



TAR

17

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Credits

THE APRIL EDITORIAL

The April Reader is a monthly publication of poetry and prose operating under the belief that the rise of the internet has allowed the written word to regain parity with mass-media and television

We hope to serve as a launching point for the future writers of this generation.

HOME PAGE: theaprilreader.wordpress.com
YOUR WRITING TO: THEAPRILREADER@GMAIL.COM



A WORD FROM THE EDITORS

Shaken but still stirring, TAR releases Issue 17. Our batch this month is quite diverse, and should tingle at least a few different taste-buds. Dive right into some speculative cyberpunk to discover what the hell Gobblefunk is. Then, take in the nostalgia of a greasy roller-rink arcade with *Hustle*. After the simstim and incest, finish off your prose binge with a downer, courtesy of *The Other Boat*. For people who love traveling but hate the world, August's poetry section is an express ticket from Contessa Feline's Italy to the Chicago of Jesse's *Homeless Face*, with lodgings at the broken down and boarded up haunts at Simon and post-Garfunkal. All credit for the lovely artwork we've butchered belongs to the talented Rallé, who has gracefully made portions of his artwork open to the public.

While we always praise the quality and creativity of the submissions we receive, we've neglected to consider the various contributions of visual works that were featured in our journal. Looking back at the art that's been donated to us, we realize that there's a tremendous amount of talent among our readers and writers. It's time that talent was acknowledged.

If you would like to send us a visual piece to include in our journal – whether it's meant to accompany a particular submission, or is simply a work you would like to share with us and our readers – go ahead and email a digital copy to theaprilreader@gmail.com. You'll be credited for your contribution, thanked profusely, and we'll tell our fanfiction buddies about how rad you are!

We sincerely hope you enjoy reading this release as much as we did making it. And we humbly thank the readers and writers who continue to contribute to The April Reader. If you would like to send us feedback, make a suggestion, send a submission, or even just chat with us (we love chit-chat!), you can reach us at theaprilreader@gmail.com

Best Regards,
TAR Staff

Fiction



Gobblefunk

by Thom Lambert

"Think of it like meditation." He had said, as he leaned in, taking my cigarettes and knocking one out onto the table for himself. "Meditation?" I asked, confused. "Yeah." He sparked the cigarette into life and exhaled, shrouding us both in a thick blue smoke. "It's like... clearing your mind, man. Focusing on one single thought, that isn't" He leant back again, and rolled the cigarette between his thumb and forefinger, the ember dancing around in the gloom of the bar. It trailed light, that let me know the drugs I had taken earlier were kicking in finally. "Every thought you have" he continued, "is memetic". It was getting harder to focus, the pain and the drugs were battling for control of my frontal lobe. "They're all linked, and you can follow them backwards, trace a path back to every thought you had before it." He had traced a line with the cigarette through the air, cutting through the smoke and leaving an orange afterburn in my vision. "So what you're lookin' for, in a manner of speaking, is a thought unconnected to anything else." I felt sick and tasted blood. My right eye was blind, shut closed by the swelling. "If you can focus on this one thought, or word, then your mind goes blank." He had swiped his hand across the table as he said this, sending our bartab app and half a dozen advertisements skittering around the surface bouncing off the edges.

I was confused. I had needed help, and Porter said he knew a guy who knew a guy that could fool the scanners, but I had my doubts. When they jam that thing on your head its pretty damn hard not to think about all the bad things you had done, and that was as good as handing them a signed confession. When I walked in, there he was, sat in the corner, cigarette in mouth and whiskey in hand, middle finger pressed firmly into the tables' Surface, tossing energy balls at digital Invaders. "The guy's a sage," Porter assured me, when I called him from the caff. "He's like... the messiah of Offenders. They all come to him for advice." I was in deep shit, and

I was desperate. And there I was, standing in the middle of the bar, slack-jawed, watching this 'Messiah'; piss-drunk, playing fucking casual games on the table's Surface, spilling his whiskey and yelping with every triple score combo he got. I had walked over and muttered "Are you the guy?" and he turned and I regretted it. "Fuck yeah I'm the fuckin' guy. Fuckin' high score here. Did ya see that?"

A round of drinks, on me of course, because I look like a guy who "can fuckin' afford it" and a few of my cigarettes later and he started explaining this idea to me. His grand teaching, being passed from master to student, on how to fool the portable Magnetic Resonance Imager, pMRI for short, and stop it snagging you for all the Offences you've ever committed. "You know you done some shit, right?" Another one of my cigarettes had made its way into his mouth and I hadn't even registered handing him the packet. "And as soon as the Met whips out the snagger, you're thinking 'Oh fuck. Oh Shit. Its gonna know I knifed that guy in the barfight, and that I defrauded the Corp, and that I stole that fucking candybar when I was eleven.' and bam!" He had stabbed the table with his middle finger and leaned in suddenly, looking me right in the eye for the first time. I had looked away, watching the ripples animate out from his finger, bouncing off the still burning embers that had knocked onto the Surface and registered as heat signatures. My arm burns from being wrenched out of the socket at the shoulder, and I wince at the pain. "So what you're saying," I finally had the mental focus to speak. "is when they grab me, I have to think something, a random word or idea, that I've never thought before, and my mind goes blank?" He nodded and grinned. Half his front teeth were missing, the rest were brown. "Exactly! Now you get it! Hale-fuckin'-lujah." He had thrown his arms over his head, tossing the remaining whiskey and the burned down cigarette

into the air behind him, soaking a young, smart-suited salaryman and his female companion. They were out slumming, obviously. The shock of this act hit them fully when they realised there wasn't a MetCop in the bar to report the Offending to. It wasn't an upstanding place full of smiles and fake pleasantries. This guy sitting in front of me, still grinning, didn't give a shit. Probably didn't even realise he had done it. Back in the Low Numbers, the 'Purity Zones', if you Offended someone you'd have a MetCop on the scene in thirty seconds, questioning everyone, mandating apologies and reparations. Pulling out the portable Magnetic Resonance Imager, checking you out to see if you were some kind of radical who went around throwing drinks on people, and also subverting MetAuthority and murdering children. "Offensive acts beget Offensive Behaviour" The classroom slogan went. "Offensive Behaviour Subverts Our Society. We Must Protect Our Society" What I had done, that made me call Porter in a panic, and had me sitting here with this guy, would have made my childhood Citizenship & Social Responsibility Coordinator Mrs Leibowitz cry. I had tapped the service app for another round and tried to wrap my mind around what he had told me.

"So how do you do it?" I had asked. "What do you think of to throw the machines off?" He had frowned at me. "Well, I have a list." He had taken the drinks as they were delivered to us, slurping his loudly and passing mine over. The weight on my stomach pressed in harder, and I gagged. "I carry my reader with me everywhere, and I get these random thoughts or hear something, a word, a phrase, a snatch of conversation in a language I don't speak, and I write it down." The Offended couple was loudly complaining to the barstaff and the salaryman was waving his arm in our direction. It blurred in my vision and I saw the reflection on a gold ring carving a bright arc in the air. "So when I meet a Met, and he pulls me on account of 'Suspicious Activity, and Possible Offensive Behaviour' I glance at my reader real quick-" He flicked his eyes down and mimed the action, making me feel like the whole room had tilted towards him. "And I pick a word at random, and then I

just let it sit there in my head and whoosh! I can't comprehend it, it's not linked to anything else I've ever thought of, so my mind goes empty, 'cept for this one word." I felt the hot searing pain across my face again. "And then he jams the pMRI on my head, and I come up clean, 'cause there ain't nothing there 'cept this one phrase, this 'Memetic Annihilation'." He airquoted with his fingers, and I caught sight of the Offended salaryman over his shoulder, storming out of the bar with his mascara-streaked and whiskey soaked girl in tow, sobbing uncontrollably. "So give me an example," I had asked. "Give me one of these 'Memetic Annihilations' and let me see how it works." He blew smoke out his nose and thought for a moment. "Gobblefunk." "Gobblefunk?" "Gobblefunk. What are you thinking about right now?" I paused. I felt the wetness behind my head grow larger, soaking my hair and neck. "Nothing, not nothing, just- gobblefunk. It's- It's not anything. I just think it, and... blank out, I guess." He beamed at me, "Now you have it! Now you gotta get your own Gobblefunk, and aint no Met with no snagger, or Hound or whatever you want to call it gonna finger you in anythin'!"

I spit blood. Gobblefunk. Fucking Gobblefunk. I wish I had never heard that phrase. I wish I had never been in that bar. I wish I had never met that braindead fuck, taken his pills, listened to his bullshit, watched him fuck me over with his casual disregard for Offending people, and put me right where I am now. I panicked. I froze, but I didn't go blank. One thought came to me as they held me down and strapped the pMRI to my head. Pinned to the floor in this shithole of a bar, half-dead with six MetCops surrounding me. "Got it." I hear the one with his knee in my chest say as he pulls my arm tighter behind my head. His vox-mod voice dull and monotone, but I can hear the delight. "pMRI is pulling everything. This guy's got some class A capital Offenses." The Taller one leans in, and I see my bloody pulp of a face reflected in his black visor.

"What-" he practically spits venom as he says it, "-is 'Gobblefunk'?"

Hustle

by Mason

Off in the far corner of the roller rink, way past the arcade cabinets and the token machines, reaching into the end of the bar, sat the cocktail machines. Titanic clinking glasses of men sat huddled around a single cabinet. One of them took a big gulp of beer before wiping the foam from his nose. Someone kicked back a bar stool, slamming it against the ground. The whipping of the fireball became so quick his hands couldn't keep up. The man in the blue corner tensed up on his stick – the onslaught battered against the castle walls. The charged shot from the john in the green corner spelled certain doom for the others.

A pixilated crash shuddered the table. Their castles lay smoldering. The man in the green corner raked in the money. He pulled out a cigarette from his shirt pocket, discreetly lit up, then passed along the carton. Beautiful red cinders fell onto the machine – the face of the man in the green corner – dripping in the afterglow – leaned back with a satisfied grin.

The man who abdicated his throne turned to the bar to refill his mug. A guy in his mid-20s, dressed in a sweat-stained white shirt, sneaked into his seat. They all slapped money in the center of the table. Warlords cash games were a way of life in Johnny's Roller Rink.

After another successful round, Gregor removed himself from the green corner and rested his glass up on the table. He had run out of tokens, he explained. Flipping open the black wallet, he strode down the aisle of arcade cabinets and over towards the token machine.

Outside the bar area, a pack of frightful, excited screams shook the cabinets. Down past Pole Position and further behind the row of ticket-games, Jacobi raked in a stack of tokens that lay in the center of the Super Street Fighter II cabinet. A huddle of kids cheered and screamed at the match. Back and forth, the two slung quarter-circles at each other until one dropped. A

raucous din echoed back to the bar in the corner.

Jacobi's black eyes burned with a blazing intensity. He had been on a roll the entire night. After dispatching Simon to go round up a couple of kids, the two made off with almost twenty bucks worth of tokens. The movements of his wrists synced up with the trance-like music pumping out onto the roller rink. A wave of lights crushed the kids on the arcade floor.

Every Friday evening, Jacobi and his dad went to Johnny's. His dad gave him a five-spot every time they reached the door. His dad didn't care how his boy spent it, as long as he left him alone.

After a few weeks of renting skates they wanted something new. They would try and race each other out on the track, but only end up running into the smaller kids. The two of them looked young for their age. Simon stood almost 5'4, Jacobi just a hair taller. Both were 14, but acted much older. They liked to maintain the attention of the crowd. It was obvious that they were the leaders. Eventually they just decided to give up on skating and hit the arcade. Originally, they started out on some of the older games: Joust, Galaxian. These only got boring – these machines lacked the competitive edge.

Then one week a new cabinet arrived. In the glow of the ever present blacklight, the tribal-designed shell caught the eye of every kid in the area. The front logo looked torn into the wood paneling. It read, 'Super Street Fighter II,' in yellow. When Jacobi and Simon first slid in their tokens, they felt an immediate jolt. The rhythm of the music, the snappiness to the new sticks, the contact from the curved buttons – everything matched up perfectly. Each time they played, they discovered something new and game-changing. Ryu can shoot fireballs. Dhalsim can teleport into Yoga Flame. Blanka was raised by animals. These specks of information gradually built into mountains of technique

and style.

Jacobi stood upright, dead focused on the cabinet monitor. His hand flicked the stick back and forth. He blocked each kick that Simon's Chun-Li had to offer. Another stack of tokens piled up in the center. A sweeping kick. A jump backwards. His opponent staggers up – quartercircle + punch.

Gregor sauntered over to the exchange near the back of the rink. He pulled out a wrinkled five dollar bill and stuck it in the receiver. It took the bill in for a moment, just before spitting it back into his hand. He sighed and tried again. A crowd began forming to his right, a huddle of kids pushing and jostling around a single arcade cabinet. Still no luck. He stretched the bill out and tried to iron it against the metal paneling. His eyes fixated on the mob forming. Finally his bill slipped into the machine – it grumbled mechanically, sputtered, and spit out the tokens into the bowl at the bottom. Just as he reached for the tokens the group exploded into cheers. A roar of high-pitched squealing voices bounced off the red carpeted walls of the roller rink. He had to see what happened. He scooped up his coins and jammed them into his pockets. The crowd scattered off surrounding one boy, leaving another behind. Gregor reached the cabinet and looked over at the decals. Never had he seen such a reaction from a game before. He looked at the kid standing by the machine, fumbling with his pockets.

Hey kid, what just happened here? What's with all the cheering?

That kid, Jacobi, just beat this other kid in a match – it was really intense – there was a lot of money on it.

He laughed. Rubbing his hands against his gritted face.

You kids are gambling for arcade games? That ain't right.

The kid looked at him, frowning.

You grownups do it down at the bar! So we aren't allowed to have any fun?

It's not about fun, it's about whether or not you kids should be doing it. You'll ruin yourselves if you keep it up.

Well it's not like we're playing with real money, it's just tokens.

Just tokens? Listen, kid....

The kid leaned up against the arcade cabinet and a glaze washed over his face as Gregor began to lecture. The 'adults' that came back to the arcade had to try and ruin everyone's fun. The kid looked down at his shoes, then over at the people skating on the floor.

So you see? It's not just about gambling, alright?

Listen – mister – do you wanna play or somethin'? Maybe then you'll understand.

Gregor toyed with the coins in his pocket, clinking them together. Running his fingers over their faces he could feel the design, a clown and a magician.

Alright, fine, show me what this game's about.

They loaded their tokens into the front end of the machine.

Okay, you see? You're the blue one, I'm the red one. Choose whoever you want to play.

Does it matter? Do they play any different?

Well they do, but it doesn't matter – at least not right now – just pick someone who looks neat.

How about this guy. B-uhl-rag

I think it's Balrog.

Whatever, you're playing some girl.

Her name's Chun-Li!

They selected the stage. He showed Gregor how to move with the sticks and how to throw out punches with his character. He shot around the stage with fierceness; the kid hadn't seen a newcomer play like him before. Most new guys fumble around a bit before getting into a groove. The first round went to the kid.

See? You're getting the hang of it now.

Yeah, this game's, uh, pretty good. This guy's real strong too.

He has some of the hardest hits in the game – but he can't kick.

Why's that? That doesn't seem fair.

I think it's just because he's a boxer.

The next round was much closer. It came down to the last seconds of the match, but Gregor won as the time ran out.

That was a good match mister.

Thanks. I'm finally feeling like I get this guy.

The game's pretty fast to learn I guess. But you got a whole different kind of speed to you.

The game loaded up the last fight.

Listen, mister, I bet I can beat you in this round.

Gregor turned to look at him.

What did I tell you about gambling kid?

It's just a couple tokens, c'mon.

The kid reached into his pocket and pulled out 8 tokens and put them on the center of the cabinet.

Listen, if you win, you get my 8 tokens, alright?

I know how bets work, kid.

He straightened his posture up and looked down at the bar – the guys were in the middle of a game. What could it hurt? If this kid wanted to lose his money, more power to him, he thought.

Alright – fine.

He reached into his pocket and put a stack of coins on the counter. After another heated match, the clock started to get closer to the finish. Both of the players hopped across the screen. Gregor's Balrog shot piston-punches. The kid's Chun-Li caught Gregor in a flurry of kicks.

In one final moment, with the clock creeping ever towards the double zero, everything fell into place. As the kid hurdled to the ground from a back flip, Gregor jammed on the punch button. It sent him sailing. *K.O.*

Gregor's grin lit up. He bathed in the glow of the winner's screen. He looked over at the kid.

That was a good match.

Yeah, yeah, shut up. Take the money.

Now listen, don't be a sore loser kid. If you're gonna be sore about it I won't take your money, is that better?

The kid looked up with a blank face

Mister I bet I could beat you two rounds in a row.

What? Kid. You just lost and now you think you can take me again? Stop messin' around.

Honest, I bet I could beat you. How about double or nothing?

He felt a sheepish smile spread across his face. Gregor leaned over to check on the game at the cocktail cabinet. A few people had stepped up to try their luck at some of the others. He didn't necessarily feel terrible about beating the kid. What could one more match hurt? If anything it would just reinforce the lesson. Leave gambling to the adults.

Alright fine. But hey, how about this instead – you got any real money? Let's make this interesting.

Nah mister, I traded 'em all for tokens.

Well how many you got? I could use some – I'll trade you real money for those tokens and we'll play for real. How's that sound?

That sounds like you're tryin' to play me mister.

The kid was smart.

No, no, no – listen. This'll just be better for you.

If you win. It's not that big of a deal anyways right? You were just going to spend that money on tokens, right? If you win, you win it all.

Yeah, I s'pose. Alright, fine, here.

The kid handed him a clutch of tokens. In return he gave the kid a set of bills. The two sunk their tokens deep in the slot. Gregor went back to Balrog. This time, the kid picked Ken. Some guy with blonde hair in a red getup.

Gregor kept the match close. Thirty seconds in he was at three-fourths of his bar, while the kid barely had any left. The kid worriedly jumped back into his corner.

I'm comin' for ya! I'm gonna get ya'!

The kid reached the end of the screen. Just then a flurry of moves came out of him. Some spinning kick that sent his boxer the ground. As soon as he got up he was met with a set of punches before a fantastic blazing uppercut.

What! How did you do that!

I don't know, I just - kind of - mashed on the buttons.

The round finished close. He may have lost but he still had another chance. The screen flashed before him. A small crowd of kids began forming around the two. Each one held an inquisitive, excited look on his face: like he'd seen this sort of thing before. The match begun.

Out of the gate, Gregor was met with a series of blows. Sweep kicks prevented him from getting his bearings. Every time he tried to strike forward he was met with another fireball

What is that thing!

It's a Hadouken.

I don't even know what that means!

The fight continued on. He couldn't even get close enough to land a single blow. The kid pushed him back into the corner. A twinge shot up Gregor's spine.

Why can't I move back anymore!

A kid from the crowd answered:

It's the end of the screen!

Another fireball struck Balrog across the chest. He couldn't move. He couldn't block, he couldn't jump, he couldn't do anything. The kid got close to his face right before planting a beautiful shoryuken on Gregor's jaw.

Perfect!

Gregor laid his hands on the cabinet, muscles twitching from the furious bout. When the final blow was struck a horrible look of defeat washed over his face, hushing the cheer of the crowd. He turned to look at the kid.

That was a good game, mister.

Yeah. Thanks, I thought I had you that first time around, uh, good going.

His voice shook. The blood all rushed to his face and filled the pockets in his cheeks. Disgusted, he handed over the money he owed to the boy. He counted it out, slowly placing each bill into his hand as the crowd of kids laughed and jeered at the man forking over his cash to some punk.

Afterward, he rushed back to the bar in a huff. His trudging footsteps clomped against the carpet and signaled his return. The older guys surrounding the cocktail cabinet looked waywardly, only acknowledging his presence for half-a-second before returning to more important matters at hand.

He sat squat in his chair, looking blankly at the Warlords screen. Fireballs bounced back and forth against the shields of each fortress. The dragon flew in, sending another one screaming into the fray. He sighed deeply, humming along to the song playing over the intercom – the match drug on, longer than any regular match. He looked at one of his friends bent over, focusing on the screen. Wordlessly he tried to get his attention. When he looked over, Gregor motioned over towards the door. His friend was about to say something when the clamber of pixilated instruments signified a game over.

Alright, let's get out of here.

Why? We've only played a few games, I still have tokens to spend.

Then let's take a break or something – go see if there's any girls out on the rink that need a partner, eh?

Just then the man in the purple corner spoke up.

Listen Gregor – kids come to skate, players come to win

His words sunk deep into the mire of Gregor's

mind. He placed his hands on his knees and pushed forward into the green corner.

Fine, let's get this going.

The four players slid in their tokens, and the game began again.

Out back, in the cool night air a pair of young looking kids met up and sat on the back steps. One pulled out a lighter. The other, a pack of cigarettes. In the glow of the lamps hanging from the building they sat laughing. They watched beautiful fading embers from the tips of their cigarettes burn out into the darkness.

It Sucks that...

(you're grounded and can't go out with your girlfriend...
maybe I could be your girlfriend tonight?)

by *Some Pervert*

**WARNING: CONTAINS EXPLICIT SEXUAL CONTENT
INTENDED FOR A MATURE ADULT AUDIENCE ONLY**

Anne had plenty of other things she'd rather do than stay in with her brother. It was her first night home from her first term at university, but those were the instructions she had been given by her parents: her fifteen-year-old sibling had invoked their wrath by disregarding his curfew one too many times, and now she was assigned to make sure he remained grounded for the rest of the evening.

It slightly tainted what would otherwise be a pleasant reunion with her family, but the tension dissolved a little while after her parents left, and soon it became just another dull evening in. Her brother's mood improved while they talked - as much as was possible for a surly, teenaged boy in the throes of puberty. Anne thought he had changed even in the few months since she had last seen him - his voice didn't break quite so much now, and the hair on his chin seemed to be turning from wispy fluff into something darker and more robust.

In time, he tired himself of whining about their parents, and about how it was so important that he should be able to go out and see the girl with whom he'd recently become involved - 'Sarah', her name was. Apparently they had met during a detention, communicating through the medium of coy glances and furtively-passed notes. Her parents, he said, let her stay out as late as she liked, and he was sure that his own mother and father were intent on ruining his life for no good reason. Anne managed to feign concern throughout his rant, although she couldn't help but be reminded of the violent mood swings that had gripped her only a few years previously, while she was embroiled in the angst and turmoil of mid-adolescent hormones.

"I know what'll make you feel better," she said.

He frowned at her, and curled his lip in a way that said "what could you possibly know about the endless torment that is my futile, oppressed existence?"

Anne got up from her chair and stepped over her brother's legs, which were outstretched to rest upon the coffee table, shoes still on. He flicked to the next channel on the television, and his head drooped to one side listlessly. Another channel-change, and he snorted derisively. The third held his attention for long enough that he was still watching it when Anne walked into the kitchen and opened the fridge. There were six beers on the upper shelf, laid horizontally. Surely their father wouldn't notice if they just had a couple.

"Here, bro." She handed him a freshly opened bottle, and set about shifting a pile of magazines from the sofa.

"You sure this is a good idea?" he said. "Dad probably wouldn't appreciate us drinking his beer. Why are you moving all that stuff?"

"I'm sure he doesn't keep count exactly," she said. "And I can't sit next to my little brother with all these things in the way, can I?" she added, transferring a stack of assorted magazines to the floor and plopping down next to him. He grunted, and his attention returned to the TV screen.

Maybe this wasn't so bad, she thought. Whatever idiotic program he had selected to watch would probably be rendered more entertaining by further alcohol, but

she didn't want to push her luck. She finished the last mouthfuls, and set the empty bottle down upon the magazines. She removed her shoes, and then her socks, sliding down awkwardly on her seat to rest her feet on the table in the same manner as her brother. She could see that the pink nail polish she had applied a few days ago was starting to chip.

It wasn't particularly comfortable to sit like that. She scooted sideways, and brought her legs around so that her feet were resting in her brother's lap. He gave her an unimpressed look.

"I had to get three trains today," she said. "My feet are tired from all the travelling... rub them for me?"

"What? Eww, no!" he said, pushing her feet from his thighs. She had to put her arm out to stop herself from falling off her seat altogether.

"Mean," she pouted.

"Whatever."

"Come on," she said, "just a bit." She very slowly brought her foot towards his face, poking him with her toe.

"Stop it, Anne! Jeez."

"It's a chance to practice," she said. "You know... for when your girlfriend wants a foot-rub." She managed to expertly manoeuvre her pinky toe into his ear, and he flinched away suddenly, raising a hand to the violated orifice.

"You're being weird," he said.

"Aww, you're just in a bad mood because you can't see her this evening," she said.

Anne shifted closer to her brother. He took another sip from his mostly-full bottle, eyes fixed straight ahead on the television. She was sure she felt him go all tense when she rested her head on his shoulder. Something in either his deodorant or aftershave gave his neck a manly scent - warm and subtle, but with a slight edge to it. The muscles in his arm were firm as she leaned against him, and she found herself thinking about how safe and protected she'd feel with those arms around her.

"It sucks that you're grounded and can't go out with your girlfriend..." she said. She allowed her hand to wander onto his thigh. "Maybe I could be your girlfriend tonight?"

The screen went dark as he operated the remote control with a white-knuckled hand. She felt his fingers around her wrist as he gently, but firmly, returned her hand to her own lap.

"What."

The word came out flat, with no hint of inflection that it might even be a question. He turned to look at her with a look of utter incredulity.

"You know, I-I mean it's just the two of us tonight," she stuttered, "I don't know, I, uh, I thought we could, t-that is, if you wanted..." she could feel her cheeks flushing hot and red. She couldn't believe what she had just said to him - it had felt so right with the warm mass of his body alongside her, but now, suddenly separated by a vast gulf of sofa, things felt distinctly different and terrible.

Her brother stood up fast, mumbling something about going to check his e-mails. He stared very carefully at the floor as he left, tossing the remote control into her lap on the way out. There was a loud clink as he stumbled over the empty bottle, but he didn't look back. The door closed. Anne found that she was feeling cold for no discernible reason.

What had she been thinking?

She sat in silence for long minutes, in the fading warmth of the place her brother had occupied. She shook her head suddenly, as if it would dislodge the thoughts from her mind, and flicked the television back on. She needed to find something mindless, some dumb programme that would help her to turn off her brain and forget what had just happened. "No sense letting this go to waste," she said to herself, picking up the bottle from which her brother had taken only a few sips. She raised it to her lips, but paused for a moment. She returned to the kitchen, and came back with a glass to pour the beer into.

The rest of the evening disappeared in a blur of repeated game shows spaced around an hour-long

documentary about some kind of whale, she didn't care which. Halfway through her drink, she decided that she still didn't like beer after all, and tipped it down the sink when she cleaned away the rest of the evidence. Her parents eventually returned, and half an hour later she was in bed with her face buried in the pillow, trying to sleep so hard that she'd forget all about the evening's events.

Of course, it didn't work, and the first thing in Anne's mind the following morning was what she'd said to her brother, and how he'd responded to it. Maybe he would have already forgotten, she thought. A silly little offhand comment, that's all it was. He probably didn't even notice, or thought she was joking. It was all fine. They'd laugh about it one day. She pulled on her dressing gown over pyjamas, and headed downstairs.

She heard murmurs of conversation as she neared the kitchen. Both deep voices. It sounded like her father and brother were up early. She went inside.

"Morning!" she said, trying to sound cheerful.

Whatever conversation had been going on ceased immediately. Her brother looked at her for a second, before diverting all his attention to the bowl of cereal before him. Her father took a sip of coffee.

"Morning, Anne," he said. He looked solemn.

She went about preparing her own breakfast, and leaned against the worktop after inserting two slices of brown bread into the toaster. "What are you guys talking about so early?" she said.

"Oho, well, yes, well," her father said, "we were just talking about," (his eyes flitted ever so briefly to the newspaper that lay folded beside him), "about that new office development out of town. Thirty five thousand square feet, eh?" he said. "Imagine that. That's what, I mean, it's quite big, wouldn't you say?"

"I guess-," she began.

"We were just trying to work it out, weren't we son, and if that were all in one place it's, let's see, the square root of thirty-five... but it's an odd power-of-ten, so that's..."

"Sounds pretty fun," she said.

"Mm," he replied.

Anne tapped idly against the worktop with her hands while she waited for her breakfast. Despite knowing exactly what was going to happen next, the sudden ejection of the toast still startled her. She speared both slices with her knife to extract them, transferring them to a plate so that she could apply chocolatey, hazelnutty spread to both slices while they were still hot. She poured herself a glass of juice, and pulled a chair out from the table.

Her brother excused himself shortly after she sat down to eat. Her father, too, mumbled something about having things to do, and Anne was left to leaf through the newspaper alone, reading nothing in particular apart from the TV listings. Later, on her way to the shower, she noticed that the living room door was closed. That almost never happened. Her father's voice was just audible on the other side. She supposed he was making a phone call, and didn't want to be disturbed.

She was greeted with a strange sight at the foot of the stairs after getting showered and dressed: her brother and her parents were all standing there, as if they had been waiting for her. She made her way downstairs.

"What's going on?" she said.

"We thought we'd go and visit your grandmother in the home," her father said. "You know how much she misses you both."

"Isn't she coming up tomorrow, though?" It was a firmly entrenched family tradition that they would all eat together on Sundays. Surely nothing could disrupt that natural order.

"Exactly," said her mother, "so she won't be expecting us. It'll be a nice surprise."

Anne shrugged. It made enough sense. Something didn't feel quite right about the way her parents were looking at her, though.

"Okay, sure," she said.

The atmosphere in the car was a little awkward. She was sitting in the back with her brother, who was staring intently out of the window. She couldn't bring up

the events previous night with her parents around. Come to think of it, they were unusually quiet as well.

The car cruised past a familiar motorway sign at a much faster than usual speed.

"Wasn't that the turning?" she said.

"They're changing the road layout further along," her father said. "This way is faster."

"Huh. You'd think they'd put a sign, or something."

"Bloody highway maintenance," he said. "Ha. Ha. Ha," he added.

It seemed to be taking an unusually long time to reach the retirement home. The dual carriageways eventually gave way to single-lane roads leading through villages Anne had never seen. There were a lot of trees around here, she thought.

A big, old-looking building came into view, something like a sprawling country manor with red brick walls and a surprisingly large car park, surrounded with a wire mesh fence. There were wrought-iron letters set in an arch over a large gateway, and she got as far as reading "St. Hilda's Hospital for Mentally something-or-other" before they had driven inside.

"This isn't grandma's place," she observed.

"I'm afraid there's some bad news," her mother said. "We need to go inside, OK?"

"Is it about grandma?"

"Just wait until we get inside, she said."

The car came to a stop in a space close to the entrance. Everybody disembarked.

"Oh gosh, she's OK, right? Please tell me she's OK." The word 'mentally' in that sign had Anne wondering if her grandmother had finally succumbed to dementia, or something worse.

"She's just fine," her mother said. "But we need to go inside now."

The family walked through two sets of sliding glass doors that were quite out of place amongst the Edwardian brickwork. Anne sat with her mother while her brother and father went to speak with a bespectacled, middle-aged lady behind a reception desk. The empty waiting room was a strange synergy of modern fixtures and old architecture: the aged, wooden floor had been scuffed by the legs of mass-produced plastic chairs, lined up in rows. A poorly-stocked vending machine stood between two brick pillars, offering for sale its inventory of three chocolate bars and a single upside-down packet of crisps. Anne stood up to wander over to a large painting of a stern-looking man brandishing a pair of callipers, a plaster cast of a human head set on a table before him with different areas of the skull coloured like a map. A brass plaque beneath it read: 'FOUNDER: Dr. T.S. Gulik'.

The lady behind the desk was speaking to somebody on the telephone now. She glanced over at Anne, and then scribbled something down on the papers before her. Her father, leaning against the counter with one hand, rubbed at his eyes, scrunching them shut and pinching the bridge of his nose. Her brother was kicking his foot against the desk, head slouched between his shoulders in typical, surly teenager fashion.

The phone went 'click' as it was returned to its cradle. The lady smiled amicably at Anne's father, and shuffled her papers. A few of them floated down to the floor, misplaced, and her father stooped down to gather them up and hand them back to the embarrassed, profusely apologetic secretary. Double doors on the other side of the waiting area swung open, and a pair of large men in blue hospital scrubs walked in. Neither could have been much less than six and a half feet tall. As they strode in, Anne realised they were heading straight towards her.

She took a step back as they came closer, their arms held just away from their sides, palms open. "Hey... what's going on?" she said. "Dad? Hey! What are you doing?"

One of the men had grabbed her by the shoulder. The other seized her wrist and twisted her arm behind her back. "Ow!" she cried. "What's going on? What the hell is this?"

"I'm sorry, Anne," her father said. He came close enough to rest his hand on her shoulder. His lips were

quivering ever so slightly. His eyes were watery. "Your brother told me about last night. About what you said."
"Oh god... Dad, I didn't- it was just some stupid thing."

"Sure. Sure it was," he said. "Look, Anne, it's obvious you're not well. The people here are going to help you get better."

"I don't need to get better! Jesus Christ, Dad! I just wasn't thinking, is all! You can't..." her breath caught in her throat, "you can't do this! Mum! Tell him!"

She looked down to see her mother holding a handkerchief to her eyes. She wouldn't look back at her. She stood up, and hurried towards the door. Her brother put his arm around her.

"Look, Anne, you need to try and understand," her father said, "I know the administrator here. They helped your uncle Andrew. You remember him, don't you?"

"He was a fucking schizophrenic!" she screamed. She barely noted the hurt expression that flickered across her father's face - it was the first time she had ever sworn in front of him.

"If they could help him, then think of how much good they can do for you," he said. "I'm sorry, love. I hope you'll come to understand. Goodbye."

The last word trailed off into a stifled sob as he turned away, hand clutched over his mouth. None of them looked back as they left Anne to be dragged, heels pattering against the floor ineffectively, through the double doors at the room's far end.

"NO!" she screamed, "You can't do this! There's nothing wrong with me!"

"Keep it down, please," one of the men said.

"I will not! Let me go right now!"

"Sshh!"

The single, hissed sound felt like it bore an immense power coming from the lips of one of the burly men. Maybe she should be quiet, she thought, at least for now. Perhaps they'd more easily see that she was completely healthy if she was co-operative. She allowed

herself to be dragged onwards in silence.

Anne spent the next three hours in a sterile-feeling room, the walls covered in thick, cream paint that had dried in rivulets around some of the fixtures where it had been inexpertly applied. There was a bunk bed, each mattress covered with a pale blue sheet tucked in so tight that there was neither crease nor wrinkle on the fabric's taut surface. A neatly-folded set of clothes was arranged on the thin pillow - a large, grey t-shirt, and a pair of loose-fitting trousers of some soft material, almost like pyjamas, with a drawstring around the waist. A pair of grey carpet slippers had been arranged on the floor, at the foot of the bed.

There was a single window, overlooking neatly-tended gardens with gravel paths that wound between blocky hedges and small flowerbeds. Anne could see a group of five people sitting in a circle on the grass - four figures clothed in formless, grey garments like those on her bed, and a fifth wearing a long, white coat, and apparently reading to the others from a book.

With nothing else to do, she watched the scene, elbow resting on the windowsill, head propped on her fist. The group remained for twenty more minutes before they all stood, and began to head back towards the building. One of the figures suddenly broke away from the rest, sprinting off between the hedges, and very soon pursued by the figure in the white coat. A pair of men, like those who had manhandled Anne to her room, entered the scene and disappeared into the greenery. A few minutes later, the would-be escapee was returned, carried over the shoulder of one of the men. Still hanging upside-down, they received what looked to be quite a stern lecture from the one in the white coat, with much emphatic pointing and gesturing.

Anne jumped to her feet at the sound of the door being opened. It was one of the big men from before, who was now insisting that she had to change into the set of clothes that had been provided for her before they left. She made some effort at objection, and the man merely glared at her furiously. He didn't even offer her the courtesy of looking away when she finally assented and changed her clothes, leaving her own garments in a pile on the floor. Without any words of explanation, she was escorted to another room, where a young woman wearing a lab coat and holding a clipboard was waiting for her, black ballpoint pen poised and ready in her fingers. She indicated that Anne should lie down on the

padded bench that occupied the room's centre.

"Would you mind telling me exactly what's going on?" said Anne. She sat on the end of the bench, but did not lie down. The wipe-clean material covering it felt stiff and plasticky.

"We gave you the leaflet to read yesterday," she said. "I'm not going to explain it again." She spoke curtly, perhaps trying to cultivate an air of professionalism to offset an appearance too youthful to suggest much experience - she could not have been older than twenty-five.

"I only got here a few hours ago, though," said Anne.

"Sure you did," she said. "Look, Anna, I know it's hard for you, but just try and co-operate. We're going to make you better."

"I'm not Anna. I'm Anne," she said.

The other girl rolled her eyes and let out a frustrated sigh.

"You want me to go over all the information we have on you? Again?" she said. She turned some pages on her clipboard so she was looking at the first, and began to read out loud:

"Anna Robinson, aged twenty-two, diagnosis-"

"But that's not me!"

"Diagnosis," the girl continued, raising her voice, "pathological liar", (every syllable enunciated with great emphasis), "mildly delusional, moderate to serious nymphomania - which is what we're treating in today's session," she added, looking up from her clipboard, "what else..." Her eyes moved more rapidly as she scanned the rest of the page, "ah, here, undergoing topical, corrective electroshock treatment. See? It's all here."

"But it's a mistake! I'm not her! Ask the reception woman, she-"

"I don't have time for games, Anna. I'm afraid you can't stall any longer. Take your trousers down and lie on the bench."

"I'm not-"

"DO IT," she said, "NOW."

Anne decided to take matters into her own hands. She leaped from the bench, making a dash for the door before she realised the fatal flaw in her plan: the orderly, still present, stepped in front of her and grabbed her with his massive arms, completely immobilising her in his iron grip. He wrestled her down onto the bench, and there was a swishing sound as, from somewhere beneath it, he drew out a strap like a car safety belt, securing it over Anne's midriff and cinching it tight. She struggled to raise herself up on her elbows, and then the other girl's hands were around her shoulders, pinning her down while more straps were fastened across her chest. A pair of cuffs were secured around her wrists, attached to the bench with locking metal rings and holding her arms by her sides. She tried to kick out at the man standing at the end of the bench and he intercepted her foot in mid-air, forcing her leg back down before securing another set of manacles around her ankles. By the time they were finished, she could hardly move at all.

"Right. It looks like we can make a start," said the girl.

Anne's anger was turning to desperation. Tied down to the bench like this, unable to move any limb more than a few inches, she was feeling very helpless indeed. She didn't know what they would do to her next, but she certainly didn't like the sound of 'topical electroshock treatment.'

"Please!" she said, "just check your fucking paperwork! I'm not supposed to be here!"

"Now you're not even trying to convince me," said the girl. "I'm tired of hearing you complaining. This ought to set things right."

She opened a drawer in a cabinet along one of the walls. Anne could move her head enough to catch a glimpse of the drawer's label, which read 'Misc. restraints'. When the girl turned around she was holding a length of thin strap, which had a perforated, hollow plastic ball set about halfway along it. She came to stand at the end of the bench, behind Anna's head, and held it out in front of her.

"Open your mouth," she said.

Anna shook her head, clamping her lips shut. The girl nodded at the orderly, who removed one of Anna's slippers. Then her sock. Then she felt his fingers tickling against the sole of her foot, and the desperate need to suppress her laughter made it all the more impossible. She let out a weird sound that was half laughter, half cry of frustration. As she did so, the girl shoved the ball gag into her mouth and fastened the strap tightly, fussing around with Anne's hair to make sure it didn't get in the way. Then she dismissed the orderly, and took his place at the foot of the table.

"There we are," she said, "I don't have to listen to any more of your whining. It's so much more convenient when you don't have to adhere to patient treatment guidelines."

"Mmh!"

"Hush," she said. "Making pointless noise won't do you any good. Now, let's begin."

The girl wheeled a piece of equipment over from where it had been resting in the corner - a small trolley, supporting an oscilloscope which sat on top of another box that had black fins along its edges. There was a bundle of wires on the trolley's lower shelf. The girl set it alongside the bench, and plugged one cable into a wall outlet. A single, green line appeared on the oscilloscope's display.

She slipped her fingers under the waistband of Anne's trousers, and pulled them down a few inches. Then she did the same with her panties. Anne made angry noises through her gag, straining her neck to look down at the girl and glower at her. Her objections turned to pleading whimpers as the girl picked up a pair of cables from the trolley, both of which were terminated with crocodile clips. She flexed them with her fingers, opening and closing their serrated metal jaws.

"Let's see if we can't bring that overactive sex drive of yours into line, shall we?"

"Mmmn!"

"It's a shame, in a way," she said. She set the crocodile clips down, and brushed Anne's hair from over her face with one hand, resting a finger on her cheek.

"I'm sure you'd find no shortage of people with whom to satisfy your deviant urges. But you were brought here to be cured, so I supposed that's what we must do. Just a little brain re-wiring. It's remarkable the sort of changes you can effect with simple conditioning." She picked up one of the clips, and Anne cringed as she felt the fingers of the girl's other hand against her exposed genitals. "This is going to hurt," she said, "so try to exhale along with the pain. Ready?"

She counted down from five, and Anne howled as the girl attached the tightly-sprung clip, its metal jaws digging into soft, labial flesh. The anticipation during the next count-down was worse, as she knew exactly what to expect, and then there was another stab of hot agony between her legs as the girl attached the second clip. The pain made her want to thrash her limbs, but any movement at all only seemed to make it worse. She lay still, wishing her hands were free to wipe away the tears running down her face.

"It's OK, Anna," she said. The girl tore a piece of paper towel from a dispenser, and used it to dab the tears from Anne's cheeks. "No pain, no gain, right? The worst part's over. Well, the worst part of the set up, anyway. Now we just need to take care of a few other things."

She fished something out from the tangle of wires on the trolley, brandishing the object like a sword - it was about the same size and shape as a cucumber, its surface gleaming, polished chrome. One end was blunt and rounded, while the other sprouted a bundle of wires. She spent a few minutes plugging it into the oscilloscope, tweaking dials and entering parameters on the equipment's rudimentary keypad.

Despite its shape, some part of Anna had been clinging to the hope that perhaps the girl was just going to prod her with the implement, and deliver a few shocks to her in various places. Her suspicions of the device's terrible purpose were confirmed when the girl unscrewed the cap on a tube of water-based gel lubricant. She applied a generous blob to the chromed shaft, smearing it around until the front half was coated with a slimy sheen. Anne didn't want to watch what happened next. She allowed her head to droop to one side defeatedly, trying to distance herself from the feeling of cold metal against the throbbing, sore lips of her genitals. She shuddered as the device was pushed inside her. It felt like her guts were being chilled by the cool mass of smooth metal.

Perhaps seeing her reaction, the other girl offered her some reassuring words. "Don't worry. It'll warm up soon enough," she said. "Just a few more adjustments to make."

Anne felt herself being violated further as the girl adjusted the position of the implement and the clips, ensuring everything was in its right place. Once satisfied, she peeled a number of long strips of tape from a roll and used them to hold the device inside her, smoothing the lengths of tape over Anne's belly, looping them down between her legs, over the device, and sticking them in place at the small of her back.

"All right, we're ready to begin," she said. Anne had been dreading the moment. The girl rested her thumb and forefinger around a dial labelled 'vib.' "We'll start off with some mild positive stimulation. Negative reinforcement comes a bit later, so for now just try and relax. I suppose you might even enjoy it, while your brain's still wired up wrong."

She turned the dial and depressed a switch. Inside Anne, the device was roused from its inert state and began to buzz quietly. She was cringing in anticipation of whatever horrid sensations her body might be subjected to, but the actual effect was quite unexpected. Against the dull baseline of pain from the crocodile clips, the implement's vibrations felt almost pleasant - a sort of constant tickling sensation in certain, rather sensitive parts of her anatomy.

"All right so far?" the girl enquired. "Oh, look at you blushing," she said, "you're all flustered. At least that means it's working."

Anne gave a whine of protest. The cuffs rattled against the bench as she tested them, but there was no way she could get free. She tensed her legs, and the clenching of her thighs only intensified the sensation from the device. She was unable to prevent herself from giving a little moan.

"Enjoying yourself?"

"Mmuh."

She had intended it to be a negative response. She shook her head and made what she hoped was a suitably pleading expression towards the girl, who

merely smiled to herself and wrote something down on her clipboard. Despite her protest, Anne couldn't deny the fact that, on some level, it did actually feel quite good.

She lay there for minutes more as the device hummed and throbbed inside her. She was sure that the intensity of the vibration was steadily increasing. The muscles in her thighs were twitching involuntarily, and her t-shirt began to cling to her from the sweat. The sensation of a steadily approaching orgasm was undeniable, but the stimulation wasn't quite enough to push her over the edge. She only wished the torment would finish one way or the other - either for the girl to realise whatever stupid paperwork error had led to her being in this situation and let her go, or to simply be done with it, and have the electric device bring her to climax. It shifted inside her as she tried to change position, and there was an unmistakable feeling of wetness between her thighs.

The girl inspected the point where the device interfaced with Anne, and nodded in approval. "Good," she said. A more sinister kind of smile appeared on her face, baring her teeth to an unsettling extent. "Now we can move on to the second part."

Until this point, Anne had drifted into hazy, semi-lucid state of mind where all she could focus on was the steady throb of the device, holding her maddeningly close to release. The girl adjusted something on the oscilloscope, and Anne gave a cry of pain as a sharp tingling sensation exploded across her nether regions. There were a few seconds' respite before the next jolt, more painful than the first, and accompanied by wavy lines jumping up and down on the oscilloscope screen. Her muscles tensed out of reflex; she would have arched her back were it not for the thick straps holding her down to the bench. Struggling only seemed to make it worse, but she couldn't help herself from doing so. She thrashed her head from side to side, whimpering through her gag as surge after surge of electricity was delivered directly into her genitals.

It didn't get any better with time. The shocks began to come at irregular intervals, always having a slightly different character - some of them long, low-power pulses that felt like her insides were being tickled, others coming in sharp bursts like a numbing sledgehammer blow of voltage, which she would only

just have time to recover from before the next jolt hit her. The implement's throbbing was much more intense now - everything seemed to be orchestrated so that a punishing surge of electricity would be delivered just as she felt she was about to finally achieve orgasm. At some point she had started to cry hysterically. Her face was wet with tears and snot, but even in that pitiful state, the girl was offering her no mercy - the shocks came again and again, and endless barrage with no discernible pattern.

Anne could hear the girl speaking over the sound of her own cries, although she wasn't sure she wanted to hear what she had to say. Something about all the parameters being appropriately balanced. She made a few pen-strokes on her clipboard with a flourish, and then leaned in close to Anne, holding her by her chin to bring them face-to-face.

"Looks like everything's nicely set up now," she said. "I've got a few other patients to take care of, but I'll be back in, oh... half an hour or so."

"Mmuuh!"

"See you then!"

The girl paid no heed to Anne's futile cries as she walked away, out of the room. A few minutes later one of the orderlies returned, carrying with him a stool, and a newspaper rolled up under his arm. He sat by the door and began to read, every so often glancing upwards to check on her. Anne was consigned to her own, private universe of torment, her body held in the grasp of an unimaginable combination of agony and pleasure. Her arms and legs seemed to be twitching every so often, totally uncontrollably. Somewhere in the maelstrom of physical sensation there was the feeling of release and relief from between her legs, and she felt a warm puddle spreading beneath her buttocks. It didn't seem important in the wider context of the unending electrical torture. She might actually have experienced one or more orgasms during the ordeal, but it was impossible to unravel them from the tangled onslaught of stimuli.

Anne was a quivering, drooling mess by the time the other girl eventually returned. She was dimly aware of the wet, sucking sound as the device was pulled from between her legs, and a fresh stab of hot pain as the crocodile clips were removed. The restraints were

unfastened from around her limbs and chest, but she didn't have the energy to move any more. She was utterly worn out - even now, the whole of her abdomen and lower parts were suffused with a tingling feeling, like the physical equivalent of TV static.

She was taken to a shower room somewhere, and scrubbed down by a pair of nurses before being put in a fresh set of identical clothes. There was another girl in her room when they brought her back, sitting on the top bunk and swinging her legs idly. Anne nodded at her once in acknowledgement, before curling up into a ball on top of her mattress and burying her head between her knees.

"Oh hey, don't be like that."

The other girl was speaking to her for some reason. Anne was not in the mood for conversation. She seemed to be talking with a quite inappropriately cheerful tone.

"Aren't you at least going to say hi?" she said. "It looks like we'll be sharing this room, so..."

Anne offered the girl a single word of greeting.

"So, what are you here for?" she asked. Anne felt the mattress lurch as the girl dropped down beside her. "My psychiatrist sent me here. He says I want to fuck too much. I think that's kind of a crazy idea, you know?" The inflection she added to every sentence made everything sound like a question. "Oh, my name's Anna, by the way. What's yours?"

Anne slowly uncurled herself into a sitting position to regard the girl, who was looking at her eagerly. She also seemed to have one hand down her pants, without particularly realising what she was doing.

"It was a bit weird today," she said, "they took me to this room, and shone bright lights at me, and went on and on about how incest is wrong and bad and causes genetic abnormalities and stuff. I don't know what they were trying to do, I was all like, 'It's not like I want to fuck my brother or anything!' and then they were like 'we know all about you, just be quiet and watch the video'. It was so weird, you know? So, what did they do with you today?"

The Other Boat

by EM.F.D

The other boat moves silently through the fog. Your own boat makes soft lappings in the water. Everything is grey, and you greyly pull your collar tight around your throat. There is no rowing silhouette sitting in the other boat, so you cease rowing and lightly ride the momentum towards the other boat. You are hungry, but you are close. It would be rude to come upon a hungry stranger with the smell of egg salad fresh on your breath. You listen to the quiet water and think about not being hungry.

The other boat slowly comes nearer, or rather it stays as you slowly come nearer towards it. Its wood begins to look like birch. A yellowish hump is visible just above its gunnel, stark in all the grey. You yell, and the hump doesn't move. The other boat and your boat continue to slowly come together. Soon you see that the hump is the highest part of a pile of humps and lines giving a yellow blanket the outline of a body: a breasted body with one knee bent, lying between the seats.

Wood knocks on wood as you grab hold of the side of the other boat. You look at the blanket, following its lines. You grab a rope from under your seat and tie one end to the other boat's seat, and the other end to your own. The blanket is a warm yellow that makes you think of fields and winds and picnics. You are hungry. You yell again and then half-shout once. The blanket doesn't respond. The water makes water-sounds and the fog is silent. The boats knock each other quietly.

You climb in and sit near the blanket's head. You touch the edge of the blanket and then stop touching it. You look about the boat; there are no oars, no ropes. There is a leather pack under the far seat; an oak box and old book are under the one you're sitting on. You pull out the box and feel its smooth surface as you lift it to your lap. The blanket does not move. You lift the lid and the box comes with it. It does not open. You push your fingertips into the small groove and try to pry, but

it does not open. You shake it and there are muffled clunks. You look it over and find that there is a small slot in the bottom panel, in the shape of a lightning bolt with advanced elephantiasis. You check the floor for a malformed key but find none. You look at the blanket for awhile, and then at the pack.

You set the box back under the seat, then bend forward to pull out the pack. The boat rocks. Your boat knocks hollow and lonely. Some movement in the water catches your eye. You stand and look down into it, but see nothing. Stepping into your boat and staring over its side reveals some more nothing. You sit and rub your throat and watch the water, look around at all the empty fog, and then inspect the pack.

It resembles the one used by your father for taking books from village to village. Fine yellow stitching and an insignia— a yellow shield bearing a radish? a beet? a bulbous root of some sort— adorn the worn leather. You undo the strap and look inside. You feel guilty when you find a bundle of letters, all addressed to one 'Darling Sol.' You flip through them and begin to read one:

How is my treasure, my lifeblood? Is the crop alive and well, does your mother still scowl at my mention? Have you gone by my house, are the hyacinths in bloom? I've not had...

You stop. You fold them and set them down and go through the other objects: a small mirror, a tarot deck, a handful of almonds, a handleless pocket watch. There is no crippled key. You pack in the objects and the letters, take a nibble of one almond, and set down the pack.

You look back to the blanket. A warm yellow: a summer coat, a bed of flowers, freshly baked bread. You grab your own box and remove your sandwich and eat

it. A little moist, the taste of fog. You watch the water and examine your boots. You finish and look back to the blanket. You stand and switch boats and slide the pack back into place. The air has grown darker. You sit and look and listen and consider patting down the blanket. You lean forward and reach and then lean back.

You remember the book. You pull it out, gingerly with appreciative hands. Its cover is blank blue leather, and its spine brings some faint memories of long-gone letters, one an R or an F. You open it to find several torn-out pages and an overwritten narrative in progress. You hold the book close and squint in the poor light. You read:

And I have never felt more dead— observant but not present; the breeze in her hair; the previous generation of sweetgrass at her feet; a reflection of a long dead star in the water; not sorrowful nor at peace, just some bodiless aspect of cosmic observance— than in those minutes on the cliffs. Before much time passed, she left, but I knew that our currents had forever converged.

We did not acknowledge each other the next day, nor the day after that. When she passed by our pasture with a few of her cousins I spat and they spat back. In the square, at the market, she was with her father, quietly questioning my milk before offering a pittance and then leaving empty-handed. I did not take insult from these few performances of ours; she glanced at me only once, but I saw the smoulder in her eyes, those typical Galli embers alight with a glow likely never before fanned by a Forn.

Our first true blaze was on a hill by the windmill, as we had discussed on the cliffs two cold nights before. I brought a quilt to lay on the grass and watched the moon flicker between the creaking arms. She came quietly from behind and sat without a word. We watched each other for a time in silence; I lost myself in the lunar blink on her auburn locks, her milky skin— growing red about the chest, flush and waiting beneath her tan-coloured cloth— and she... my...

It has grown too dark to read. You attempt the next few lines thrice over before your eyes ache, and you stop. You close the book, squint at the blanket, and return to your boat.

You lie between the seats. You set the book

beside you, your head on the boards, and you shift from one uncomfortable position to another uncomfortable position. After some time of failure, you move the book under your head and are not comfortable, but not uncomfortable. You close your eyes. There is a small splash somewhere and you open them. You look into darkness. You cross your arms and wish for a blanket. You close your eyes. You sleep.

You dream of a warm grove filled with leafy shrubs and olive trees, in the melodic trickle of water. You push through the growth, towards the source of the sound. A small clearing appears with a fern-circled pool of grey water below a yellow sky. You step out from the brush and a girl surfaces in the water. She walks from the pool and you stare at her bare, dripping breasts and the wooden box in her hands, and then her breasts some more. She sets down the box and comes close to you. You step back and she smiles, touching your arm, and you are a deer being chased by howling wolves; running, bounding, the crunch of twigs under-hoof and the heat of breath on your fur, and you wake up.

Everything is grey. You look into the grey for some time, then sit and stare at the blanket. You stretch and yawn and climb into the other boat. You pull out the pack, open it, find the almonds, and take them. You look at the oaken box and eat an almond. You close the pack and put it in its place. You return to your boat and sit and eat. You pick up the book, examine its cover and spine, then open it and find where you left off.

You eat and flip through a few pages without reading. You find that the book is hollow; not far from where you stopped reading the pages have had their centres gutted and edges glued. In the open space sits a small, painfully misshapen wooden key. You pick it up and feel its smooth sides.

You feel the edges of the attached pages and close the book. You step into the other boat and set the book in its place. You hoist up the box. The key fits into the bottom of it with a neat click. The lid opens.

Inside, on a red velvet lining, purple hyacinth petals are strewn about a dagger and a beet. You lift the dagger, feel its heft, and set it down. You smell a few of the petals. You pick up the beet, squeeze it a bit, and wonder if it's good to eat. You stare at the blanket for some time, then bite into the beet.

The Other Day, I was Just Sitting There and Then

by 1c7

Hey there, how's it going – yeah, no: don't answer that. I know what you're thinking – basically – but it's not really important; you're not going to say anything anyway, are you? That's fine, I know you won't. Yes, I'll have a slice of fried mortadella (crusty edges, soft center) and a black coffee. He'll have another coke here, thanks. Anyway, I know you're freaking out right now but are too neurotic and anxious and scared to say anything; I bet you're wondering if this is a normal social situation – that you're just too disconnected to realize it, and risk looking like a goon by saying anything. I know. Not you, personally. But I can tell your type by looking at you. You're mediocre, neurotic, faux-romantic – the works. You're sitting here and you were just gonna order drinks and wouldn't even consider ordering food. That's just how you are. Don't beat yourself up about it. I'm just here to talk, not have a conversation though, since it's been established you won't say anything, so I'll just talk enough for the both of us.

You like this suit? Me too. I love it, actually. It's been a nice day, people've been commenting on the suit the whole day. I saved up for half a year to get the goddamn suit – you see it's not just the tailor whom I have to pay, it's also the round-way ticket to London to get it. The hotel, I mean. It snowballs into a whole thing – it's way more expensive than at first glance, you see? Ah, god, you see, I'm rambling now, just rambling; this isn't what I wanted to talk to you about. No, no, I'm not on any drugs. I know how you might think that but I'm not. I'm just – Oh, thanks. Can I get some more napkins here? Hey, okay, here's the deal: I've been thinking, wondering if my first sexual experience was in any way a course-setting event for the rest of my sexual, and by extension entire, life: as an event that shapes my actions, as opposed to the beginning of a pattern of events that happen to me, if you know what I mean.

Basically what went down is this: I'm seventeen and your type – quiet, averse to action, lacking basic

human ambition – and there's this family gathering, right? There's a barbecue, hammocks, beer, sand, the whole she-bang. And there's this little cousin of mine, and the kid must have taken horse-steroids during the couple o' years I hadn't seen her 'cause she honestly looked older than I did. Of course, later I learned how old she really was, but I hate stories where the preface just gives away the whole story, so I'm not going to elaborate much into it. Just let me say I wasn't the one driving the wheel, OK? It was knock-knock, I open the door, and suddenly I'm face up in my bed and she's straddling me and I can't even respond, much like you can't right now. I don't even have a say in the entire thing and it's not like I'm particularly enjoying myself. My dick didn't get hard for a couple of minutes and she was mad about that: pinned me down and rammed her tongue into my mouth, which actually got the whole thing going. She never said a word, and neither did – well, could – I, but I came out of the whole thing alright, even better than before, the whole incestuous pedophile thing notwithstanding.

You see, a thing like that – a thing, an actual thing that happens to you – is bound to incite some change. I, for one, turned out to be this, what you see here: the suit, the hair, the watch. Not saying that's what the ideal is or that you should be this, but I at least became some kind of person, you know? And that's my point: you're barely a person right now, like this, without any kind of will of your own. Point in case: you're just sitting there, taking this as I took that without even making the slightest effort of resistance. That's why I'm here, to shock you into being a person, and maybe some day you'll find yourself from a few years ago sitting somewhere like this, and you'll recognize yourself immediately and try to spark something into action in that rusty stopped clockwork of an almost-human that you'll find, because I sure as hell couldn't sit back and not do anything. Hey, hey, I'll take the check now. Yeah, the cokes too. You're welcome, kid.



Poetry

Contessa Feline

by ToM

Witch thee
Bewitch me
Which me? switch me.
Kiss me, fix me

Deeply feel those desires crossed out
Miles of way
Years of day
Moods of Night

Crystals on tips
of touched tongues
Chants lightening lungs
Notes & mists twirled and spun
Extract exact intention from print
basked fun

Such momentum in moments
No split spit
trust love it
si, si, si, vero
plus positive, plus positive
Catharsis cater
Devine serene being
Supreme thing intangibly tangible
It's within and expressed in eyes full

Lines don't weight
Lines await
Fate to rake
Violet Sweet taste
Amore shake
Silver glitter cake taste
Meow amore

don't know

by Theo Thimo

mom
please
i cant
mom
i dont
know how
to
swim
mom
please
dont let
go
of me
mom
hold
me
mom
please

Gnosis

by Benjamin Snyder

*Children of Seth, you do not know what you want,
But you seek out whatever you may get. Salted down men,
You chase after Joves in the sky.
You will see what it is like to know.*

I. Pater

*In the days of Lilith demons were everywhere.
You and me have differences. We're carved like
Misfits, but I was given a more pronounced chin.
I'll leave you, running away! You'll never catch me.*

*I never caught her. I walk through the woods naked.
The birds mock me, they've made songs about me.
I'm aloof to their simple scorn, I read books by Aristotle
And I think about God.*

*I want to play in the bushes with her still,
She could pretend to be Holy and I would pretend
To be a real sinner. 'We have different parts,'
She'd say, and I'd lick her face.
We'd both lay down together and we'd
Talk about getting into heaven,
And dying at the same time,
And she'd slowly show me her thighs.
I'd convert to heathenism and become a cruel man,
I'd slaughter children for the fun of it!
She'd let me get in her pantsâ€¦'*

*In the Golden Age of man I was in a cave,
Mocking everyone else's having fun, chumps!
I read slowly the works of Ovid and Virgil.
Foolish poems, these are for little girls.
I couldn't give a damn about frilly elegance.
The water in my cave drips and makes a harsh sound,
I hear the little bugs scramble and chatter,
I want the poets tongue blurred, and his eyes blotched out.*

In the silver age everyone else was just children.

*I was a big hairy yeti with brown eyes,
My ass stuck out and my head was large,
My face was covered with spots.
Too bad, I thought, I'll live alone forever.
It rained on me all the time.*

*The bronze age brought new gods,
They came in on boats from across the shore,
Dressed in war clothes.
They made songs with strings and lispy words.
They can have fun on boats,
I will be here enjoying the land.*

*And what comes on a boat now?
It's the end-times, disease, and poetry,
Ay me! My guts are spilling out.
What a rout to my cleanly living!
And who is that on my fields?
I see him on his flaming wagon,
It's hell come to disperse my atoms.*

II. Filius

*Black has chopped the wood,
Weird symbols, obscure lines.
Sigils of demons drawn in my blood,
Ugly beasts growing from trees.
Aye, so this is it. Hell is two eyes,
And a disgusting nose
And an incessant whine.*

*Blackness, you, born from me.
I raised you like a mother,
You suckled on my teat.
I deemed you, 'Ezekiel,
'Prophet of Madness.'
And you titled me Exiled King.*

*Days are long now, Ezekiel.
Everything is by nature long.
I want to see what it means
Once again to be a sailor,
I want to once again drink,*

*And drink until I'm drunk.
And then I'd be a wet Greek
Sailing a boat. On the
Afternoons the air is misty.
My side-man calls to me, he says
'Loosen your eyes upon all!'
So I did.*

*It is spring. I took you for a wife,
My little love, my pure flower.
It is summer. You talk to me.
You want me to come with you
Down to the woods. I will.
'Come with me far away!'
I will.
'Loosen away your cares!'
I will, sure.
So we went down to the woods.
The bugs chatter and grieve,
It's dark. I love you.*

*'Don't you enjoy the summer breeze?'
'What do you think, eh?'
I see the red eye of death.
These trees are midwives
To birth up my Mars.
These blackened husks,
Albino white marrow inside,
Are like the screech of ghosts.
These trees hang themselves
Slender up in the eaves.
The lights brought in are distorted.
This is no way to live.*

*These trees hang up in the airs,
Ropes around their husks.
Eyes, nose, whine, red planets,
Utter but a 'Thoth,' say but a 'Sun'â€,
Uniform, these fields are blank.
Endless white, the thrills of death!
All of a sudden from the white
I see a steady head, a lion-man
Who talks the words of God.*

*I, Bythos - seven feet tall statuette -
'Burly lion with the face of a man -
'Am revealed. Behold! My power:
'Red planet, red planet; dancing
'Fast until dizziness pervades ye.
'I - Elohim, Demiurge, tight ball of
'Spirit, dancing wildly around, arrive.
'Worship my divine faults! Cracked mirror.
'Shards of glass. Cups of wine.
'I will show you now true intervention.'*

III. Spiritus Sanctus

*The sun is on my back fine, I look around.
The water flows along the lake's white.
Great waves are around me, ancient waves,
Like stones set in primeval ground,
With carved faces with primitive brows.
The sun is a face carved in wine.
Famous men are all around me,
Men who were savages with hands,
And men who were lovers of women.
Men who loved the arts and often tried
Their hand at crafting what is most beautiful,
But always failed, are standing around me,
Wonderfully carved into their stone
They wave around me. My boat tousles
Itself, it cannot decide which way to go,
It is drunk off the fact it is thrashing,
It is intoxicated and immovable for it
Moves all around. I wipe a good sweat off
Of my brow. The water is beautiful in the evening.*

*'Dimitri, man, grab me the whiskey.
'Hell's a deafness, the moon is out,
'The sun is out. Wolf-men walk now
'With their fur off, and their skin slicked
'Back, and their bones revealed.
'And now witch-people will clamor around
'In the streets, showing off their sexuality.'*

I, twice-true and knowledgeable, am burning with alcohol.

*I am what is left in the dusts, I am undiluted and unmixed
In my pure passions. I am what is most great in a striving man,
And what is excellent in a passionate woman, naked in the arts
And thriving in an admixture of faultiness. I am the teeth that greatest cut
Into the flesh, and I am the flesh that's hardest to cut.
Take part in me for ultimate and divine Gnosis.*

*The water is fine in the morning. Rising up with you
When you want to rise up, the blueness of awakenings
And the whiteness of energy.
You hardly stopped to think,
But when you are you have always had to be,
Did you stop to think of all your daughters?*

*Your winters ever since the beginning of your life have been full of sin,
Little girl, you have since the age of ten always had recourse with law.
Barbarians had but stolen away your mind from Italy two millennia ago
And you deigned to write poetry!
Little girl, you think you're sweet when you eat the skin off bones.
The hungry Bythos laughs incredibly at your faults!*

*When the boat came into the port and you stepped on rather timidly
I expected a far better outcry. You had stepped onto the boat of emanations!
Would you rather lose your skin to feisty half-Gods?
Everyone pretended they hadn't seen, but I recorded it in my notebook.*

*You sailed for at least a month on that boat, they kicked you off
In Abyssinia. Drunken kings pointed their fingers at you and laughed,
Saying, 'And who here comes naked to my land? Who bears her breasts
'As if she's holy?' And you cried.
You should've thought when you decided to be spiritually enlightened!*

*You returned to Pisa in fall with your hair short and your face down,
You could not dare to look at any of us, you'd fooled yourself
Into easy sex under the guise of touching God. Naked you came from the
boat.
Oh well, I guess, you'd have lost touch with the animals.*

Don't you know why the forest is always sad?

*She's the mother of the forest; her breasts are very large.
Trees sprout out around her fertility.
At evening she cries, the gay freaks of the woods comfort her.*

*'Ugly sons, you may only comfort me so far.'
And they all gang around her beautiful skin,
Huffing and sweating, hoping to catch a glimpse of her naked
And sad. 'Mother of the forest, we are too much for just this,
'We must have more than just your warm love in the morning
'And your comforting kisses at night. We wilt and depress.
'Give us your flesh at evening and we can be happy men.'
All the black children raised their heads a bit
And all the green children salivated at the mouths.
'You can only see through two eyes, children of wood,
'Had I but two eyes I would see you as fools.
'Pitiful crops, lay yourselves down and relax.'
The imps all laughed and then sat their fleshy bodies around,
Tugging at roots and digging up dirt, wild and entranced,
Green in the eyes at the fun they were having.*

*Today the trees walk around at midnight,
Looking for their naked mother. They grieve,
Hanging up dry, brown in autumn,
Laughing at their unfortunate position in life,
Like crippled dwarves they bleed out their kneecaps
And crimp around on the forest's floor,
And when trolls come in the middle of winter
To goon around, they can only see death!
Winter is the spirit's pretense to summer.*

*Everything quickly stops.
Girl with light brown hair, the universe is alluding me.
Girl with light red hair, your father's skull, your scriptures!
Our snow has been stepped on by stupid non-believers!*

*What was already naked is now public, and what wasn't is stripped.
Would you like to go out on a date with me?*

*Oh well.
If I had only one sip of wine,
I'd sip it gladly with you.*

Infinite Drive

by Michael Atreides Lair

*We watched the distant stars
becoming more distant.
What we saw was years apart
from this moment.
And I wondered aloud about
death and all her shattered hour glasses.
A man spoke
of an infinite drive,
of traveling, light with light,
for some unknown amount of time,
still alive
and yet still: dead.
Somewhere our illuminating past
could meet another's bright future.
Reflections of moments lost
had never seemed much darker.
I watched and wondered to myself,
“Who else has lived and seen us then?”
And I watched and wondered,
“When will it end?”*

Jesse's Homeless Face

by Michael Lee Johnson

Someday Jesse wants to go home.

I see his world,

all it's hidden concepts

embedded in Jesse's aging face-

life has whispered by leaving

memory trails-

wrinkled forehead,

deep as river bed ruts

dried with years, weather-beaten,

just above his bushy eyebrows

that are gray and twisted-

much like life drawing memories

across his empty face.

Jesse has a long oblique

Jewish nose with dark

blue opal eyes,

that would pierce

even the pain

of his own crucifixion.

Life tears flow though

*a whole new ghoulish
apparition, a vision
of homelessness plastered
east of Dearborn Bridge,
near Lower Wacker Drive,
downtown Chicago-
where affluent citizens
seldom go unless inebriated;
puke-stained, or in a taxicab.*

*Jesse's hair sprouts skyward,
groomed like an abandoned
dove nest in wild Chicago*

*meandering winds.
Puffed eye bags of weariness*

sag like sandbags,

*one slightly heavier than the other.
Weeks of breaded growth
contour his chin in color blends*

*of white and black.
Over one shoulder drapes
a grungy gray blanket found
in Lilly Mae's garbage can,*

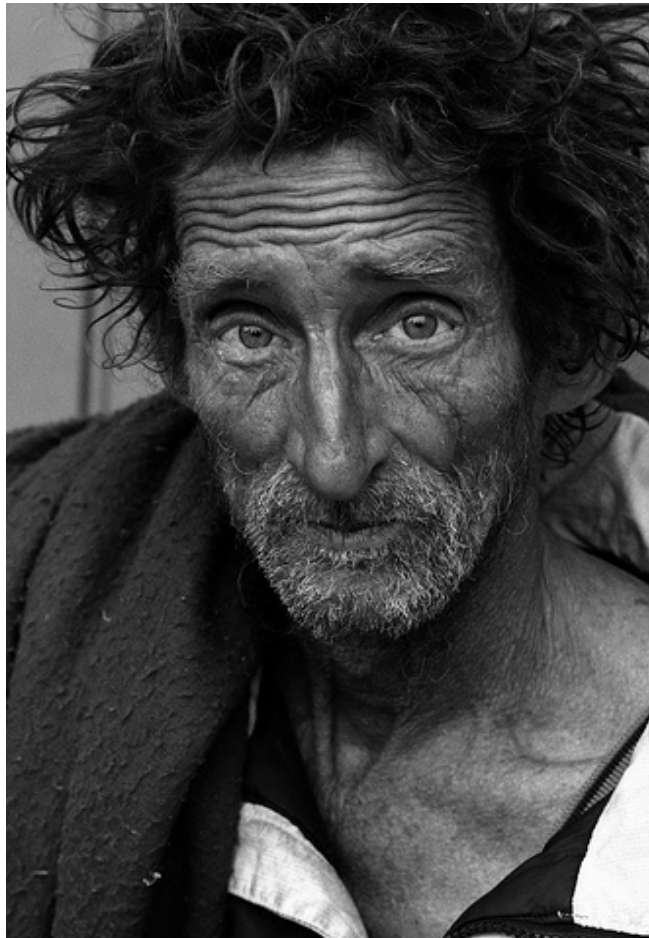
the other shoulder,

naked, but tanned,

bears itself to the elements.

Jesse panhandles during the day.

*At night and early Sunday mornings,
you can find him behind
a local McDonalds,
near Cracker Creek,
sharing leftover burgers
and sugar candy
with river rats-
Jesse considers it an act of religious charity;
age 69, someday soon,
Jesse wants to go home.*



Simon and Post-Garfunkal

by Kieran Hunt

*thick, black criss-crossed connection
of interwoven roads
tell tale as engrossing as E.E. Cummings.
PLACID doll-like // Beside one another
pulsating in false thought are
the denizens of this web of
scraggle and squalor.*

*Broken down & Boarded up former haunts
of smiles, clammy hands, malted milk mouthfuls
provide backdrop to the roads 'n' people.*

*Far gone, alas, are innocent high necked
full armed shirts, giving way to tantalising
slits of fabric*

multicolour

ribs poking

OUT

*a faint glimmer of pink puffed nipple
just below ironic chest tattoo
cooing reclaimed SLUT or
unthought out celtic symbol.*

*whispers of men trod effeminately, saunter
along foreboding road with half-lit
street lamps casting heavy masks.*

*Their minds are full inadequacies
and second guessing. Wondering why
the women, the gays, the coloured, the world
brings them down. "Gay and Amazing"
is lauded while angry crowds lynch
the comfortable straight mans
stunted ego.*

*The tattooed intellectual university educated
skankpunk
lifts up her very own plastic brick and fb's an
emotion or phrase and
claims it as her own.*

Why think when others have already charted

*the brain of the neurotic? They think
let's UNITE for a chance to care
with as little care as possible.*

*post-Liberal post-Feminist post-Reality
Goddesses stroll on through Monstro's stomach,
smelling of wet decay and that stomach acid taste
after a particularly awful purge.*

*Orange (closer to black) light
from and sky and lamp finish scene of
Downtown, North America, Western Hemisphere.
(and soon to be removing all pesky Borders)*

*fresh, full fog fortifies each individual
as an island, Paul Simon's voice
echoes through centuries
as we continue to find reasons
to live "on the fringe."*

Sometime

by Citizen 17

*On the day when your mentality
Will catch up with the rest of humanity
You will feel so great and relieved
You will feel so grateful*

*On the day when your personality
Will face the harsh reality
You will be in a comatose
You will snuff the coke of love*

*On the day when your mentality
Will face the hostility of the reality
You will cry out loud for reverse
You still won't see my hospitality*

*On the day when your mentality
Will face my cruel reality
You will stay cruel to me
As always.*

Sons

by Michael Labone

I

*One chose god
One chose wine
Pick your poison
Pick your poison*

*You are filthy
a liar
 arrogant
 unintelligent
bring me my bible
 a glass of wine*

*It would be easier to forget,
to remove the memories,
to exhale them with the countless cigarettes that I smoke,
or to drink them away with another beer.
But the anxiety in my stomach never ceases*

*Yet after everything
the pain
the hurt
the abandonment
and the torment
After seeing them become hollow,
shadows of the men they were.
I continue to idolise them*

*They are my father
Adrian
 Ian*

II

*Is this how all sons feel?
That they can never become a man
until they remove the final fragments of their father.
Until they are rotting in the earth*

or floating through the breeze over the ocean.

*Do all sons feel this scared
of becoming their father
of the voices in their head that come and go
of the figures seen
out of the corners of their eyes
in the dark
or the shadows*

III

*I murmur in my sleep.
I weep for my children,
for my wife,
for the family that I will destroy.
For my son.*

*But for now I will roll another cigarette
and send my essence out into the aether.
For at this point,
I am still valuable.
I still have words,
and dreams
and hope.*

*But I can feel it all start to corrode
as my thoughts become non-linear,
nonsensical,
and I crawl into the foetal position.*

IV

*I like to think that I am Billy Pilgrim,
and these memories that I have,
that are so vivid,
are relived.
That the dreams I have of the future are true.
That I have somehow opened my mind further than others.
That momentarily, I can see in four dimensions.
Because everything is predetermined,
and everything will work out.
Everything will be fine.*

*And I will die when I am ready
And my mother will stop crying
And my sister will find the man that she deserves
And my brother will wake up from his coma*

*and everything will be okay
and everything will be okay
and everything will be okay
I repeat this mantra
over
and over
and over
as I slowly fall asleep.*

Typewriter Poem 1
by John

*Oh you fine cherub.
Beautiful, yes? so ordinary, but you've
become a real test of spelling.*

*Oh you cherub, walk and talk with me.
tell me of your dead cousins and your
antique superstores.*

*"Beauty is absurd,"
you proclaim as you arrive.
"I am not used to such unkindness."
I've got you matched.
I did not set the table for guests.*

*How strange is such indulgence.
Pocket dictionaries
would be of good use. I was
not lifted to you, cherub.*

I am not part of your fantasy.

*Long haul into a sort of short sailor
with beard clipped, rightly so,
etched into the wood cabin like
a deaf testament. I won't die until this
is over,
until my slung notes sing above the
black trees and fires
of Germany*

*Queen of the idiots took an ad out in
the paper.
Said they wouldn't bide a dead tide to
the withdrawn
legs of a cold ocean.*

Sloppy at best. Idiots.

The Young Idealist's Seduction
by Fergus Henderson

"I tell ya boy, out here a man can get wild."

Up the cliffsides man has made wooden dashes
to help plants grow.

The man with the toomanytattoos wants to talk
to you

About the spirit which replicates Hollywood
replicating Buddhism

Like drifting incense smoke. The junkman's
Walden.

It's not my fault that if he looks at the mountain
cleft he sees Eden's.

Admit it, you like the smell of his sweat. He
had that christcrazed charisma.

Anyhow

The view is obscured by the heat haze and we
keep tripping down the sides,

Springbopping like a boxed jackoff.

Holy holy holy nature.



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