

zenith



23/24 SPRING

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
PUBLISHING SOCIETY

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Bucharest

MĂLINA TODORAN

DECREE No.83, 2 March, 1949

They become the property of the State, as property of the whole people:

(a) The agricultural land holdings which have been subject to expropriation, according to Law No. 187 of 1945, and the model farms, established by the effect of the same law, with the entire living inventory, dead and buildings, belonging to or affected by these holdings, regardless of their location.

(b) Agricultural and semi-industrial installations, goods and materials intended for agricultural exploitation, agricultural products intended for sale, wherever stored, belonging to the expropriated landed holding.

The old man put his shirt on. It was his Sunday shirt: there was a certain crispness in the white of the hemp and the fabric did not fall perfectly on his large shoulders like his everyday shirt did. Colourful beads were sewn on the collar, reflecting the sunlight on the walls in different hues. It was unusual for flowers to appear on collars, especially on men's shirts, but his wife had insisted. Next were the black leather boots that almost reached his knees. The man knew what followed. He looked at the box on the tiny bed next to him. He bent down over it, opening its lid. He held his breath as he took out the brâu, the threads and beads sewn there even more breathtaking than the ones on the collar. Like the name that the man shared with his father, his grandfather, and his ancestors before them, the brâu was an heirloom that had been in their family for generations. He had never taken it out of the box before. He glanced down at his fingers buckling the brâu over his shirt.

He looked at himself in the mirror one more time, before turning towards the door. The heels of his boots were making a very satisfying sound on the wooden floorboards as he passed through the warm kitchen. The smell of spice and roasted nuts enveloped him. Every Saturday evening, his wife would prepare the dough for the cozonac she baked on Sunday while they went to church.

The church bells were chiming, summoning everybody, like they always did, on Sundays. When the old man opened the front door, he saw his neighbours in their finest clothes on the road going towards the church. People were chattering nervously and even though they moved slowly, the man couldn't make out exactly what they were saying around him. *Communists, they're coming... Shh! In the middle of the night. What? No, attack... Tonight, what? No...*

He heard all this, but tried not to understand. The law had been passed in the middle of the night, their mayor told them at the council meeting the previous night. Their president announced however, together with the law, that they would not do anything until Monday morning, allowing the people to prepare and to put their affairs in order. However, rumours were heard from villages around them, where people had been attacked the next morning. They were getting closer.

The bells were getting louder and louder as they approached the church. But rather than pass into the Church, the man broke away from the column, feeling the eyes of everyone on his back.

Ignoring them, he made his way slowly through the town, until he arrived at the end of the road and stepped off it, onto the grass. The land, his land, bowed at his feet. The old man did not stop at the edge, however. He continued to the middle of the field. The houses of the village were not far away from him, but the man felt like he was in another world completely, secluded from everything else. The black, sticky soil clung to his boots, keeping him in place, rooting him down. There were beads of sweat on his forehead as he lifted his head towards the sky. As he extended his hands, a wild image struck the old man's mind. A sudden wish to embrace the entire land came over him, so strong that it brought him to his knees. The smell of the soil was sour, fresh, and prosperous and it was boiling in his blood. He took a clod of earth and crumbled it in his hands, which remained greasy with the clay. He allowed the earth to dehydrate his skin, to crawl under his fingernails and enter the crevices and calluses of his palms. He brought his hands to his nose and inhaled, rubbing them together. Then, slowly, almost without realising it, he knelt down, lowered his forehead on the ground and pressed his lips to the wet earth, allowing the sun to scorch his back. The church bells were ringing in the background.

Early the next morning, the communists got to their village and took everything away.

Brâu = a thick belt, made of leather or woven textile

Cozonac = a kind of sweet bread, often containing raisins or nuts, traditional in Romanian cuisine



Lifin' O' Herts Tae Appleton's Turrets

CHUNG YU HUI

Ye wrote tae me again
But got ma address wrang
Ma place is caèd
David's Tower
Yet ye put
Appleton
But I'm pleased a' the same
Sae I'll nae correct it
Besides
Yer a poet
Appleton
Is yer blessing
Appleton Tower
Och aye, let me be
Zenith fae noo on
In the west-facin' windaes
Crowded space live at ease
Oft smile and fancy Appleton
Is nestin' on ma beams
Though they call it David's Tower
I ken fine it's really mine

For names arenae destiny
It's what's inside that matters mair
Like yer words sae warm and kind
That lift ma spirit tae the sky

And fill ma heart wi' bonnie dreams
O' castles high up in the air
Where pinnacle o' ma hopes reside
In Appleton's imagined towers
That shine abune the countryside
Adorned wi' poetry's fair flower







Jocelyn Arnold

Creepy Crawly

SIMRAN KAUR JOHAL

Islands in her face floated, in a still stream of skin, no waves. She was a collection of people to me, maybe even places. She didn't move, until she did, and all along the still stream of skin carried sharks in waves and waves.

I had been trying to hate her because I had every reason to, almost a license, especially for people like her. The people that are lazy horror on sunny days; unsettling in the middle of a busy street, venom at a distance while I lick ice cream. You could probably ignore these people, except, something makes you stiffen up when they're near. Like when you find a spider suddenly on your wall. That's what she was to me. A jump scare I used to eat lunch with.

I knew I was finally away from her when I woke up in a noiseless place, a place where nobody had been for a long time. It was somewhere I felt safe after she committed her random acts of violence—the ones she called her “bad days.” The strangest thing—this wasteland was made up of so much of me, and what I used to be. Flower clips I used to put in my hair when I was ten were hung like vines, the lids of the Fruit Shoots I used to bite with my two front teeth, thrown diagonal as houses. The softness of my palms laid out as the ground, the plump of my cheeks mountains in the distance. I wandered around it in amusement, because at least I was away from her: her and those “bad days.”

I skated the lines of my palms in the wasteland, trying to learn how to tell my own future, trying to understand—‘why did I always have to be there for her bad days?’ But in this wasteland that was me, I would fall asleep between my knees, catch dusty butterflies in my starry eyes. All along, there had been better sights to see than her. Because of her, I forgot that I belonged to the better things.

Now that I have the luxury of being away, I'll watch the sun setting in a park, but her image flashes, like that silverfish I caught on my door. There I am, drying my curly hair and parting it off to the side— it reminds me of electricity sparks falling with rain. It's a pretty image, for a moment I'm the same thing as a pretty image. But something itches my face— an earwig hanging off of my pretty pink lips. I'm biting into toast on a cold morning, and racing along the ground is her, like an ant carrying a crumb — does she take crumbs of me back to herself?

I'm afraid. Gut is on a spin-cycle, mouth is dry like a saltine cracker binge, face is as red as when she smashed it in. That's okay, it's bound to happen. I'll just catch the train to the next day, wait patiently at the platform, unfazed by all the delays.

I can go anywhere. Skip along happily in this life, feed the ducks, water the flowers. But—there she is—Creepy Crawly on my wall.

In a lighthouse I danced to a song I only ever sang before. I was there for no reason because after her, I was allowed to make less sense. I moved my hips and put my hands over my eyes, in case I saw what I looked like. I preferred the way I looked on the inside. On the inside— I'm so shiny, sexy, free.

It had taken way too long to feel anything good about myself. It was closer to embarrassing than empowering, feeling pretty in that green dress I was wearing. It didn't matter if I felt pretty. After all, she saw it, this somebody that I used to know, and she pushed it from her high-rise building. She said it was my fault for being there when she was the one that pulled me into herself, took me up to her rooftop, then she left me all alone to enjoy her view. But it was night, and her city had no lights. When she came back she said to me in the plainest voice I've ever heard, with the deadest eyes I've ever seen alive, "The stairs are under construction. You can't get down now." I told her I wanted to leave, and she didn't deny me but she didn't warn me either. She just pushed me off of her high-rise building. Then she took the elevator down to kick my face in.

Used and abused — I am not amused.

I took my hands off of my eyes and caught a glimpse of my reflection in the lighthouse window. There I was again, in a tall building, but alone, nobody to push me. I liked the look of myself, so I got closer—and let me tell you—those eyes. I pulled a window open to feel air on my hot skin, touching my cheeks over and over to see if I was cooling down.

I had an idea to get my temperature cooled. Broken and broken, bandaged and bandaged. It just wasn't something that interested me anymore. The impersonal attack of someone else's "bad day" would fall on me again. I wasn't the kind of person anyone valued in that way— you know where they might hesitate before pulling a monster out of their head, turning off the light, then leaving me alone in the room with it. I'm too many people's void.

I was tired in that lighthouse, confused by the freedom of dancing alone but thinking in a crowd. It was a "bad day" for me. If I stayed here, what if I became just another Creepy Crawly who kept on having "bad days?" So, I fell out of the open window of a lighthouse — I wasn't pushed, I just fell.

As I fell, I watched the green skirt of my dress lift like a parachute. I felt versions of myself falling in and out of my body, each one tripping up another, stumbling and tumbling. The one with the flowers in her hair, the one with the Fruit Shoot lid against her teeth. The soft palms, the softer cheeks. The thing about my green dress was, it looked so pretty, it lifted in the wind like a parachute — but by the end it wasn't so pretty, after all it wasn't a parachute.

In a green dress, at the bottom of a lighthouse, I look like a spider hit by a newspaper.

Moss

AMELIA STOKES

The moss on the roof
Attempts an escape:
Formlessness clumps
And begins to take shape.
Tiny green fish,
The furred minnows cling -
To the gaps, to the space,
To the in-between stream:

To the edge, to the gutter,
To the lining of this home,
The symphony of floorboards
Competing in groans.
The fabric of this house
Untangles. And so,

The flick of green tails now picking up speed,
They've lived here so long, and the crows start to feed -
Damp craves a home, craves the dry, craves the light,
No steps to retrace...
No plan to rewrite

Abandons its roots,
No green left in sight,
Leaves prints on the roof,

And falls

from a height.





Douglas Crammond

Rhapsody on an Evening in October

J. J. O'MOLLOY



He told himself not to overthink things, to let them evolve in the heat of those wonderful evenings which had come to embody all the motion and meaning of his life, and in that way the expression of their feeling for one another could be completely sincere. But somewhere underneath this, he had subsequently realised, lay another feeling. The thrill of conquest, of seduction, undercut his every glance; each movement, though spontaneous, was also a little considered. Though he later knew this, he also knew that his final aim by this bodily conquest was to attain some ideal vision of love, mutual and stable. He wanted to be there for her and to feel that someone was there for him, and then sex would be used by them both only as an imperfect physical expression of some deep and infinitely meaningful sensation.

They had arranged to go to a Beethoven concert at the Usher Hall. Meeting at her flat an hour prior, they went straight into bed and lay together beneath her duvet talking and laughing and kissing until they realised it was nearly time to go. Last minute she decided to change her top, and got up and turned her back away from him because she wasn't wearing a bra. But as she was changing he got up from the bed and went to her, turned her round and kissed her on the lips and then on each of her breasts. Her body went rigid and a distant, serious expression crossed her face. 'Come on, we're gonna be late,' she said.

They had seats in the stalls near the front and off to one side, with a view of the piano keys. Most of the audience settling in about them looked long retired, with old couples before and behind them and an old bachelor or widower along from them in their row, though nobody sat directly beside them on either side. He was filled with an exhibitionistic pride as they sat and spoke before the show, and an idea, perhaps only a hope, that they reminded the people around them a little of their own youthful loves, which he further sensed, or again perhaps only hoped, she shared.

For a few seconds there was only the raw noise of the orchestra tuning, followed by a moment of quiet, and then the first severe notes of the concerto. He steeled himself and reached for the hand in her lap. Finding it, he linked fingers with her, but only loosely, formally, intimacy checked by insecurity. He looked over to her face once or twice as the music played and found it held forward with a deep emotion evident behind her fixed features. Occasionally, they traced circles on each other's hands, playing like self-conscious children. The second movement continued without pause into the frantic third, which to him embodied the terrible ceaseless advance of time which soon brought everything and took everything away, moving indifferent to pleasure and pain.

It was dark when they came out, and the rain was falling heavily. They both felt ready for a quiet, reflective drink somewhere close by, so they sheltered in an archway of the Hall whilst she called a friend who had invited her along to a party to say she was just with him now - apparently no further explanation was required. They took a small corner table in a nearby bar. Neither spoke a great deal, as both felt tired and significant, but happy. After a single drink, they decided to walk back to Bruntsfield in spite of the rain, because they felt like going by the canal. They walked closely together, heavy droplets falling on the back of their stooped heads, her hand entwined with his in his coat pocket, and ran reckless as one over busy roads, and laughed at the absurdity of the rain and of themselves. There was no one else about. His flat was near the canal, and without any forethought or discussion they found themselves heading up his street. Then, without clearly deciding to, they stopped at the front door of his building, unlocked it, and went up.

His flatmate was away that evening, and they found the flat unlit and possessing a strange pregnant stillness like it had been lying there awaiting their arrival. Without turning on any of the lights, they went straight to the sofa. He left her there a second to get them a glass of water to share, and when he returned they exchanged a few quiet and forgotten pleasantries. Then they

began to kiss, sprawled side by side with their shoes kicked off and their feet under them on the sofa. 'Shall we go to my room,' he said simply - it wasn't a question - and they went.

She took off her wet trousers first, and he lay on his back and watched her do it with a mixture of tenderness and triumph, before she crawled into bed on top of him. Then both were completely taken by a feeling of mutual delight and became so absorbed in each other's bodies he forgot all sense of triumph and tenderness. After she came, they carried on for longer with her on top. A long time went by around them before they had reached a point of lazy satisfaction, and only then did they finally go still in each other's arms. They had moved together and they ceased together.

After some indeterminable age had gone by with them both, worn to nothing, held together, some simple words occurred to him at last. 'That was wonderful. Just the most wonderful...'

She made a small moan as answer, part expressive of pleasure, part agreeing, but part dissenting too. By what combination of instinct and experience he discerned these different levels of meaning he hardly knew, but he was suddenly frightened. 'What?' he said.

'Do you really want me to say it now?' she said.

'Why, what is it?' He still had his eyes shut and heard her voice coming from his chest where her head was rested.

'You know this is it. You know this can't go on.'

'Why not?' he said sleepily.

'It just can't. It isn't right - not fair on you.'

'You know you keep saying that, but I still don't know what you mean by that.'

'It's just not fair on you,' was all she said, like she hadn't heard him.

'But can you tell me why not? I mean, what do you mean when you say that?' He was met with silence from the head at his chest. 'Amelie?' he

said in the same soft, tired voice.

‘Let’s not talk about this now. Not now.’ Then in a different voice, very quiet and naïve and full of contrition she said, ‘I’m really not worth it.’ Then louder again she said, ‘I’m too moody. I can’t be stable for anyone, I become so self-absorbed. Literally, my last boyfriend, I didn’t message him for a month. I can’t... I’m just gonna hurt you.’

‘But isn’t it up to me?’

‘No, I’m being serious. I can’t. Just trust me.’

He was still nestled in the lazy feeling which clouded him from the full pain of her rejection. Perhaps a part of him had even been waiting for something to disrupt such an unreal evening. All the same, at her words he felt that hope of conquest and that vision of future love which had hitherto sustained him finally and irrevocably crushed.

He went quiet for a time, and she said, ‘What?’ and said his name.

‘Nothing,’ he said at last. ‘I’m just sad.’

‘I know. Shall I go?’

‘No, please don’t go... I don’t think I could bear it now if you went.’

‘I’m sorry,’ she said.

‘It’s fine. I just need a moment to feel sad about it.’

‘OK. You can cry if you like.’

He thought about it. ‘I don’t think I can right now.’

‘That’s OK... I’m really sorry.’

‘It’s fine. It’s just... dunno.’ He had no energy left to speak. He just held her more tightly and let himself feel a little.

She remained with him the night, and later on they fooled around a little until he came, and then, both utterly reduced, they fell asleep. The next morning she left early, and feeling like he needed to be out of his flat he went with her as far as the Sainsbury's by hers, where he bought himself breakfast. A couple of days later, he went on a long walk far down the canal and then up Craiglockhart Hill, after which he felt a little better. But long afterwards he recollected that evening with her breath and the rain and the piano keys as a moment of peculiar charge and vitality, and it filled him with a proud youthful feeling which undercut the pang he felt long after when he recollected her.

Creeping May

MADDIE WREN

The shutters with the acorns on the handles
Are difficult to open this morning
Because the sun has soldered them.

The rays raise their hands and force them through the gaps.
I'm not ready to

The first light climbs and moves
bed sheets hold my shoulders like a pair of old arms,
Parched pink fabric slides down my
Until I lose my appetite



XXII.—HOW TURNED-OVER LEAVES ARE DRAWN.

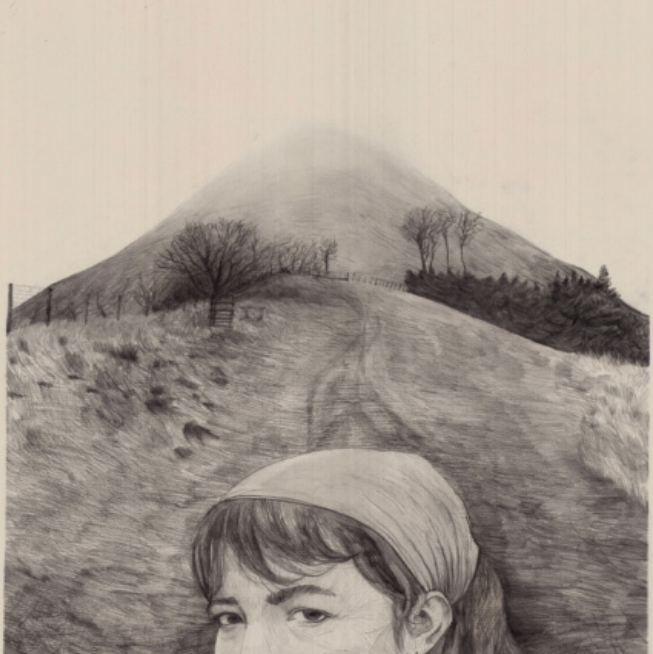
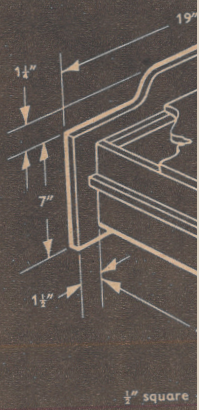
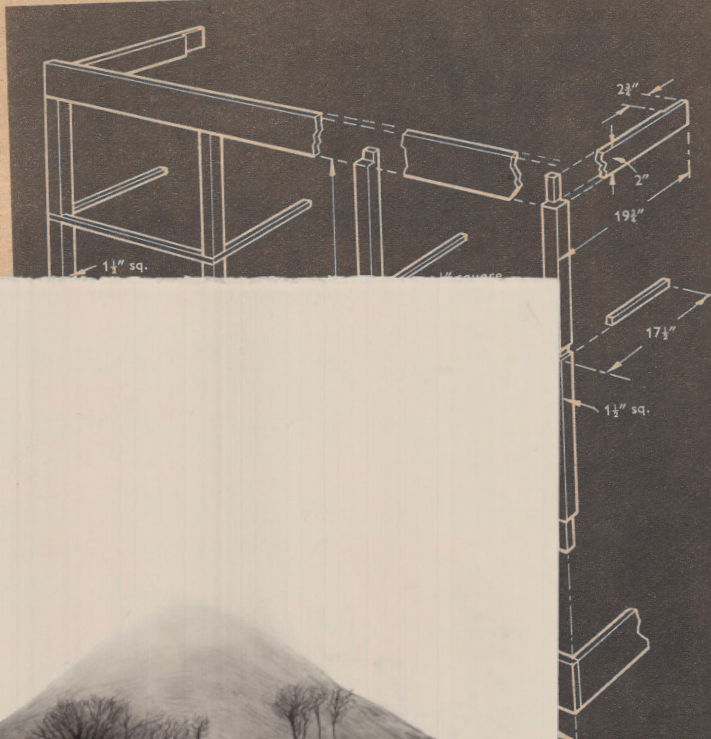
It's a creeping May.
The sky's turned inside out like a big blue pocket and everything
Important has fallen out and gotten tangled,
Lost, within the spring growth.

Everything is climbing, bruised buds by the
Kettle and in the grass
But I've lost it, I've lost it.
I wish we had another month together.

shaped for exact fit there will be further contributions to overall strength when they are glued in place. Fit back panels to both outer cupboards; the middle one has neither back nor shelf because there must be clearance for the plumbing.

You may prefer to delay panelling until after the drawer runners have been fitted so that you can have elbow room for adjustment. The drawer action is easy to make, smooth in operation, and imposes no wear on the cabinet structure. As Fig. 5 shows, it comprises a 1/2-in.-square rail on each side of the drawer and built-up hardwood channels in which the rails slide. Each channel is a screwed and glued assembly of two 3/4-in.-square hardwood strips and parallel on a strip 1/2 in. thick. The whole being fitted to the cabinet with packing pieces as required to correctly engage the rails. This should be determined by trial.

Fig. 5 also shows the drawers, with dimension view for clarity. Use plywood 1/4 in. thick for the front as a guarantee of flatness. The lower drawer (uppermost in Fig. 5) has



North Beach, L.A. 10.22.59

The back of the cabinet again as seen from the rear

Detail of drawer construction, showing hardwood slides

of width to form the shape is not critical provided it is symmetrical and all three fronts match exactly. To avoid dovetailing, the remainder of the drawer is made of 3/4 in. plywood glued and pinned in an arrangement that employs edge stiffness to make the panels strengthen each other. Fillets are used to joint these panels with the thick front one. For economy the bottom panel could perhaps be of hardboard. Only two drawers can be fitted because the bowl occupies the middle space, but the usual dummy front is included to maintain the design theme.

Hard plastic laminate is the recommended treatment for the front surfaces of the unit. In the two-tone scheme shown in Fig. 1, a pale yellow linen pattern was used for the

drawers and doors. To cut the material is to score both sides (deeply enough on the decorative side to reveal the dark base material) and break. Allow a little excess width in case of slight location error in glueing and to allow the completed work to be cleaned up level. Use impact glue for this part of the job. The top horizontal strip should be wide enough to be covered by the pressing but clear of the edge that has to be rounded to fit the flange.

For the drawer fronts cut the plastic slightly oversize all round, using a fretsaw for the curves or drilling close small holes and breaking. Fix with impact glue or, if you can arrange pressure for a few hours,

Trim the veneer edges and paint these edges white to seal them against moisture and to smarten their appearance. Veneer and paint the dummy front before fitting; screw it from inside the carcass. Veneer the front of the plinth with white laminate, as in the prototype, Fig. 1.

With the exception of the door runners, all surfaces not veneered should be protected with a good brand of waterproof paint. To guard against the ravages of moisture I suggest painting the underside of the plinth, particularly the edges that will be in contact with the floor and vulnerable to the effects of mopping operations. This could well be done before veneering, when the carcass can be turned over without risk of damage.

(continued on page 62)



Ed Berwick

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(e 62)

Return to Sender

FREJA HUNTLEY

Dear Elsie,

I wonder how it feels for you to hear from me out of the blue? For me to be able to reach out to you again is a great release, a cathartic outpouring of emotion. There is so much I want to tell you, that mere words on a page become insufficient. But my options are limited. I hope that, for you, this letter is a reassurance, a link between us, a reminder that no matter where you go or how much time passes, we are as inexorably tethered to one another, tied and tangled as ever.

Can you believe it's been almost a year since we last spoke? I remember our teary final phone call in June. That was a hard month, days stretched ahead of me, empty of purpose, empty of happiness. You were my joy - there were times when the smallest glance from you, a sly gesture, a flick of the wrists, the movement of your hair from one shoulder to the other, could sustain me for weeks. You were cryptic when we first met, but I took the time to know you, I paid attention, and I learnt to understand. You say so much more than everyone else, in so many different ways, and this is why I love you. How long did it take for me to tease out your knots? I learnt your language, I was your student. Months of patience and dedication, suddenly rendered worthless in your absence. Without you, I had little to think about.

Sometimes I wonder if I should be angry with you.

How could you do this to me?

Swallow me whole just to spit me out again.

I was so consumed by you, by your puzzles, the lines you made me walk, embroiling me in your dance, pulling me close and pushing me away.

It would be so easy to despise you for the callousness with which you cast me aside.

In the early days, the tail end of that summer, I even began to think that this was another one of your tests. You wanted to know if I would remain dedicated to you, even when I was desperate, even when all hope was lost.. But then the seasons changed and I found it didn't matter anyway, test or no test, abandoned or merely waiting, I could not find it in my heart to hate you. Just as I know you do not hate me. Just as I know that even now, reading these words, and knowing that I pressed them into the paper, that I think them as I write them, the pen loose in my hand, my fingers touched to the page you will hold, will elicit in you a note of excitement. Almost overnight, Autumn was crushed under its own weight, the mass of waterlogged foliage and hordes of heavy grey clouds gave way to a still, bleak winter. I missed you but the missing was shifting into something malleable. I made a monument of your absence, the empty spaces became solid shapes. It still hurt, it still does hurt, but I am being constructive now.

I never meant to have to write, why re-open old wounds? But when you love someone I don't think that love ever goes away completely, remnants always remain, and in our case, the remnant is a protective sort of affection. I know you described it as possessiveness, and it breaks my heart a little to see

how you misconstrued me, but now you've had some time and distance I hope you will see the motives as they truly are, nothing more than one friend looking out for another, a very harmless and helpful sort of concern.

Promise me you won't be alarmed, but I saw you recently. It was an accident. I was on a day trip, it was work-related, and you were far from the forefront of my mind yet, there you were. When I first caught sight of you my heart jolted, squeezed in my chest like a clenched fist. You'd cut your hair and put on a little bit of weight, but these changes were superficial, in manner, and in spirit, you were still, and always will be, my dear Elsie. I couldn't help myself, I followed you for a little... well... you know what they say about old habits. You needn't be alarmed, and you mustn't stop reading, even if you are a little disappointed. You have nothing to fear from me, in fact, you probably won't be hearing from me again.

I always said there was someone else, and now I know it to be true. I saw him there.

A dark-haired man in a navy anorak. I'm almost embarrassed to admit, it's the anorak I recognised first - Me! Who has always prided myself on seeing past these shallow external elements! Elsie, I couldn't tell you what you were wearing that day I saw you, or any day we met before. When I look at you I look inside you - at your purest and truest self, this is how I know that despite our recent lapse in communications, I still know you better than anyone, perhaps even yourself. And it's with this same discerning eye that I see the malevolence this man harbours. And that anorak! I'm sure I would not have noticed it now, or on any prior occasion if it weren't for his forced air of nonchalance. Everything about him, from his mannerisms to his outfit, was purposefully curated to make him as inconspicuous as possible. Yes, I saw the coat first, and then the full weight of recognition hit me for the second time that afternoon.

Didn't I tell you? Didn't I always say?

There is someone watching you.

I know to see it written down is alarming, but you cannot ignore my warnings any longer. He has followed you, across a threshold even I didn't dare cross. Perhaps like me, he is attracted to your purity, your lightness, and goodness, but unlike me, he is no casual admirer, and certainly no friend.

I know with a certainty that scares me, this man does not mean well. But you mustn't panic. I mentioned earlier that I do not think you will hear from me again, but please know that, for better or for worse, I will remain devoted to you. Even now, I am enacting plans that will ensure your safety from this man who, I believe above all others, poses a threat to you, to your virtue, your happiness, and perhaps even your life. Elsie, you must be careful. I am sure he will not be the last.

Look after yourself, my dear,
I cannot hold them off forever,

Yours always,

J. E.





Liv Bertani-Green

Thresholds

AUSTIN KEANE

A fallow deer halts
at the border: furrowed

inside the earth, he is
startling even to himself.

Unmade by fear,
all creatures must perform

their violence, make
a mock trial of the jaw,

—how not to kill
but taste—

make of us
a worthy hunger.

An arrow weeps out
the sky, the head of silver

turned lovely in its bite.
Watch a shiver

under the blood,
its tender leaping

—the flight that makes
a sacrament of the dark.

Follow the wound appearing
only to see itself

as if waiting for the dead thing
to leap up again

or to witness the working
of some ordinary charm.

The Haunting of Juan Emilio Pinto

MARIELA BROWN



Lucy Kitchin

I, Maximón, Mayan deity of plentiful power, am hungry. I am the benevolent giver, the god of greed, the paralysed wooden effigy, the stalking spirit of disguise. I sit in this lowly house in Santiago Atitlán, receiving supplications from the Guatemalan people who plead for safety, wealth, and love. These desperate dogs cannot discern my thigh from a scratching post; they merely howl, plead, and howl again. Once upon a time, they struck my knees and shattered my spine to subdue my strength, and now they seek my protection? They forget that a god must also be gratified, lest he send a torrent of ichor down upon his puppet-stringed people and wash away their pleas into the undemanding earth.

Now, young Rosa Irina Pinto hosts me in her living room and I welcome visitors like a dying old man. I have watched Irina for many years with passionate fascination. Irina is the gentlest of women. Her tall and slender frame hides her thunderously thumping heart, as her mousy-brown eyes are hidden behind a perfectly groomed fringe. She was born with an unshakeable love for animals. To her mother's dismay, this extended to the rabid dogs that still roam the suburbs. As a child, when coming upon a twitching corpse, she would bend down to floor level and weep, with the sheer child-like hope that her anguish would cause God to resurrect that pitiful creature. I felt obliged to leave at her feet a lifetime with a man who would shield her from the brutality of the outside world.

With Irina's abhorrence of violence and her husband's distaste for blood, their marriage has blossomed with a sacred tenderness, birthing their beautiful son, who laments the forsaken animals of Guatemala with equal vigour.

Her younger brother, Juan Emilio Pinto, never possessed such a temperament. His interminable laziness and unchecked greed sickened me. While Irina raised her son, he drove taxis near Guatemala City Airport and extorted naïve tourists with overblown prices. He would see the world through his fat eyelids and strode with baseless confidence through the city, smoothing his black, greasy hair behind his ears. He was mine from birth and I yearned to shatter his legs for his entitled avarice. He was a plague upon Irina's radiant family.

While working his usual shift, Emilio picked up an American tourist for a ride and proceeded to shoot him in his left eye-socket under my undetected direction. There could be no angel upon his shoulder strong enough to quieten my utterances in his ears. I stared at him through that *gringo's* right eye. I could taste the salty sweat that stuck his shirt to his back.

The drive from Guatemala City to Santiago was like running through water. Emilio did not think, he just drove for four hours in the hopes of seeing his sister. All he knew was that despite witnessing the shot explode through that man's eye and watching blood spray across the seat of his car, Emilio believed he could feel someone's breath upon the nape of his neck. He feared his mirror just in case this animated corpse was to sit up straight and stare right back at him. So he drove and drove with unblinking eyes, suppressing the urge to soil his seat.

He pulled into Irina's drive, knocked on her door, and waited, grinding his teeth and pacing like a wolf in a zoo. I decided to burst his tyre.

“¡Emi! ¡Fijese! ¿What on earth are you doing here?”

Irina froze. Her brother's eyes were black and unnerving, his shirt drenched in sweat, and there were specks of brown blood on his collar, neck, and flushed earlobes.

Emilio walked in without greeting her or even smiling, and stopped dead in the centre of her darkened room. There I stood, attired for the occasion, adorned with multi-coloured ties and a towering black fedora embellished with a blood-red ribbon. The room reeked of incense and cheap tobacco. I hoped the fumes might suffocate him as they endeavoured to purify his soul and mind.

Staring into my eyes, Juan Emilio Pinto's fingertips began to tingle, and he felt a sudden compulsive urge to rip the skin off his cuticles with his incisors. He was reminded of when he contracted food-poisoning from some fish he acquired from a local vendor. He remembered a slow descent into nauseous apathy, where his body felt as if it weighed as much as a car but was

floating as if it were in water. He plummeted to the floor when I struck his knees. Clawing at his hair as if he had ants behind his scalp, he threw up yellow bile upon Irina's bare feet. She could see his obliques tensing with the force of his sickness, and his wretched quivering, hunched over as if scrounging. This horrendous sight invoked a memory of a rat she tended to when she was sixteen, who was hit by a car and let out its last breath in a ditch at her toes.

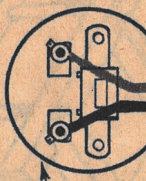
"Perdóneme, perdóneme, perdón..." Emilio sobbed.

He rolled over onto his side as if overcome with indomitable agony. With white knuckles, he clung to his sister's ankles, and green mucus fell from his nostrils which mixed into a salty fluid with the foam from his twitching mouth. The stringiness of his saliva clung to his canines as he spoke his final words.

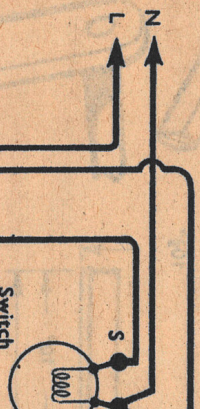
"¿Do you forgive me, Irinita?"

"¿For... for what? I cannot say. I do not think God is in this room, otherwise I should ask him," she replied, phlegm clinging to her throat. Internally, she begged for mercy to reach her brother, and whimpered at the sorry sight.

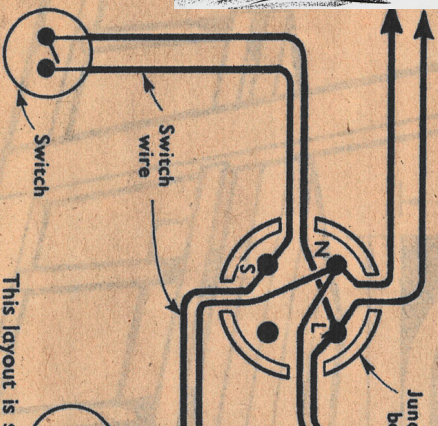
Finally, I tugged at my strings and hoisted my pathetic puppet to his up until his knees locked. Without saying goodbye, he turned and stiffly sauntered out of the room. Irina's sticky feet resisted as she walked from the door. Falling to her knees, she prayed to me for her brother's safety and the protection of her family from the malevolent and bile-scented miasma she sensed had entered her home. She would not be forsaken in her final wish, but I was no longer sitting peacefully on her floor. Inside the skeletal structure of the gringo on Emilio's back seat, I sat up and watched him accelerate down the serpentine roads of Santiago. Juan Emilio Pinto peered in his mirror, as his burst tyre finally faltered on the lakeside curb and he skidded into Lake Atitlán, the car swimming and then drowning in Guatemala's purifying waters and crashing to the volcanic earth below. He was the delicious victim of my insatiably gnashing teeth. He was the doomed casualty of the germy dog-bite of desire.



A standard me
maximum safet
is always in



Another live
goes through
switch wire



This layout is s
circuit includ
replaces the te

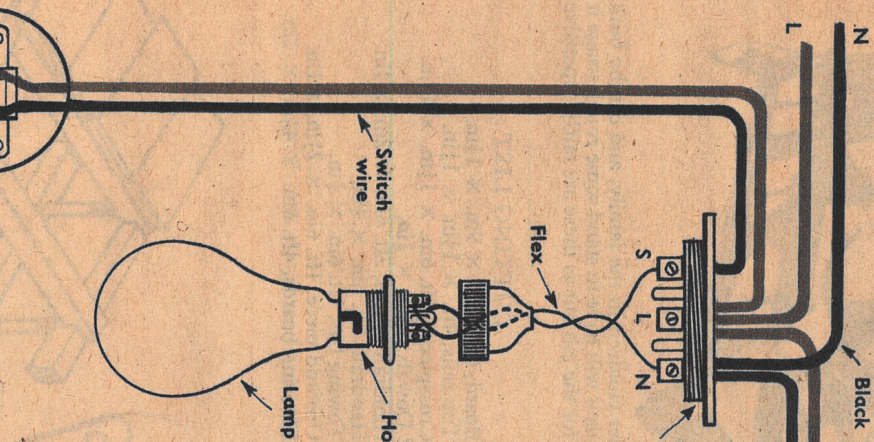
Ysobel Gouriet



LIGHT

BY F. G. RAYER, ASS

THE INKWELL





Laura Bonetti Teran



Cristi Watson



Elana Munasinghe

Speaking Ill

LEYLA BOWERS

My grandmother was a pilot, and she died last Boxing Day. The next morning, while it was still dark, we began the journey to her funeral. Four hours to London, an hour to the airport, a three-hour flight and then another long drive. In Islamic tradition, the funeral takes place physically as possible after the death. This is because angels question the deceased after their death, on their path to Jannah. I imagine if left too long, the body forgets what is right, what ought to be said to secure their peace. There are other traditions, like binding the jaw of the dead. This was not observed. We are not a religious family. My grandmother, in her life, shouted often, spoke words that could turn your stomach. The thought of her, mandible gurning, trying to voice what it was that had been done wrong, or how we might have displeased her; the movement over time shredding the cotton into scraps, her eyes white and stirring. In this case, custom would have widened the wound.

My parents drove to sign for her body in the early hours of the morning and I was left alone in her Ankara apartment. I stood paused in the doorway of the bedroom where she spent almost all of her final months. Still: the red fleece blanket to cover her healing wounds, the picture of my mother and sister on her bedside table. The last time I saw her she had been in this bed, five months earlier. She was bound to her mattress by an operation to repair her shattered hip. Nearly no teeth remained in her mouth, because of an encounter with a dentist who had removed them, returned with badly fitting dentures, and then vanished. Her voice was hoarse, and when she spoke or laughed, she covered her mouth with her hand or a folded tissue.

Imagine the most powerful entity you have ever known - a war criminal who has wreaked the kind of pain that you will hear about forever. The mother of it all - collapsed into half their size. The brutal flashes of their armour, absent: in its place a small clutching animal, mangle in their feathers, eyes huge and demure. You will feel like their campaign was an imagination, you will begin to think that all the bloodshed did not in fact take place, the conspiracy of some agent whose place was taken by the old woman now in front of you.

The question of how to mourn a complicated relationship is one that I had not prepared myself for. My weeping surprised me. I was continuously dazed by the intensity of the grief, by how much I thought of her. The knowledge of her many violences towards my mother settled on the surface of my memory, oil on water, the testimonies refusing to dissipate. I thought of her, brow sweating from the heat of the stove in the height of August, making me something to eat, rinsing the chalky residue from sweet yellow grapes. I sat down by her wardrobe, inhaling the mothballs, and I did not move until dawn.

When I grieved, it was a grief divided: I mourned the cares denied to the heart of the woman who made me, and then I mourned her mother, merciless in her tending. There too, was something even more heart-wrenching. The burrs of pain sticking between my mother and her daughters began to tessellate under my gaze. Years of blistering conflict seem to lose their sharp colouring once the roots of the parent have lost their grounding.

So there I stood with my mother, set back from the others, while they took the body out of its casket, brought to her grave in a van we had had trouble following since it was amongst four identical ones, each with their own alien loss inside. So much of it was like that, a dull shock for one versed only in churches and vespers. The prayers took place only a few metres away from the morgue, the same prayer served equal purpose for five dead. Why make a distinction? We were all there for the same thing. My father and my mother's brother were the first to split the December earth with their shovels, their faces focussed on the effort. Stumbling a little on the soil. They placed her in the ground in a white plastic bag. We stepped backwards at the same time, watching from a distance, a woman and a child. Both of us were resistant to getting too close to the heaving plastic, for our own differing reasons. I couldn't let my mother be alone in the pines, amber light pouring heavy between the trees and dust from the breezeblocks. The oldest child and her daughter, the duty to sorrow, the reluctance. Pictures of us, all over. I waited until she was ready to turn.

Embankments

ZOE MILTON

I see God in Small Places
Great American lakes and rivers of gold,
It came to me in the quiet of the morning.

Hair weaved with doldrums and joy
In sensible shoes, in the songs of starlings,
It comes in the quiet of the morning.

Mother's voice descends now
Gathering in the corners of Small Places,
Onto banks, and into streams—

We coalesce in mossy tissues and
Synapsing pools

And I have found God in the clicking of tongues.



Lydia Kempton

Go, Bid the Soldiers Shoot

LUKE HAMPSHIRE

*Such
A
Sight
As
This*

Edgar paused on his typewriter, the last keystroke echoing in the whitewashed square room.

Once, he had had many companions, fellow slaves to the typewriter, their clickety-clacks a constant music to his ears. The sweet sound of companionship. But one by one, they had been taken away.

The first place Edgar could remember had been a grand, never-ending hall, brown heads stretching off into the distance as far as the eye could see. The smell of sweating monkeys thick in the air, the sound of typing rattling round like a whisper.

*Becomes
The
Field*

Each time he was seized, they gave him treats of sweet white sugar cubes, yellow bananas, red strawberries, only to place him in a smaller space, with fewer companions each time.

They never got to rest. If they spotted you idle at your desk for too long, they would take you away and put you all alone, for days, months, years on end. And then you were back.

But
Here
Shows
Much
Amiss

Edgar breathed out. He only had one fellow monkey in his room these days. Every night they gave them treats, preened their fur, washed them in warm baths. Treated them like kings. But it was so lonely.

He stared at the typewriter. His closest companion now. His only enemy. He knew that if he typed the next words, he would be on the brink of another change. If he typed a certain word, that was. Every time, it had been like this. He would type the same string, and then type one word differently, and every so often, once in a thousand days, it would be the right word and he'd be taken aside and given treats, moved into a new, smaller room, with less monkeys in it.

But if he did it one more time, what would happen? Would he be taken away from his last remaining monkey?

So Edgar hovered over the keys. If he paused much longer they would be angry.

*Go
Bid
The
Soldiers*

The last word was hanging on his fingertips. He knew what it had to be. He had reached this point a thousand times before. There was surely only one word that would fit. But he didn't want to. He didn't want to!

But what else could he do? Perhaps they would let him go. With a tug in his chest and a deep sense of resignation, Edgar leaned forward and spun his nimble fingers across the keys.

Shoot.

As soon as he typed the word, he regretted his decision. He couldn't be alone. What would life be, if not this endless series of rooms and treats and other monkeys? What if they were going to drag him away and never let him see another monkey again? He suddenly hoped that he had just typed the wrong word.

But then he heard the sirens and the doors started to open and he knew he had done it.

Desperate, he looked over at his final companion. They were not permitted to talk, but many years of silence had taught the monkeys other ways to convey their feelings.

Edgar twisted his lips, inclined his eyebrows and his companion made faces back. The other monkey leapt to its feet. With an ear-splitting cry, it danced on the table, then bellowed and released a torrent of urine all over its typewriter and the clean white papers beneath it.

Edgar realised with a jolt what was happening. His friend was trying to save him. To distract them.

He paused, frozen, but then the men came rushing in with their white coats and he knew he had to go now.

He charged for the wall. It was hard to move, his arms lethargic, his legs paralysed from sitting at the same desk for so long, but as the adrenaline flooded his system, his body kicked into action.

The white coats grabbed at his friend, but the other monkey was fast and deft and ducked back, cackling.

Emboldened by his friend's show of defiance, Edgar leapt onto the wall and gripped on with all his strength. It was slippery smooth, surely engineered to stop monkeys.

His hands were slipping. Edgar lunged higher, changing his hand positions. Each time, he started slipping seconds after. He just had to be quick.

One grab. Another grab. The top of the wall was fast approaching.

Behind him, the other monkey was squealing.

The white coats were shouting at one another.

He reached the top. All around him, a maze of rooms stretched on and on, for miles on end. Some large, some small. Each full of tiny brown figures, working away. His companion monkeys.

His heart ached. All this time, they were still here. So nearby.

A dart whistled towards Edgar. He screeched and dodged out of the way. The white coats each held guns and were pointing them up at him.

He breathed in, deep. The gap from one room to the next was colossal. But there were no other options. He bent his legs and made a leap of faith.

Yes! He'd made it.

With his nerves electric, Edgar jumped from room to room, staring down at the monkeys there. He gestured down.

“We can be free! Go! Shoot!”

Somehow the last word he'd typed became like a battle cry.

“Shoot!”

“Shoot!”

“Shoot!”

Echoes bounced off the walls, not of typewriters but of howling monkeys, realising, all of a sudden, that there was more out there than treats and whitewashed walls.

The walls swarmed brown, monkeys piling up as they broke free. They climbed on each other's shoulders, towers of muscle and hair. And at the top of it all was Edgar, scuttling from cell to cell and bellowing.

“Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!”

And shoot they did. But not one of those tranquillisers hit their target.

The monkeys spilled up and up and up, a pyramid of bodies, their arms reaching for the open sky above.



Amy Penrose

in the common *Fouquieria*, or are deeply divided into the pinnate form so

immediately connected with them. The

main mid-rib of the frond makes a graceful

curve, beginning below, broad and shaggy,

with brown membranous scales, ragged

and woolly. Some measure of these

scales are to be found on the back of the

mid-rib, all up, and on the backs of the

pinnae as well. The blade of the frond is

green, veined with forked veins. In those

forms which have not serrated edges the

pinnae make forks with long prongs, running

out to the edge, and more or less at right

angles to it. But when the edges are

serrated, the branches of the veins run

down to the points. The forked character



XXI.—FERN-FORM.



Alice Batten

s in the common Polygony, or are deeply divided into the pinnate fronds immediately connected with them. The main mid-rib of the frond makes a graceful curve, beginning below, broad and shaggy, with smaller ribs branching off from it.



The Pope's Ghost

OLIVIA CEJNAR

Enter my dream:
a faery-child in halo-white
a fly in shadows on the wall

but not the Pope:
he's dead in a wedding bed,
set aglow by an open gown
a martyr, an unconsummated bride,
with eyes opened wide.

of billowing white –

The fluttering of stained-glass wings –
fly meets window-flesh
and falls in matrimony with its Christ
into a bed of dust.

And gumboots fester in her soul –
the haloed child who sunk for a glimpse of God,
 the mother held back by men who didn't understand her pain,
kneeling in repentance, hands in supplication
at planets that imploded light-years ago,
jealous of the mindless burn
they didn't have to feel.

Now teabags steep
where feet should be,
yellowing with glass-blown time:
 before departure from the moon
 before the Church consumed itself
before the sun-bleached day when heaven breaks free
the drowning paradox
that haunts us more than death.

And yet the three –
they billow endlessly
in a sea-blue sea of dreams:
 they exit from the womb of earth,

just footprints left behind.



Hannah George



Eliza Percival



Defrosting Robbie Williams, or: the cultural logic of late capitalism

MAYA ENGWELL

She has a special crew of photographers booked for the occasion, flown in from Europe with their tote bags and bright eye make-up and ironic perms. She has a thousand oranges juiced. She has a chocolate fountain installed and heart-shaped balloons pumped full of helium. She has one of the maids iron and suspend an enormous white sheet – big enough to swathe a giant – on the wall for the screening of obscure DVDs.

The parlour is ever so impressive today – the first few guests trickling in as the smoke machine starts up, the lights kicking off with a rainbow of colours, the pink tablecloth with Tamagotchis hung around each champagne flute as a take-home gift (the poor beasts, once activated, will be dead by morning). A Victorian property, it originally belonged to a Lady, some blue-blooded aristocrat whose grandchildren were forced to sell it, and Natalie had been grateful and proud to take on this townhouse in central London – red brick, white windows, and the Ming vase they'd forgotten in the move. This is the new way of things, this is for the people who've earned it, and Natalie always smiles when she thinks how proud her parents would be if only they had lived to see it.

And not through tricks either. Not that Natalie disapproves of people using their looks – she is the first to admit she’s had some tasteful work done to aid views, and then there’s the perpetual but necessary diet. But she is proud to have got where she has using only the powers of her mind. She bought this house with the products of the past. The sprawling playlists, the dress-codes unfamiliar to her viewers as prehistoric times, brick phones, overplayed films, they all seemed like coded clues to an unknown puzzle – and then there was the cookbook, *Bake That!* which pretty much explained itself (the ‘Cherry Barlow Sponge Cake’ was her personal favourite).

As everyone arrives, the DJ plays the pop song Natalie requested, the one that got famous again online last week, rescued from the cramped dark cupboard of cultural amnesia, bringing the singer, blinking, back to the light.

The other creators locate her and swarm. The snap of cameras and the occasional flash fills the room, the photographers truly on working time now.

‘You look gorgeous!’ say the friends, and it’s true, Natalie knows this, especially with how thin she has gotten, all collarbone and tan in her strapless outfit. ‘We all look gorgeous!’ she says back, and this is also true, though their being gorgeous depends on other people, outside this party, not being gorgeous. Without the not gorgeous they would cease to be what they were.

‘Oh, I HAVE to show you this, Ted, it’s awful!’

A recycled joke, or: the cultural logic of late capitalism. Upstairs in Natalie’s wardrobe hangs a dress with a Mark Fisher quote she once wore to a party, and on her bookshelf a copy of the *Communist Manifesto*, never read.

People love the Tamagotchi thing, the little creatures in their digital prisons, and they leer at the videos on the wall. ‘Rock DJ’ causes a stir, the stir of forgotten media, that breath of nostalgia, the fashion now so beautifully ironic that everyone feels safe to love it, laughing even as Robbie takes off his clothes, his skin, his flesh, for the fans.

‘God, how tasteless – play it again!’

The Robbie video gives Natalie another idea for a cake recipe, although sadly she can’t use it for her next book, *What Bakes You Beautiful*, deceptively savoury this time and more coffee-table-ish than practical. The font big, the volume slim. They have promised, though, some segue into autobiography where appropriate, and this feels hopeful.

She is still working on the titles. Bun Direction. Steal my Swirl.

There’s no way that last one will make the edit.

A trip upstairs, to the bedroom mirror for pictures, leads Natalie past a girl being ironically bulimic over the toilet bowl, high heels and empty plate beside her on the floor.

‘Oh!’ says Natalie. ‘Are you okay?’ The girl smiles back weakly.

As Natalie walks on, the moment strikes her as so un-staged, so chic somehow, so of a type, the suffering girl amidst the high ceilings and the beauty, that she wishes she had taken a picture, and captioned it ‘Club toilet, 2012,’ like a tombstone, or a piece of art.

PR Stephanie is speaking, her glossy lips forming words.

‘...that recession look, circa 2008. Obama’s in, Gwen Stefani’s playing, austerity marches, everyone’s unemployed like uber-recession but they’re looking good, do you get what I mean?’

Natalie is drunk. She is thinking about the recession, about the Special Offer deals in the supermarket, the mould on the ceiling and her father’s eighties music and the fact she has a maid. How things rise and fall, are remembered and forgotten.

‘That’s the look that’s gonna be big,’ says Stephanie before answering a call. ‘I’d start looking into it.’

They do a good job making authentic conversation as the photographers buzz around them like electric flies. The less subtle ones ask to see the pictures for re-takes but not Natalie. She’s a professional and, like the best of them, lives her life as if for the camera.

Maria, the maid, whispers something to the caterer.

These people, the way they live---

The scented candles start blowing out.

‘What we need,’ says an influencer called Skylar (nepo baby, model mother, Big Pharma father), ‘is a musical about Take That. Maybe in the style of with Cats. Think how terrible that would be, it would be huge.’

Natalie does not hear a word, having not eaten and having drunk a gallon of wine to compensate. Skylar’s features rearrange themselves in front of her like a Picasso.

At twelve Natalie passes out, is carried to bed and promptly left there. The lonely blue wallpaper glows, the open window letting in a breeze that brings with it cold and the sounds of London on a Friday. Puffy-eyed Yuppies roar like bison on the plain.

She drifts into unconsciousness, thinking about her father's funeral. In her sleep she dreams that Robbie Williams is swimming towards her like a dolphin but with the beard of Karl Marx. Gary Barlow has been cryogenically frozen, the defrost scheduled for 2050.

Underwater, Robbie whispers something to her, and Natalie thinks at first it must be a prayer, some piece of infinite fatherly wisdom.

It is an idea for a t-shirt slogan.

'For sale,' says Robbie. 'Baby shoes, never worn.'



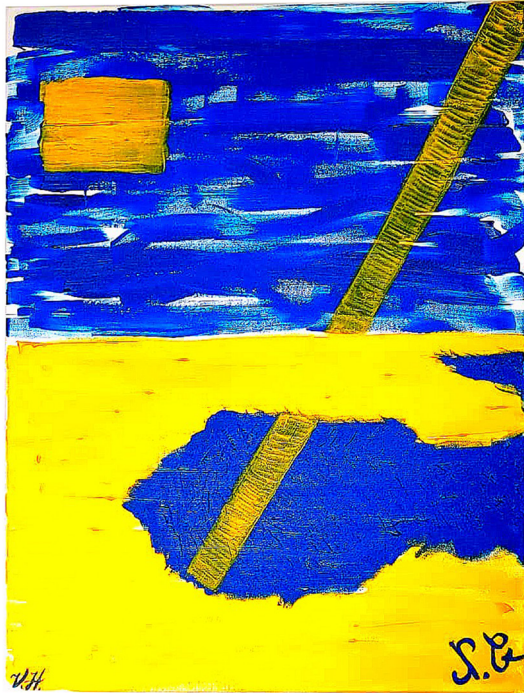
Patterned Pathways



The Day I Realized There Was No End To This

KATE CATCHPOLE

I took your hand in my hand and imagined our warm palms
merging into each other.
My skin through your skin, my bones passing through your bones
like Chinese linking rings, so quick you don't catch
the trick inside the magic.
I squeezed hard and imagined my hand could become your hand
and I could touch the world the way you touched it,
and never leave a bruise.
I squeezed, and I could feel the whole universe pushing at its edges,
and I wanted to crush your hand to break the edges of you, too,
and expand in through the cracks.
And although the love already felt ruinous, it just kept going,
kept spreading outwards, downwards, up and up,
inventing new space to take up.
The universe expands at a rate of
73.3 kilometres per second per megaparsec.
I don't exactly know what that means,
but I know it feels like this:
my hand in your hand and
my love too big to fit.



Nathaniel Cartier

At the Marketplace

ROSALIE WESSEL

the market is hot, the crowd
is sweating a gabble of words.
vendors fan their faces red,
and i reach forward to grab a book
i once recommended to you.

funny: after telling you it was worth reading
i never picked it up again.
now i trace my fingers
over a rough, cracked spine
and know that my copy is barely broken in.

in a far corner,
two lovers take coffee with a
fistful of sugar mixed with warm
silver spoons, slung in sunlight.
today, i take mine with ice,
and a drowning of soft milk -
refusing harsher notes.





i buy an unnecessary potato,
burnished apples, and a soft peach. turning,
i bump into a girl and her perfume
makes me stop
searching for you. reminding me of you.
and you are never there,
so i am momentarily stuck
in that irrational disappointment.
her dress is a spool of yellow
and against sun spotted streets, i watch it flutter away:
my flag of surrender, walking abreast
in the stream of sunday brunchers.

by mid-morning i have a sticky neck,
and when a cool gust blows through my body
i am glad i no longer love you.
it might be summer, and i might miss you
but i am no longer frozen in time.
i move languid,
warm in life.
idle in love.

letting freedom sink into my teeth,
i taste the freshly bought peach
and continue down the road.

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