



The Green Fuse

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TO ABSENT FRIENDS.



iction

“FICTION IS LIKE A SPIDER’S WEB, ATTACHED
EVER SO SLIGHTLY PERHAPS, BUT STILL
ATTACHED TO LIFE AT ALL FOUR CORNERS.
OFTEN THE ATTACHMENT IS SCARCELY
PERCEPTIBLE.”
-VIRGINIA WOOLF

I'LL
MIKE HERR

I'll start drinking my coffee black—straight from the soggy filter burning through the thin flesh on the roof of my mouth ripping quick down my throat and stewing in my stomach. That's what I need is real scalding black coffee pain taking everything out of me as I sit here at my table in the middle of my bare kitchen in my small fucking apartment and I'll live like a man. I've decided this and what will I decide next? Nothing. Maybe soon. Maybe soon what? What I need is someone, because now I have no one—I feel like no one myself. A couple of trees sway outside my window. Oak trees looking at each other and I feel like they at least have each other rocking together with trunks moaning and creaking like old women having sex and they're infested— enjoying the company of their infestation. Why not invite a whole nest of termites into me and talk to them instead of watching a film and let's make it some foreign film—black and white and the light just touches a beautiful woman's face and sleeps on her high cheekbones as she sighs because the sigh is the way to go in the world: I am without cares and I'll make it known—and I'll speak with them while they crawl up my dusty elbows and into the forest cavern of my armpit. I'll say things like, "Do you enjoy Godard's work?" and they'll say chewing on me spitting out dead epidermis onto dead epidermis, "You know it's a lot of this and that skipping around everything that matters in a film— we'd like to see a god damn car chase or loving embrace every once in a while to move the fucking plot forward."--and here I cut them off and flick them into the abyss while saying, "To me, he's telling you everything without showing you anything you expect to see, so fuck off." So now I'm happy that



they're flying off unconscious at speeds they have never known or wanted to know and I no longer want to be a tree, with a swarm of insects or squirrels hugging my intestines— instead... What. Instead I want to watch a lovely old French Nouvelle Vague film with a lovely embrace and some soft skin—shit, no I'll have a woman now, and it's been too long and my hair's ratty and lies flattened and unattended in its thin jut back manner and no beautiful or even decent-looking woman wants to eye down a pale son of a bitch with a couple false teeth (coffee-stained at that) with hair resembling a bad sweating toupee. Ah I'll need to pry these sneakers off my feet with a fire poker and toss them out the fucking window. Down they'll drop into Mrs. What-and-What's Zen bullshit garden and rot the stones into sand and someday I'll stick my toes in the sand and whistle at her ass from her own garden might even drop my pants and the sun will be gazing at me baking me because I need some color for fuck's sake and I'll have her pour lemonade all over me while someone honks past her privacy fence because a terrier's been flattened and its intestines popped out through its throat and I'm loving it because it's the first time I've felt real and absorbed and loved by someone instead of pouring down this grease-pot tar-throat coffee slumped in a rotting uneven chair-and I'll get up and out of the boiled urine stench plaster melting off the walls kitchen to find myself a woman and not Mrs. What-and-What to talk to because I'm nothing now and all I have's this voice to say things about termites but nothing to make me real to a soft-skinned woman and god damn I wish she could be in black and white.

I'll be brushing my teeth hard and rough feeling the pain of those



bristles etched well into my gums because when I spit blood I know I'm doing it right and I'm getting clean as I should be getting to get out the door and look for someone. No clothes in the closet of course—I'm the only hanger in the house and I'm wearing it all a mass of grey and forest green blunting any feature on me you could call a feature but it will have to do until I make it down to McGovern's shop and I'll just walk right down there a little quick because I haven't been out in a while or seen anyone or cared to see anyone or the bruised and cracked streets and steaming man-holes punctuating each one. I'll slip down the steps of my building—the walls are pitiful flaking off-blue paint and drawings of sloppy genitals obviously done by amateurs no wonder I don't fucking go you might say—and outside my building the sky's not too bad not too harsh and not too sour and so I take my time getting to the tailor's place otherwise I'll feel like a fool and everyone will observe how quickly a man with ragged shitty clothes makes his way down the street to get a nice new suit and they'll stare knowing that no one in their right mind would talk to this man much less feed him or have harmless sex with him because look at that hole chewed out of the ass of his pants—pitiful. The suit will have to be sharp to say the least—it will be sharp. McGovern puts his hand steadily on my shoulder like your dad might when he's telling you something about how a car works but you couldn't give a shit because in reality all you need to know is the car gets you places faster than your two (or one or none I suppose) feet would and then as now all you're motivations are geared towards getting a nice woman with you and taking her out but the hand does not move instead grips you and you become its fucking cement foundation as the words come out of McGovern's freshly minted mouth: "This is a top



of the line combination. You have yourself a fine double-breasted silk sport coat on your back here and a pair of damn fine flowing pants to match, fantastic thick silver cufflinks to weigh those old wrists of yours down and perhaps you could use a slick black derby to top you off or a shoeshine from the kid over there or I could trim your beard right now or perhaps your pubic hair?"--and nod and nod with a smirk at this old-world salesman still in his prime chuckling in my gut because it's the only way I know to keep sane under this barrage of offers and bullshit while his words seem to reflect off the dark wood-paneled walls in the dim billiards room light colliding and refracting through each other. Nod and nod and pay and pry his hand off my god damn shoulder and out the door I'll go feeling like I'm becoming something because of this brand new suit which broadens my frail shoulders and my chin seems to jut a bit more in that old Errol Flynn sort of way not chiseled from stone but a chisel itself that could mold a stone or marble into a piece of modern art and be sold to some yuppie who needs a giant abstract marble-flesh sculpture of breasts to let his friends know that he's on the up and up or better yet I could probably make love to a woman's neck with this chin and now I need a woman to fill me out more. The pants will seem a bit baggy because of the quality of the sheer silk flailing subtly around my wire legs but I'll manage and get myself a cigarette case—silver no engraving bullshit just straight silver sleek and pure to weigh down one of my breast pockets and I'll fondle it with my hand as I pass a couple of bills over the counter to the salesman and my thin lips will curl up with a smile that will let this old sap know I mean business and he nods his receding hairline at me as I walk out languid and cool now not like before but with calculated steps and my suit sways only



enough for a woman with waxed eyebrows to notice and I tip the front of my new derby to him enough but with a relaxed grip going out the door. And I'll need some cigarettes. At the corner store where no one knows my face because the last time I was there I was a kid and got kicked out on my ass alone and dead drunk onto the damp chipped sidewalk where no light shines and the moon was behind a cloud and I was wondering why I was sitting out there vomiting over the cold curb when most people had someone to struggle with but this was the first time I'd been drunk and I needed something to feel more real than when I sat watching my folks watch old grainy sitcoms at home and their gurgling laughs made me wish I wasn't human or that I wasn't destined to be them one day but soon vomiting all the liquor your weak stomach can't hold and rubbing gray tears out of your eyes gets old too and you want to put some black coffee down your throat and find a woman and offer her a cigarette and sit down somewhere and not out on your ass but in a place you used to think looked romantic with its candles and couples and noodles and you want to find for yourself now if love's real like you hope it is and if it's worth trying to be a man and then maybe your whole wiry-ass frame in an expensive suit will know something solidly for once. But first I'll buy the cigarettes.

And I'll be strolling along a wide avenue somewhere but not in my neighborhood because I'm tired of the look of it with its rusted flagpoles and sewage built up in every nook it can find and the elderly nudging weathered curtains aside staring right down at you from second and third-floor windows whether you're walking your dog or pissing on someone's new tires. No I'll be making my way through cutting down some hip



sidewalk full of dives and younger people straight out of college chests protruding with utter ambition and the stench of fine draft beer and hardly subdued sex-drives and chilled night air flowing from their mouths agape. She's there just through a cool tinted window and I feel each step of these heavy new rubber soles connect with the uneven concrete beneath me and I know each step and I care for each step because each step is a new chance for her to look up from Mr. Chekhov or Mrs. Woolf and feel the presence of these new soles and the sway of my new self entering her existence with a pulse but for now she continues stirring her mug lazily connected with printed words amidst the gaiety and rowdiness of the café she knows and has undoubtedly spent many nights in alone or with some young poet that thinks he knows himself through his own words but she shot him down because her eyes told him straight away what she really thought and he acted like he couldn't give a fuck and became harsh since then she's been spending more time with these old dead writers instead of these phony breathing amateurs crowding the hazy room. I'll pass on and take a heavy drag on my cigarette knowing that she'll catch my last step before it passes out of her view and I'll have to turn back in a matter of minutes with a new smoke between my fingers and biting my already burnt raw tongue as I enter the café she has nuzzled herself into over and over again and brush past tall bearded men and loud pale women with fat asses that I'll never know again— ah well and perhaps they'll notice my arm or shoulder briefly on their bodies and know that someone is really touching them, a real person and he's making his way to his woman because the way he moves is uncanny and he hasn't been this horny or determined or romantic or sad since his flat-nosed ex-girlfriend pushed her slimy grimace of a face



on top of his into an asymmetrical kiss or something like it. But now the room feels good and warm and full of noise that I know urges me toward her even though it's talk like, "Syllables make us up, we are them, I am a bunch of assembled syllables and you know if I can construct myself in fewer and fewer syllables each time, I'll be fuckin' happy with or without a drink or getting laid..."--or some bullshit yet it all still pushes me toward her and I'm now sitting opposite her. She'll look up for a moment and feel my eyes and the bit of pressure I put on the tiny wooden table with my arms but I'm relaxed because this is now me. The whole place will stop its noise and every heavy whiskey glass slamming on the rigid bar counter is muted when our eyes meet and the assholes with gangly-stringed are done and talk of syllables has been choked and now it's me who has to say something because she already knows it's coming and I have her out through the door in no time and we both feel the open avenue's incandescent possibilities shouting at us with playful voices through the chaos of trudging polished cars and whining-drunken-laugh pouring from people across the way. She'll take my arm and I feel her against me—her flesh is against me and you know you can feel flesh through any amount of layers of linen or clothing and it feels enticing and comforting even among chaos and her breath reaches your nostrils and her clipped blonde hair bounces with your steps and now you know that something's inside you waiting and you move your mouth.

I'll start a conversation with her after we're seated and I'll have no problem restraining myself from staring at the hostess' breasts as she leans over the table to give us our menu—the candle warms us and together we feel something as I rub my hands together.



-Have you ever been here before?

-I live just down the street, and pass it almost everyday, but I've never really had anyone to come and sit and eat here with, you know?

-So do you not go on dates very often then? You're a very beautiful woman you know.

-Aw, well I don't know what to say to that, so I'll just smile at you. But to answer your question— No I don't often go on dates, except you know every now and then with a book to a place where I can burrow in the back of a crowd unnoticed.

-I like a woman who reads, something about it is very sexy. Who have you been reading lately?

-Well, I've just been skipping around; maybe some Beckett, Hawkes... I don't know-

-I've read some Beckett before— depressing shit, but you know it's... It all revolves around absurdity and blah-

-Right, right I bet you studied literature in school, huh?

-A bit, but I'm proud to say I'm a dropout

-Really? You look so clean-cut and scholarly though... Ah, I suppose school doesn't matter a whole lot in the end anyhow.

-My thoughts exactly. I'm also unemployed.

-Really? I find that sexy.

-We're both very sexy to each other I suppose then.

-I feel like I could eat a whole loaf of bread, a salad, and eighteen meatballs- with or without pasta.

-Fantastic. But I think I'll have veal and- do you want some red wine?



-Absolutely. You know, your chin is so sharp. It could just be the contrast with the darkness of the room, but either way, it's definitely there. It's very masculine, like Errol Flynn's or something.

-I tend to think of my chin as my only distinct feature.

We'll have eaten our fill and laughed moving down the streets that have now quieted themselves and filtered out all chaos so now all is diluted and fixed except she and I pointing laughing knowing everything but each other's bodies but I can imagine hers as I wrap my arm around her shoulder there is that wild adolescent feeling of knowing there is hidden skin pure and tempting at the same time but closed off from you without discretion and that's the way she wants it so you let your arm dangle from her shoulder because you're even more relaxed now and your steps take into account each glass of wine down your throat and fuck didn't that alcohol burn your naked tongue on the way down but she holds you up like a strong woman smiling all the while happy with the burden of carrying you back through your neighborhood--you both half-drunkenly flip off the old broads leaning on their dark windowsills and chuckle from the diaphragm and you nearly get an erection thinking about how fun this girl is even on these murky streets. And before you know it you're up the creaking stairs past the cartoon genitals naked in your bed with her this beautiful woman and it's so dark it might as well be black and white and she takes your hand puts it gently on her breast and you know your breath smells like shit and you begin to sweat hands almost burning on her flesh and fear she's falling in love with you as the big oaks outside your window sway and rock and creak nearly inaudibly and her eyes pierce you until you realize that you



still don't feel any different you still don't know yourself at all. I suppose
I'll just keep sitting here and wait until this coffee cools off.



TIMES BEACH

KATRINA JOHNSON

Tom Johnson and his red-headed daughter Ruby, just seven years old and already morbidly fascinated by the curiosities of death and disaster, stroll together down the cracking pavement of Silver Oak Lane. At the corner, where Silver Oak crosses Leafy Walnut, a rusty street sign, like a sentry who never noticed the war had ended, stands in the overgrown field. Only empty lanes crisscross the field, like crop circles or Nazca lines in a grassy desert. Lining the lanes are two-foot-high cement cylinders, the remains of street lights. The remains of houses are marked by lines in the grass where the edges of filled-in foundations keep the grass from growing. Sometimes, a pipe sticks out of the ground, reaching forever toward an invisible sink that still exists in some plane. At every corner, a rusted green sign with the names of two streets in once-white letters across it.

“This is where you were born,” Tom tells his daughter. “This is Times Beach.”

Times Beach, synonymous with disaster, with toxic waste and mass evacuation, rumors of a government cover-up, a grisly experiment in a secluded housing development. An issue of the Washington University school paper ran an article on the survivors of Times Beach.

“Right before the evacuation, I saw something in the sky. Looked like a giant Frisbee with lights around it,” said Mary Beth Hughes to the school paper. “The flood wasn’t real. It was just an excuse to get us out of our houses so they could cover up what they done there.”

Times Beach is a nexus for time travelers, ghost hunters, conspir-



acy theorists, hopeful future abductees. All anyone really knows is that the leak was from the potato chip factory. The water was deemed undrinkable. The fish mutated. A child was born with only the left side of his brain.

Since the day of the evacuation, six years ago this Halloween, “Dave” has come every day at precisely 4:44 in the afternoon to the corner of Juniper Glen Lane and Apple Tree Court to take readings with his EMF meter at what used to be 44 Apple Tree Court. Nothing today. His eyes dart around as if he's been followed here by the FBI, NSA, or his family.

“Dave” takes a pH reading from a cup of water he keeps inside a rusted old electrical box Slightly base, about the pH of human blood. Does it mean something? He takes notes in a miniature composition book, one with a marbled black cover and the word “Composition” across it.

A three-headed deer tears a few tender blades of grass from a crack on Evergreen Street. Only one of its heads has teeth strong enough to eat grass, so it eats constantly to feed the other two. Three brains, one body. One heart. It's a wonder the heart knows when to beat. Even if the deer could talk, he probably still couldn't explain what really happens in Times Beach.

In a puff of green smoke, a time machine appears in the cul-de-sac of Apple Tree Court. A Victorian inventor-scientist steps out with his lovely assistant, dressed for what they imagine to be the future. The inventor-scientist wears a pair of glass goggles on his head, a Colonial frock coat with his vest and watch.

“What was once in style always comes again,” his lovely assistant explained, running a stitch in her own ultra-masculine, purple tail coat with a steam-powered sewing machine.



They hold hands in the cul-de-sac, their black buckled shoes only a foot from their time machine. No horseless carriages on the broken roads, no electric street lamps, not a house or a man in sight. The distant hum of traffic sounds like a swarm of God's locusts to their unaccustomed ears. How ironic, how disheartening, that the first time traveled to would be one beyond the end of humanity. They say a prayer for the future and return to their machine.

Madam Julianne leads the ghost hunters across the field where Times Beach rests, hidden in the tall weeds and fast-growing locust trees.

“This is where the exit ramp was from the highway,” she says, waving with a shawled and bangled arm at an arc of open air. The ghost hunters follow her wave, as if they can see cars slowing down on the ramp to pull onto Silver Oak Lane.

“This is where the factory owner lived... and where he died.”

Cameras flash, hoping to catch an orb or streak of ectoplasm that has decided to pose for a picture. One of the ghost hunters every year sends Madam Julianne a photo of that particular location with a ghostly mansion superimposed upon it.

In the fading light of the October evening, Olivia Mathis, a self-proclaimed amateur paranormal investigator, catches a puff of green smoke out of the corner of her eye. By the time she looks toward Apple Tree Court, there is nothing to see.

Madam Julianne looks at the empty roads and street signs of Times Beach. She can see it as it was. Instead of empty lots, she can see houses, John and Louisa Carmel's house, with its seven-foot-high picture window, the London family's tri-level, her own little bungalow on the edge of town,



which had rough-hewn stone walls and window box flower beds. The apparition is as real as the grass in the field, as real as the people surrounding her, waiting for her next story. It is both real and not real, as if both realities exist at the same time in the same place. Then, suddenly, the vision is gone, and Times Beach is once again a field of grass and crisscrossing streets.

Poetry

“POETRY IS SIMPLY THE MOST BEAUTIFUL,
IMPRESSIVE, AND WIDELY EFFECTIVE
MODE OF SAYING THINGS.”

-MATTHEW ARNOLD

FATHER, TARANTULA

ABIGAIL KERN

We were halfway down our long driveway
and I looked up at you.
But I was little then. I think I would be taller than you now,
You were short after all.
Your bearded face smiled as I watched you
and the tarantula crawling on your arm.
Each long, hairy leg slowly moved with deliberation.
Since then I have always wanted to let a tarantula
crawl up my arm and ask him
if he remembers you.

STORMING

EMILY KOTHE

Slow down and watch how a tree moves
in a nighttime storm and you'll find
what there is to know of the nature of living.

The tensile strength of a trunk and roots
hold fast to the only stabilizer—
Earth's gravity—as we grasp deeply
and dirty our hands to hang on to it.

Limbs jerked and leaves torn away by winds
and sudden downpours. Loud cracks of thunder.
The world isn't visible beyond the open window,
But the wet tree reflects light
from the still-hidden moon.



BODY OF CREATION

MELISSA LOMAX

*When the skies above were not yet named,
Nor earth below pronounced by name,
Apsu, the first one, their begetter,
And maker Tiamat, who bore them all,
Had mixed their waters together.
-Enuma Elish*

I am chaos.

I mix the waters.

I am betrayal.

I hold destiny in my lover's hand.

I am mountains.

I do not break for the wind.

I am sky.

I am not afraid of arrows.

I am protector.

I water the ground with my tears.

I am mother,
and the heart of a feared god
trembles at what I become.



TO THE FAMILY WHO USED PARTS OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AS KINDLING

DIANE DRIES

At first I was appalled
imagining those ancient words forever lost
in such a simple act and yet
what better way to go than in a family fire,
rather than the angry flames of Roman legions.
The family was a tribe of herders
and with little other kindling than the brittle scrolls
the words of God started the flames
that cooked the meal and warmed the night.
The humble supper must have been filling
while flecks of holy words filled the air
and a flask of wine was passed around.
That night the family easily fell asleep
while breathing in the names of God.



RUNAWAYS ON THE BLACK RIVER BRIDGE

TIM HENDRICKSON

They crossed the dark bridge
and heard the sound of doves
at roost in the iron beams.
The moon was obscured
by the clouds drifting south.
A mist was rising
with the hush of the river.
They traveling silently, praying
that the shadows of the cypress trees
would grant them refuge
when they touched the far shore.

WORDS AND WATER

LAUREN L. BERKHOLTZ

I saw my words like stones
skipping across the surface of shallow waters,
echoing back at me in thin fading lines.
Your face rippled out
into emptiness,
an image I could not discern.
I measured the weight of my words and
felt nothing but smoothness.
There were no edges,
no marks to be explored,
the substance was too light to sink.



MY DADDY BOUGHT ME PORN WHEN I WAS NINE

LINDSEY KLEES

He caught me wearing Mommy's pumps and bras
and spreading her "Rita's Rose" lipstick across my mouth.
She always got it on her teeth, but not me; it was perfect.
He walked into the room when I was in the middle of performing
"Happy Birthday" in the style of Marilyn Monroe.
I smiled at him and waved my delicate hand.
He dropped his Miller High Life and stared.
I could hear the yellow liquid fizz.
That day we went to the barber shop and he got me a crew-cut.
I used to go with Mommy to the salon.
She let the women put curlers in my hair and sit under the heated globe.
He's so patient they'd say and she would smile.
No one spoke at the barber shop.
My hair was uneven in the back, but they said it would build character.
The next day three magazines were sitting on my bed.
I gazed at the lovely bodies of women for hours.
Daddy cracked the door open and I looked up, fearful.
He tipped his hat, smiled and left me alone.
I undressed myself and stood in front of the mirror.
I held up a magazine in front of me and wondered,
When will I get my breasts?



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

ABBY DRIEMEYER

*For what do we live, but to make sport
for our neighbors, and laugh at them in our turn?*

-Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice

With a cup of coffee in my hand
I gaze out of the kitchen window
past the flower beds and hedge.
I see Mrs. Betts standing in her front lawn
wearing a thin negligee that hits mid-thigh,
exposing white legs mapped with purple lines,
her hair in a silver tangle down her back.
She smokes a cigarette and waits.

As the mailman comes down the street,
Mrs. Betts hikes her skirt and waves.
The mailman casually looks around
before swiftly stepping into her yard.
She takes his hand and pulls him into the house.
With my nose pressed to the window,
I am left with only my imagination
and an explanation for my late mail.



ODE TO THE WIND
AFTER NERUDA
GEOFFREY PARKER

Autumn.
Twilight.

The night sky
full of wind,
turning
and singing,
it grazes my cheek,
Nature's poet,
carrying leaves
as words,
whispering
in my ear
phrases such as,
*the stars shiver
blue
in the distance.*
dancing between trees
heavy
with the colors
of fall,
you give the leaves
their last sound.
To others you are a nuisance,
but I,
in the moment,
welcome you,
like cool sheets
wrapped loose
around my skin
on a silent summer
night.
My body,
cold and shivering,

but my heart
warmed
by your presence.
I too can write
the saddest verses,
but tonight,
my soul is content
with the faintest rustle
of your words.
Sleep,
my secret lover,
begs me back to bed,
and these
are the last lines
I hear from you,
faint,
turning in the distance,
gone,
like a string of verses
fluttering in the wind.

THE CIA AGENT

SEAN MICHAEL ARNOLD

strolls down the street. Sexy
white cheeks reflecting the hot
Beirut sun which reflects off the
car doors and metal street-light posts.
His eyebrows are hard
and suggestive. Perhaps like Colin Farrell's,
an entire black sheep's wool condensed into the intensity
of his eyebrows and he is thinking about that sheep
as he crosses the road with his briefcase.
He is always very well dressed,
His black suit costs as much as a used American car,
He has black leather gloves
and no one knows why.
He is smoking a cigarette as he drops the briefcase
beside a white, foreign minivan
that explodes as the agent exits the scene
a cool 300 yards away.

Off-screen are the charred bodies
of 200 people, most of the dead
are inside a mosque. The agent
did not hit his intended target.
But you don't know that. Perhaps he will be reprimanded for it.
Perhaps.
If it is Colin Farrell, he just
walks away with his black gloves,
smoking a cigarette, sexy in the hot sun
and is thinking of a good place for a Bacardi Mojito.

If it is Matt Damon playing Jason Bourne
you see his glinting eyes soften,
as he walks into a café for a dark coffee and an unfiltered cigarette,
and he wonders why it has to be this way.
Perhaps he even realizes he missed the target
but walks on anyway.

AL DENTE
TANYA SEALE

Semolina noodles
curl around
my fork,
bringing back
memories
of kneading
rolling
cutting
boiling
with you
for just
two minutes.



STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA 1941

GEOFFREY PARKER

They put us into homes
made of green wood.
Six small doors, one for each family,
and only one inch of floor.

It would have to do, they told us,
the war would only last a couple weeks.

Six weeks later
the green wood warped,
the floors cracked,
and we were still there.

Only an eight-foot divider separated us
from the small family next door

and the eyes of curious men
who peeked at us while we changed.
They stood on stacked orange crates,
but we didn't have any oranges.

We stole the crates and broke them, but then
green weeds grew from cracks in the floor.

And those eyes peeked in from the gaps
left by the aging green wood,
so we wrapped the walls
with borrowed green blankets.

The war still had not ended as they had hoped
so they put us onto trains and took us here.

It did not matter how long we had been in this country.
Our eyes were thin, our hair was black,
our skin was yellow. Just like those men
who dropped their bombs on us.

BUNDY'S NEW GIRL

KATIE LOCHHEAD

Our bodies lie together on the dank soil.

My hip-bones shifting over hers.

I gaze down at her,

slipping her dark-brown hair

between the crevasses of my fingers.

My eyes and lips graze

the unblemished, creamy skin

of her forehead, cheekbones,

the pocket of her neck, where, in time,

mice or parasites

will find the same comfort.

When she leaves,

her head velvet and sticky,

I will wrap her loose limbs

Around mine and smile.

Because if she twitches,

she twitches for me.

on-iction

“WORDS HAVE NO POWER TO IMPRESS THE
MIND WITHOUT THE EXQUISITE HORROR OF
THEIR REALITY.”

-EDGAR ALLAN POE

UNDERNEATH THE PEWS

KATIE MILLER

I blame my parents for most of my problems and quirks. If I find myself using the word “neat” to describe something that should, in modern terms, be deemed “awesome” or “cool”, I blame my mother. If I find myself silently chuckling as I walk around in invisible circles, I blame my father. I like musicals, and it’s all because of my mom. I feel safe in churches and libraries and, surprise, surprise, it’s all their fault. As a child of a pastor, I considered church a natural habitat and I one of its natural fauna. Baptismal basins, offices and altars were made so I could explore and haunt them. What could be more appealing to a child than having a blue plastic lake hidden under the floor where the worship team led us in singing and hand-raising every hallowed Sunday? They are buildings rife with duality. In a place where the very planks on which we walked could open to reveal secretive places of water, golden treasures were always waiting to be found. To my Conquistador zeal, each church housed different varieties of booty and beauty.

My first church memory is of a small church located in dusty Oklahoma. I don’t remember much about that building or the congregation except the playground of the connected school and its rusty merry-go-round.

My second church left deeper pockets of memories and deeper scars. It was a small and aged church just inside the border of Illinois with a congregation made up mainly of the same thirty relatives who started it years ago. All of them were chain-smoking, Holy Ghost-praising, penny-pinching citizens of the Grand Ol’ United States of America. This building, one of the oldest in the county, sat upon a steep hill overlooking the fenced-in, pocked yards of our neighbors and their dogs. On snowy evenings, we would take cardboard boxes and



coast the slope.

The outside was a playground for all of the children and some people who acted like children in times of snow and leaves, but I had an advantage over the other children. They were just visitors while I was a citizen.

My siblings and I spent hours before and after services, not to mention during parties, meetings, and cleaning sessions, exploring the grounds. I knew the bookshelves and video collections like they were my own. The wine varieties and contents of the refrigerators were no secret to me. I even knew which parts of the floor were the warmest in the winter, when the ancient heating pipes radiated through the thin carpets.

The beauty of churches goes beyond the buildings themselves. Any building can be mysterious, but churches are mystical. I loved their small secret spaces, like God's scavenger hunts set out just for me. When no one was around, I loved to crawl under the pews and lay, almost invisible, in the shadow of the solid wood structures. I knew when I was under the pews, looking up at the ceiling through the spaces between the worn wood, that I was experiencing church like no one else could. It was a forbidden love, to be so intimate with something that everyone else could only experience through their meager Sunday services and church events. I was in touch with God in a way they never imagined.

I remember so many things, like all the work my parents did to raise money for a sign and renovations to the ancient building. I remember the trips to the hospital when someone from the church had a health crisis. I remember how all the kids used to stay in my dad's office and stare at his tanks of guppy fish. I remember going to pick up someone's kid because his parents had given the school our number as an emergency contact. I remember having a crush on the Sunday School class clown. I remember when someone robbed my dad's office



at the church.

I remember when we left the church and never came back. I remember the final showdown between my parents and the elders who had founded the church. After years of tension, arguments, lies, and pain, my dad finally walked away from the hardest job he ever had.

I remember the church after that and the one after that. They both housed wonderful and sad memories of teenage awkwardness and angst, but nothing could compare to laying on the floor in the sanctuary, feeling the heat from the pipes and smelling the old, dusty carpet. Just me and God, underneath the pews.

MCDONALD'S MEMORY

HANNAH DOERGE

When I was a small child, I loved going to McDonald's. Nothing else would do. I remember once when the restaurant was too crowded for my parents' liking, they took us to the Wendy's down the street—I felt as though I were betraying Ronald McDonald himself, as well as more edible McDonald's creatures.

It wasn't just any McDonald's restaurant we could eat at, either. No, it had to be the one by Sycamore Mall, "the fifties one, the cool one".

Back then the place was as nice as you get for fast food. White tiles, interspersed with black here and there, made up the floor. Gel rope ran in the corners of the layered ceiling, red and white with blinking lights. Oversized plastic records hung over our heads. I stared up at them, washing the French fry taste from my mouth with orange Hy-gee, trying to find names and songs I could recognize from the fifties and sixties.

I also loved watching the juke box. It was lined with electric plastic, and the soft neon glow glided into different colors.

The seats hurt my legs in the summer. They were coated in glittery red plastic, and the skin on my thighs stuck to the seat. I developed the habit of lifting and dropping my legs, getting unstuck and then re-stuck. My skin would be pink by the time we left.

My dad liked the booths, so we almost always ended up sitting there. They were decorated with great, big, red, obnoxious fifties car wings, complete with headlights on one side and tail lights on the other. They even had plastic tires ready to burn rubber against the tiled floor.

Cool as the booths were, what I really wanted was to sit in the



stools. The stools were along two counters, one of which had some cut-out plywood pictures of admiring fans from the fifties, posed by actors who probably were living in the eighties. The other counter, the one I wanted to sit at in one of those awesome stools, had a rendition of Buddy Holly, on his knees and singing rockin' roll when it was still young. At the time, I'd never heard any music by Buddy Holly, but Weezer did a song about him, and my brother said he was cool. They even mentioned him a few times in "Happy Days", which I watched courtesy of Nick at Night. So that's who I wanted to sit under when I sat in those stools. Plus the fans, gazing across at Buddy Holly, were just kind of creepy.

Those stools! A chrome post rising from the tiled floor, supporting an equally shiny casing which held the same plastic red gel material of the booth. Plus they could spin. My god, could they spin, and you couldn't spin in a booth, not even a cool car one.

One day it was semi-crowded at the McDonald's, and my father, seeing that most of the booths were taken, and that those which were vacated were covered in someone else's filth, agreed that we could sit on the stools.

I felt pretty damn cool; I'm not going to lie. As the youngest, I always had the job of "saving the seats" while someone got the drinks, and someone else waited for the rest of the food.

That day I was with my Dad and my brother, so while Dad waited for the food, and my brother filled our cups, I spun like a maniac in the stools I was "saving". My brother set the drinks down on the counter, and began spinning, too. Then we both started spinning each other under the watchful eye of Buddy Holly.

My dad came back with the food and told us to knock it off. My brother calmed down, but I continued swinging back and forth. I nibbled on a fry and considered my chicken nuggets even though my stomach felt off while I sashayed my hips on the seat. My dad put a

hand on my knee and told me to knock it off, which I did for about two minutes before secretly starting again.

We finished our food, cleaned up our trash, and headed back home. As soon as we stepped out of the restaurant, I had other things on my mind, like running to the car and playing with my *Aladdin* action figures, especially Jasmine.

Meanwhile, the stool sat still in the fast food restaurant, waiting for someone else to come and flatten its gel cushion.

ranslation

“IF A WRITER WROTE MERELY FOR HIS
TIME, I WOULD HAVE TO BREAK MY PEN
AND THROW IT AWAY.”

-VICTOR HUGO

NO TE VEO PEDRO SALINAS

No te veo. Bien sé
que estás aquí, detrás
de una frágil pared
de ladrillos y cal, bien al alcance
de mi voz, si llamara.
pero no llamaré.
Te llamaré mañana,
cuando, al no verte ya
me imagine que sigues
aquí cerca, a mi lado,
y que basta hoy la voz
que ayer no quise dar.
Mañana... cuando estés
allá detrás de una
frágil pared de vientos,
de cielos y de años.

I DON'T SEE YOU TR. CHRISTINE PARSONS

I don't see you. I know
that you are here, behind
a fragile wall
of bricks and mortar, well within reach
of my voice, if I called.
but I won't call.
I will call you tomorrow,
when, no longer seeing you,
I will imagine that you are
still here with me.
Yesterday I could not promise this,
but today these words are enough.
Tomorrow... when you are
there behind a
fragile wall of winds,
of skies, and of years.



LENIN, FROM "THE LIVES OF GREAT MEN"

INOUE TAGUCHI

レーニン

レーニンは
自分の銅像が倒されてほっとしている
本当は半世紀も前から
赤の広場で寝そべりながら
ビーチボーイズを聴いていたかったんだ
天気の良い日曜日の午後になんか
もちろん家族や 親しい友人たちと一緒にね
でもそんなことは誰にも打ち明けられないから
銅像のままつつ立ってたよ
だがねえ 銅像の身にもなっておくれよ
ただつつ立って歴史を眺めているだけでも
けっこう体にこたえるものだよ

TR. ANDREW LEE

Lenin is relieved
That his bronze statue was taken down
For more than half a century
He has wanted to lie down in Red Square
And listen to the Beach Boys
on a sunny Sunday afternoon, for instance
With his family and close friends
But he could never tell anyone something like that
So he stood without thought
But please, suppose you were in the statue's position
Simply standing, just watching history
It would wear heavily on your body



AN DEN MOND

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Füllest wieder Busch und Tal
Still mit Nebelglanz,
Lösest endlich auch einmal
Meine Seel ganz.

Breitest über mein Gefild
Lindernd deinen Blick,
Wie des Freundes Auge mild
Über mein Geschick.

Jeden Nachklang fühlt mein Herz
Froh- und trüber Zeit,
Wandle zwischen Freud und Schmerz,
In der Einsamkeit.

Fließe, fließe, lieber fluß!
Nimmer werd ich froh,
So verrauschte Scherz un und Kuß,
Und die Treue so.

Ich besaß es doch einmal,
Was so köstlich ist!
Daß man doch zu seiner Qual
Nimmer es vergißt!

Raushe, Fluß, das Tal entlang,
Ohne Rast und Ruh,
Raushe, flustre meinem Sang
Melodien zu,

Wenn du in der Winternacht
Wütend über schwillst.
Oder um die Frühlingspracht
Junger Knospen quillst.

Selig, wer sich vor der Welt



Ohne Haß verschließt,
Einen Freund am Busen halt
Und mit dem genießt,

Was, von Menschen nicht gewußt
Oder nicht bedacht,
Durch das Labyrinth der Brust
Wander in der Nacht.

TO THE MOON
TR. GEOFFREY PARKER

Once more you fill the bush and valley
Silently, with a misty glow,
And finally you release
My soul.

You spread your gaze
Soothingly across my fields,
Like a friend's eye
Looking kindly upon my fate.

My heart feels every echo
Of both good and bad times,
I walk between joy and woe
In loneliness.

Flow, flow dear river!
I will never be cheerful:
Laughter and kisses have gone,
Along with faithfulness.

But once I had
These precious things!
To think that despite this pain,
One never forgets them.

River, murmur along the valley,
Without rest or repose,

Murmur, whisper melodies
To my song,

When, in the winter night,
You furiously flood
Or purl around the springtime splendor
Of young buds.

Bless him who removes himself
From the world without hatred,
Clasps a friend to his chest,
And enjoys with him

What is unknown to others,
Or not the thought of,
And walks through the labyrinth
of the heart of the night.



COUVRE-FEU
PAUL ÉLUARD

Que voulez-vous la porte était gardée
Que voulez-vous nous étions enfermés
Que voulez-vous la rue était barrée
Que voulez-vous la ville était matée
Que voulez-vous elle était affamée
Que voulez-vous nous étions désarmés
Que voulez-vous la nuit était tombée
Que voulez-vous nous nous sommes aimés.

CURFEW
TR. AUTUMN ROMER

So what the door was guarded
So what we were locked in
So what the street was blocked
So what the town was conquered
So what it was starved
So what we were disarmed
So what night had fallen
So what we loved each other

SANGUINE

JACQUES PREVERT

La fermeture éclair a glissé sur tes reins
et tout l'orage heureux de ton corps amoureux
au beau milieu de l'ombre
a éclaté soudain
Et ta robe en tombant sur la parquet ciré
n'a pas fait plus de bruit
qu'une écorce d'orange tombant sur un tapis.
Mais sous nos pieds
ses petits boutons de nacre craquaient comme des pépins.
Sanguine
joli fruit
la pointe de ton sein
a trace une nouvelle ligne de chance
dans le creux de ma main.
Sanguine
joli fruit.

Soleil de nuit.

BLOOD ORANGE

TR. DIANE DRIES

The zipper slid gently down your back
and the storm of your sensuous body
there in the dark
suddenly burst
as your dress dropped to the polished floor
making no more noise
than an orange peel does on carpet.

But under our feet
The small pear buttons cracked like seeds.
Blood orange
pretty fruit
and the tip of your breast
drew another line
in the palm of my hand.
Blood orange
pretty fruit.

Nocturnal Sun.



NEWTON, FROM "THE LIVES OF GREAT MEN"

INOUE TAGUCHI

ニュートン

林檎の木の下で

ニュートンは万有引力と出会って

たちまち恋に落ちた

おお 彼女こそ永遠なる恋人

普遍なる愛 愛なる普遍

その晩ニュートンは腕をふるって

ラブレターを書いた

「万有引力の法則とその激烈なる作用について」
という題で

けれども万有引力の方では

ニュートンに見向きもしなかった

当時はやっていたカドリールに

彼女は夢中だったので

Tr. Andrew Lee

Beneath an apple tree

Newton encountered

The Law of Universal Gravitation

And instantly fell in love with her

Oh, she was his true love

Eternal love, lovingly eternal

That afternoon he devoted himself

To writing her a love letter

"The Law of Universal Gravitation
and Her Passionate Actions"

He titled it

However, the Law of Gravity
Didn't give Newton a second glance
She was absorbed by the Quadrille
Who was in fashion at the time

CONSPIRATION
JEAN FOLLAIN

Les glaces reflètent
des glaives et trophées
chrétienne elle se défait
de sa robe écumeuse
plein d'agrafes, de rubans, de nœuds
puis de tout son corps tendu
écoute la vie en elle
mais les âmes
de la conspiration
veillent à travers les piliers
et le cri survenu du porteur d'eau
fait éclater l'or du'un silence païen.

CONSPIRACY
TR. EMILY KOTHE

The mirrors reflect
broadswords and trophies
a Christian, she undresses
from her swirling gown
full of hooks, ribbons, knots
then with her body tensed
she listens to the life in her
but the souls
of the conspiracy
are waiting behind pillars
and the water carrier's sudden shout
breaks the gold of the pagan silence.

NO SPEAKING

TOSHIO NAKAE

無言

この一生 誰とも口をきかず
動物たち 植物たちと交わって 暮らせたら
どんなに心は晴ればれと 敏捷に動きまわり
なにごととも 全部わかち合って
世界とともに限りなく豊かでまた些細に
軽々と 宙を舞い 山野に跋扈して
魚たちと一日中話す仲間で
そのくせ 鳥たちですら秘密の合図をおくってくれて
風は耳元をくすぐり あるいは脳天を突き通す槍となって
つたえるべきことだけつたえ

そのまま誰とも 金輪際口をきかずに居れば
私は虫たちの気ままな住居でもあり
山にもなり 川にもなって
堅く固まったり流動したり
雷鳴し焦げ 轟々いうかとおもえば
しゃくりあげしゆうしゆういい
けれどもまた一方で 黙りこくって
終局 地球のように虚空を飛んで 黙りこくって
世界とともに老いる

TR. ANDREW LEE

In my whole life, if I could live without having to speak to anyone
And only communicate with animals and plants
How bright and lively my heart would be
We would share everything with each other
And with the world we would dance
Into an infinitely rich and trivial universe
We would infest the fields and mountains
I'd talk all day with fish
And even birds would give me their secret signs
Wind tickling our ears or spearing our brains
And only conveying what is necessary

But the truth is, if I stayed silent to everyone
I would be a willing house for the insects
I would be a mountain or sometimes a river



Hardening or flowing
Sometimes thundering with a burning crack
Sometimes whimpering and sobbing gently
On the other hand, if I remained silent
Floating through space like the world
And growing old with the Earth

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