Printer's Devil Review







Editor Thomas Dodson

Fiction Editors Poetry Editors

KATE ESTROP ZACHARY BUSCHER
THOMAS DODSON BONNIE RUBRECHT

Arts Editors Nonfiction Editor
JESS BARNETT DAVID TABER

Joshi Radin

Communications &
Marketing Writer
KATE JOVIN

Volume 4, Number 1 (Spring 2014) Cover: Jeremy Geddes. *Cluster*. 2011. Oil on board, 44 ½ in. x 44 ½ in.

Printer's Devil Review (ISSN 2160-2948) is an independent, open-access journal of fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and the visual arts. We are an online and print-on-demand journal and publish two issues per year, in spring and fall. Issues are available for free on our website in PDF format. Print editions are available for purchase from Lulu.com.

Printer's Devil Review is published by Black Key Press and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.

Printer's Devil Review pdrjournal.org editors@pdrjournal.org

We do not accept postal submissions. Please see the submission guidelines on our website.

Duly Noted

Congratulations to *PDR* contributors Kendra DeColo, Nate Pritts, and Kate Racculia on the publication of their books.

Thieves in the Afterlife, Kendra DeColo's debut collection of poetry, was selected by Yusef Komunyakaa for the 2013 Saturnalia Books Poetry Prize and published by Saturnalia Press in March of this year.

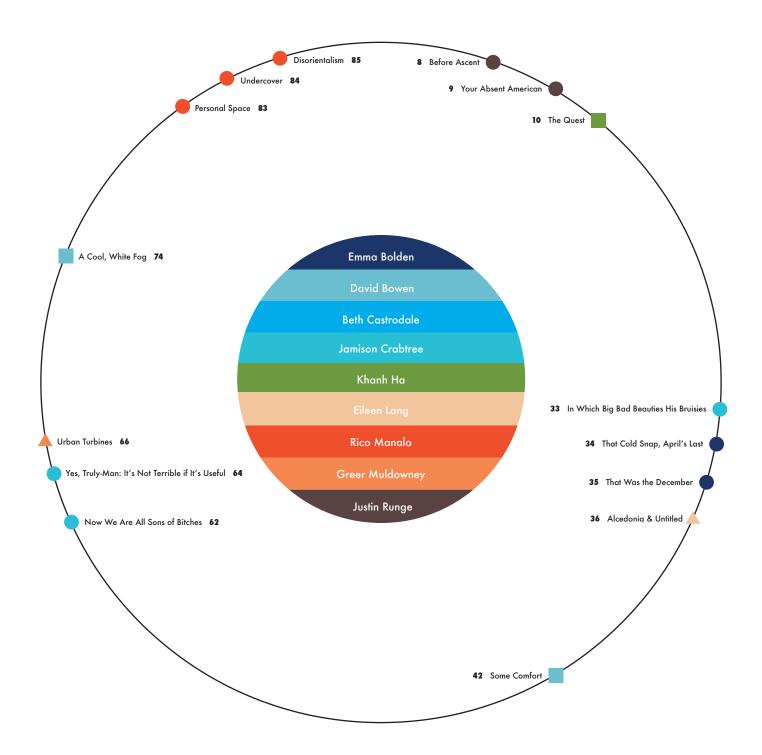
Pattern Exhaustion, a new chapbook of poetry by Nate Pritts, is now available from H_NGM_N books.

Kate Racculia's new novel, *Bellweather Rhapsody*, published this month by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, has been lauded as "charming" (*Los Angeles Times*), "witty" (*O, The Oprah Magazine*), and "whimsical" (*People*).

Brian R. Hauser, whose essay on the H.P. Lovecraft Film Festival was published in our Spring 2012 issue, has written and directed a feature film. *Nontraditional* tells a story about how difficult returning to civilian life can be, especially for women warriors. The film was nominated for Best Drama Feature, Best Actress in a Feature (Kat Evans), and Best Actor in a Feature (Nnamdi Ubozoh) by the Bare Bones Film Festival 2014. *Nontraditional* will also be screened as part of the Catskills Mountain Film Festival and the New Filmmakers New York 2014 Spring Series.

Congratulations also to our own David Taber for completing his bachelor's degree at Harvard University and to Joshi Radin on her admittance to the MFA program in photography at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she was elected as the recipient of the New Artist Society Scholarship.

CONTENTS SPRING 2014





Emma Bolden is the author of *Malificae*, a book-length series of poems about the witch trials in early modern Europe, published by GenPop Books in April of 2013, and *medi(t)ations*, forthcoming from Noctuary Press. She is also the author of four chapbooks of poetry: *How to Recognize a Lady* (Toadlily Press), *The Mariner's Wife* (Finishing Line Press), *The Sad Epistles* (Dancing Girl Press), and *This Is Our Hollywood* (The Chapbook). Her nonfiction chapbook, *Geography V*, is forthcoming from Winged City Press. Her work has appeared in such journals as *Prairie Schooner*, *Conduit, The Indiana Review, The Greensboro Review, Redivider, Verse, Feminist Studies, The Journal, Guernica*, and *Copper Nickel*. Bolden has been featured on *Poetry Daily* and *Verse Daily*, and was named a finalist for a Ruth Lily Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation/*Poetry* magazine. Currently, she serves as an assistant professor of creative writing at Georgia Southern University.

DAVID BOWEN is a senior editor at New American Press and *MAYDAY Magazine*, as well as a contributing editor at *Great Lakes Review*. His work has appeared in journals such as *The Literary Review*, *Monkeybicycle*, and *Flyway*. He is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

BETH CASTRODALE edited books and digital media for Bedford/St. Martin's for many years before leaving full-time work to devote more time to her fiction writing. Since then, she has completed two novels, and she is partway through drafting a third. She also works as a freelance editor and recommends small-press books on her web site, SmallPressPicks.com.

Jamison Crabtree is a Black Mountain Institute PHD fellow at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. His work appears or is forthcoming in *Whiskey Island*, *Ampersand*, *The Destroyer*, *HOBART*, *Apt*, and *The Offending Adam*.

Jeremy Geddes studied painting at the Victorian College of the Arts and began working full-time as a painter in 2003. He is most well known for his paintings of cosmonauts and people floating, falling, colliding, and drifting in empty landscapes. Jeremy was born in Wellington, New Zealand, and now lives in Melbourne, Australia with his wife and whippet.

Khanh Ha is the author of *Flesh* (2012, Black Heron Press) and *The Demon Who Peddled Longing* (November 2014, Underground Voices). He is a three-time Pushcart nominee and the recipient of *Greensboro Review*'s 2014 Robert Watson

Literary Prize in Fiction. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Waccamaw Journal, storySouth, Greensboro Review, Permafrost Magazine, Saint Ann's Review, Moon City Review, The Long Story, Red Savina Review, DUCTS, ARDOR, Lunch Ticket, Cha: An Asian Literary Journal, Quarterly Literary Review Singapore, Sugar Mule, Yellow Medicine Review, Little Curlew Press, Mount Hope, and other journals.

EILEEN LANG'S life has wholly been surrounded by the arts and nature. These two serve as the driving forces behind her works. Lang primarily utilizes paper as a backdrop. She is captivated by the way it partners with the pigments. It is unpredictable, yet beautiful, almost like a natural process. The colors seem to dance as they reach their finale. Recently, she has begun experimenting with India and *sumi* ink on photography paper, taking inspiration from the great *suminagashi* masters. Exploring their ancient techniques, Lang puts a modern twist on the tradition by applying it to modern papers, specifically photo paper.

RICO MANALO holds a BFA in writing, literature, and publishing from Emerson College, where he focused on poetry composition and daydreaming about girls. His work has appeared in *The Emerson Review* and *Stork*, and he was also recently interviewed for *The Kenning Journal* blog.

Greer Muldowney is an artist, photography professor, and independent curator based in Boston, Massachusetts. She received an undergraduate degree in political science and studio art from Clark University, and an MFA from the Savannah College of Art and Design. She has acted as the curator for the Desotorow Gallery in Savannah, Georgia and is the regional coordinator for the Flash Forward Festival on behalf of the Magenta Foundation. Muldowney also serves as an active member of the board for the Griffin Museum of Photography and currently teaches at Boston College and the New England Institute of Art. Her work has been exhibited and published in North America, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and France. She is a 2013 recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship.

Justin Runge lives in Lawrence, Kansas, where he serves as poetry editor of *Parcel*. He is the author of two chapbooks, *Plainsight* (New Michigan Press, 2012) and *Hum Decode* (forthcoming from Greying Ghost Press). In 2013, his work was selected by Brenda Shaughnessy for inclusion in that year's *Best New Poets* anthology. Poems of his have appeared in *Linebreak*, *DIAGRAM*, *Harpur Palate*, and elsewhere. He can be found at www.justinrunge.me.

JUSTIN RUNGE

Before Ascent

It is as if she's come back from twenty years of war.

- Gabriel García Márquez

You'd cast her in roles: Aurora, your Antonia. You'd ambulate

from shade to sun, wondering which was better. The latter

was best, how it'd push past the skin, make her a lantern,

and you'd see the grass fires of Roman candles, sudden

plumes of road, the gravel cracking stars into car glass.

How she left: with white sheets in a clean contrail,

with the cowlicked babies singing Canadian bluegrass,

with the flags at half-mast, clinking like humble bells.

JUSTIN RUNGE

Your Absent American

Without her body, you go to bed early. Now midnight is a moustache. Every morning, there are certain unbearable neckties. Your guitar stays in tune. You eat tuna with no mayonnaise. Jets only fly at dusk.

She left for reasons such as a lack of beaches. Consequently, after a week, a small girl danced next to you for a nickel. Your refrigerator is empty, except for the strawberries you purchased for the picnic.

You do not look into cameras. Most children are wary of you. The body heat of others is perjury. Every day, you explore the dictionary, listen to Edith Piaf. You serve no one tuna sandwiches.

Since she left with her warm breath, *café au lait*, with varying success. Sunsets are not treated casually. No one sits next to you. You show more compassion to the neighborhood dogs.

Interstate travel lacks romance. You drive it grudgingly, and see that Nebraska is coarse, shrunken wool. Downtown is vacated, a cavity. A balloon ascends without a hand. You serve tuna sandwiches to the neighborhood dogs.

You never carry more than twelve dollars and house keys. Your mouth is cleaner. Only leaves and receipts cling to you. Nat King Cole is on the radio. The streets are empty. You pray without pressing your hands together.

KHANH HA

The Quest

Nam woke to the shaking of the truck bed. Sounds of crates sliding gently on the planking as the old man shouted, Easy boy, easy with em eggs. Then the heavy thudding of boxes. Nam could see in the side-view mirror the old man counting the boxes by jabbing his finger and jotting in a small spiral notebook. Fresh eggs, ten crates. Bananas, five boxes. Pineapples, five. Barley sugar, three. Jackfruit, ten. Persimmon, five. Then the old man who had given him a ride climbed back up onto the driver's seat. He smelled darkly of cigarettes and beer.

Got a lighter, Daddy? a voice came from behind Nam, from the truck bed.

The old man flicked his Zippo and held it back in the cab's rear opening. Nam glanced left to see a hand with a wrist bangle hold a cigarette against the flame. The old man clapped shut his lighter. He rides with us till we get there, the old man said. Boy said he ain't got no money for road fare. Least I got him to help me load em boxes and they ain't light.

As the truck sped past the market, the noodle smell wafted into the cab and Nam groaned. He tried to sleep, turning his face toward the rolled-down window, and heard the old man. Know what that boy did in that liquor joint?

What? Nam said, grumbling.

Threw a knife to make a living.

I've seen it before. Nam stirred, eyes closed.

He kinda aroused my interest, the old man said, cos my dad when he was young that's what he did. Hustling from town to town taking the whole family with him, my mom, me, my little sis. My mom over the years got used to standing there till Dad's done throwing the whole set of knives at her. If I remember correctly, twelve of em. They got thin, mean-looking blades, red tassels on the handles. I don't know why I never thought of him mis-throwing any of em knives and injuring my mom. Now sometimes I did think about it; it kinda gave me the creeps.

The old man ground the cigarette in the ash- and butt-filled tray and turned his face three-quarters toward the back. Hey boy, he called out.

What've you got, Daddy?

Where'd you learn throwing em knives?

Just throwing at trees when I've got nothing to do.

You're pretty good at throwing at the backboards. If you've got to throw at a human target ... You what?

Used to do that, Daddy.

You did? Who'd you throw at?

My brother.

See only you here.

He's somewhere else. On my way to hook up with him again.

Nam opened his eyes, turned and looked through the cab's rear opening. Among stacked-up creels, crates, boxes, he saw a boy sitting with his back against the wooden rails, his cropped-hair head between his drawn-up knees, his hands clasping them. He saw the shimmering bangle that fit snugly round a thick wrist. He no longer felt sleepy. He sat up, watching the road, then turned sideways to look at the new rider and back at the road. Past a small open-air market, he could smell the rich, fatty odor of catfish. It made his stomach grumble.

Oh that devilish smell, the old man said, clucking his tongue. Bet ya it's one of em flathead or blue cats. Fat and juicy.

You can't beat that. Carp and cat.

Grill em over the fire till they get that buff color like a sleek skink. Make a bowl of dark fish sauce and pound in all em hot peppers and a fat juicy ginger in there and boy oh boy!

Damn, old man. You're killing me.

Ain't nothing can beat a river catfish. He spoke over his shoulder, How bout you, boy?

Fuck em. I'll feed em to a dog.

Why? Mommy fed you catfish stead of milk so now you're just fucked up in the head? The old man roared with laughter.

You ain't laughing you old fart if a fucking catfish pokes one of your eyes out.

Say what? Whose eyes?

Who the fuck you think? You saw me. Do I have both eyes like you? That's how you came to lose an eye, eh? What'd you do? Looking for something where you shouldn't be?

There was a silence, then the boy spoke again. Was just bending down into this vat looking for a fat juicy cat when this motherfucker jumped up in my face and next thing I knew I sat on the floor and felt my eye and tried to put my eyeball back in.

You got my sympathy, son, now that you confessed.

I wasn't confessing. Shit. Even if I'm dying, I ain't confessing to no monk or no priest.

Nam turned to look back and what he saw churned his stomach. Not the damaged eye, nor its sickish blue-white, the color of a rotten egg. He stared at a face, dark-skinned, thick-lipped, a low forehead sharply marked with thick soot-black eyebrows. As he watched the rider's face, he saw him go under his open-necked shirt and pull up a neck chain. The one-eyed boy held a claw on the chain and scratched his stubbled head with it. Bluish-green tiger's jade claw. Nam knew the color well. It had belonged to a girl he loved, his cousin.

Hey, he said to the one-eyed boy.

What? The rider stopped scratching his head and slipped the claw back under his shirt.

I heard you're out of money.

So?

I'll buy that claw from ya.

What made you think I want to sell it?

Is it a thing from your family?

My thing. He put his hand on the fig carton, fingering a green-skinned fig. How much you want to pay?

My whole week's pay.

If that makes me rich, may I call you "sir"?

To me it's a lot, friend. I work like a dog. Seven days a week.

Work like a dog, fuck like a dog. Do I give a shit?

It's one hundred and five thousand đồng.

You're a fucking laborer ain't ya?

What if I am?

Double that.

No.

That all you've got on you now?

If I've got more, so what?

Fuck it then.

Nam turned back, leaning his head hard against the headrest. The sun was too bright. It hurt his eyes. He closed them, holding his breath, then slowly exhaling until the rage simmered, quaking now in the pit of his stomach. For two long months he had been searching for the two brothers' whereabouts. Drifters. Raped girls they came upon in their wanderings. He found his cousin at a creek; she'd been dead for two days. No clothes on. Raped, sodomized. Her neckchain was gone too. That heirloom was a tiger's-claw-shaped jade pendant hung on a necklace. They said it kept demons away.

They got into town mid-afternoon. The old man brought the truck to the rear of the cinder-blocked market. The shanties' back end was a cement court for delivery.

Why don't you wait out front, the old man told them. I gotta collect the payment first.

The rider eyed him as if he was having second thoughts. Yeah, he finally said.

When the old man went inside to look for the fish dealer, Nam stepped down from the truck and headed into the market's stalls. He walked down the noisy, smelly aisle, slimy and flecked silver with fish scales, until he saw what he needed. He talked a woman fish vendor into selling him one of the short knives she used to slit and scale fish. It had a wooden handle and a six-inch-long steel blade. He wanted something to wrap

the blade, and she gave him a cleaning rag. He took it outside, walking to the last shanty, where there was a water hose that fish vendors used to wash down the floor at the end of each day. He soaked the rag, then washed and wrung it repeatedly. He shook it and smelled it. The stink was almost gone save a faint metallic odor of fish in the rag's fabric. He squatted down, laid the knife on his thigh, and rolled it inside the cloth until the blade was wrapped tightly. He stood up and stuck the wrapped blade under the front of his pants, then dropped his shirt over the knife handle.

It began to rain. They climbed onto the front bench seat. The one-eyed boy sat in the middle with the soda can wedged between his thighs. He'd eaten half a loaf of bread he'd bought while the old man was gone. As he chewed, he swept the crumbs from his lap onto the floor.

Get there sometime after dark, right? he said to the old man.

If I drive straight, which I'm afraid I won't, the old man said, stepping on the gas pedal as the truck hit an incline.

I can take the wheel for ya, the one-eyed boy said. Whenever.

Can I trust you? the old man said, eyes on the road.

I trust myself, the one-eyed boy said through his mouthful.

I hear you. The old man looked quickly at the two riders. You boys both from Ô Sang?

I didn't say that, the one-eyed boy said. I said I wanted to find work there.

Work? What kind?

Any kind. Chauffeur. Bodyguard. Pimp.

The old man chortled. You're a colorful boy, you know that? And what bout you, mister?

Boats. Fishing.

Ô Sang might be your kind of place. Has a fishing hamlet.

Nam said nothing. As long as it was a small town, he felt good. Even if it'd take weeks, he believed he'd find the other brother. He leaned his head back, narrowing his eyes, taking in what he hadn't had a chance to see with his eyes, so they could remember the face: this face now inches away from his, this wiry black hair, the ears that had no earlobes and stuck to the side of the head, a black birthmark shaped like a small

sickle outside the corner of the healthy eye, the short, stiff bristles that were his sideburns. But it was the good eye that he knew he must be cautious about, for it hid behind itself a cunning mind that seemed to take nothing at face value, that soured quickly on anything that ran afoul of its predatory nature.

He kept his thoughts at bay as he stretched his right leg to ease the pressure of the wrapped knife blade pressed against his thigh. The cab's vinyl dashboard had sun-bleached cracks. It stank of stale pipe tobacco even with the windows rolled halfway down.

The old man jerked his chin toward the glove compartment. Can one of you boys get me my pipe?

Nam leaned forward and opened the compartment. It was jammed with maps, vinyl folders, rolled-up sheets of paper, napkins, two pairs of sunglasses, a black baseball cap. He cleared them with his hand and saw the pipe and a pistol. He picked up the pipe just as the one-eyed boy reached for the gun.

Leave it alone, the old man said in his dead tone.

Nice toy, the one-eyed boy said.

The pipe still had fresh tobacco in its bowl. As he drove with one hand on the steering wheel, the old man lit his pipe with a lighter, moving it around the bowl and giving it several quick puffs until it glowed evenly and a redolent smell filled the cab.

Nam looked out the window and saw a hillock, brown and dripping from the blades of sedge and long drooping leaves of stunted date palms. The truck wound its way between the hill and the woods, rising and dipping, and the rain blew the leaves onto the windshield, where they lay glued to the glass and the wiper passed over them.

The old man slowed the truck down and brought it to a stop on the roadside.

I'm gonna take a leak, he said, reaching over to open the glove compartment for his baseball cap. After putting his hat on, he patted the one-eyed boy on the shoulder. Take the wheel, will ya?

The one-eyed boy just nodded with a blank look like he'd just come back from an astral journey. The old man stood in the rain peeling off the leaves on the windshield and then headed into the woods. Then the one-eyed boy jumped out and Nam saw him leap over the small ravine

PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW

Khanh Ha

and disappear behind the trees. Nam let out a sigh, then got out and relieved himself into the weedy ravine, hunching up his shoulders as rain pelted the back of his neck. Dark gray masses of thunderheads built toward the lower horizon. In the cracks of thunder, he could smell the windborn truck's exhaust and gasoline. He walked around the front of the truck and was climbing back in when he saw the one-eyed boy come running out of the woods and dashing back to the truck. The other boy was dripping wet as he slumped in the driver's seat, the door still open, and grabbed the wheel with both hands, panting.

Nam looked back into the woods. Where's he? he asked the one-eyed boy. The boy grinned, his face wet with rainwater.

Nam took another quick look toward the woods. When he turned back, he saw blood on the bangle and on the back of the one-eyed boy's hand. You killed him? Nam shouted. You sumbitch!

The one-eyed boy took a deep breath and, arching his back, drew a knife from the waistband of his jeans. What he held was a hunter's knife covered in a camel-colored leather sheath. There were bloodstains on the knife's nickel-silver finger guard. He opened the glove compartment, tossed the knife in, and yanked out a handful of papers.

One of these pieces of crap must be his contract, he said, shoving them into the boy's lap. Find the delivery address. Then he snatched the pistol and weighed it in his hand.

You didn't have to kill him, the boy said. You fuckface!

Stop yapping!

If I knew this, damn, if I knew this...

Listen, golden boy. We'll come in as partners. We'll deliver the goods, sign the paper, grab the money, and get the hell out. You keep your trap shut and I'll give you my neckchain. And some money.

I want that neck chain. Now.

Easy. You'll get it when I'm ready to give it to you.

You think it's up to you?

You do like I say. Now read the crap.

Why don't you?

I don't aim to read contracts for pleasure.

So you don't know how to read?

What the fuck's wrong with you?

The one-eyed boy fished out a map and dropped it in Nam's lap. Look it up, he said. Nam turned it around until he could read the names of the towns they had passed through. By his estimation, another hour. The one-eyed boy caressed the pistol's barrel with his fingers. That's about what I figure, he said. With this stupid rain.

The boy put the folders back in the glove compartment. He stared at the hunter's knife, the bloodstains now dark on the finger guard. He pulled himself together and shut the compartment.

The one-eyed boy glanced up in the rearview mirror, raised his rump up, and worked the pistol down behind his waistband. Fucking heaven's gift, he said, grinning. I always wanted a toy like this. Wouldn't trade it for my life.

Not even for your lost eye?

I can see fine with one. He put the truck in gear and soon it picked up speed descending a slope. The tires made wet hissing sounds on the blacktop. They passed another hillock and the country road became winding, with no divider to separate the lanes. The one-eyed boy hit the window glass with his fist.

Damn, just forgot his watch.

What else you take from him?

Everything except his watch and his balls.

And now his gun.

And his truck. Next subject?

Everything on you were things you stole, eh?

You got a problem?

Where'd you get that neck chain?

Not from anyone you know. So don't ask.

Nam ran his tongue against the inside of his cheek, then across the inside of his lower lip until he felt calm.

He died quickly didn't he?

If he knew he died.

You believe in the afterlife?

I believe in hearing no more shit from you.

Nam said nothing afterward. The rain followed them south, letting up briefly, then falling heavily again. The road was washed out in places, and when the truck hit the standing water it skidded and water splashed

6 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Khanh Ha

the windshield like going through a waterfall. There were few cars on the road. Once, a motor scooter tried to overtake their truck, but it hit a puddle of water and died. Nam could see the motorcyclist trying to push it off the road in his yellow raincoat.

It was getting dark quickly. The one-eyed boy flexed his neck now and then and tapped the steering wheel. The bangle jangled against the wheel. In the cab, dimly lit by the dashboard light, Nam could see bloodstains now black on the back of the one-eyed boy's hand. He didn't want any part of getting to the destination, and now as he heard the cracks of thunder and the drumming of rain on the cab's roof, he imagined how he could get to \hat{O} Sang if he had to start from here.

Hunger gnawed in his stomach, but it was like an afterthought. His guts suddenly tightened. No, he wasn't to kill this boy in the truck. That ought to be outside like how this boy had taken the old man by surprise.

Then, as the truck was coming down an incline, the headlights picking up sheets of rain that blew across the road into a deep ravine, he saw another road merging with the road they were on at the bottom of the incline. The one-eyed boy rode the brake to nudge the truck onto the shoulder of the road. He put it in park and opened the door.

My fucking bladder is about to burst, he said, stepping down without looking back. He ran around the truck, across the headlights'illumination, and turned sideways as he skidded down the ravine's slope. From the cab, Nam could see a stand of trees at the bottom of the ravine. Shoving his shoulder into the door, he came stumbling out in the rain.

Through the soles of his sandals the earth felt slick as he slid down the ravine. His eyes stared into darkness, and he held his arms out to the sides to balance himself. He hit the bottom of the ravine. Shapes of rain-blurred trees twenty feet away. He saw the one-eyed boy, a black figure, standing to relieve himself at a tree. Nam pulled out his knife. Just as he made for the trees, his feet stepped into a rivulet. It was pebbly and muddy. He slid and fell.

The one-eyed boy turned around. He couldn't have been more than ten feet away. Fuck it. Nam got up quickly, but his sandals were stuck in the mud. He wrenched up one foot, then the other. They plopped free. He swung the knife in an arc, regaining his balance. Then he saw a flash, a loud pop, and his legs buckled. He fell backward into the stream. A pain

flared up somewhere in his leg. His mouth fell open. He could taste rain. Before he could pull himself up, the one-eyed boy was already over him.

Motherfucker, the one-eyed boy said, lowering his pistol at the opened mouth, shaking his head. Pray so I don't kill ya...He relaxed the hand that held the pistol just as the boy freed his arm under him and drove the knife up the one-eyed boy's guts. His hand slipped off the handle and went over the blade. The body fell on him. The knife handle hit his chest, and he heard a gurgling sound in the one-eyed boy's throat. With a push, he shoved the other boy to the side and rolled over on his good leg. He felt a heaviness in his thigh the moment he crawled out of the water. He sat on the bank, both legs stretched out on the ground. At his feet lay the one-eyed boy. He was on his back, half of him in the water.

Nam felt his left leg. The pain pulsed. With his fingers, he could feel a hole off to the inside of his thigh, a finger length above the knee. He didn't know if he could walk. He clenched his teeth and pushed himself up with his hands. He stood wobbly looking up the ravine and saw the small lighted shafts the truck's headlights made in the night. He walked back to the body, biting the inside of his lower lip. He must tie up that wound. The body in the stream. His shirt would do. The hand still holding the gun lifted up from the body and Nam kicked it, knocking the gun to the ground.

You're still alive, he said, crouching down beside the body. The face below him was dark, except the shape of the opened mouth that was drawing in air and rainwater. A weariness seeped through Nam's bones, the hatred in him gone. He remained on his bent knees, hearing the wind gusts, the clattering rain on the leaves, the occasional gasps coming from the gaping mouth that held his gaze. Rainwater coursed down the sides of his face and fell drop by drop onto the one-eyed boy's upturned face, into his mouth. He could see the chain around the boy's neck. He felt for the tiger's claw under the boy's shirt, squeezing it in his hand. Then he bent down a handspan from the other boy's face.

You know this thing? he said slowly, lifting the tiger's claw. Do you know this thing? He saw the eyes flutter like they wanted to stay open but couldn't. This thing belonged to my cousin. Yeah. Before she died. You know how she died? These two brothers raped her then killed her then dumped her body in a creek. I guess they just did it for fun. Fun.

18 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Khanh Ha 19

I don't know how many girls they'd raped. But I'd thought about this for a long time. You know what I'd thought about? About those girls they raped. And their families. I figured that some of them just went on with their lives. Just have to live on, you know, cause what choice do they have? And I thought there're some who're not as strong. So what was done to them really screwed up their minds.

He licked rainwater from his lips, looked down at the face. The eyes had closed, the mouth remained opened but no longer drew in air, the windpipe gone silent. Even in death, the face was still rough, violent-looking. He wondered where the soul had gone to.

It took him a while, but he managed to cut off both sleeves of the boy's shirt and then wrapped his thigh with them, one after the other. He wiped his face with the back of his hand, turned the body over, and took out the wallet. The bills he removed from the wallet were damp. The money belonging to the old man was a decent sum. He found the pistol a few feet from the boy. He wiped it against his trousers and jammed it down behind his waistband. Then he walked up to the clump of trees and hurled the knife into the woods.

He got into the cab and turned off the headlights and then the engine. He left the ignition key in, closed the door, and walked down the road. Each step he took sent shooting pain up his crotch. He moved off the asphalt and walked on the grassy edge of the road, wiping his face now and then to see better. After a while he was able to ignore the pain in his leg, like it didn't belong to his body. Halfway down the incline he saw a light coming down the merging road. It moved so slowly he thought it wasn't moving at all; it couldn't be a car. By the time he reached the grassy triangle where the two roads came together, the light appeared brighter. As the light drew closer, there was a tinkling sound. It was a horse wagon. He could see that it didn't have the thin rubber wheels of a carriage, but two large tires fitted on an automobile axle. Under the carriage's overhanging roof sat a man in a hooded raincoat. Nam waved at the man as the wagon came near, the little bell tinkling under the horse's neck. The man halted the wagon; the clinking stopped. The bay horse stood stamping its forelegs, its wet, black mane matted on its neck. The man peered down, taking the cigarette from his mouth. Yeah, he

said, baring his gapped teeth as he nodded at Nam standing drenched in the rain.

Can I ride with you into town? Nam said, looking up at the gray-bearded man.

Tell me what town you have in mind.

Ô Sang.

What're you doing out here at this hour?

Someone gave me a ride. But he didn't go to Ô Sang.

What happened? The man looked down at the boy's legs with a jerk of his chin.

Was an accident.

You got blood all over yourself. Need to see a doctor?

What doctor? The thought didn't strike him and never had in his life.

In the town. But it's late now.

I think I'm okay.

Outside the town, he got off and stood watching the wagon turn around and head up the dark road. When he could no longer hear the clinking of the bell, he turned to look at the tavern that sat back from the edge of the road. There was an oil lamp hung by the door but it wasn't lit. Perhaps he could ask for a glass of water.

In the stillness came the sound of a flute. It lilted in the air. He lifted his face, listening. The sound soared until it thinned out to a sudden silence. Suddenly it took off gliding like all of its crystal-clear notes were materializing out of the white mist. Something in him stirred.

The road was wet after the rain, and as he walked on toward the sound of the flute, he could hear his sandals squelch on the blacktop. For a while there was nothing around but sawgrass and bulrush and bushwillows growing wild and thick along the roadside. His legs were tired; his head, his throat were burning. He ran his hands along the wet bushes and licked the beads of moisture off his fingers. He could hear the flute somewhere behind the mist, behind the clumps of bamboo and fruit trees. As the road bent, canopied by a pond apple tree that leaned out, thin and gray-trunked, he saw a light ahead. It was a graveyard.

PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW

Khanh Ha 2

He followed a low stone wall to the entrance, which was framed by two stone posts. Hung on one post was an iron-wrought gas lamp. He leaned against the post, listening to the flute soaring and dropping. The trees and the gravestones swayed with its soul-aching lilt, and then his mind started swimming away.

He did not hear the flute any longer. He yearned for it deep in the black pit of his mind. Suddenly he woke to grab a hand that touched the gun tucked behind his waistband.

Hey, a voice came from above him.

A dark, damp smell of earth got into his nostrils. He kept his cheek pressed to the wet ground, his hand securing the butt of the pistol.

Hey, bud?

He wanted to answer but couldn't. He felt bodiless.

You got shot?

He said yeah, but only he could hear it. Then with determination he pushed himself halfway up on his hands. His eyes were blurry, his throat sand dry. You have water? he said to the figure kneeling beside him.

I'll get you some. C'mon.

Looking at him was a boy about his age with a head full of curly hair. His deep eyes gleamed. Then he rose. Can you walk? he said.

The moment Nam willed himself to rise to his feet, he felt his leg give. Blood had soaked through the wrappings; it wet his fingers as he touched them. He knew it was fresh blood. He stood bent, wrecked with the clawing pain in his thigh. Putting both hands on the wrappings, he told himself not to faint, repeating it in his head until the voice said, You're so fucking busted. Okay, here.

The stranger gripped him under the armpits and propped him up. The dirt path going through the graveyard was just a dark line in his hazy vision. Rows of gravestones, dimly lit, sat under huge canopies of tree foliage and in their velvety black harbors the fireflies pulsed in myriad green and yellow dots. Bone tired, he felt like sitting down but his mind refused to. He hadn't gotten very far when the stranger said, You're burning hot. Sit down. And wait here.

Nam dropped down on the dirt path and sat on his rump with his bad leg straight out to ease the pain. The stranger had gone down the path and disappeared into the blackness of the graveyard. *Is this where he lives?* His eyes closed, he tucked his chin against his chest. He could smell his own shirt, dank and musty. It was so quiet that he could hear the sawing of insects deep in the earth, the croaking of frogs among the weedy graves.

The sound of wheels woke him. The stranger was coming up the dirt path pulling a wooden handcart. It was painted rusty red with two spoked wheels. The stranger swung the cart around and dropped the back end to the ground. Get in, he said.

Nam lay down on his back on the tilted cart and it trundled down the path. A fish odor hung in the cart. When the cart stopped, it was in front of a cluster fig tree in a corner of the graveyard. On one of the tree's low branches was hung a burning kerosene lamp.

He propped himself up on his elbow, fixing his gaze on a car, black as an otter, that sat under the tree. The derelict car was doorless, seatless, sitting on the four tires completely flat. He leaned his head against the side planks. You have any water? he said.

The stranger walked around the tree and moments later came back with a can of water. Nam drank, lifting his chin until the can was empty and then sat panting, holding the empty tin can that had once held condensed milk. The stranger bent to look at the bloodstained wrappings.

You got shot, bud? he said, glancing up.

Yeah.

Tell you what. I can put something in there so you won't bleed to death. Eh?

What thing?

Take off em wrappings.

The boy pulled up his leg, untied the shirt sleeves, and then held them up, now damp with blood, so the stranger could look at the wound. The stranger felt around the thigh and put his finger on a hole in back of the pants. The bullet got out, he said. Then he went behind the tree and returned with a pail in one hand and a round canister in the other. He washed the bloody shirt sleeves in the pail, wringing them several times. Here goes all my fucking rainwater just for you, bud, he said. You mind telling me your name?

22 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Khanh Ha 23

Nam. Your drinking water?

Shit yeah. Best water there is.

And what's your name?

Phát's the name. The curly-headed boy handed him the washed sleeves and opened the canister to pick up a handful of crushed leaves. Then he spread them over the blackish, mushy holes of the wound and patted them down. He stood back and wiped his hand on his trousers.

Nam rewrapped his wound. He felt a heaviness in his eyelids and unbearably hot in his body. Only he didn't sweat, and he knew it was because he had lost so much blood. When he was done wrapping his thigh, Phát said, Tell you sumthin. You stay here and you'd probably never wake up again tomorrow.

I hear you, the boy said resignedly. I'll be going.

Going where?

Fishing hamlet.

That's another three kilometers. You ain't talking in your sleep are you? I think I can hold up. What's that stuff you just put on me?

Some leaves. It ain't help to know the name, but it'd help so you won't get infection.

I thank you. I just feel awfully hot that's all.

I know em fever. That's why you can't stay here. And I aim to take you to the abbot.

The who?

He helped fix me up when I got bit by a snake. Here in this fucking graveyard. Or I would been in one of these graves here you're looking at.

Who're you talking about?

The old head monk. Lives in the pagoda yonder. Phát put away the canister and came back. He got himself between the pull bars and said, Hold on tight, bud. Nam felt the cart trundling away again, creaking and bouncing over the dirt mounds. He lay flat on his back, his legs dangling over the back end's rim. He looked up at the sky, so low with a rising mist it seemed to skim the treetops. A nightjar called in a tree. The empty road echoed the dull sound of the cart's wheels, past sandy hills thick with pond apple trees, and before long he could smell seawater in the breeze.

Hey? he called out to Phát again.

Yeah?

You play flute?

Been known to.

I heard you play. You're good. How long you been playing?

Since I started having pubic hair.

How come you ended up staying in the graveyard? They let you squat there?

So I can keep an eye on em ghosts at night.

But why a graveyard?

Cause it's the only place that took me in.

Nam turned on his side, propping himself up on his elbow, and looked at the figure clad in a black polo shirt and dark colored jeans. The boy thought of the coolies who pulled carts where he came from and knew why the thought came to him. He felt grateful to the stranger.

He had been under the old monk's care for two weeks. He could walk now without much pain from the thigh wound, and during the convalescence he got some new clothes and personal items that he bought by asking a novice to go to the town. He cut his hair and shaved his beard. In a small cracked mirror above the wash basin he looked at his naked face. It took him awhile to accept it.

One night, from the pagoda, he heard the flute again. From the edge of the back garden rimmed with whistling pines and wide-canopied rain trees, with their tiny leaves folded after dark, he could see the graveyard below where the hill dropped into blackness. The lamp at its gate burned like a yellow, wakeful eye.

It was a long walk from the pagoda to the graveyard, yet the downward slope of the winding road eased the strain on his legs. He passed knolls that suddenly shuddered, a twitch in the sand from a darting skink. Some nameless living thing, deep in the trees' horse-tail-shaped leaves rustled the dried pine cones. The wind sung softly through the wispy gray twigs that harbored a dark scent as old as the earth.

24 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Khanh Ha 24

The squatter's kerosene lamp was burning low on the tree limb. Nam stood watching the derelict car and the shadows the wind made on the blue cloth that hung down from the sides to cover what used to be the doors. He listened to the nocturnal sounds, constantly sawing and chattering, that came rising up from beneath the earth, from clumps of saltwater grass and mats of creeping devil's grass. Scattered in the night were flickering lights, placed on the graves to keep watch, to keep demons at bay. The lights would burn until dawn, coming and going behind the windblown grass.

Nam turned up the lamp wick. Shadows paled, fading from the cloth-covered doors. Phát was asleep, sitting up, leaning back against the car. He woke the moment the lamp brightened.

Hey, you, Phát called from inside the car.

I heard your flute, Nam said. Thought you might've been up.

Do I know you? Phát crawled out.

What?

Phát walked to the lamp and lowered the wick. Hey, he said, don't fucking play with my lamp.

Was a little dark when I came in.

Didn't you see me sleeping? Are you from around here?

Damn. You took me up to the pagoda and you forgot?

Phát pushed the lamp toward the visitor and brought up the wick. What the hell, he said. It's you, bud.

The boy looked around for a place to sit. Then he sat on a gravestone, beyond the sphere of light. The stone was a weathered, worn marker, defaced of its inscription. So what've you been up to? he said.

Same, same, Phát said. You still up there?

Yeah. Probably not for long. He watched Phát search for something in the tree-mounted bin. He drew out a pack of cigarettes.

Phát lit a cigarette with a match and blew it out. You moving around pretty well now ain't ya, he said.

Getting there. Hey, thanks.

Never asked you before, but hey where ya from?

Up north.

Ain't it a long way from here unless you got some business to do.

He grinned, eyeing Phát. The other boy's profuse, curly locks dangled over his brow. Phát stood up and went back to the tree bin, speaking without turning his head. I'm hungry, are you?

I thought you already ate before sleep.

Is that what people do? Phát turned around and held up two Styrofoam cups of ramen. Well, you want to eat or not?

Sure.

Phát brought out a crate and a brazier. He set the brazier on top of the crate and lit the coals. His match went out before the coals were lit and he tried again, letting the match burn to his fingertips. The coals rose in tiny blue tongues of flame. He went behind the tree again and came back with the condensed-milk can and set it on the brazier. Then he sat down on one of the tree roots, hands clasping his ankles.

So where're you bound to? Phát said, squinting at Nam with his deep-set eyes.

Maybe to the fishing hamlet.

Don't tell me you're a fisherman.

Don't see why not.

I know somebody down that way. Might help ya out.

What did you do before?

Was hauling fish they brought in. Tons of em. Took em to their trucks fore they went off to fish markets.

You retired now? the boy said with a small laugh.

Yeah, yeah, retired and rich. Phát grinned. His teeth were very white.

The boy remembered the fish odor in the handcart. You got that cart there from them? he asked Phát.

That? Yeah. Traded for it.

What sort of things did he trade with? The can boiled, puffing up steam. Phát peeled off the paper lids on the cups and, wrapping his hand with a piece of cloth, lifted the can and poured boiling water into each ramen cup. Then he resealed the lids.

Here, he said, giving Nam one of the cups and a plastic spoon.

They ate. The brazier was burning red and the wind scattered its smoke in the air. Don't you want to put it out? the boy said, spooning up noodles.

It keeps out the fucking mosquitoes, Phát said, then slurped up the broth and licked his lips. Hey, you still want a job down there?

Khanh Ha

That's what I aim to do.

Look up the foreman. Tell him I sent you.

I will. Thanks.

When you get the job, remember me.

I will. He wiped his lips with the heel of his palm. How come you quit what you got?

Fish stink. Phát burped. I fucking hate it. Besides I'm not cut out for that type of work. There ain't but three things in life I don't do. I don't work for nobody. I don't want nobody to stand on my shadow. I don't take a bath.

No bath?

Hate feeling wet.

The boy gathered noodles and bits of carrots and peas onto the spoon. Phát leaned against the tree, cupping his hand over the cigarette. Where'd you get that gun, he said.

The boy narrowed his eyes at Phát, thought, and said, From the guy who shot me.

I remember. You killed the dude. Where's it now?

Not here.

Phát cracked a grin. I want to buy it from you.

You need a gun for what? Shooting ghosts?

I have enemies.

I ain't selling no gun to nobody.

Would love to shoot it. I'll buy you ammo. Would you let me shoot it?

I'll think about it.

Where you shot him at?

Nam just shook his head. Crazy sumbitch.

Where? Pow pow eh.

You're nuts. Now I can see why you sleep sitting up.

Ain't nothing wrong with it, is there?

You tell me.

I used to have all kinds of fucking bad dreams, that's why.

Every time?

Phát nodded. He ran his fingers through his hair, paused and scratched the top of his head. You ever slept with a blindfold over your eyes? he said arching his eyebrows. Even that wouldn't help. Kept seeing em comin.

Who were coming?

Strange things.

Why'd they come?

To fucking get even with me, that's why.

For something you did? To them? The boy, dipping his head slightly, peered across at Phát.

I figure that much myself.

Nam rubbed the underside of his chin. Maybe you can ask the old monk.

Did. He said it's my conscience that bothers me. He he. My conscience is me. Why'd I want to bother my old self is what I can't fucking put together.

What did he say to that?

He didn't say nothin cos I didn't tell him none of what I thought bout it. Long as I keep that lamp there burning I could sleep alright.

You keep it on all night?

Not all night. It'll burn out.

Then they'd come?

Nah. But sometimes she did.

Who did?

The one who died in that car. Phát leaned his head toward the derelict car.

That car, Nam said in a disbelieving tone.

In real. First time she came like in the fucking dark of the night, I thought this girl was some looney. Know what she said? Wouldn't want nothing but stay in the dark with you, said I'll come back, and before morning she's gone.

Gone, Nam said with a frown, gone where?

No fucking where. Just gone. Stepped out of that car and gone.

She told you she died in that car?

Did. Her family had it towed here next to her grave.

Nam looked where Phát pointed but couldn't make out which grave beyond the rim of the lamplight. They don't mind you staying in that thing? Nam said, jerking his chin toward the car.

Never seen none of em. That thing must be at least fifty years old if they still making any fuckin road wheels like that.

 $Khanh\,Ha$ 2

That's half a century and how old is she? This thing, I mean, that girl...well.

She ain't somebody just died in town and got buried here, that's all I said.

She told you that also?

She told me she died in that car and that's what I told you, cos I didn't bother with nobody long fucking dead and she kept me spent till she left every time.

She what?

Fucked me, that's what she did.

She must've been taken by your flute, I imagine. Nam laughed, shaking his head.

Phát clasped his hands on his chest, slid down resting his head against the grave marker. He began to whistle. The boy didn't recognize the tune. Yet he felt taken by its melody. Head bowed, hands locked between his knees, he sat nodding to the tune.

When he looked up, he saw a green snake slithering its way down the mistletoe-trailed trunk of a rain tree. Phát watched it, too. As the snake crept up on the grass, Phát tore one of his cigarette stubs and rolled the tobacco shreds between his thumb and forefinger. The snake raised its head, darting its tongue with a hiss. Nam watched, tensed, and Phát flicked his thumb, sending a tiny wad of tobacco toward the snake. Quickly the snake struck it with its jaw. Phát flipped it another wad and the snake struck it again. Moments later he snapped his fingers and waved the snake off. It didn't leave right away, but posed its triangle-shaped head in midair for a moment before deciding to withdraw.

The boy watched the snake glide up the tree trunk, following a leafy branch where a wasp nest hung at a split, and then disappear in the black-green foliage.

How did you get em snakes hooked on tobacco? he asked Phát.

I ain't no snake charmer. Them sumbitches just came out one night and tasted the leftover rice liquor. By and by they tried the cigarette stubs. You just have to know how to turn enemies into friends, that's all. He paused and belched. Whew. I'm burning hot. Maybe just get me em fruit over there and I can sleep for fuck's sake.

What fruit?

Em fruit. Look like berries. Taste like berries. They just sting your tongue that's all. Eat a few of em and your tongue goes numb and then you start seeing things, ghosts and demons and weird creatures coming out of the bowels of the earth. Eat a handful and you be a lovely corpse if you've lived fast.

How often have you tried?

As often as losing sleep.

Even sleeping sitting up?

When my time comes, I won't need but some signs in the sky.

Yeah?

Things like circles round the moon, or a dark haze over it when you don't even see a damn cloud in the sky. Evil things. Just looks real spooky. Rainbow at night. Yin and yang are fucking out of order. Comets and shooting stars. Misery falling on you.

Damn. When did you turn out to be a prophet. Nam sighed, scratching his head with the pointed tip of his neck chain's claw.

Just keep your eyes open, Phát said, turning his face toward the boy who sat on the fringe of lamplight. Say, where you got that thing.

What thing? This? Mine.

Phát screwed his eyes to look. Shit.

You fixed to buy anything you lay your eyes on ain't ya.

I don't want it. My bro he has one just like that.

The boy stopped scratching. He did?

Exactly like that.

And where he got it from?

Shit, if you ask me.

Stole it?

Phát grinned. No, paid for it on credit.

Yeah. Where is he now?

Shit if I know. We kind split up cos of our different interests. I suspect he's bound to show up around here sooner or later.

Which one of you is older?

Him.

Just you and him?

We're buddies. Orphans like us we kinda bonded together. Went everwhere together.

PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW

You're not twins?

Fuck no. I'm much better looking than him.

What bout him?

What?

What does he look like?

Ain't look nothing like me. Phát sat up, lit another cigarette, and blew the smoke into the palm of his hand. He ain't so lucky you know. Stupid enough to stick his head in a vat of catfish and got struck in the eye. He got just one eye and was mean like a catfish.

Nam rubbed his face, his head feverish. He stood up, looking away and back at Phát. The turbulent feeling was neither hate nor rancor. But it didn't go away.

I better get going, he said.

I'll be here, bud.

JAMISON CRABTREE

In Which Big Bad Beauties His Bruisies

Together with touch, doctor-good acknowledged grief

as a new type of contagion. Illnéss. It was apparent, and *áll* sci-en-tif-í-

cal: those left with the responsibility of unnaming the *city* were plagued with troubles. Rationally, the correlation between the grief and the physical symptoms

was obvious. It was grief that purpled the skin and skunned

the body. Doctor-good helped with his knife; stitched new faces into new places (*Smíle!*).

A tragedy of muscles and eyes and lips and the lesser tragedy of masks. The softest breeze

thieved hair from off the crowns of heads. Little streams

of vomit fractaled through the debris and implicated the existence of little secret fishies. Yay. Yay,

yay. To be alive in such a world, there's *oh* so *much* to *Ré-joicé!*

My own face, stricken as it is, was precisély like some sort of cracked, black bowl.

EMMA BOLDEN

That Cold Snap, April's Last

The weather was an ice cube against her bared pink hand. Wool skirts and knee socks, the sound of wood giving up its ash. An umbrella blown backwards to show itself

in metal bones and joints. The weather was wind sharp as peppermint. It was hair burl-curled and uncombable. It left its red marks in her eyes and her cheeks. From inside the house, the weather

was a song heard from a neighbor's distance, all woodwinds and violins, a voice rushing through the high notes. She was thinking of ice pops in plastic, the kind that sliced her mouth at its corners, the insides

of her cheeks. The weather was the kind of lie she told when she said that she was fine. The weather was an envelope and she was sealed inside. She took off her jacket so it could sit in the passenger seat. She wanted to know

what cold meant. She wanted to know what meaning meant. She parked the car. The weather sat above the pavement and shimmered until she thought she saw, far as a distance, what should have been a ghost.

EMMA BOLDEN

That Was December

wide as any infection (a landscape of horizons catching horizons of cold). I wore my cleanest fever

elegant as ermine (the skin of a skinless beast whose beastliness never leaves the beads

which in their proper sockets are seen as eyes). He had lost his camera. I had lost whole

Battenbergs of lace, lemon leaves and belief pulsed below both palms and wasn't at all indelicate. I was my life to leave.



Eileen Lang

text by JESS BARNETT

Eileen Lang's painting are fluid, dynamic, changeable. In other words, like water. Lang, who grew up along the California seashore, might have more of water and its characteristics in her blood than most. After living in Manhattan for over twenty years, she moved forty miles from the city and back to the ocean, the Northeast coast this time. "I need to be near a coastline at all times," Lang says. "It feeds my soul."

Lang's technique appears deceptively simple, incorporating acrylic paint along with India and sumi inks on photography paper. Pieces, however, can take from a few days to several weeks. "Each time I layer a color," Lang explains, "I need to wait until the previous layer is completely dry before adding more color."

Her paintings are inspired by the techniques of ancient Japanese suminagashi masters.

Suminagashi, or "floating ink," uses water and ink on paper to create a marbling effect.

Unlike in marbling, however, in which certain patterns are repeated, Lang's pieces draw on serendipity and the processes of the unconscious. "I try not to 'plan' a painting. I like the spontaneity of pouring paint and taking it from there. The main goal for me is then to develop balance, shape, and honesty in my work."

In the Alcedonia pieces (those with more pastel colors, including yellow, light blue, and violet), the effortlessness and apparent ease of Lang's craft shines. The latter pieces (those with darker colors and featuring repeated lines created by running paint) convey strong emotion, strength, even wildness.



Alcedonia Eleven (left) Acrylic on Photo Paper $17 \times 22 \text{ in.}$ EILEEN LANG

Untitled One Acrylic on Photo Paper 22×33 in. EILEEN LANG









Alcedonia Nine Acrylic on Photo Paper 17 x 22 in. EILEEN LANG

Untitled Two Acrylic on Photo Paper 22 × 33 in. Eileen Lang

39

Eileen Lang

Untitled Four Acrylic on Photo Paper 17 × 19 in. Alcedonia Ten Acrylic on Photo Paper 17 x 22 in. Eileen Lang

PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW SPRING 2014 38









Alcedonia Eight, Seven, Six (left) Acrylic on Photo Paper 17 x 22 in. EILEEN LANG

Untitled Three Acrylic on Photo Paper 33 x 44 in. EILEEN LANG

SPRING 2014

BETH CASTRODALE

Some Comfort

K arin Coughlin was riding her bike down the sidewalk when my father swung our Dodge into the driveway, just missing her. She clapped her feet to the ground and glared in his direction. But as if nothing had happened, he cut the engine, made a leisurely way to the passenger side, and opened the door.

Taking his arm with a tiny gloved hand, Aunt Vivian pulled herself up and into the sunlight: a four-foot-something woman wearing a black gabardine dress in the June heat, her face powdered white, her mouth and eyebrows painted on like a child's picture of a face.

While Dad retrieved Aunt Vivian's luggage from the trunk, Karin hissed a complaint I couldn't make out from my spot on the porch.

"Yeah, yeah, I saw you," he barked in reply, slamming the trunk. "And I better not catch you around here again, you thieving little punk."

"Wilson," Aunt Vivan scolded, "she's just a child."

Dad barreled toward the house, packages bulging under each arm, suitcases dangling from both hands.

"Don't be fooled, Viv. She's a barracuda."

Now, Aunt Vivian became the target of Karin's gaping, the subject of revulsion and delight.

But Aunt Viv didn't notice. When she called my name and opened her arms, I had no choice but to run into them. And by the time I was released from her perfumed embrace, Karin was gone, and our little world, the world of the Scarpetti family, no longer seemed a freak show. I willingly assumed my place in it.

My brother, Hugo, was slouched over a soda in the kitchen when all of us came in. Seeing Aunt Vivian, he got up and gave her a big hug. Though fifteen, he was still sweet around old people and other kids' parents, and I couldn't deny it seemed sincere. Aunt Vivian stepped back from him and beamed.

"Look how tall and handsome you are! What have they been putting in your milk?"

Aunt Vivian loved being around kids, even when her "moods" came over her. She was always polite to Hugo and me and interested even in the stupid stuff we said.

Dad pulled out a chair for Aunt Vivian. As she sat down, she took his hand and asked, almost in a whisper, "How's Ruth?"

"She'll be all right. She's just getting cleaned up, then she'll be down." Hugo cracked open a Pepsi for Aunt Vivian and brought it to her in one of the pebbled green guest glasses while Dad went back into the hall to bring the bags upstairs.

"Wilson, can you get the black suitcase?" Aunt Vivian craned her neck to look behind her. "No! *No!* Not that one! The small one!"

Dad shot Hugo an irritated look and then deposited a little round suitcase, sturdy as a vault, at her feet. She lifted it to the table, sprung the latches, and opened the lid, releasing a smell that reminded me of church: old air and flowers. Aunt Vivian had worked at Hickens department store for years, and everything in the case was professionally wrapped in white tissue. She laid out four packages and puzzled over them for a moment – none of them were marked. Then she slid two of them over to Hugo and the other two to me.

"Now, go ahead and open them, both of you."

Hugo got a 1978 coin proof set and a digital watch on a bright gold, stretchy band. I got a glass paperweight with a pink rose in it and a little

42 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Beth Castrodale 43

ceramic puppy with real sprayed-on fur and two brown stones for eyes. The rose was my favorite. I couldn't tell if it was real or not, but maybe because it was trapped it looked more alive than a rose from our garden. I wondered what Karin would think of the gifts, if she would laugh at them before stuffing them into her pocket.

When Dad came back down, he admired the gifts over our shoulders.

"You must have spent a fortune, Viv."

She shrugged. "It wasn't so bad. Here."

She reached into her case and handed a package to Dad.

"You should be saving your money," he said.

"For what, at my age?"

"Dad lived to ninety-two."

"You call that living?"

Grandpa Scarpetti hadn't talked for the last ten years of his life, or so I'd been told. He died when I was six, but I had a memory of him sitting on Aunt Vivian's couch with his head in his hands. I was afraid to go near him, and I didn't really understand that this stranger was my grandfather until I was older and he was dead.

"Please, dear, just open your gift."

Dad unfurled the paper to reveal a wallet of soft brown leather. He turned it over in his hands and opened it.

"Thanks, Viv. You know, I can actually use this. My wallet's coming apart at the seams."

"I'm glad."

"Can I see it, Dad?"

He passed the wallet to me and I felt the leather and inhaled its chemical smell. Inside, stamped in gold, was my father's name, Wilson Scarpetti.

"Look! Dad!"

"I saw it, honey. Your Aunt Vivian doesn't buy any garbage, does she?" She took out one more package and slid it to the middle of the table. Mom's.

"Now where's Ruth?" she asked, finishing her Pepsi.

"I'll get her," Hugo said, starting to get up, but Dad gave him the sign to stay put. Then Dad turned to me, his face serious.

"Ellen, I need to talk with you for a minute. Hugo, get your aunt another drink."

A bolt went through me. As I followed Dad into the hall, I tried to remember what I might have done wrong, but couldn't. Dad opened the screen door leading to the front porch then closed it and the main door behind us so no one inside could hear.

"Ellen, when that Coughlin girl was in this house, did she go into our bedroom?"

"No. I mean, I don't think so."

In truth, Karin had roamed the house freely that day. My parents had gone to see one of Hugo's baseball games and, to my anxious delight, Karin had invited herself over to watch television with me. But after a few moments of the afternoon movie, I noticed that she was shifting on the couch. When I glanced over I saw that her eyes weren't on the TV, they were darting from here to there like she was tracking a fly.

"I'm going to walk around," she announced, getting up and leaving me alone with *Singin' in the Rain*. There was no way to say no, and it was understood that I wasn't to follow. Karin was gone for a half hour, maybe an hour. Then she reappeared in the doorway, following my gaze to the TV, where Donald O'Connor was dancing gleefully up a wall.

"God, how gay! Have you been watching this the whole time?"

"I fell asleep," I lied.

"I'm going home."

Over the next week, the following items were discovered to be missing: a miniature cat of crystal glass, a cloisonné pill box, Hugo's prized baseball signed by Phil Niekro, and, worst of all – and (unlike the other items) so far not discovered to be missing – *The Story of Life*. The first two items had been in the front room, where Karin's footprints had disturbed the vacuum tracks on the wall-to-wall carpeting – something my parents discovered instantly. The baseball was found missing almost as quickly, because it sat on a wooden stand right across from Hugo's bed so he could admire it regularly while he listened to records through his headphones. No one knew *The Story of Life* was gone, because I'd kept that under my bed.

Dad bent down to get a good look into my eyes.

"You don't think so, but you don't know so."

I swallowed.

PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW

Beth Castrodale

"Your mom just discovered that her pearls are missing, the ones Grandpa Barrett gave her. They didn't walk away on their own."

This was especially terrible because my Grandpa Barrett, Mom's dad, was dying. That was why Aunt Vivian was staying with us, so that Mom and Dad could go to Grandpa's house near our old neighborhood. Things had "taken a turn," as Mom said, and it was even possible he'd die when they were there, if not sooner.

"I'm sorry." It was all I could think of to say.

"All right. Go in and see your aunt. We'll talk about this more later."

We went back inside, and Dad headed upstairs while I wandered back into the kitchen. Hugo was gone, and it was just Aunt Vivian standing in front of the counter taking goodies out of an old Hickens bag: boxes of Peek Frean cookies, petits fours dunked in pastel icings, and bottles of milky liqueur, pink and green. In the late afternoons, she liked to drink grasshoppers with the green liqueur and vanilla ice cream, and she always made one for Hugo and me.

She looked up when I came in.

"What's the matter, honey?"

"Nothing."

Her eyebrows shot up in doubt.

Right then, I was tempted to tell her everything, down to why I had let Karin into the house. But I didn't.

"I'm okay, really."

She paused to give me another chance and then rooted in the bag, handing me a stack of fashion magazines, including my favorite, the decadently enormous W. Just as I took it, I heard Dad yelling. I first thought he was fighting with Hugo, but no one was yelling back at him. Dad was on the phone in the upstairs hall, and I ran to sit on the lowest stair. As I listened, my stomach rolled.

"Wait a goddamned minute. If those pearls aren't back here by the time we're home, I'm calling the police. Do you understand? ... Yes, yes I am, I am accusing her ... then look in her room, why don't you? Turn that goddamned farm getup of hers upside down and give it a good shake. You just might find a few things!"

Aunt Vivian was standing at my side now. She looked from me to the top of the stairs, shaking her head.

"Who's he yelling at?"

"The father of a –"I couldn't say what I was about to say, *friend*. "The father of a girl I know. He thinks she stole something when she was here."

Aunt Vivian clutched her little hands to her stomach as if to protect herself. It was a gesture I was to take up unconsciously later and still catch myself making to this day.

"Well, did she?"

"I don't know."

I didn't tell her that after my mother confronted Karin's father about the crystal cat, the pill box, and the baseball (but not *The Story of Life*, because no one knew it was missing), the items showed up the next day. Dad opened the front door to get the morning paper, and there they were on the porch, in an A&P bag, everything (except for the book) present and unmolested. Maybe Karin knew I'd be too ashamed to say the book was missing, or it was equally possible that she'd been too embarrassed to reveal that it was something she'd found worth taking. Karin and I were therefore joined by a secret, and I imagined her studying the pictures in the book, her thirst and revulsion possibly as great as mine.

"And if we find one more goddamned thing missing from this house, even so much as a can of corn, there's going to be hell to pay. Do you understand?"

Aunt Vivian flickered her fingers at her breastbone, the closest she ever came to making the sign of the cross.

Just as she stepped past me to start up the stairs, Dad slammed down the phone. She and I scuttled back to the kitchen, where I tried to nonchalantly flip through W while Aunt Vivian laid out a tray of petits fours. The fashion models were pale and slinky that year, with dark silver shadows around their eyes. Like beautiful cats and raccoons.

Ten or fifteen minutes later, my mother entered the kitchen, her face pink and her eyes shining. She looked both fresh and tired, as if she had walked through a storm.

"Vivian." She extended her arms and Aunt Vivian did the same. "It's good to see you."

46 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Beth Castrodale

They embraced for a moment and then stepped back from each other, still holding hands.

"Thanks for staying with the kids. It's a big help to us."

"These kids? It's a pleasure. I'm just sorry about Horace."

"Mom," I interrupted, "Aunt Vivian brought you a present."

Mom looked to where I was pointing and made a face of mock displeasure, or maybe it was the real thing. "Oh, Viv, you're always too generous."

"Don't get excited. It's not that much."

"Should I open it now?"

"Sure," Aunt Vivian said in an indifferent tone. "Everyone else has already opened theirs."

Mom unwrapped the flat little package, and my guess that it was a book proved correct. After Mom looked through it, making appreciative comments, she put it back on the table. I picked it up while Mom explained to Aunt Vivian what was in the freezer and how everything was labeled by meal. Aunt Vivian didn't like to cook and wasn't at all offended that Mom had taken this particular chore off her hands. The few times I'd stayed at her house, we'd eaten frozen Stouffer's every night, and it had seemed like a dream.

The book was like something from Sunday school, back when I still went. Its cover had a cross entwined with white roses and in the lower right corner was a pair of praying hands. The title was *Words of Comfort and Peace*, and each page had pictures and just a few lines on it – Bible quotes and poems about things like lambs being walked through rainstorms under God's robes. Aunt Vivian had signed the first page: "Dear Ruth, May these words provide some comfort during this difficult time. Affectionately, Viv."

The book didn't line up with Aunt Vivian somehow. It felt like a way she wanted to see the world more than something she deeply believed in. As far as we knew, she never went to church except on Christmas and Easter. She wore a little gold cross, but I saw it only when she got ready for bed, and it seemed as private as her underclothes. Not something to be shown off, like the gold and diamond crosses some of the girls at my school wore.

Aunt Vivian lowered her voice. "Ruth, I heard Wilson up there shouting in the phone."

My ears perked up, but I kept my eyes on the book.

"He better lay off that kind of thing or he'll have a coronary, just like Dan."

"Viv, you know there's no stopping Wilson when he gets going."

"Well, a coronary will stop him."

"What'll stop who?" Dad was standing in the kitchen entrance with his sunglasses clipped into the pocket of a fresh shirt and his hair neatly combed.

"Getting upset isn't good for you, Wilson. I heard you up there."

"Neither is living down the street from criminals." Aunt Vivian stepped up and patted his arm, and even though he was almost two feet taller than she, I thought about the stories of Dad sleeping in a drawer as a baby, next to her bed. "Did Ruth tell you that one of the neighborhood punks lifted her pearls?"

"Pearls?" Aunt Vivian clutched at an imaginary strand around her neck. "Let me tell you," Dad went on, "this subdivision has more hoods per square inch than Sing Sing. You about ready, Ruth?"

"I just need to make one more trip upstairs."

After Mom left, Aunt Vivian took Dad's arm and looked into his eyes. "Was it the girl you almost ran over?"

"I didn't almost run over her. There was plenty of room."

"But Wilson, what would a tomboy like that want with pearls?"

Dad ignored this remark and bent to kiss me on the head.

"Sweetheart, you be good for Aunt Viv, okay?"

I got up to give him a hug, and he smelled like piney cinnamon. It was the aftershave I always gave him for Christmas.

"Where's your brother?"

"Upstairs, I think. I'll go get him."

I had to pound on Hugo's door because he had headphones on. When he finally opened the door, I saw that it was dark in his room except for the green light from his stereo. His eyes were two slits.

48 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Beth Castrodale 49

"Mom and Dad are leaving. Do you want to say goodbye?"

At first I thought he was going to close the door on me, but then he came out and shut the door behind him as if there was something secret in there.

Outside, as we all waved goodbye to Mom and Dad, the sun lit each blade of grass on our lawn and cast everything, even the concrete sidewalks, in a golden light. I thought about how pleasant and peaceful our street might look to a perfect stranger.

Mom had given me *The Story of Life* the year before, around the time of my tenth birthday. She came into my room, where I was listening to my radio or writing in my sporadically kept diary, and the only reason I knew it was something important was that she sat down on the bed next to me. She handed me the book and said, "Read this and let me know if you have any questions." So I did as I was told and read the book. It didn't raise any questions. Instead, it filled me with dread.

The book was illustrated with cartoonish drawings of a boy and a girl. When fully dressed, they wore clothes and hairstyles from the fifties, which made them just a little less scary when they were naked. The boy and girl were both blond and had identical sprays of freckles across their noses, calling to mind a brother and sister. Only in retrospect did this explain some of the prickling at the back of my neck as I studied their pictures. At the start of the book they were apart and stood in clinical cross-section, revealing glands and appendages the general functions of which were known to me, even if certain specifics weren't. "The ovaries and fallopian tubes are approximately the size and shape of two almonds and two pencils."

The real strangeness began when the thoughts of the girl and the boy, Jill and Roy, were revealed. "Jill is attracted to Roy's muscularity and confidence, and she dreams of a happy life with a man, perhaps the man that Roy will become. Roy admires Jill's sparkling eyes and shapely figure, and sometimes at night he has special dreams of her that cause him to release sperm in a spasm beyond his control."

I read and reread these lines and was haunted especially by those final words: "a spasm beyond his control." The thought of Roy in his

bed, helpless against the spasm, filled me with fear and pity, and then horror. Mom had read these lines. Probably, Hugo before me had read these lines. These thoughts got me to flip quickly ahead to the marriage of Roy and Jill, and then to the unromantic suggestion of their coupling. After this point in the book, Roy vanished and Jill was left alone with her cross-sectioned uterus, on which a spotlight seemed to shine. Page by page, the gilled flipper-fish within her transformed into a baby who seemed only to want to remain in peace. Even as it squeezed its way out of the birth canal and into the world, its eyes were closed and its face scrunched into a look of complaint. From the miniature penis revealed on the final page, I could see that the child would suffer the same fate as Roy.

Though not many of the facts were new to me, something about the book, maybe just the stark progression of the illustrations, was my first hint that I was perhaps not so strange as I'd imagined. It was ordinary, maybe even inevitable, to be alone. Even when a man wants to get that close to you, even when a baby gathers life inside you. Even when you're the baby, sheltered within your mother. From that point on, I looked at the book nearly every night before bed, until it vanished.

After the second hang-up call, I knew that Karin Coughlin was trying to get through to me. Aunt Vivian answered the first two times: "Scarpetti residence ..." The third time, I was ready by the upstairs phone. I picked up before the end of the first ring and crouched in the dark by the phone stand, heart pounding.

"Karin?"

"I didn't steal those pearls," she rasped.

I could tell she'd been crying, which disturbed me more than her anger or disgust. She was in serious trouble, and I was responsible. At the same time I didn't know whether I could believe her, as much as I wanted to.

"They were a gift from my Grandpa," I said. "He's dying."

Karin hung up before I could work up the courage to ask about the book.

Beth Castrodale

To those who had never seen her in action, Karin Coughlin would not seem to inspire terror. She never reached five feet in all the time I knew her. She was chunky and pale as milk, and dressed every day in shapeless overalls, the only variation being the shirt she wore beneath them, usually some variation on a nursery school theme (flowers, hearts, balloons, teddy bears) that I didn't know whether to take at face value or as a nose-thumb at the world. She wore wire-rim glasses that, depending on how the light hit them, either magnified her eyes or masked them by reflection – the latter effect being especially chilling, for it concentrated her smirk, making it even more searing.

With time, everyone at school came to see that Karin was fearless, that she would step into the ring with almost anyone: other girls, boys, janitors, bus drivers, crossing guards, even the occasional teacher. It wasn't that she always did, but that she would when she wanted to and circumstance allowed. A typical chain of events was that something in Karin's surroundings would provoke her to make a comment under her breath, or curl her legendary lip, and then the target, actual or perceived, might say something like, "Do you have something to share with the class, Karin?" or "What's your problem, smart-ass?" Her response: stony silence or something like, "None of your business, dillweed." Words and gestures were her usual weapons, although once, on the bus, I saw her depose then-reigning tough girl Angel Ripperton by slamming her head against a seat back. Karin was suspended once or twice, or maybe she just got detention. In any case, she seemed to get away with a lot.

Nearly always – in the halls, in the cafeteria, at the various assemblies we were compelled to attend – Karin traveled with an entourage of the most beautiful and popular girls, and the funny thing is that she was the one you wanted to look at. Karin walked or sat among this twittering, sparkling bunch with a supremely bored look on her face unless she was whispering nastiness into one of the girl's ears or beaming everyone's attention toward some unfortunate. Occasionally she would casually stuff one of the other girl's potato chips or cookies into her mouth, and no one would seem to notice or care.

I remained crouched in the dark by the phone, knowing that Karin would call again. Once more, I picked up on the first ring.

"What's with the little lump at your house?" she asked.

At first I imagined some prized object Karin now had her eyes on until I realized she meant Aunt Vivian.

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said.

"Of course you do. God! - Is she some kind of circus freak?"

I began to stammer an answer, but once again I was alone on the line.

Downstairs, Aunt Vivian was pouring green liqueur into a blender full of vanilla ice cream. Her finger paused over the switch as I entered the kitchen.

"Were those more hang-up calls?"

"Yes." I said, not wanting to have to explain anything else.

"Does that happen a lot?"

"Not really. Somebody must have the wrong number."

"You think they'd be getting wise by now. Oh, well."

She hit the switch and the blender hummed, bringing Hugo up from the basement, where he was making some kind of robot. Hugo was always making stuff in the basement.

Aunt Viv poured three grasshoppers and lined them up on the counter. "Shall we toast the sunset?"

We took our glasses out into the back yard, where the sun cast a mellow path along the grass, and into the hosta bed.

"Is there really alcohol in here?" Hugo asked in joyous disbelief.

"Don't get excited," Aunt Viv replied. "It's mostly for color."

Aunt Viv was my dad's half-sister, the third of eleven children born to the first or second wife of Bruno Scarpetti. Dad was child number ten, and twenty years younger than Aunt Viv. She'd been born in Italy, my father in the United States, and both had grown up poor, their child-hoods book-ending the Depression. By the time Dad came into the world, Aunt Viv was working in the typing pool at an insurance company. Although she eventually moved out of Grandpa Bruno's place and into a boarding house downtown, she came back frequently to see her father, my dad, and her other brothers and sisters, and to drop off grocery bags of prosciutto, olives, canned nuts, coffee, containers of macaroni salad, anise drops, Hollywood magazines, playing cards, and denture polish and adhesive for Bruno and his second wife, Amelia.

53

52 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Beth Castrodale

Later on, Dad and the younger children became the breadwinners, but Aunt Vivian's generosity and resourcefulness remained legendary among all of them.

"You could drop her out of a helicopter in the Sahara," Dad liked to say, "and she'd find her way back to civilization and have a gift for everyone."

I also knew that her "moods" could make my parents crazy. There was no way to predict what would trigger them. One time, when Dad called Nixon a "rotten crook," Aunt Viv hung up on him and wouldn't speak to him for weeks. Another time, when she arrived for a visit to see that Mom had redone the kitchen in golds and greens without telling her, she bolted to the guest room and didn't come down until after breakfast the next day.

"I guess you can use them as paint rags," she said, when Mom finally opened the package of blue dishtowels that matched the old kitchen.

The moods hit without tears or scenes. "A cold front's rolled in," Dad would say with a smile, touching Mom's arm so she wouldn't take it so hard. But she never got used to it.

"I'd rather she just say something, have it out. Like you, Wils."

"That'd be too easy, Ruthie."

As my parents knew, and as Hugo and I discovered, Aunt Viv's moods were reserved for adults. To her, all young people, regardless of their actions or obvious faults, were blameless and worthy of adoration. Once, an older cousin of mine on my father's side was given an expensive ticket for driving through a four-way stop. When, a year or so later, the ticketing officer was discovered to have been axed to death by his adult son, Aunt Viv remarked, "I'll bet you a fifty he had it coming. Who knows what that poor boy put up with all those years?"

On the morning after Aunt Viv arrived, I was reading Edgar Allan Poe in the front room when a shadow passed the window. I parted the curtains and saw Karin Coughlin walk toward the porch and then disappear from my view. I froze, waiting for the doorbell to ring, but I heard just the "skreek" of the screen door. Was she just going to barge right in?

Then I heard Aunt Viv's voice and understood that she had come upon Karin while watering the flowers. Quietly, I slid open the window and

leaned forward as close as I could get to the screen. Karin had stepped back off the porch, and I saw her in profile. I couldn't see Aunt Viv, who, from the sound of her voice, was standing by the front flower bed.

Karin wore an expression, both amused and predatory, that made my stomach drop.

"Why are you wearing *that* to do yard work?"

Aunt Viv stepped into my view to sweep the hose over the peony bush, and I saw that "that" was a navy blue sweater-dress, matching pumps, and a choker of seed pearls. She didn't look at Karin; it was almost as if she'd been expecting her.

"I don't have a choice, honey. I've never owned a pair of trousers in my life."

"Why?"

"I don't like them. Have you ever seen a short woman who looks good in trousers?"

Karin had probably never been asked such a question, much less seen a copy of W.

"Why do you draw on your eyebrows like that?"

As Aunt Viv stepped in front of Karin to get to the geraniums, I was afraid that Karin would trip her or kick her in the back of the knees. But she stepped back to make way. Just then I glimpsed something in the big front pocket of Karin's overalls, something flat and white along the edge.

"They fell out when I was a kid, honey, and never came back. Vitamin deficiency. Not enough meat, not enough milk." Aunt Viv yanked the slack out of the hose. "The milk had to go to the babies."

"God!" This favorite exclamation of Karin's traded some of its usual derisiveness for astonishment.

"I'm afraid God wasn't minding the store at the time, dear."

The book. The thing in the pocket was my book, I was sure of it. Karin had sneaked over to leave it behind the screen door, maybe the pearls, too.

Aunt Viv stepped back onto the walkway to turn a broad spray on the whole of the flower bed. She was standing right next to Karin, who was nearly her height. While Aunt Viv watched the flowers, Karin watched her. Something in Aunt Viv seemed to have caught her interest in the most innocent, unguarded sense. They stood together almost companionably, and any stranger who drove or walked by at that moment would

55

assume that *they* were the relations, perhaps a grandmother dispensing bits of gardening wisdom to a granddaughter, one whose choice of a poppy-sprinkled T-shirt might have been something more than an accident. I was beginning to feel a surge of jealousy when Aunt Vivian came out with it.

"Honey, if you took those pearls, you can give them to me and no one will need to know. I'll just say I found them."

"I didn't take them! *I didn't!*" Karin seemed close to crying, her face splotched red. "What would I want with stupid pearls?"

"That's exactly what I told Mr. Scarpetti. All right, then. I had to ask once, but that's the last we'll speak of it. Do you mind going around to the side of the house and turning off the hose?"

Karin was glaring at Aunt Vivian, perhaps fashioning an insult in response. But then she turned and made for the side of the house, and in a moment I heard the rush of water cease in the pipes.

"Thank you, dear," Aunt Viv said when Karin returned. They stood together in silence for a moment.

The book, I thought. What about the book?

"Have you always worn a wig?" Karin asked.

"No, not until about thirty years ago, when my hair started coming out, from stress. But you should've seen it when I was your age. It was down past my shoulders and thick and soft as mink." Aunt Viv reeled the hose around her braceleted arm, looking like an aged rodeo queen. "But it's funny how I don't miss it anymore, really. A good wig won't betray you. You'll see."

A silver car, not new but well kept, crawled by. I thought it might be someone who was lost and looking at address numbers, but then it stopped just past our house, the motor still running.

Karin noticed it too, and her face changed, as if she'd swallowed a stone. Aunt Viv followed her gaze to the car.

"What is it, honey?"

"I have to go."

Karin ran for the car, and the passenger door opened to swallow her. I should have remembered that it was Mr. Coughlin's car. The only

time I ever saw him was when he was out in his driveway washing and polishing it, looking both intent and distracted. The door closed and then they were gone.

That afternoon, Aunt Viv and Hugo watched baseball on TV while I did paint by numbers at the kitchen table. Because it started to rain that evening, we fried hamburgers indoors for dinner and sipped our grasshoppers on the couch. When Aunt Viv learned that the evening movie was *Wuthering Heights*, she put her hand to her chest and gasped, sending a current of fear through me. Heart problems ran in Dad's side of the family, and I thought of Uncle Dan's coronary.

"Oh, honey, have you ever seen this movie?"

"No."

"Then we *must* watch it."

At the opening credits, Hugo bolted for his stereo, leaving Aunt Vivian and me alone on the couch, under an afghan that Grandma Barrett had crocheted. As the light died, we didn't bother to turn on the lamps, and the weather on the English moors merged with the storm outside our window. Still, I couldn't go as far into the movie as Aunt Vivian did, or once had. Something, maybe the thirties hairstyles and staginess of speech, held me back a little, even though I loved the dark beauty of Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon. It was as if someone was putting a hand against my chest, blocking me from someplace I wanted to get to.

When I finally read *Wuthering Heights*, I understood that no movie could capture its strangeness. No movie could wholly and truly capture Heathcliff, on whose rocks I longed to crash myself for years longer than was sensible.

Years later, I wondered if Aunt Viv had been reaching toward Heathcliff when she found Lloyd Chesterfield, her first and only husband, whom she'd divorced long before I was born. She never spoke of Lloyd, though she kept his last name until she died. I saw only one picture of him, probably from the forties. It was a photograph of the Scarpetti men, Grandpa and Dad's older brothers, and Mr. Chesterfield was standing in the back

56 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW Beth Castrodale

row. The Scarpettis were staring ahead and laughing at something, maybe some crack from the photographer, but Lloyd is not. He is glancing off to the side, as if someone has called to him, and not with happy news.

Once, when I asked Mom what happened, she said, "No one knows for sure, but it seems that Viv initiated the divorce. Aunt Betty's understanding is that she wanted children and he didn't, but who knows?"

That night, after the movie, the phone rang for the first time that day. It was Mom checking in on us and giving us the news that Grandpa Barrett was still alive.

The storm broke overnight, and the next day was bright and hot. Because of the rain, the flowers didn't need to be watered, but Aunt Viv had brought zinnia seeds that she wanted to plant. She dressed in a bright red skirt, polka-dotted blouse, and cushioned red mules and headed for the front yard, waving away my offer of help. So I sat again in the front room, resuming "The Masque of the Red Death," which I'd already read about six times.

I heard the click of bike spokes and knew before I turned to the window that it was Karin Coughlin. I don't know why it never occurred to me before then that whenever I saw her in the neighborhood, she was never with any of the girls she ran with at school. She was almost always alone. I wasn't even sure whether Karin had brothers and sisters. I knew that her parents were divorced and that she lived with her dad on Pine Acres Way, but there might have been more kids at her mom's. I wasn't sure. Really, I knew so little about her.

"Hi, honey," Aunt Viv called. Karin laid her bike on the lawn and walked up to the flower bed. My heart sank a little when I saw that she was wearing shorts and a T-shirt instead of the overalls. There was no way she could be hiding the book anywhere. Something else was different, too. I couldn't put my finger on it, but Aunt Viv noticed it right away.

"What a lovely barrette. Where did you get it?"

Karin had pulled a hank of hair away from her face with a clip that bore a tiny pink rosette. This slight nod toward girlishness made me feel uncomfortable for her, as if her skin had lost a layer or two of thickness and everyone could tell. "My mother gave it to me."

"Well, it's very pretty."

Karin made a face at the compliment. "What are you doing?"

"Planting flower seeds. Do you want to help?" Aunt Viv ripped the seed packet open and gave it a shake.

"Not really. Can I just watch?"

"Sure."

Aunt Viv bent and sprinkled the seeds.

"You said your hair fell out from stress. What happened?"

Aunt Viv finished sprinkling the seeds, then kicked a little dirt over them. "Honey, can you go turn on the hose and bring it here?"

Was she going to answer Karin? Since that time, I've always believed she was working up to it.

As Karin came back with the hose, Mr. Coughlin's car pulled up again, right in front of our house. He leaned toward the passenger side window.

"Karin Marie, get in this car now." His voice, which I'd never heard before, was deep and fine-toned, in contrast to his appearance. He was a small, pale man who seemed to have accepted defeat at some distant point in the past.

"It's all right, hon," Aunt Viv called to him sweetly, taking the hose from Karin. "She's helping me."

Mr. Coughlin ignored her. "I thought I told you to stay away from these people."

Aunt Viv looked as if she was working up to a response, but then she turned to Karin. "You better go with your dad, but you're welcome here any time."

Karin turned a hard look on Aunt Viv, the one that usually preceded calling someone "dillweed." Suddenly, she spun around to face Mr. Coughlin and shouted something I still can't quite believe was "fuck you." Then she bolted across our driveway, toward our back yard.

A second later, Mr. Coughlin was out of his car and running at a surprising speed in pursuit of his daughter. Almost as quickly, Aunt Viv ran with the hose to the open side window of the car. She aimed the nozzle onto the front seat and called over her shoulder, "Hey you!"

Mr. Coughlin whirled around.

"You keep running and I'll do it. I promise."

58 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW

He turned and made for Aunt Viv, and I screamed Hugo's name as I hurtled out of the house and off of the porch, followed seconds later by Hugo, who must have been in his room. Aunt Viv had stepped away from the car, but she gave the hose some slack and started swinging the nozzle in front of her like a mace.

Mr. Coughlin's face was bright red and his dress shirt was already soaked through.

"I don't know who you are," he said, panting, "but you don't tell me or my kid what to do. You and the whole damned bunch of you."

Hugo and I now stood at Aunt Viv's side. Mr. Coughlin remained a moment longer, his eyes flicking over her, then me, then Hugo. Then he got back into his car and drove off.

All of us were too upset that afternoon to have a proper lunch, so we ate cocktail peanuts and Peek Freans with ice cream and Pepsi. Afterward, Aunt Viv pushed back from her place at the table, kicked off her mules, and swung her feet up on an empty chair. "Hugo, why don't you turn on some of your music for us all. Honestly, I don't care what it is."

And so he ran upstairs, unplugged his headphones, opened his bedroom door, and blasted what I later learned was *Quadrophenia*. It was a good way to be alone and still be together. We didn't have to talk, and the music carried us along without our having to understand anything.

When the phone rang, we looked at each other. No one wanted to answer it, but finally Aunt Viv did. Hugo bolted back upstairs to turn off the music.

"I'm so sorry, Ruth. When did it happen?"

Hugo sat back down at the table, and we stared at each other over our Pepsis. I didn't know what Hugo felt exactly, but I wasn't sad about Grandpa, at least not then. I felt relief that what we'd all been waiting for had finally happened.

Hugo and I learned from Aunt Viv's side of the conversation that Dad was going to drive back and pick Hugo and me up for the funeral. She was welcome to go, too, but she declined.

"Oh, Ruth," Aunt Viv interjected, just as they were ending the call. "I do have a little bit of good news. I found your pearls just an hour or so ago. I thought I'd look around for myself, and I discovered them behind your dresser...I know, but it's not surprising considering everything you've had on your mind. I'll send them back with Wilson, if you'd like to wear them for the funeral."

I never asked whether Aunt Viv really did find the pearls, or if Karin handed them off to her at some point when I wasn't looking. I couldn't tell if I wanted to believe that Karin was innocent, or if my greater desire was to think of her as I always had, as someone who would do what she wanted and not knuckle under, or at least not as easily as I always did. I never saw her again on our street, and she wasn't in our school in the fall. I heard from some other kids that she'd moved in with her mother, but I never knew for sure. Mr. Coughlin stayed in our neighborhood for another year or so, and then his job transferred him to somewhere in the South.

That same fall I found *The Story of Life*, or what was left of it, at the edge of our yard, in a little drainage gully that ran between our place and the MacMasters'. The book was buried under the leaves that I was raking. It was soaked and swollen, but I could still turn what was left of the pages. There was Jill with her organs, there was Roy with his. The discussion of their coupling was missing, as were some other important parts that I could not at that moment remember. On the last remaining page was a damp golden leaf. I peeled it back and saw Jill's sleeping baby, with his embittered little face.

I cried until I was sure I was done, and then I carried the book to the side of the house, dropped it into a trash barrel, and closed the lid.

60 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW

Beth Castrodale 69

JAMISON CRABTREE

Now We Are All Sons of Bitches

Facts lie. To be social

is to enter a conversation started by the dead;

how much is left to discuss?

Even at your loneliest, refuse

to talk to yourself – language violates

experience; turns it

into something uséeeeefull!!!!!!.

This is not talking, this

wríting. The night celebrates

day; the day is too serious

to celebrate. Bombs celebrate

the ends of *things*; other bombs

celebrate the ends of things.

I want to be a wolf or a boy or something

cruel enough to accept happiness as an end.

But I'm out of sorts, out

of (the language required to) shape

(things up). I want to be there

with cake and soup

on your birthday when you're sick.

But instead, I leave a note on your wall

and I'm using

the deaths of the people closest to me

for the ideas they represent. I won't be there;

I'll eat your soup alone. I'm using myself

to make something that you can usé.

It's ok. Let me down.

JAMISON CRABTREE

Yes, Truly-Man: It's Not Terrible if It's Useful

People died, became ghosts. Ghosts died;

became different ghosts.

A lossy transcoding of the spirit, resulting from an indistinct but continual

passing on & through one's death & then,

into the next. Ghost-of-the-ghost of little girl-big dressed in her coal black jumper, startled her still-living grandmother:

What's wrong, boo?

Wootie, wootie, woo wound the wind. Wolf

removes his head from under the hood of his red ford s $\acute{u} - p - \acute{e} r d \acute{e} luxe$

to watch the marchpasters in the ghosts-of-ghosts parade ripple by

with their banners and with their floats. Don't ask

where they're going. After such an unending accumulation of losses, ask

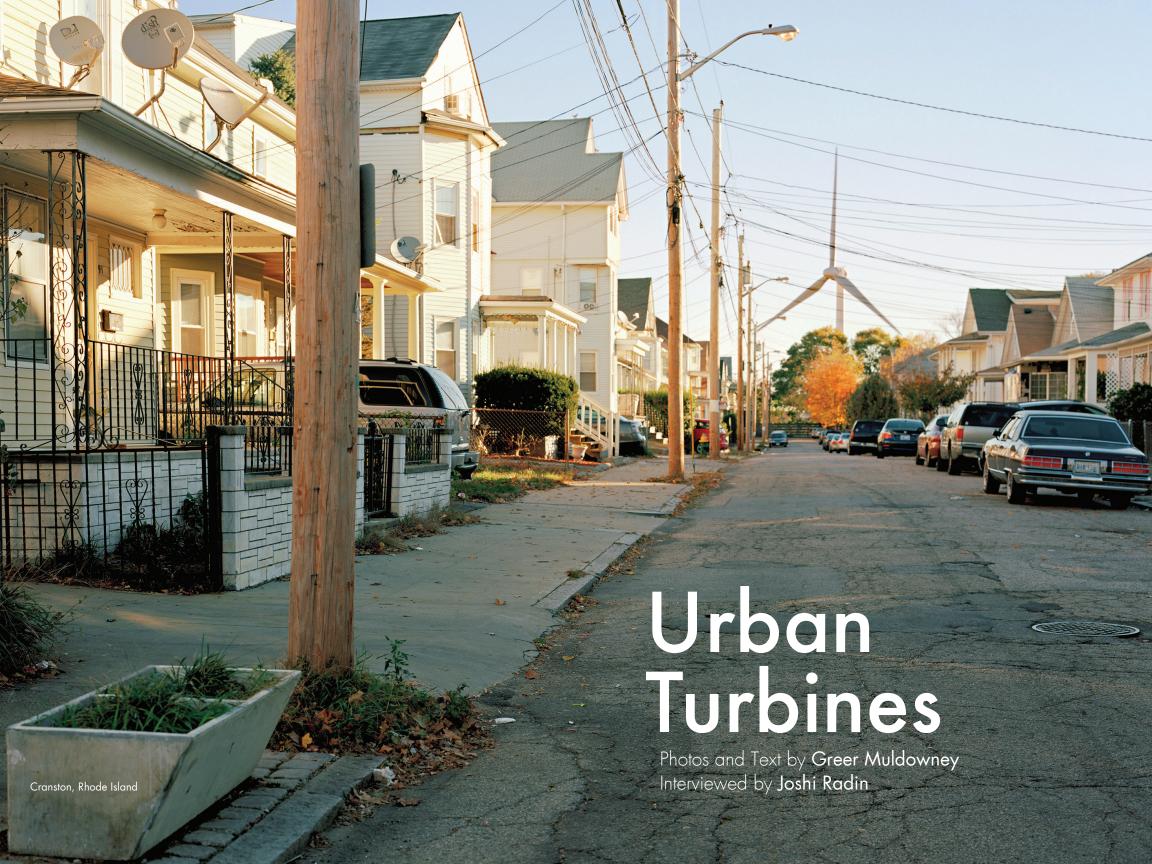
what is it

that is left to celebrate? Yourself

at eight, at twelve, at midnight last night: you, too, búd: you are full of ghosts.

PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW

Jamison Crabtree





Sullivan Square Coal Plant, Somerville, Massachusetts

This new work is loosely titled *Urban Turbines*, and it's about how green energy is visual PR. It's good PR on the landscape, particularly for certain industries like electrical unions, and pretty interestingly connected to energy companies whether they are nefarious or well-intentioned. I am all for green energy. I think wind energy is great. But sometimes where [turbines] are placed actually doesn't add to the infrastructure of the community at all; it's just there to look good.

For example, the Sullivan Square turbine is in front of the Exelon Mystic Generating Station, a fossil fuel

electrical plant. It's a coal plant, but basically it's like having an American flag in the front yard. It's a token. It is the same thing with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. 0103 Local in Dorchester, the electrical unions station. They have one in their parking lot, but my understanding is that it can't work up to efficiency that well. I've been photographing these locations, and I've been photographing turbines that are popping up on school grounds that seem to serve an educational purpose, as well as energy support, so it kind of goes all around. The body of work is based around the idea of landscape imagery, dotted with

these turbines, instead of the turbines always being central to the imagery. I hope to create a sense of how new this structure is on the landscape. Particularly in New England, because we are so energy poor, we are desperate to have something that both fills this need and can be seen as progressive.

I naturally am interested in politically loaded imagery. Ultimately what I'm interested in is how we are visually literate and how – not even just with photographs or film – but in how we approach our landscape, and how that is regurgitated to us, and how we buy in to certain ways a city is constructed, or what is good and what is bad. You know, we can talk about Boston's Government Center, we can talk about Hong Kong, we can talk about beautiful fields of solar panels. I've been collecting soap boxes, or mailers, or even our letters that now have turbines on them. When Ed Markey was running for Senate, he was going to be the senator of energy, and there was an image of him with three turbines in the background sent out as mailers. I've been collecting this stuff, and it is really used as this propaganda of the future – and how it's going to be good. At the last wind energy conference in Texas, George W. Bush was their keynote - it's the old oil guard who have come in and are prospecting for this in upstate NY and VT. So yeah, I guess I always do lean a little political, but I'm trying to show both sides. It's a hard line to walk. It's a very hard line.

I teach a propaganda and media class, so it's completely relevant to my work. When other people have asked me about the work, they have said, "well, don't you think you're kind of leading

people on?" I'm not a journalist. I'm asking people to question journalists by looking at photos that are overly aesthetic about this stuff – so much so you almost can't trust them. You shouldn't always believe in the media you're given. Same with green energy, same with any visual media.

There are some artists I absolutely love because I know I can't do what they do. It's a different genre. I love Tara Selios's work because it's just trippingly beautiful, but I would never be able to make it. And I love Bryan Schuutmat's work, but I would never be able to take portraits of strangers that way because I am awkward even with people I know — I just would never be able to do that. I would say that in terms of people I'm influenced by — there are a couple photographers out of Chicago that I have known for a while, like Matt Siber and Brian Ulrich.

Brian Ulrich's book that he put out a couple years ago, Copia, looked at big box stores, and then thrift stores, and then dark stores – like empty malls and these huge grand landscapes. It's about American consumerism. Some of them are great, some are a little redundant, but that is the point. Ultimately, I like the way he talks about the work. I've asked him how he approaches making work like this without being overly on one side or the other. His perspective was that he was just trying to get people to notice that we've fallen into these terrible voids in our culture, and we're all a part of it. He has two kids; he's been to Toys"R"Us. He's complicit with this; he has a car that burns gas – we're all complicit.

PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW SPRING 2014 6





Waste Water Treatment, Providence, Rhode Island

I like talking to him about the pragmatics of being a voice for awareness in imagery, instead of something overtly political, because we both walk a line that attempts to find some balance.

And then Matt Siber, who isn't really doing [straight] photography anymore, but he started with taking these great photos of highway culture. Ugly strip malls and giant signs: McDonald's, Mobil, Pizza Hut, Walmart. He was removing all the pillars from the signs in the images so they look like they're floating in space. It asked the question: do you even notice these things in your skyline anymore? That really gave me the idea to talk about whether we notice these turbines in our periphery,

or is it just part of the skyline? And do we realize how destructive we are to whatever landscape is anymore? Which is a different story.

I'm not a purist in any sense in regards to which tools I use for photographing, but as someone who works in a digital lab, I do scanning for a lot of artists, and I do a lot of printing, and I see everything from large format film to your normal digital files. And I teach digital. So, with this experience, I have to say I can spot a digital print from a room away. The technology isn't there yet. For certain things, yeah, I shoot digitally all the time. I wish I could shoot my work digitally, but if I want to print it as large as I usually do, there's no way. It just breaks down. And I'm not a



Walmart, Worcester, Massachusetts

huge tech geek; I don't keep up – well, I can't afford to keep up. Even if someone offered me something to try, I would say "no," because I'd break it, and then I'd cry. I would love to go up to digital but it's not there yet.

In terms of addressing the changing nature of photography and the sheer number of images being made – and because I teach at the college level it's something I talk about all the time, as it really has my students worried – I don't think it's the ubiquity of images that's the problem. It's just another form of communication, but we don't know how to talk about that. Pun intended. We don't write letters anymore; we send pictures. So the question is, is this supposed to be an elevated image? Is

this supposed to be more important? Or is it supposed to be something used to process information quickly between people? I think those lines have become more and more blurred, because there are so [many images] out there, in the vernacular. Communications imagery is becoming better and better.

I don't know if it will be less differentiated in the future, or if we have to actually appreciate professional art makers more, and actually differentiate. That's a whole new set of educational tools we're not using. We'll see what happens in the next ten years.

72 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW SPRING 2014 73

DAVID BOWEN

A Cool, White Fog

Everyone at Big Strikes was in high school except for me. Even though I had just turned thirteen, I still felt like twelve. For almost half an hour I stood against a wall, my face prickling as it thawed, and watched my cousin Shane and his pal Willie play pool with the high school guys. Shane and Willie knew everyone. Shane either felt guilty or being in a crowd made him feel generous, because after he and Willie won their second game, he started introducing me to people by calling me "a seriously cool kid."

The four pool tables were grouped in a long green room next to a smaller room with arcade games, and the both of them adjoined the larger area where everyone did their bowling. On the other side of the bowling alley was Frank's, a biker bar where kids weren't welcome. Some of the high schoolers probably had their own booze, but I wouldn't have known about it.

The high school girls Shane knew were nothing like the girls in my seventh grade class at St. Mark's. All the girls at Strikes wore makeup and tight blouses, earrings and hairspray – none of which were allowed at the Catholic schools. The newness of their faces was exciting; any of them might be the most beautiful girl I'd ever see, perfect and kind. They smelled like fruit, and the conspicuous curves of their new breasts drew hot blood into my face and ears. I was without currency in this strange land.

Shane introduced me to a group of high school girls sitting on benches in the corner.

Veronica Jansen was the oldest, a junior with mousse-spiked blond hair and heavy eye makeup. Her younger sister Melissa wore a red Wisconsin Badgers baseball cap and shoulder-length blonde hair.

Kate Burkhardt was Melissa's best friend. Her brown hair made me think of trees, a thick forest of wet leaves and naked branches. Her round cheeks jumped when she smiled. Kate and Melissa were freshmen. I tried my best to look indifferent.

On the jukebox, Joe Elliott sang: "pour your sugar on me!"

"Hey," said Willie, slinking against the wall. "I heard about something."

Veronica exaggerated an expression of shock. "What did you hear?" I didn't like the way she pretended she didn't care about anything.

"This place out on Lake Saraw. Someone built a house on the ice, out in the middle of the lake."

"What are you talking about?" said Melissa, a little high-pitched. "Nobody builds a house in the middle of a lake."

"I swear it," said Willie. "I've seen it."

"I thought you just heard about it," Kate said, exaggerating a note of doubt.

"No, I saw it, too," said Shane. "It's smack in the middle of the lake. Bobby was with me – tell them, Bobby."

I was paralyzed for three long seconds. Kate's eyes swept over me, gray as robin feathers. I could feel Shane's look on me.

Melissa rolled her eyes. "You're full of it."

"It's too cold to even talk about the outside," said Veronica. "It's like breathing knives."

"It's not that cold," Kate said, offering Melissa a stick of Juicy Fruit. "We should go on an adventure."

"I know someone who had sex there," I said.

Eyes turned to me. Shane raised an eyebrow.

Veronica made a contemptuous noise. "Then I'm definitely not going there."

"No, listen. My friend Danny met this girl who was from Ireland when he went to college, and she said she always wanted to do it in a

74 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW David Bowen 75

castle. So Danny got a book about Irish castles and made one out of snow, right in the middle of the lake."

Melissa shoved my arm playfully. "Nobody built a castle in the middle of the lake. You're such a liar."

"Well, it wasn't like a full-sized castle or anything," I said, leaning against a vacant pool table. "It was smaller."

"Like you have any friends in college," said Veronica.

"He was in my Boy Scout troop."

"What was the girl's name?" Melissa asked.

"What girl?"

"The one from Ireland," Kate said, meeting my eyes. "You know, the lass."

I licked my lips. "Her name was Isobel. Isobel Shaw."

Veronica shook her head. "That name's doesn't even sound Irish."

"It's Irish," Willie said. "Like Bernard Shaw."

"Yeah," Shane said. "Bernard Shaw is Irish."

"Irish names all have 'O' in front," said Melissa. "Like O'Brien, or O'Connor."

Kate pulled her dark hair back into a ponytail and smiled. "Did it work?" "Did what work?" I asked.

Kate sighed patiently, as if she knew the game we were playing. "This castle. Did Isobel go for the mini-castle?"

I pushed my palms into the rail of the pool table. "Danny just showed it to me and told me why he built it."

"A gentleman never tells, and our friend Danny is a gentleman," said Shane. "Just like us."

Melissa and Veronica rolled their eyes at each other.

"This place is boring anyway," said Willie. "Come on, this is going to be fun."

The mist had thickened into a dense fog, moist and soupy. After a chilly early evening, the night had grown warm, and we walked in a cloud that we could taste. The girls drifted behind us so they could talk out of earshot. They walked in a huddle, giggling. We were about a block away from the cemetery.

Shane glanced behind us, shook his head at me. "Nice move back there with the thing about the castle."

"Pretty cool," said Willie, flicking his Zippo in the cold.

"I told you he was a cool kid," said Shane.

"I liked the part about being a Boy Scout," Willie said. "That was quick thinking."

Shane shoved me playfully. "Bobby is a Boy Scout – isn't it obvious?"

"Now who gets who?" asked Willie. "I like Veronica."

"No way, man," said Shane. "She was giving me eyes the whole time."

Willie lit a cigarette. "In your dreams. I think Bobby likes Melissa."

"He couldn't handle her," said Shane. "He wouldn't know what to do with her."

"Yeah, she's got monster tits," said Willie, exhaling.

"Don't be a jackass," said Shane.

"Fine," said Willie. "I get Kate then. You guys can do whatever you want." Shane glanced behind us, checking distance. "We'll get them in the cemetery."

"I thought we were going to the lake," I said. "And I think Melissa likes you, Willie."

"Oh, yeah?"

I watched my feet trudge through the snow. "Yeah, I saw her looking at you."

"Great," Shane said. "Then let's make a bet. Whoever goes the farthest tonight gets to eat the whole pizza when we get home."

We walked in silence for almost a minute, listening to the wind whistle. Behind us, the girls laughed. Willie looked back. "And ten bucks. The pizza, plus ten bucks. You guys are going down."

"Bobby, you're gonna pay up, right?"

"Yeah, but this is stupid."

Shane punched Willie in the arm. "I don't know how I'm related to this kid, thinks making it with girls is stupid. There must have been a fuck-up at the hospital."

"I didn't say making it with girls is stupid."

"Then let's see you win the bet, Casanova."

I kicked a chunk of ice down the white sidewalk. "Fine, I will."

77

76 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW David Bowen

The mist had thickened, and all that was visible of the brick archway in the cemetery was the dim orange service light fixed near the top. A wisp of fog near the light looked like a shawl, fluttering in the slow wind, moving as if someone were walking along the archway.

When we got to the wrought-iron fence enclosing the cemetery, we waited for the girls to catch up. When I looked up, the shawl near the archway had disappeared.

"What are we doing in here?" Veronica said. "I thought we were going to look at a castle, not a tomb."

"It's a shortcut," said Shane. We helped them over the fence and into the cemetery. We tried to find a spot where the snow wasn't as deep, but we all sank shin-deep into the stuff when we landed. When we got to the path, Shane pushed Veronica into a snow bank. Kate and Melissa armed themselves with handfuls of snow and jumped on his back. He held them up for a second and then buckled. Willie jumped onto the heap, making Veronica squeal at the bottom of the pile. I picked up some snow and turned it over in my hands.

"Looks like someone's afraid of a little snow," Shane said. He climbed to his feet and tackled me. He rubbed a handful of snow in my face, laughing. I'd learned that my best move in these situations was to pretend that I was enjoying myself.

Meanwhile, Veronica got free of the pile and made a break for it. Melissa, Kate, and Willie followed close behind.

"Don't cry about it," Shane told me, disgusted. "God, you're such a girl."

He got up and ran after the others. They dodged between trees, throwing snow. I got up and opened my coat to shake the snow out, letting some of the wet air against my chest. Shane and Willie and the girls had scattered amongst the trees. Their shouts sounded close and far away at the same time. I walked along the path toward the back end of the cemetery, all the angrier because now Shane got to laugh at my anger and there was nothing I could do about it.

The tombstones were clean of snow, but the mausoleum had a good two feet on top. If there'd been a little chimney with some smoke coming out, it would have looked like a cozy cottage, sweet and peaceful in the moonlight.

The path led to the back of the cemetery and then split into a T. I stomped through the snow and grabbed hold of the wrought-iron fence. The lake was completely invisible at the bottom of the snowy lawn, covered entirely by the fog.

"Where'd you run off to?"

I turned around. Kate stood on the path, packing a snowball and shifting her weight back and forth.

"I just wanted to see the lake," I said. "You can't even see it with all the fog."

Kate dropped the snowball and grabbed the top part of the fence. "Okay, then. Let's go."

"Where?"

"To see this snow castle. Out on the lake."

She set her boots into the fence and started pulling herself over. But her boots were still wet, so her left foot slipped out and her knee cracked against the fence when she put her weight on it. I only moved fast enough to catch her thigh and make it easier for her to right herself. She pulled herself over and dropped to the snow on the other side. After she landed, she staggered in a circle, making a sound like laughter and crying at the same time. "Good thing it's cold out, or that would've hurt even more." She flexed her leg at the knee. "What are you waiting for?"

I did a pull-up and swung a leg up to the top of the fence, then crawled over so I was hanging on the other side. As I crawled over, I was careful to avoid the tapered points extending over the top of the fence. Before I let go, I noticed that the points were actually fleur-de-lis emblems.

Kate ran onto the ice, hopping into a skip once in a while to take weight off her bad knee. I followed her. Three inches of snow stood on top of the ice, but my feet were already wet, along with the rest of me. My shirt, damp from the snow Shane had rubbed into my face, made my skin itch. Kate wore boots that went up to her knees. She kicked at the snow as she ran, laughing like a new kind of punctuation.

"Hurry up!"

I ran and tackled her and threatened her with a handful of snow. We wrestled in the snow like that for a while, and then Kate grabbed me by the sleeve.

78 PRINTER'S DEVIL REVIEW David Bowen 79

"Let's find this castle."

"We're never going to find anything in all this fog."

The wet air made me shiver. The fog on the lake was so thick I couldn't see any more than ten yards ahead of us. We'd only wandered for a couple of minutes when I realized that we were lost. The same murky whiteness lay in every direction.

Kate pulled at my arm. "Look," she said.

A large snow bank seemed to materialize out of the mist. Its edges had been evened out, and a shelf carved into the middle of it. A smaller snow sculpture stood in front of the first one, and together they resembled a sofa and coffee table. Empty beer cans were crowded on the table. The only thing the scene needed was a television and some magazines and the room would be complete.

"Is this the castle you were talking about?"

I shrugged. "I guess so."

"Where'd the walls go?"

"Someone must have taken them."

Kate moved some crushed beer cans from the sofa to the table, then sat down and looked around. "How romantic."

I sat next to her, trying to think of something funny to say. "I guess."

Everywhere was the same uniform, milky expanse. Ice and snow blended into fog and sky like a blue-white bed sheet stretching in all directions, obscuring buildings, trees, and street lamps. The only things that implied up or down were the stars, shining in the blackness above like ice hung from a dark tree.

"It's like being on the moon," I said. "And if I look up it, it feels like I'm coming out of something very slowly."

Kate turned toward me, crossing her arms over her chest. "What are you talking about?"

"I told you. Look up once, really look straight up."

She looked up, then around into the whiteness. "Bobby, how are we going to find our way back?"

I put my arm around her shoulders, a risk minimized after all that we'd just done. It was casual now. "Any way we go, we'll hit something. The lake isn't that big."

"So you and Shane are cousins?"

"Yep."

We sat for a while in silence, looking at the sameness all around. The cold had settled into the deeper parts of my arms and legs, making me stiff and numb. Kate touched my arm and warmth spread from my shoulders to the backs of my legs. My heart beat faster.

"I see it," she said. "I see what you mean. It does feel like I'm coming out of something. If I look straight up I feel like I'm moving slowly through a tunnel." She leaned into my shoulder and sighed. My lungs felt hot, like I was trying to traverse the entire length of a swimming pool underwater. My arms and legs hummed. Heat swam through my veins and under the surface of my skin and into the cartilage of my ears. It filled my face like an ocean rushing through the hull of a sunken ship.

"I'm not cold anymore," I said. "Except for my hands. My hands are still cold."

Kate took off her mittens and put them on my hands.

"No," I said, "your hands are going to freeze."

"No they won't," she said and stuck her hands under my shirt and against the warm skin of my belly. I howled and clamped my hands to my middle. The cold in Kate's hands pulled all of the heat from my belly and then out of my arms and legs. She moved her hands to my back, and when she pulled them out again there was a clean, cool space inside my head. It was empty except for the whiteness that surrounded us, pure and unbroken.

Kate stood up and wrapped her arms around her shoulders. "I'm getting really cold. Are you sure we're going to be able to find our way back?"

I got up and looked around. Far off in the distance, I could make out the faint glow from on top of the cemetery archway. "I think I know where we're going."

David Bowen

"Where's that?"

"Over here," I said, pulling at a part of her coat sleeve. We walked through the fog and the snow, the cold sinking back into my muscles. But it didn't feel like suffering anymore. It didn't feel like something that required enduring. I just felt it, the cold and the empty white slate that surrounded me on all sides. I jammed my hands deeper into my pockets and bunched up my shoulders around my neck, headed for the faint orange light hanging in the fog ahead.

Kate quickened her step as the snowy lawn behind the cemetery came into view, limping on the leg she had banged on the fence. From somewhere in the cemetery, the sound of crying floated on the night wind, and I smiled numbly in the cold.

Melissa and Veronica were calling Kate's name – there were no ghosts in this graveyard.

Kate called out a response and skipped to the fence, her hair bouncing on her back like lengths of warm brown rope. I followed, eager to help her get where she needed to go.

RICO MANALO

Personal Space

Falling in love is as simple as locking eyes with someone across the emptiness of a crowded room, that beautiful someone you imagine the rest of your life with for the rest of the day.

SPRING 2014

RICO MANALO

RICO MANALO

Disorientalism

Close your eyes. Extend your consciousness along your nervous system. Be calm. Re-examine every nerve-impulse deliberately and pay attention to your breathing. You are not breathing.

Realign your spine and focus squarely on its curve, allow the column of your vertebrae to be as Doric or Ionic as you please. Move each muscle, flexing each chamber of the heart,

wander through your bloodstream with purpose. Be a cancer. Coil your thoughts into origami noodles. Let that be your brain. Name it Brian. Go ahead, flood yourself with schools

of endorphins. Indulge yourself in casual racism. Let that word become "endolphins." Blow it out your blowhole sometimes. Let your secretions become revelations. Let them feel the light

and cool breezes coagulate them with hearty handshakes. Tighten the tiny muscles of your skin. Raise your hackles. You'll never be free of them, not really. You are a mammal.

Let your pinkies wink red, out of existence. Play piano for ten fingers, with eight. Unbalance your teacup. Now bow.

Undercover

Torn between a dream where we are love and bleak morning floorboards, sleepily I wet the bed. If only wakefulness was relief: each moment a colorfast warmth, pregnant as the long embrace of wind in sail. All that is absent in the clammy grip I twist in, hang from, soak through. Leaving sleep is not leaving bed. Rather, it is an ending, a lost thing, small as molted lashes, skin flakes, sleep sand. No telling how long dreams take to dry. There may be a million bottles of beer on the floor and I'd still have no idea of when or what numbers are. Maybe a wake or a shame. Whatever it is when an elegy is a puddle of my own treachery. I abandon it, rolling over into spaces between tomorrows and something untasted in the textures of torpor's questing tongues. Feverish, pawing danger, reimmersed in innocence: a growling sense of simple, screaming alarm.