vicious place.  
Once I thought I knew my heart, that red  
kestrel soaring in such a shallow sky.  
Now I can't see it, I don't know where it is.  
I find lone vultures cleaning their beaks on my ribs.

After sins luxurious, mundane,  
count the faces cut with sorrow.

Once I drew a dragon in the morning.  
At night he dreamt she came to life  
and dragged her talons down his chest  
Now we comprehend this as prophecy.

*Your teeth tore the laughter out of me.  
I am not a story you can cut at will, I am not  
a line you can erase with your coarse tongue.*

What can I do with so much pain?  
There is no suitcase big enough for it,  
no abyss deep enough to bury it,  
no fire to burn the incinerator of the eye and heart.  
We tether the shreds of ourselves together  
and cry it, cry it, cry it,  
until the bed is soaked,  
and hemlock sprouts delicate lime  
from the sweaty folds of the sheets.  
*Your body sowed this poison.*

When he leaves, his face  
is chiselled to bone  
by the naked hallway light.  
His face is a mask savaged  
by my own blunt tools,  
these stupid fists clenched  
in the steel jaws  
of hunger and anger  
and lust.

# I Leave You

I leave you on the Transcanada beside a cemetery.  
Crooked headstone teeth grin and leer.  
Farther up, ravens feast on road spoils . . .  
But don't watch those red elastics  
of gut and sinew, split fur.

See instead the field at my left,  
    watch the wind make love to the wheat.  
Though invisible, his body is alive.  
Watch the field's lime contours writhe,  
    ripple to please, pulse  
        to pull him through,  
            and down, deep into  
            the seed.

Christ, to have it so simply.  
Enough poetry.  
I'm sick of it,  
    Whitman and the elegies,  
        the oatmeal and apples in your pack.  
The wind plucks a senseless tune  
on your shrouded guitar.

I push you from the borrowed car,  
kiss the mouth you've lent me these months.  
Hurry, hurry, go now,  
cut your poetic tongue  
out of my mouth.

I leave you by a field of green wheat.  
Grasshoppers razor blind against the wind,  
strike your wrists, the rope in your hands,  
your gorgeous blade-hard hips.

II.

I drove away howling love  
in perfect time with wind  
thrashing hair in my eyes.  
A wasp died skewered on sunlight  
against the back window.  
You caught a ride east.

Slowly, I am beginning to learn the list:

lightning struck down cock to cunt,  
blazing in legs, belly, fingertips

muscles thrust in brutal tides over your ribs

thrash of shoulderblades, your narrow ass  
rising white in the dark like a wave's crest

your thighs crashing against me.

I am learning this,  
the list of what I do not own.

Least of all, I do not own those roads you travel now,  
the steel arteries of this country  
pumping petrol blood, the earth's muscles  
torn open and and beaten black with asphalt.  
I do not own the spring-born mud.  
The fierce engines roar on without me.

I untie myself from the tracks  
of this dumb melodrama.  
Stand up filthy, covered  
in dust and pigeon shit,  
a fool, a fool.

But I stay here.  
I will not follow  
fear, your one-eyed  
highway, your backward  
migration.

*Judy MacInnes Jr.*

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## Pumpfish

When your lover presses his palms and fingers, flat and as hard as 2X4s, down on your chest you remember the fish at Link Lake, the summer you were ten and a half. His hands seem to be working on you, trying to revive you like a paramedic would. A few minutes earlier, you were sure he was checking for a pulse. And when he moves from the bed to the windowsill, to the dresser and back to the windowsill again, you remember the fish, the lake and also how your father circled the campground, trailer full of daughters, looking for a spot to spend the night. You remember how you counted each time the car, pulling the rented trailer, passed the woodpile: -4-5-6. And how your boy cousin, Nal, sat up front with your parents. -7-8 you counted and nine bucks a night for the spot he finally picked where poplars blocked your family's view of the highway.

Your lover comes back to the bed, stands beside it for a moment before covering your body with the summer bedspread and for the fifth time tonight he grips the dresser. Your father did his best to circle indoors, too. Pushed himself past paper plates, around mosquito coils, buckets of chicken, endless string clotheslines, spinning around the broken zipper of your sleeping bag while your mother rested after a full day of travelling. It's your lover who holds your feet at the ends of beds. After your family had dinner, your sisters, with flashlights in the backs of their pockets, took off down to the lake leaving you to watch Nal fill the tires of his bicycle. You think your father told you to leave the campsite, find your sisters, urged you to do something other than stare. So you followed your cousin to a different part of Link Lake where certain birds could be mistaken for your oldest sister's laughter. Your lover is still in the room and waits for you to respond to his mouth, his fingers, his face. His face resembling Nal's when he reached a point in the path where he could see a

wooden dock and a boy jigging for fish. An intent face, quick, ready to please. You took the line when the boy was called for supper and jerked on the string as instructed. You imagined your father, underwater, circling the bait. Ready to snap. (And tonight you imagine your lover with all his fingers pulling a line.) As soon as Nal took over for you, a green and grey fish with fins as fat as cigarette butts jumped, hooking itself. You remember the fish dying and gaping and Nal unhooking the fish. You remember him running back to the campsite, hands cupping the catch, his feet licked with dirt. You remember him placing the damp fish evenly down on a stone the size of a grown-up's hand. You remember petting and smoothing the fish out on the rock while it clumsily breathed under your mosquito-bitten fingers and you remember Nal finding a twig near the fire pit, propping the gills open, shoving the bike-pump in its mouth, pushing down on the handle.

But on other nights, your lover is like the fish out of water, because, like a child, like a poem, he starts inside of you. And like a bike-pump, you push and breathe into his ears and mouth until you hear the sound of his lips opening, the warm water, the struggle in his voice.

# Widows and Dead Men

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*Beth Simon*

In the hours surrounding the Banaras sunrise, religious Hindus, and also tourists, come to the Ganges. On the river side of Godauliya Crossing, about thirty yards before the riverbank, the street splits into two forks. The right is lined with vegetable stalls, antique dealers, and shops displaying herbs and powders, dried snakeskins, chillum, skulls, stone vessels. The left fork has fruit vendors, cheap cloth, and the lepers. Then the street rejoins to form a set of wide concrete steps that descend into the water. This is Dasashwamedh Ghat, the most popular of the bathing docks.

Both sides of the steps are lined with old people, mothers, mothers-in-law, most of them widows. They have come, or were sent by their families, to die in Banaras. They sleep in the *ashrams*, and in the beginning, they give donations to pilgrims, to *yogis* and renunciates, to the poor. After a year, or after two, the money from home stops, and except for begging, they have to live on the brief meal the *ashram* provides.

Each sunrise, they bathe, pray, settle on the steps. Some are knotted by arthritis into terrible shapes. Many are without teeth. Their skin is like rice paper, wrinkled and translucent from facing into the hard light reflected off the river. They appear to be a hundred years old, bewildered, in pain. The wear cloth like winding sheets. Pass by them and their faces, like flowers, turn, and the turning is a breeze that whispers, "Please, Sister." "Help, Daughter." "Hear your mother."

I had come to Banaras on a grant for language research. I intended to study natural speech in local settings, and Dasashwamedh Ghat had seemed a likely place to find people to record. The first few times, I went to the *ghat*, I carried my cassette recorder in a shoulder bag with "Free Tibet" woven on one side, and bits of change loose in my pockets. When I saw the women, I easily gave away every *paisa*, but got only halfway through the hands.

The next week, I prepared. At Godauliya, I purchased small things

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from street vendors and took my change in twenty *paisa* pieces. At the *ghat*, I came toward each woman respectfully, with soft steps, head bowed, eyes lowered. I distributed the money evenly, two coins per person. I said "*Namaste*" to several in their white widow's *saris*.

I doubt that anyone physically touched me, but there was a brushing, like moths, like clouds of mosquitoes, across the hem of my *kamiz*, across the billowy material of the legs of my *shalwar*.

Day after day, I thought of the widows on the right-hand fork, and so I began to approach the *ghat* from the left. This route led me by the lepers. They sprawled against mounds of dirt and debris left from the reclamation projects. They looked like large bundles of rags. Their stumps, the nose holes and cheekbones exposed where the flesh had fallen away, were wrapped in cloth strips.

On the left fork, I dropped money onto tin plates and walked away terrified. I tried not to inhale. I had begun to see what was possible in this life. One day, a girl, glossy hair, smooth flesh, fifteen, sixteen years old, pushed a makeshift wheelbarrow so close to me that the edge nicked my calf. I almost fell onto the footless man tied loosely to the wheelbarrow by string around his waist. The girl squatted beside him, took a *chappati* out of a dirty cloth and tore off a bite. When she put it into the man's mouth, I saw she was missing two fingers.

I flung coins at them like gravel, yelled "Don't touch me," and whipped around. The air was hot, black. I waved my arms like a landlocked bird. I wanted them all, the crippled, the eyeless, the thin bitter dying, to fly, fly, disappear, to leave the *ghat* silent, empty, clean.

I ran back along the left fork, then east along the right. I saw a shop and pushed through the beads.

Inside, the air was cool, the light-like green glass filtered through gauze drapes. Two velvet Victorian jackets glowed secretly against the opposite wall. One was a rich garnet colour, one a tight-waisted black with jet buttons. Immediately to the right of the door, a rosewood tea chest the size of an infant lay on a spindle-shaped pedestal. I put my hand on the chest to steady myself. I stroked the chest lid and wept.

"From the *Raj, Memsahib.*" The dealer stepped forward. "The early days." He lifted the chest and held it out toward me. I opened the lid. The room filled with the perfume of tea bushes in bloom. The dealer glanced out through the beads then back at me. "May I send for refreshment?"

I shut the lid and patted it. "This is nice."

"One thousand *rupees, Memsahib.*"

I said, "Okay."

"I do not bargain." He put it back on the pedestal.

"Good." I picked up the chest and hugged it. "Perfect."

---

I crossed the *ghat*. At a fruit stall I bought red bananas newly shipped from the Malabar Coast. I sent a little boy to hire a bicycle rickshaw for me. I peeled and ate a banana while I waited. I gave nothing to anyone.

When the *rickshawallah* pedaled up, he recognized me. "Now you do the good thing, My Sister. You are not the people to be walking."

One day my fieldworker Nagender was driving me across the Ganges to Ramnagar, a town on the other side of the river. We stopped at a tea stall he liked and he began telling me about a friend's death. The friend had gone to the wedding of a young girl, a sheltered girl of good family, a girl of their neighbourhood. At the wedding the friend had drunk too much. "And then," Nagender said, "he began saying disrespectful things about the bride. Bad things he seemed to think were jokes."

The stall owner came over to the jeep to offer me more tea. "He wouldn't leave. He wouldn't shut up. He picked a fight."

"He got beaten up." Nagender grinned. "And cut. He fell on something rusty." He pointed at his own blue veins branching under his wrist.

"He got tetanus," the tea stall owner said. "Then lockjaw." He scrubbed at his scalp. "Go figure."

"Wait," I said. "Wait a minute. He didn't have shots? No one took him to a doctor?"

Nagender finished his tea and dropped the unbaked clay cup on the street. "He insulted the bride, the bride's family. Everybody." He squeezed the ends of his moustache with two fingers, shaping the long coarse hairs on each side into a point thick as a dogtooth. "And perhaps he didn't remember the cut." He hopped back up into the driver's seat of the jeep. A pariah dog ambled over and began to lick at the cup.

"When was the wedding?" I asked.

"Not so long ago," he said, and started the motor.

Nagender introduced me to the administrator of a public hospital who took me on a tour of his building. One room held sixteen cots, four to each wall. We stood at the foot of the one occupied cot. A man fully clothed, sleeping or unconscious, lay on his back.

"My lockjaw ward," the administrator said. "See how I pity those such as this man?" He pointed up at framed pictures of gods and saints and teachers on the walls. I saw all of the great ones: Shiva with his trident; Rama, Sita, and muscle-bound Hanuman, the monkey god. Blue Krishna played his flute to melt the milkmaids. The Buddha realized Enlightenment. Swami Yogananda sat in deep meditation. The Mother looked out on the world and redeemed it. The Sikh Guru, Bindrawale, champion of Khalistan, floated pacifically before the golden Temple in Amritsar.

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"You have gathered everyone," I said. "This is very kind."

The administrator shrugged. "What else can I do?" He nodded at the man on the bed. "I have no funds, no treatments. At least the wretches can call on their guru at the time of their crisis."

As if pulled by wires overhead, like a puppet, the man before us rose up involuntarily, howled, and convulsed.

In Banaras, it is easy to see someone die, easy to see them before and after. With the appropriate rags and body, a man can earn enough to live by falling down on the side of a street and acting out death throes. Sprawled in the dust, grey-faced and bony, he twitches and spits, and religious people who happen to be passing leave alms for the funeral.

Funeral processions come from all directions on the way to Harishchandra or Manikarnika, the burning *ghats*. Male relatives hold the stretcher shoulder high, and the mourners chant as they move through the streets. Once, when I was in a bicycle rickshaw, a procession coming the other way stopped for a moment. The stretcher was almost directly below me. On it lay something rolled up in white gauze, a lozenge, a pellet. A body. In Banaras I saw how a body is small. I learned how in death, we shrink.

Eventually I stopped going to Dasashwamedh. Whenever someone asked me, "Where do you bathe?" I said, "I don't bathe at Dasashwamedh. Too crowded."

I never doubted the purity of the Ganges, or the efficacy of bathing. I did not doubt that one can sluice the scales of defilement and knowledge into nothing. In Banaras, I learned what a river could do, and I wanted it to submerge and rise, free from hope, from language with its syntax and synonyms, and the charts and charts of sound. I wanted to follow the others, bathe, die, be done with words, ideas, the endless proposals and half-started research projects, with this long and unnecessary series of mistakes.

I love water. I live in the dream of shedding, like a psoriatic skin, the horizon, of waking up, unconfined, finally beyond land.

# The Desert Never Ends

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*Steven Hartman*

I know guys ten years younger than me that I can slap their ass silly. I can put em right over my knee and spank their little faggot ass like they was kindagartners. Me, I'm thirty-eight, and I ain't what I once was. But I can whip their ass. They so young and faggoty they don't know what it means to work a day in their life, the sorry sons a bitches.

I been working near every day a my life since I was twelve. Never went to no school after that, cept for prison school, and I'll tell you right now, they work you as hard as on a goddam farm in prison. And these guys that go lifting weights all day, they the worse ones. Waste half their time pushing bars up over their heads—sometimes five, six hours straight. Waste the other half smiling at themselves in the mirror like a bunch a girls. They the worse ones, the fucking pansies, cause they wouldn't know a day's work if it come up and bit em on the ass.

Me, my name's George, but my friends, they call me the Ox, cause I work so goddam hard and they know I can load up a truck with half kegs so damn fast it'll make you cockeyed. I can all by myself load up a truck while they two at a time is struggling to push kegs around on dollies, the worthless shits. They never seen nothing like me, and so they say to me at lunch break, they say How come you run round like a goddam madman picking up the kegs and barreling cross the warehouse like the place is on fire? They say Why don't you slow down cause you make the rest of us look bad. And I tell em to go to hell cause they never known a honest day's work their whole fucking life. And they know I'm right, the bastards.

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I got a woman and a couple pups. The pups, they named George Jr. and George II. George Jr., he's the older one, six, and you can tell he's

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gonna kick some ass when it come his time. I come home and wrestle with him. Sometimes I bang him around pretty good, bruise him up a little, but he won't cry cause he's a tough little fucker. I don't know what to make of George II. He's only four, but he walks round all day hanging on my woman's dress, sucking on his little fingers like they was the tit itself. Sometimes I holler at my woman, tell her to quit spoiling him, cause I don't want him to grow up a pansy. But her, she just tells me to go to hell and leave him alone cause he ain't but a baby. I tell her When I was his age I was already smoking cigars and drinking beer. But she tells me to go to hell anyway.

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She got spunk, my woman. Her name's Cassy and she used to be a whore. When I was haying seven years back I come and saw Cassy in town every weekend and sometimes I brung her flowers. I go and spend a hundred bucks on Sunday screwing her all day and half the night, just pissing away money but sure as hell liking the tumble. But then one Sunday she starts complaining bout how sore she is down there cause she already had three guys that morning that stopped off on their way home from church. Me, I try not to pay no attention, but truth is I don't like the sound of it. I go back to the farm, work my ass off that week and chop wood when I ain't working. I don't talk to a fucking soul the whole week long, and the other hands, they keep their distance.

When I come to town next Sunday I say—Listen here, Cassy, you come and live with me. You'll always get half what I make, and you won't be so sore no more cause you ain't never gotta fuck no more no good bastards on their way home from church. And here's a promise, I say. We won't never tumble on Sundays, it can be our day off. Instead, we'll take Sundays like a couple of real Christians. We'll play bingo at the fire hall and buy junk at the flea market and eat ice cream at the Dairy Queen and shit like that. And maybe we'll even get around to having us a couple pups, I say. But she says she don't know. She says she has to think about it. So I remind her The days grow shorter the older you get and you ain't getting no younger.

Next Sunday when I pull up in my truck she's all packed up already and says Help me with my shit. I say It can wait, let's have a little fun first. But her, she says it's Sunday, our day off—and I must admit, she got me on that one. Cause I'm a man a my word.

We start loading up the truck. But Cassy, she got this nasty sonuv-abitch she work for named Ronnie that don't like her moving in with me cause he takes eighty percent. And so Ronnie, he grabs a crowbar and say I better watch out cause he almost killed a man once and done time

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for it. So I laugh and say I did kill a man you little faggot and he was my own father. I tell him No man ever tangled with me that wasn't sorry for it afterwards. And Ronnie, he laughs when I tell him this, so I bust him up good, break his fucking shoulder and make him eat dirt. When we driving away he's laying out in the yard, curled up like a worm, hanging on to his shoulder cause it's all loose and unconnected. He's moaning like a dog and screaming how he's gonna get me. I lean my head out the window and tell him I will count the days you little pansy.

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I been thinking a buying George Jr. a gun. Not a big gun, not a hand gun, but a twenty-two rifle. I got a gun when I was a pup that I shot up the woods with every day. I spent more time in the fucking woods with my gun than I done at home, cause I hated to watch my old man beat the piss out a my ma. His name was George too, and he beat the hell out a her near every single day.

Anyways, I figure I'll take George Jr. up top a the hill behind our house and show him right how to use the gun. I figure it'll help him mature faster like it done with me. I'll show him how the safety works, and how you never load till you safe away from other people. I'll teach him to shoot things with the stock propped tight and firm against his shoulder, with his cheek up close, but like feather on the wood. None a this from-the-hip cowboy shit. But I won't let him shoot nothing that's alive, not even squirrels. I can't kill animals.

Hell, I can take a man and fuck him up good. I can make him bleed and make him cry. I can even kill the bastard if I have to. But I can't hurt dumb animals. That's just the way it is with me. Cassy, she can't understand that. How I can thrash a man within an inch of his life, but get all green in the face if I see someone kick a cat. She says my morals are ass-backwards.

After that deal with Ronnie, me and Cassy, we went back and lived on my little plot at the farm for about five months. Then I got canned. I tell you, I never got canned before in my whole life cause I'm such a goddam crazy hard worker. I jumped round from job to job bout a million times, but always cause I was getting itchy to move on. I never once come close to getting canned, though, not even from a bad job. But then I never broke the boss's jaw before neither.

What happened was I come out of the barn one day and the boss, he's sitting there with a few a the other hands chuckling like a fool bout something. So I walk over in pretty good spirits to get in on the joke. What's so funny, I say, like I'm real interested and wouldn't mind a laugh myself.

But then—then all a sudden everybody gets real quiet and I'm standing

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there looking at a bunch a empty faces. Hell, I ain't no Alfred Einstein, but I know when it's me that a group a guys's been laughing at. Clamming up like that's a dead giveaway. But I think to myself Shit, I been worse than laughed at before. So I decide I ain't gonna say nothing. I decide it ain't worth the trouble.

But the boss, he must a felt he had something to prove or something, or else it'd look like he's afraid a me. So he says How's that whore you been shacking up with, Ox? And me, I right away say She's fine, how's yours? He didn't spect me to say nothing like that I suppose, cause he don't live with no whore. He got a regular wife that gone to college with him. But him, he tries to pretend he don't hear it and he says You mind if me and some a the boys come on by tonight and take her for a tumble?

I say Goddam right I mind! She ain't no whore no more. She's my woman and we got a pup on the way.

And then—the bastard—he says We'll give you twenty bucks a head.

Some sons a bitches is just mean fuckers, plain and simple.

I say What you saying something like that for, boss? I ain't no fucking whore master.

And he says Well she got a nice set on her and personally I wouldn't mind getting a close up look at em. Then he makes a little wink at the others and says Come on, thirty bucks a head—how bout it?

And I say What you doing this for, boss? It don't speak well for you. Didn't you just hear me say we got a pup on the way?

And he says Well shit George, she's a whore ain't she? Come on, for chrissake, she'd probably like it. Sides, he says with a little shit-ass grin at the others, We won't go hurting the pup. We'll be extra careful not to go poking him in the head.

So I had to thrash the fucker. Some guys don't never know when to keep their mouths shut. And he come from a good family and owns his own farm and everything. He gone to college and was sending his pups to some snotty private school that's got dormitories and rugby. I mean, he's the kind a guy you suppose to look up to. But you get him around a bunch a lazy shits, a bunch a lousy loafers that never work a honest day their whole fucking life, and all a sudden he turns into a nasty, mean-hearted sonuvabitch. It took all five of them other guys to get me off him. But by then he was in pretty bad shape. He's just laying there in the mud, bleeding, trying to fire me. Cept he ain't doing a very good job at it, you see, cause his jaw ain't working on account a the way I smashed it all up.

I get out a there quick cause I knew he'd have the law on me. I haul ass back to our house and say Pack your shit Cassy, we gotta hit the high-way.

And she says What the hell you talking bout?

So I say I just busted up the boss and we ain't got much time.

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And then she loses it and starts throwing shit at me, hits me right in the head with a fucking AM radio. Cassy, she don't like it when I bust people up. She didn't even like it when I busted that bastard Ronnie up, even after he said he was gonna take my head off with a crowbar. She thinks I like bustin people up, like it's my fucking hobby or something. I try to tell her how that ain't the way it is. I try to tell her how I never started nothing with nobody in my whole life. I try to tell her how I only bust people up when they got it coming. But she don't believe me. She says I'm full a shit. And in lots a ways I guess she's probably right, but not when it comes to that. There ain't nothing I hate more in this world than busting people up, cause I ain't got no control when I do it. And afterwards, it always makes me feel ashamed. But I swear, the more you hate to bust people up, the more they do things and say things that give you no other choice. There ain't no way to win sometimes. And that's a goddam fact.

So I finally get Cassy settled down and we pile into the truck and hit the road. We drive west for seven days through eight states. We sleep in the cab at night and only stop in the day for Fritos and beer. And then finally we get to the desert and pull into this gas station that says last chance to fill up on a sign out front. And I say to the guy that own it, I say Hey, what's on the other side a this desert? And him, he says Nothing, it's all desert, the desert never ends. So we turn round and drive all the way back through eight states, all the way back here to Pennsylvania. We don't want to live in no fucking desert.

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The pups, they both of them take after me in face. But the little one, George II, he got my woman's hands and really he looks more like my brother Cecil than he does me. Takes after him the way he acts too.

When I was young and we was brats, Cecil never talked much at all. I had six years on Cecil, but me and him, we always got on good cause he was smarter than me, even when I was twelve and he was only six. Even then he could kick my ass at checkers.

But Cecil, he had a quiet way bout him. Never said nothing the first five years a his life. Never said a single word. Instead, he just looked at you, and by the way that he looked at you, you suddenly know just what's on his mind. Like when he wants a glass a milk, he comes walking up and stands next to you in the kitchen. And you look down at him and he don't even try to say nothing. He just looks back up at you with a special kind a thing in his eyes that makes you know exactly what it is he wants. So you say You want some milk Cecil? And him, he just nods his head.

I'll tell you right now, it's the goddamdest thing I ever saw.

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It got so I could every time tell exactly what Cecil was thinking just by the way he looked at me. And the old man, you never saw nobody get so mad as him after I went ahead and answered Cecil when no one even heard him ask me nothing. Like the time when we was watching the Saturday morning cartoons while the old man was nursing a hangover. That day, Cecil, he just looks over at me and I right away know that he wants to watch the Bugs Bunny instead a the Tom & Jerry. I know it just by the way his one eyebrow goes up a little.

And with the old man setting right there, bent over a cup a steaming coffee, I say I know the rabbit's funny, Cecil, but I like the mouse.

Then Cecil, he moves his eyebrow a little more, just a little tiny bit—and me, I'm hearing words in my head just like they was being spoke out loud.

Yeah, I know he is, I say to him. The duck's kind a funny too, but I still like the mouse.

That's when the old man grinds his teeth like he's feeling pain from a tight bit. And he looks up from his coffee with pinhole eyes and says to me with his teeth still clenched, his voice real low and gravelly, he says You ain't fooling nobody, boy—you ain't fooling no one!

And the way he say it, there ain't no air in his voice. There ain't no sound practically. Just the sound of a slow-creaking door. But you can hear what he says all the same. Actually, you can hear it like it's the only noise on the face a the earth, like a faraway crack a thunder rolling on and on forever, but at the same time trapped inside the walls of our TV room.

Later on, in the backyard, Cecil tells me how nothing scares him more than when the old man talks like that. He tells me it's worse'n him yelling at the top a his lungs, it's worse'n when he sticks his face right in front a yours and screams at you till the veins stick out in his neck. And we agree, me and Cecil, that there ain't nothing scarier than when the old man clenches his teeth and talks gravelly and low like that. Cecil tells me all this while I'm over in the corner a the yard hanging upside down from the short limb of a apple tree. And him, he's way over in the other corner a the yard digging a hole that's a grave for dead bugs he went and collected from the bumper a the old man's truck. And that's when the wind picks up and whips all a Cecil's hair over to one side. And just as it does, he turns his head for one second and our eyesights touch. And that moment, right when the eyesights touch, that's when he tells me. Not with words, though, like you and me. No, he tells me with that special thing that's in his eyes.

This guy I work with name Bill, he tells me one day that they got a word for this thing, says they call it telepathy, says people that's really good at it get to go on Johnny Carson. I tell him to go to hell. I say You

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don't know what the hell you talking bout. It ain't no telepathy, just the way Cecil was. He argues with me, says It is so telepathy. But Bill, he don't know shit. Never known a honest day's work his whole fucking life. Goes out to the parking lot every ten minutes to pick his nose and smoke a cigarette. Lazy sonuvabitch.

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When me and my woman get back to Pennsylvania, we pull into this little town called Sayre that's got five 7-Elevens and a lizard zoo. And I stop practically the first place I see, a big warehouse where they loading kegs a beer into semis. I go inside the office and meet with this guy behind a desk that looks kind a faggoty to me. I tell him I'm the hardest worker he ever saw. I tell him most guys is such pansies bout not wanting to work hard that it makes me want to puke up all over myself. He just sits there and stares at me, and then he swallows and says Sorry, we ain't hiring. I say Bullshit, you ain't even seen what I can do yet! So I go out to the warehouse and start picking up kegs and carrying em with my bare hand up ramps into a trailer. I'm running round like a fool, bustin tail and making the regular workers look silly. In a half hour I got twenty-five kegs loaded into that trailer and most the other workers just standing round watching me with the dumbest goddam look on their face. Finally, the faggoty guy that does the hiring, he comes up to me and he tells me I loaded all them kegs on the wrong truck. But right after that, he says You got a job, though, if you want one. And he offers me three dollar and seventy-five cents and hour. I tell him I'll take it, and then I spend the next half hour unloading all them kegs again.

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Before I killed my old man, things was real bad round our house. Like I said, my old man, he liked to knock my ma around. He beat the hell out a her just bout every day. And if you ever got the nerve to stick up for her, then he beat the hell out a you too. My ma was like a field mouse, timid and shaky from all the times he split open her mouth and bruised up her ribs. And one time my brother Cecil, who was just a little shit, he tried to jump on the old man's back when he was beating on her. My old man flipped Cecil to the floor, turned and laid a boot right into his mouth, knocking out three a Cecil's teeth.

Later on, when my ma was in the bathroom holding Cecil round the waist so the blood could drip in the sink, my old man, he picked up a couple a the knocked-out teeth from the kitchen floor. Then he looked at me

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and said They gonna grow back, they just baby teeth. And when he said it, there wasn't no real sorryness in his voice, no real sorryness in his eyes neither.

They gonna grow back, he said again, like he was talking bout a bad haircut.

My old man wasn't always a nasty no good bastard. I member when I was a little shit how the old man would carry me into town on his shoulders and buy me licorice at the drugstore. And I member him wrestling with me on the hardwood floor and laughing when he tickled me under my arms. And I member him taking me and ma to the relatives. I don't remember whose relatives they was, but they was somebody's. And they lived in a big house with a cannon on the roof.

When we was there, they cooked up a big dinner with turkey and lots a mash potatoes. The relative that had the withered hand and the big purple spot on the right side a his face, he says We thankful to get the family together and in honour of the reunion I'd be honoured if George Sr. could do the honours.

So my old man, he says Lord thank you for this feastly grub that the relatives worked so hard for . . .

And then he kept on going, doing the honours like that for a real long time, with him and my ma holding hands. I don't remember the rest, but it was all well-spoke. What sticks out in my mind, though, is those first words, and to this day I still every time say Lord thank you for this feastly grub . . . when me and Cassy and the pups sit down for dinner.

But then my folks went and had Cecil when I was six, and all a sudden, my old man, he gets nasty and mean and hard overnight. I don't know what for—he just does. We ain't always got enough food on the table and we most the time is drinking the expired milk that's half price. The old man, he takes to yelling at my ma cause she don't cook up enough meat. And one time she just can't take the yelling no more, so she tells him we can't get no meat cause he ain't worked in over six months and there ain't no money for it. And that's when he gets up and cracks her in the head. Things get worse from that time on, and my old man, he gets the worse of all.

But before that, before that he was better and nicer and he done things with me. One time he even took me up in a airplane with a guy he know named Buster. And we fly up straight in the air till we looking down at the town and the cars is big as ants. And Buster, he says You like flying, son? But me, I don't answer cause I'm too busy looking down at the cars. And my old man, he says to me See that house right there, next to the pond? He says That's our house with the green roof. He says Your ma, she's in that house right now, looking up at us, waiting for us to come down.

And for the longest time after, I think every plane I see in the air is

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Buster. And no matter what I'm doing I stop when I hear a plane. I look up and see it flying cross the sky and I start running after it, waving my arms, saying Hi Buster, bye Buster. Most the time I'm by myself, but sometimes my old man, he's in the yard with me. And I say Is that Buster, Dad? And he looks up and says Yep, George. That's Buster.

Hi Buster, bye Buster I say.

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When I been loading kegs a beer for bout four months, along comes the first pup. Cassy, she's whiter'n shit in the hospital bed cause she been in labour for twenty-two hours. The doctor says he's worried she might hemorrhage. But she don't, cause finally out pops George Jr. He's tiny in my hands when they let me hold him. He's tiny like a little frog. And there ain't nothing like it, nothing like it in the whole fucking world.

My woman, she's pretty as hell, all sweaty and breathing hard with her eyes puffed up, all that dark stringy hair clinging to her face that's white as a ghost. There ain't nothing as pretty as when she takes our little frog baby from me and is holding it to her chest, even when it's still all bloody. There ain't no movie stars or Miss America that's prettier than that. I slap the doctor on the shoulder, saying Good job, Doc! And him, he damn near falls over.

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I shot up the goddam woods like a freak a nature after I got my first rifle. But I never aimed at nothing that moved. What I mostly did is I went up on top a the hill behind our house and shot at a old washing machine that was up there in the middle a nowhere. How that thing got up there to begin with don't ask me. But by the time I was thirteen I must a laid bout a thousand rounds in that fucking machine.

At home things was the worse they ever was. My old man, he ain't worked for years by this time. That's when I quit school and begin to work myself, instead. I felt good bout working cause now we could afford to eat some decent food. Like I tell my woman just a few months ago, I say Cassy, that first day I go to work on the farm is the happiest day a my life.

That first day the world change and I become a man. The other kids, they playing football and going fishing and throwing gobs a horseshit at passing cars. Which is OK, cause that stuff is fun when you still a pup. But for me, I know it's time to stop being a pup. I know it's time to take a hand in making living just a little bit better for me and my loved ones, so

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we can feel just a little bit more like human beings.

My old man, he starts laying into me every day when I get home from the farm, cause he don't like that I work and he don't. He says So you think you better than your old man, huh boy? He says Any day you want to put your old man to the test, boy, you just let him know. I will fuck you up he says, and fast! And his voice is low and gravelly, his teeth cemented shut.

Nope, he didn't like it one bit that I worked. But he sure was in a hurry to get his hands on my pay at the end a every week. The first couple times I got paid he just takes it from me and off he goes. Couple days later he come stumbling back drunk and dirty, yelling at my ma that he wants some meat on the table. And the money, all of it spent—every last fucking penny.

After two weeks I get smart. I take my pay and go to the store before I come home. I spend it all on groceries and come home loaded up with food. The old man, he's setting there making taps with his fingers on the table when I walk through the door. He don't waste no time.

Where's the money? he says.

I put the bags down and says You looking at it! This makes him dangerous red-face mad and before you know it he's beating up my ma again. I can't take this shit no more, so I jump in front a him and say Hit me if you gonna hit someone, you sonuvabitch! But he don't. He kicks the door and barrels out the house instead. He goes down cross the state line to get drunk with these guys he know.

We don't see or hear him the rest a the day. But late night I wake up cause he's choking me with some baling twine. I can't breathe cause he's got it pulled tight round my neck. I fall out a the bed on the floor and don't know what I'm doing cause my head ain't getting no air. But Cecil, he tells me later how I'm banging my foot up and down on the floor. Banging hard—thump! Thump! And that's when my ma comes in and hits my old man in the head with a plaster St. Francis of Assisi that Cecil paid a nickel for at the flea market. We ain't no Catholics, but Cecil says he likes how St. Francis of Assisi got his hands hid in his sleeves. He likes to look at it and makes guesses what St. Francis of Assisi is doing with his hands. Anyways, my ma, she busts St. Francis of Assisi into a hundred pieces and splits the old man's head open.

Afterwards, he ain't moving for a while. But he don't die. Me and my ma pick up the old man and carry him into the bedroom. And while we doing it, Cecil, he's on his hands and knees collecting St. Francis of Assisi from the floor. We come back to the kitchen, and my ma, she's crying cause she went and broke Cecil's St. Francis of Assisi. She spreads him out all over the table in little piles, some big and some small. She picks up the pieces, fumbling with em one by one and is crying, saying I'm sorry

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Cecil, I'm so sorry, over and over to him. But Cecil, he ain't shook up. He's telling her Don't cry Ma and he's showing her how easy it is to put St. Francis of Assisi back together one piece at a time. See? See? he's saying in a no-teeth whistle, and he's showing her how it ain't so tough at all. And, after a little while, she stops crying and they break out the glue. When I fall back asleep a few hours before sunrise, they still out there working away, and St. Francis of Assisi is a pair a feet growing taller by the minute.

Next afternoon the old man wakes up with the worse goddam headache a his life and he don't remember a single fucking thing—not a single fucking thing.

When I was in prison, they made me talk to this psychiatrist bout my old man. I didn't want to, but they told me I gotta meet with him once a week if I want to get the parole. When I told the psychiatrist bout the rotten things the old man done all the time, he tells me he thinks I might be stretching things a little.

He says It all sounds pretty mellow dramatic to me.

So I tell him Mister, there wasn't nothing mellow about it.

He says I'm sorry, George. But I have a hard time believing anyone could be that cruel. He says I meet all types in this profession, and I have yet to meet a person as cruel and as spiteful as that.

So I tell him, You're a lucky man, mister. And I ain't kidding around.

And then one day this damn psychiatrist just starts telling me how things really was with my old man, which wasn't nothing like what I remember. And he's going on and on, saying all kinds a stuff I don't really get bout baseball games and pinewood derby and singing songs round the campfire.

I finally break in and tell him We didn't have no fuckin campfire!

That's not the point, he says. What I'm trying to tell you is that I believe your father actually loved you.

So I tell him I didn't say he never loved me. I say We just couldn't go on living like that. I say Love ain't enough sometimes—that's the goddam point.

After the night my old man comes home and chokes me in my sleep, sometimes I take my gun up top a the hill where the washing machine was. But once I get up there I suddenly don't feel like shooting it. Sometimes instead I put the end a the barrel where my eye is, press it right up against my eyelid. I put my thumb down against the trigger, making just a little pressure on it. I don't want to kill myself or nothing. I'm just seeing how far I can get the trigger back without really shooting. And sometimes—sometimes it's really close.

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One Sunday it's raining like a sonuvabitch. I ain't working cause the beer place is closed. And it's me and Cassy's day off, so I know there won't be no tumbling. So I figure the only way leftover to pass the time is to drink a case a beer and curse at the neighbours. But Cassy, she lays into me and says I don't do enough with the pups. She says I never take em nowhere and do shit with em and it's fucking high time I did. Me, I ain't opposed to that, so I tell em Where you want to go, boys?

George II, as usual, he don't say a word. He just peeks round, from behind my woman, with two fingers crammed in his mouth. But the other pup, George Jr., he gets jumpy and loud with his arms flapping all over the place, saying The lizard zoo! The lizard zoo! I want to go to the lizard zoo! I peek around at George II, where he's hiding behind my woman, and I sneak him a smile.

You want to go to the lizard zoo, George II? I say to him.

He still don't say nothing, he just stares at me with them big old pup eyes a his. But after a minute, while George Jr. is bouncing all over the kitchen like a crazy little chimpanzee, my little George II finally goes ahead and sneaks me a smile back. And me, I don't need to hear no words, I know this means yes.

But the lizard zoo is a disappointment. We drive there through knock-you-down rain and wind, and the water's near a half foot deep, running like a river in the road. We don't see nothing most the way, cause a the windshield wipers tha's broke. I got to lean way forward, stick my left arm out the side window, and clear the water by moving my hand up and down. But even then we still can't see the goddam lines on the road. I ask George Jr. to roll down his window and let me know if we start going over the cliff on his side. And I make a joke, saying All this rain is actually God peeing on the earth, which makes the pups giggle. At one point I damn near run head-on into another truck that lays on its horn for about a whole minute, flashing high beams on and off, on and off, someone screaming What the hell's wrong with you? Get on the right side a the road!

Fuck you, you no good bastard! I yell back, and this makes the little ones giggle even more.

We just keep on driving, my boys and me. It seems like the rain ain't never gonna stop and it seems like the road ain't never gonna end. Until we finally see it, the huge sign for the lizard zoo with gigantic orange letters that say THE LIZARD ZOO!!!

But like I said, it's a big disappointment cause that sign is bigger than the whole zoo, which is only two cages in a shed. We stand outside in the rain and I pay three dollars for me and the pups. Then we go inside. And while I'm brushing the water off the pups' jackets inside the shed, I only then realize that we the only ones there.

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In one cage there's all sorts a scrub bushes with a dim lightbulb hanging down from the ceiling, and that's all we can see. We stand there for damn near a half hour and the whole time we don't even see a garter snake. The guy that's got no teeth and that owns the lizard zoo says there is five lizards hiding in them bushes, but they is all camouflaged. Me, I tell him I think he's full a shit. I tell him we better see some fucking lizards, and pretty damn quick, if he knows what I mean.

So he walks over to the other cage and says Here's one, here's a lizard!

The pups, they run over in a fury and press their face right up against the chicken wire. Then I walk over and look in myself. Inside, there's a lizard alright, but it's the deadest lizard I ever saw. It's laying white belly upside down on a rock with its feet sticking out and the toes all curled up at the ends. And there's bout a million flies laying eggs in its mouth and swarming round its head.

I turn to the no-teeth guy and tell him to give me my money back. But him, he says it's a strict policy a the lizard zoo not to give no refunds under no circumstances. Me, I don't care bout the fucking money. I'm just pissed the pups is so let down. So I tell the no-teeth guy I got a mind to knock his head off. And that's when he runs wobbly-legged out the shed door through the rain. He burns right through the shin-deep puddles in the yard, up the back steps and locks himself in his house.

I'm standing at the foot a the steps for the next five minutes getting soaked, telling that guy all the rotten things I got a mind to do to him. And that's when George II starts to cry. The pups is getting soaked, too, standing off to the side, looking like a couple a drowned rats. Finally the no-teeth guy peeks through the curtains and yells out that he hopes it don't come to that, but, if he has to, he'll call the sheriff to remove me from his property. I tell the pups Come on, let's get the hell out a here. And right away George II ain't crying no more.

The little pup, he don't seem to mind none a this very much. But George Jr. is let down something awful, and he's taking it hard the whole way back to the truck. I suppose he thought he was gonna see some goddam alligators or dinosaurs or something. As we leaving, he takes George II by the hand and walks back to the truck a few steps behind me. Every time I turn round I see how his mouth is clamped shut in a sour-hearted pout. And I know for him there ain't nothing on the face a the earth that can make him feel any worse than he does right now—not even if all them fucking karate turtle guys got killed in a car wreck.

On the way home I tell him Let that be a lesson to you—don't never waste your money on a lizard zoo. But that don't make it no better.

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After I been working on the farm for bout a year, the old man, he gets thrown in jail for a few months because he went and punched a police that pulled him over in his truck. And then next three months is the happiest time I remember with my ma and Cecil. I give my ma secret money that the old man will never know about to buy some new shoes. Her old ones got too many holes and they make blisters on her feet. She come close to crying when she put em on for the first time cause she ain't owned a new pair in close to six years.

At dinnertime Cecil lets St. Francis of Assisi stand in the middle a the table. We couldn't never find his nose after he got smashed over the old man's head. Cecil says St. Francis of Assisi's nose is still hiding there in the old man's head. He says St. Francis of Assisi left his nose there on purpose so he can smell what the old man's thinking. He says St. Francis of Assisi whispers to him at night all the bad thoughts that he can smell in the old man's head. Anyways, at dinner while the old man's in jail, Cecil starts putting flowers where St. Francis of Assisi's nose used to be and he lets him stand there in the middle a the table. Our ma, she tells him how it brightens up the meal.

The other thing at dinner is my ma asks me to say the grace that didn't never get said for the last few years. And me, I begin it Lord thank you for this feasty grub . . .

Them three months was like a dream. I come home one day with a puppy from the farm. I give it to Cecil. I can't play checkers with him no more in the daytime cause a my job. And so I think the puppy can make it not so lonely for him during the days. The puppy is a black lab that is the best pick a the litter and he takes to Cecil right away. Cecil says he will call him Blackie, cause a his colour.

On the farm, coming in at the end a the day, I once see Cecil and Blackie way off in the distance. Cecil, he's setting there on the fence watching me work when I don't even know it. And Blackie, he's jumping up and down, up and down, nipping at Cecil's pants. It's a happy time for me to see him like that. And I think, when I see them there, how it's like we swimming in a big pond that's the only pond for a million miles. Everywhere else it's just sand and nothing can grow, cept right around our little pond that we swimming in. It's just us, me and Cecil and my ma and Blackie, and we don't never get sunburned cause a the palm trees that give us shade.

But a week later they let the old man out. And while I'm working I know he's getting out that day. I know he's probably already home when I'm coming in from the fields. I look over at the fence where I seen Cecil the week before. But this time there ain't no Cecil, and there ain't no Blackie nipping at his pants, and there ain't no pond, and no shade from

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no trees. There ain't nothing but a sun-baked patch a mud in my heart.

I don't go home till way after dark. I grab my gun from the barn instead, and go up on the hill, way up top by the washing machine. I set there for three or four hours, just thinking. Once or twice I press the barrel tight against my eye, feeling the trigger cold and greasy on my thumb.

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One day a couple months ago, George Jr. beats the piss out a this fat neighbour boy that's picking on George II. George II is in the driveway riding around on his green tricycle that we got him for Christmas. He's just going round and round in little circles, honking the silver horn that's on the handlebars. And this fat neighbour boy that's maybe eight and a nasty little fucker, he comes running up from out a nowhere and kicks George II off the tricycle—really kicks him, so the tricycle tips over and the pup takes a tumble and the horn breaks in half on the pavement. George II gets to his knees, but he don't start crying right away—least not till he gets a look at his elbow that's bleeding from where it got all scraped up on the driveway. But that ain't nothing next to what follows. The crying gets about a million times worse when he catches sight a his silver horn that's laying there, all broke in half. So he picks up the horn and just kneels there, turning it over in his hands, trying to put it back together, bawling his eyes out. And the fat neighbour boy, he starts to go Waaa! . . . Waaa! . . . Waaa! . . . making fun a little George II for carrying on like a baby.

Me and George Jr., we seen the whole thing cause we was on the front porch playing checkers. So I say to George Jr., I say Go kick the shit out a that fat little fucker! And him, that's all he's waiting for. He takes off like a wild animal and in about two heartbeats he's got that fat boy pinned to the ground, laying into him with both fists. My woman, she comes out and tells me to go and break it up. But me, I say Bullshit, he got it coming! I say George Jr. got to learn to stick up for family. And my woman, she gets pissed. She tells me I am sometimes a real asshole and then she goes and pulls George Jr. off a that rotten fat kid who is now the one crying like a baby. As my woman grabs George Jr. by the back a his hair and steers him to the house, George II gets up, still holding the horn with one hand, and grabs the back of her dress, following her all the way in. And that fat kid just sits there in the driveway on his big fat ass, rubbing his eyes and feeling his nose. And let me tell you right now, he will think twice before he goes mad and kicks my little George II off a his tricycle again.

Like I was saying, George II, he's different from George Jr. He's got

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them womanly hands and he don't like to horse around like a boy should. But he sure is a smart little sonuvabitch. In some ways he's just like what my little brother Cecil was—I mean, exactly. Never said a goddam thing, didn't even utter a word since he was born—not until a month ago. Then one day, at the age a four and a half, he opens up his mouth and starts talking in whole sentences. I'm setting there at the kitchen table eating some fried potatoes, and the pup, he comes walking up and stands beside me.

I look down and say How's my little bad ass? But I ain't expecting him to say nothing back. I figure he'll just stand there like always, staring at me with them big old pup eyes a his. But then, right out a the blue, he says to me Imagine if there were ten secret things under this table. . .

The potatoes damn near fall right out a my mouth, it's hanging so wide open. I blink my eyes and swallow and tell him What did you say? So he says it again, and I can't believe my ears cause I ain't never heard him say a single word before in his life. But finally I get over the shock and say to him What kind of secret things you talking bout boy?

And he says Well, there's really no way to know. Otherwise they wouldn't be *secret* things.

And if all of this ain't enough to make your head do handstands, then the next thing he says to me is enough to set it to somersaults.

He says Mom says you deserve a raise. I think she's right.

I'll tell you right now, I just bout fell on my ass. If I wasn't already sitting down, I'm sure I would've. I mean, I never seen nothing like it my whole fucking life. Not even the one-arm, no-leg guy at the fair when I was a pup that let rattlesnakes bite him on the face and then still lived. Not even that could hold a candle next to what my little George II up and says to me out a the blue while I'm eating them potatoes. But me, I don't argue with it. I figure it's some kind a omen that after six years I should be making more than three dollar and seventy-five cent an hour.

The very next day I go in to that faggoty guy that does all the hiring at work and I say Listen you sonuvabitch, I want another buck an hour. I'm the hardest goddam worker you got, and you know it. You don't give me another buck an hour, then piss on you, I'm leaving! And bite my ass if he don't go ahead and give me another buck an hour. He known damn well I would a left too, cause if anybody know anything bout me they know I'm a man a my word.

He says I guess you deserve it.

And I say You goddam right I do!

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I guess I never told you how it was I come to kill my old man. But now you know, so you oughta hear it right. By the time I'm fourteen, he's beating the living hell out a my ma damn near every night a the week and he barely never knows a sober moment. My ma, she's like a shadow that don't dare to look him straight in the eye. She walks round our house and is jumpy all the time for fear that she might do or say something wrong. But that's not completely why I done it. It was part of it, a big part, but not the whole reason.

You see, Cecil's dog Blackie, the one that I brung him from the farm, he goes and gets hit one day by a truck when I'm up working on the farm. So I ain't home. It's just my ma and my little brother Cecil and my old man who ain't nothing but a bum anymore.

So when Blackie gets hit by this car, he gets hurt, but not that bad. His back leg is broke, but it can be set cause the bone ain't sticking through or nothing. But the old man, he decides he's gonna shoot Blackie just the same cause he don't want to deal with no dog with a broke leg. Least that's what he says. But that ain't really why, cause one day Blackie bit the hell out a the old man's arm after he hit Cecil. That's really why he wants to shoot Blackie.

And so my old man goes and gets these two friends a his who come on up with him from cross the state line bringing grain. These guys is just as no good as him, never even heard a working, the fuckers. And they sit there, drinking grain and getting drunk in the sun with Blackie just laying in the yard, not able to move too good cause a his back leg that's broke. And these guys get drunk for a couple hours and then break out my twenty-two rifle that I made the mistake a leaving home—and I'll tell you right now, that ain't no kind a gun to go shooting a dog with if you gonna do it right.

And so with Cecil standing off to the side crying, cause he's just a pup and he loves Blackie, they take a rope and tie Blackie to a tree. And Blackie's no idea they gonna kill him, so all the time they tying him up he's licking their hands and looking up at them friendly like a dog is bound to do. And then, instead of just killing him with a clean shot from close range, they go cross the yard, bout fifty foot, and start having target practice with him. And my little brother Cecil is just standing there watching the whole thing. They lay a round in Blackie's ribs, he howls and gets up as best he can and limps a few feet before he collapses. Then they pass the twenty-two and lay another round into his shoulder, and he howls and gets up again, limping to the end a the rope and not able to go no further. And then they lay another round into that back leg that's broke and he hits the dirt again, still howling.

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Like my brother Cecil told me before they took me away, he says there ain't nothing as horrible as listening to a dying dog howl when it's tied to a rope and getting shot all over the place by a bunch a drunks. It ain't a normal howl, like a moon howl at night. It's a lot more like a human voice, he said, like when a old person cries cause they can't find the door in the dark. It even starts to sound like it's saying words in its howl. And when he stood there watching and crying as they fired round after round into Blackie, Cecil said he could almost make out Blackie's words, like he was asking him for help. But Cecil, he was scared to death a the old man, specially when he was drunk. And so he didn't dare to come near. But when our ma come out with trembling hands and tried to take Cecil in-doors, he couldn't bring himself to go in neither, cause he didn't want to leave Blackie alone, even if he was cross the yard and couldn't stop them fuckers from shooting him.

When I get near the house I can hear the shots firing, but I don't know what for. And then I get up close and see them drunks loading up the rifle and swigging from the bottle and old Blackie just laying out there, still not dead, tangled in the ropes. He's jerking around, but not too much, still trying to howl, but only half-yelping a little cause he's near dead. By now he's got near twenty rounds in him and still he ain't giving up the ghost. And my little brother Cecil is sitting down in the yard off to the side with his feet stretched out in front of him, his shoulders humping the way they do when you is crying and can't get all the air you want. The little pup, he's pulling grass out a the earth in hard tugs. He's crumpling up the dirt and grass in white knuckled fists and then throwing it back down between his legs, snot and tears running down his face. And my ma, she's crying too, cause it's a terrible thing to see what them guys was doing to that dog. And so I run up and grab the gun from my old man's hands with him fumbling around trying to load it, but too drunk to see good. And then I walk over to Blackie, and he's covered in blood, still not dead, panting with his tongue stuck out the side a his mouth, spit mixed with blood dripping onto the dirt and grass. He's too hurt to even roll over.

Blackie tries to turn his head up a little to one side, so he can get a look at me, but he don't have the strength to turn it all the way. It's only his eye, the one facing me, that makes it so he's able to see me at all. It's

turned all the way back, so far back that it don't look natural and there's way too much white.

I know what I got to do, but it's harder'n hell to do it. Cause when I point the gun at his skull, that eye starts to flinch, fluttering wild from fear and pain and sadness. And I know right away, all suddenly, that me point-

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ing this gun at him is the last thing old Blackie will ever remember, the last thing he will ever see. And that breaks my heart.

My eyes are watering like crazy and I go to wipe em with my fingers a whole bunch a times before I can see good enough to aim straight. The thing is, I just can't look at his eye flinching like that. I can look at the bullet holes and the blood. I can look at his legs tangled up in them ropes. I can look at the way his rib cage heaves in jerks. But I can't look at that eye.

I'm sorry boy, I say. I say it as nice as I can. And then I put a hole right through his brain and he ain't moving no more. I hear my brother Cecil scream, but when I turn round I don't see nothing but the back door slamming behind him and my ma shuffling in after.

The old man, he's all drunk and nasty now and he says So you think you can whip your old man, boy, zat what you think? And I don't even look him in the face the whole way cross the yard—his voice, it's so gravelly I can taste the sand in my own mouth. Zat what you think? he says to me again, but I barely hear it this time cause the blood, it's rushing hard in my ears as I raise the gun and lay a round right between his eyes. The old man hits the ground and he is one dead fucker. The other guys, they look at me like I'm crazy and take off like deer. But I don't even bother with them. I just look at my old man laying there for a couple of minutes. His mouth is wide open and so is his eyes, and I think to myself I ain't ever gonna hear his voice again. And the funny thing is, I can't tell if that makes me happy or sad. And looking back, I don't know if it made me either one. I keep on looking at him for a couple minutes, searching for something, for anything, that'll help me feel regret for what I just done. But it never comes. I think of what it was like flying with him in Buster's plane. I think of what it was like when he carried me into town on his shoulders. I think of him wrestling with me on the hard kitchen floor, tickling me under my arms, me and him laughing together. But none of it helps me to feel bad for him, laying there dead at my feet. Oh, I feel bad, alright. I feel rotten. But only cause I can't feel a thing *for him*. The day is ending. I go pick up Blackie. I take him to the woods and bury him.

So now you heard it right. I ain't no fucking saint, but I ain't never pretended to be one. And I ain't sorry I did it neither, not even after they sent me to juvenile prison for the next four years. After that day I got

plenty a time to think things over, and I come to decide I'd do it again all over without thinking twice. I can look myself in the mirror at the end a every single day. I can look at myself, deep into my own eyes staring back, and feel alright, without shame, knowing it was the only thing left to

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do. That's what that fucking psychiatrist could never understand—that there was nothing else left to do, that there was no way around it, that we was dying. I sure the hell ain't proud of it, and I told him as much. It makes me very sad, I said. But I ain't ashamed. And ain't you or nobody else ever gonna make me feel that way. I did what I had to do. We was dying.

In prison I worked hard and kept my nose clean and done my best to put up with all that psychiatrist crap. So finally they tell me I am a model inmate and let me out a month before my eighteenth birthday. Ma is dead when I get out. And Cecil, I don't know where he is. Them social service people, they say it's best he don't see me cause they went and put him with a new family. And I know they probably right, I know it's best for Cecil, but it's the toughest thing of all knowing I ain't ever gonna get the chance to play checkers with him again.

I ask them Did you let him take St. Francis of Assisi?

What? they say.

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One night just a little while ago, me and my woman and the pups is watching TV. And it's John Wayne kicking the shit out a the Indians. The Indians is riding through the desert, and there's bout a million a them. And right behind em, picking em off, here comes John Wayne with bout a million cavalry blowing a bugle. And the cavalry, they scaring the shit out a them Indians, cause they ain't never heard no bugle before. On and on they riding deeper and deeper into the desert. And there ain't no coming back for none a them, cause they went and got John Wayne pissed.

George Jr.'s laying there with his arm round George II, who has already fallen asleep. And him, he looks up from the screen and says Dad, how big is the desert? And I say It's the biggest thing you ever saw, boy—there ain't nothing bigger. And he's looking up at me with his eyes open big and wide. Right below is the little one breathing heavy and regular like a wildcat resting up for the hunt.

There ain't nothing bigger? says George Jr.

And I say No, there ain't nothing bigger—the desert never ends.

He looks from me to John Wayne, from John Wayne back to his ma. He's taking in everything, saving it up for some day to pass back on. By the look in his eyes you can tell he don't doubt a single word I say. By the look in his eyes you can tell he's putting full faith in me to show him what is right and what is wrong. There ain't no half way, there ain't no middle ground. There's only what works and what don't. George II turns uneasy in his sleep like he is fighting off a ghost. And George Jr., he settles in

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again and holds on tighter to his little brother. No, he don't doubt me. Not for a second, not even half a second. There ain't a single damn reason he should. And let me tell you right now. It ain't cause he knows I'm a man a my word. It's cause he knows I been to the desert.

Lyle Daniel Neff

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## Money and Music

*Ah, it's all math anyway*, say the bewigged pontificants  
paid to think in symbols, made to ignore the crash  
of classes, unable to see how the noise you make  
follows from how well you're paid. This leisure society  
boogie-woogie, these slavery blues, that military tattoo

It all fits together like a body, so damn near knowable  
it makes you cry. My dad's a railroader, I work in restaurants;  
he listens—barely—to country twang, while I jump for rock and roll,  
I mean I *thrive* on it. We're union men, Canadians, down on symbolism,  
money's dry leash wraps equally round both our necks

But he works it out in weepy angst, while paranoid aggression  
is more in his son's line. Well, our albums are all heaped together now;  
we can meet over a bottle of whiskey while the rich twitch  
to their Mantovani or what-have-you. Maybe the music's tinny,  
lacking higher maths, short of soul; but it's the soundtrack of our lives  
and we've paid for it dearly.

# Contributors

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**Michael Bullock** is a professor emeritus of Creative Writing at UBC and the author of thirty-two volumes of poetry and fiction, as well as over a hundred translations of major works from German, French and Italian.

**Karen Connelly** is a Canadian writer who divides her time between Canada and Europe. She is the youngest winner of the Governor General's Award for her 1993 non-fiction book *Touch The Dragon, A Thai Journal* (Turnstone Press). She is also the author of two collections of poetry (*The Small Words in my Body* and *This Brighter Prison*). Currently living in Greece, she is working on another volume of poetry and a new book of essays and stories about gypsies and travellers.

**Colin Garrett** works part-time as a copy editor at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and is a contributing editor at *KCTS Nine*, the magazine of Seattle's public television station. He grew up in Virginia Beach and was educated at Wesleyan University.

**Greg Gilbert** works in a warehouse in Ottawa. He has a story forthcoming in *The Malahat Review*.

**Adrienne GreenHeart** is currently attending Boston University. She has had previous work published in *Blood & Aphorisms*, *Puck!*, and other literary magazines. Her novel, *Six Sex Scenes*, will be published by Voyager on CD-ROM in the fall of '95.

**Catherine Greenwood** works for the Ministry of Health and is completing a degree in English Literature and Creative Writings at the University of Victoria. "Feeding Time" was written after a visit to Shetland.

**James Gurley** lives in Seattle and is co-editor of *Salmon Bay Review*. He will have a chapbook, *Transformations* (References West), published in 1995. The poems appearing in this issue are from a manuscript in progress entitled *Temple of Science*.

**Steven Hartman** is completing a novel and a collection of short fiction, of which "The Desert Never Ends" is the title story. He is also translating two books from Swedish: a collection of stories by Stig Dagerman and a collection of speculative essays by astronomer Peter Nilson. Hartman's fiction and prose have appeared in numerous journals, including *Grand Street*, *Quarterly West*, *Columbia*, *Witness* and *Confrontation*. He teaches literature at Stockholm University.

**Cellan Jay** teaches literacy to adults in Toronto. This is her second appearance in *Prism International*.

**Heather Keenan** is a Victoria artist. She had a solo exhibition of her work at the XV Commonwealth Games and she has recently won the honour of being one of the artists featured in the Windsor and Newton Artists' Materials 1995 Limited Edition Calendar.

**Alfi MioDrag Kojadinović** was born November 22 where three borders meet, with four planets in Scorpio. He has learned five classical and six modern languages, loved seven hundred and seventy-seven men of wisdom, opened eight doors but stopped at the threshold of the ninth—in awe with the Zero.

**Judy MacInnes Jr.** was born in Prince George in 1970. She is the author of *Super Socco and Other Super Stories* (ga! press). Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *The Capilano Review*, *Prairie Fire*, *Blood & Aphorisms* and *sub-TERRAIN*. New work will be appearing in *Geist*

**Luigi Malerba** was born in Parma in 1927 and has lived in Rome since 1950. He has written novels and short stories for adults, as well as books that may also be read by children.

**Sharon McCartney** has a M.F.A. from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a law degree from the University of Victoria. She has been published recently in *Event*

**Lyle Daniel Neff** is a Canadian poet.

**Sue Nevill's** poetry has appeared in many Canadian literary periodicals including *The Malahat Review*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Grain* and *The Antigonish Review*. Her first book, *I Was Expecting Someone Taller*, was published in 1991 by Beach Holme.

**Miranda Pearson** is originally from England, but has lived in Vancouver for four years. She writes and performs poetry, and has recently been published in *Grain*, *Room of One's Own*, *Dandelion* and *The Malahat Review*.

**R.J. Powell** lives and works in Ottawa. His work has recently appeared in several magazines including *The New Quarterly*, *The Antigonish Review*, and the *Univeristy of Windsor Review*.

**Beth Simon's** non-fiction piece "Widows and Dead Men" is from a collection of essays and short fiction based in India. Other pieces have appeared in *Carolina Quarterly*, *Indiana Review*, and *Massachusetts Review*. Her first volume of poetry will be published by Pecan Grove Press this spring.

**David Winwood** is an Irish writer. He has had previous work published in *Writers Forum*.

## Creative Non-Fiction Contest #8

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**Three winners will each receive \$500**

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Writers are invited to submit manuscripts that explore the creative non-fiction form. See *Event* 17/2, 18/3, 19/3, 20/3, 21/3, 22/3 and 23/3 for previous winning entries and comments by judges Myrna Kostash, Howard White, Eleanor Wachtel, Susan Crean, Andreas Schroeder, and Stephen Hume.

**Note:** Previously published material or material accepted for publication elsewhere cannot be considered. Maximum length for submission is 5000 words, typed, double-spaced. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope and a telephone number.

**Entry fee:** Each submission must include a \$16 entry fee (includes GST). All entrants will receive a one year subscription (three issues) with each entry. Those already subscribing will receive a one year extension.

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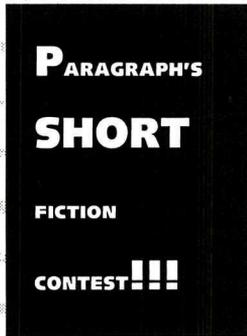
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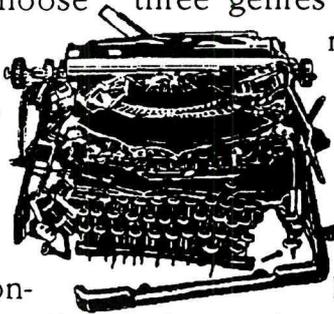
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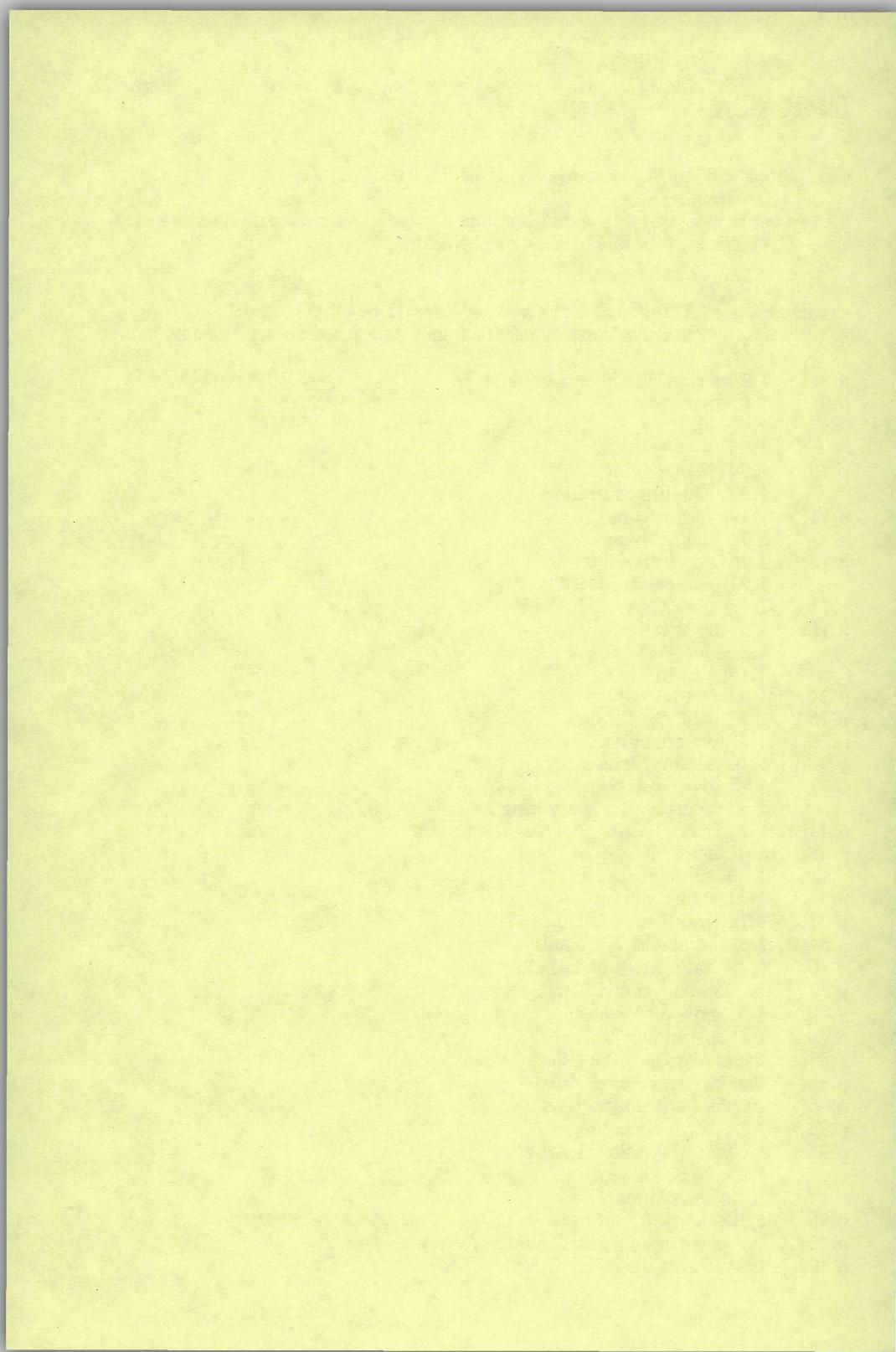
## ERRATA

Corrections to *PRISM international*, issue 33:1 (Fall, 1994)

"...errata are as mortifying as holes in one's tuxedo and not easily overlooked."  
--Arthur Plotnik, *The Elements of Editing*

Contents page: "*Et in hora mortis nostrae*" should be cited before  
"Waiting" and "Question" should be cited before "Friday."

- p.7, 1.2 period should be a comma.  
p.9, 1.8 form: from  
1.32 id: it  
1.38 ----: --  
p.10, 1.24 lieing: lying  
1.32 handling: handing  
p.11, 1.14 form: from  
1.41 lieing: lying  
p.13, 1.16 no on: no one  
1.21 paragraph indent  
p.17, 1.18 god: God  
p.18, 1.3 Its: It's  
1.3 add: and  
1.18 I n: In  
p.21, 1.23 bottle: bottles  
p.25, 1.22 I'll, do: I'll do  
p.29, 1.8 form: from  
p.30, 1.10 blond: blonde  
1.25 own had: own hand  
1.37 everyting's: everything's  
p.41, 1.2 Than: Thank  
p.48, 1.4 the: The  
1.20 form: from  
p.53, 1.33 dunit: dunnit  
p.63, 1.12 and I'm: And I'm  
p.64, 1.6 out hands: our hands  
p.70, 1.26 battlefiedl: battlefield  
p.73, 1.5 on on: on one  
p.77, 1.6 show dry: whose dry  
p.78, 1.1 space after "if"  
p.83, standard space after title  
p.85, standard space after title  
p.86, standard space after title  
p.93, 1.14 form: from  
p.97, 1.17: and A&W: an A&W  
1.25: space indent  
1.30: he s: he's  
p.98, 1.10: sort of: sort of a  
p.101, 1.7 *Southern Revises: Southern Review*  
p.102, 1.24 form: from





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Greg Gilbert  
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Catherine Greenwood  
James Gurley  
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Sue Nevill  
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