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UNIVERSITY
REVIEW



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TRINITY REVIEW

EDITORS	Shannon Garden-Smith Mike Kryluk
EDITORIAL CONSULTANT	Kira Wronska Dorward
BOARD	Katrina Broder Mariam Marqus Elisa Pelaia Konstantine Polyzois Clara Rozee Alexandra Savilo Jonathan Scott Christian Siroyt David Stokes Alexandra Veall

CONTENTS

Clara Rozee	4	<i>Sea Lion Carcass on the Beach at Tofino</i>
Maxine Truxa	5	<i>Roadside Smoke Smoke Shop</i>
Lara Daniel	6	<i>The Long Ride</i>
Trevor Karson	8	<i>Untitled</i>
Anastasia Shteyn	9	<i>The Landlord's Love</i>
Jason Smith	10	<i>Untwisted</i>
David Stokes	11	<i>On Twelve Mile Creek</i>
Claire Marie Stancek	12	<i>Shifts</i>
Evan Jordan	13	<i>Aisle Eight</i>
Kira Wronska Dorward	14	<i>Tomatoes</i>
Victoria Hetherington	16	<i>The Unexplained</i>
Konstantine Polyzois	17	<i>Self-Portrait</i>
Patricia Marie Robinson	18	<i>Mohair</i>
Salahuddin Rafiquddin	19	<i>Untitled</i>
Joe Dylan Aiello	20	<i>Cut of Jaw</i>
Victoria Wang	22	<i>485 Cosgrave</i>
	23	<i>Bloor</i>
Evan Jordan	24	<i>House Porn</i>
Cecily Carver	25	<i>Pencilled-In</i>
Claire Marie Stancek	26	<i>Fear</i>
Jenny Kim	27	<i>Sleeping Dogs</i>
Cailin Smart	28	<i>The Feeders and Pancho Lopez</i>
Trevor Karson	34	<i>Untitled</i>
Victoria Hetherington	35	<i>Lewis, Rose, Ben</i>
Anastasia Shteyn	41	<i>Untitled</i>
Alyssa Hauer	42	<i>Untitled</i>
	43	<i>Untitled</i>
Andrew McEwan	44	<i>Red Truck</i>
Weronika Czaplá	45	<i>Pilgrimage</i>
Maeve Devitt-Tremblay	46	<i>Spring Forward</i>
Victoria Hetherington	47	<i>Wheaton and Me</i>
Clara Rozee	48	<i>Oral Tumour</i>
Gagan Sandhu	49	<i>Arwinder</i>
Sophia Balagamwala	50	<i>Cloud Story 3</i>
	51	<i>Bird Catcher</i>
David Stokes	52	<i>The Poet's Mother in Her Room, 1973</i>
		<i>Untitled</i>
He Zhang	53	<i>Untitled</i>
Felix Kalmenson	54	<i>Boris Pasternak</i>
Emily Swinkin	55	<i>Light and Language</i>
Polina Teif	56	<i>Untitled</i>
	57	<i>Untitled</i>
Riley Quinn	58	<i>Story of His Life</i>

SEA LION CARCASS ON THE BEACH AT TOFINO

On the smooth-sand beach you lie like a log
 Rolled up by the waves
 Subdued and cold,
 Big, wet, dead.
 Yet invulnerable—
 You've gained a forceful boldness,
 An unapologetic manner not shamed by
 Torn, wrecked fur
 And thin, pale entrails.
 Red blood and white bone
 Are movie-set stark: funny and blunt
 Like plastic and paint.
 Dogs and children race around
 Not shocked or even curious—
 Fooled by your easy confidence.
 You are now part of the landscape, and as night falls
 Darkness sits on you like the occasional crow,
 And keeps you company.

CLARA ROZEE

ROADSIDE SMOKE SMOKE SHOP



MAXINE TRUXA

THE LONG RIDE

I. Early August

The Great Canadian Geese
Are the self-appointed police
of Toogood pond.

Big birds that cry out
angry songs
through rusty,
saxophone beaks.

Protecting their young
from this horrible machine,
with the rubber mouth,
that gulps up the gravel,
and bits of bread
they watch over.

I try to beat the brazen bird
at her own game.
Bring my bike to an awkward halt.
I smile like a Mountie would (I imagine),
wave my sweaty palm,
tip my plastic helmet.
allow her and her young to cross.

But she'll have nothing of my awkward
language of decorum.
A foreign tongue
from the land of metal,
rubber
and noise.

Her tinny warnings grow louder,
become an accusation against
the hungry rubber mouth,
the lunch squashed
between
the hollowed out
snakes
of my tire wheels.

I have lost the territory.

II. Late October

I can feel the winter come closer,
kicking its long legs out
behind me.

My bike moves quicker, is more obedient to
the rhythm of the ride.
Isn't as
trepid
and jerky
and spastic
as usual.

Smoother, this October night,
anticipating a cold garage,
curling into a duvet of dust
during the bear's sleep
of a fully-formed winter.

III. Early November

Geese, in the sky,
have assembled into
a voluptuous flying fleet.
A goose at the front
turns its tubular neck
in my direction,
wings flapping vehemently
a gesture of relief,
or sympathy.

I stand on a pond,
iron-coloured,
and wave at the sky
with a warm gloved hand.

UNTITLED

8



TREVOR KARSON

9

THE LANDLORD'S LOVE

The day was sweeping itself
when she descended from the second floor
teasing the stairs with her toes.
There was something unreal
about her floating figure that fogged
my glasses...

A tail
of dreamy dogs followed her alluring silhouette,
a German Shepherd, a Pug, a Chihuahua, two Great Danes, a Bullterrier,
a Labradoodle and a Cockapoo,
stretching across the lobby as if
on a leash.

ANASTASIA SHTEYN

UNTWISTED

It moves slowly at first, this twisting together,
The winged strides of our dancing mercurial feet
So stroke their steps to the music's breadth, but meet
With its cessation; yet begin anew with another
Orchestral furor. And we romp, like stag and doe,
In a summer's breeze, prancing amongst the leaves,
Each new song a bursting bloom that weaves
Through autumn and into winter's snow.
And like the clock past midnight's stroke, we dance
The dance again. Only now, our steps miss their mark
And eyes intwound unbound themselves, and embark
On other sights. And ever so slowly this prance
Unwinds, like life uncoiling from its heart.
Slowly and slower, until untwisted apart.

JASON SMITH

ON TWELVE MILE CREEK

The river runs from Olcott Beach,
an old bride still frilled for the summer.
A rotten boat sulks in the mouth of the harbour—
waiting with decayed black stumps,
it knows how difficult redemption is.
The water is simple and clear as a country creek can be,
all lush and beautiful
with the greens and yellows of
algae and the sun, the bottles of Castrol and Pennzoil
askew in the bottom of our boat.
The day yawns.
I see the wriggle of a trout
through the sunshine-gleams of the water.
Cutting a bit of line, the fishing lure punctures my hand
bringing blood, red sweet and hot as the day,
to the surface.
I still get my trout,
a murder unnoticed
by the chorus of cicadas
practicing in the trees.

DAVID STOKES

SHIFTS

My shift would start at three o'clock, and if I dashed through the ravine where longhaired light strew green glints into leaves, I could be on time. I would rattle the swinging doors at the back, say hi to Glenn, the produce guy coring pineapples. It was the style to smile at Roger in long hair until he yelled, barely looking up from his office desk, "Hair, ladies!" Then we could roll our eyes, throw our heads forward in great hairfalling bow, drag our fingers through upside down blonde, suddenly ponytailed when we stood, and pink cheeked, the world brighter for a second as it righted itself. I loved the lines of faces becoming lines on faces, the way slippery bags of chips on the conveyor belt were prologue to three-minute acquaintance. One old lady huffed through a fat leather purse for ages before handing it to me, "Lovey, see if you can't find that credit card—my! What would your mother do without you?" I blushed though I hadn't heard what that man said, his wife clucking nearby, pressing my elbow, promising he was only teasing and could I double bag the catfood? I loved them for the way they shifted past: moments of people wobbling together like apples on a scale.

AISLE EIGHT

Wake up
 morning at the end of
 aisle eight in the grocery
 super store, somewhere beyond
 the boxes of stale taco shells
 a graying woman
 knocks
 over a display of cherry
 tomatoes, spilling over the edge
 like measles or tears
 for lost children
 on the milk carton forever
 along the conveyor belt
 in line at the checkout
 counter
 the attendant has no face
 only a din
 the pitch of a hyena
 blowing from an empty
 hole that's not quite
 a mouth, but nothing
 scans, nada,
 and I'm returned
 to shop for eternity
 at the end of aisle eight

for G.G.

His hands moved over the tomatoes, gently squeezing for firmness. He found two he wanted; ripe and tender. She had always admired his hands. They were small for a man of his size, with stubby fingers and a well-developed callous in the one that held his lacrosse stick. They weren't pretty hands. But they were very gentle, and decisive of intention. Last week she'd cut her leg; he'd applied ointment and a Band-Aid, then rested his hand briefly on her knee, as if it had always been there.

Now he watched him make her a sandwich, the fleshy insides of the tomatoes giving his fingers a wet varnish as he sliced through them.

"Where's Sarah?" she asked, hesitantly.

He shrugged. "She's got class till nine."

He was delicately laying fish strips on top of the bread.

Her phone rang. She looked at the number and very obviously screened the call.

"Guess the guy's not getting a second date."

"Whatever," she said, very blasé. "It's never okay to pull out a half smoked joint on a first date."

"Maybe he was nervous—you sometimes have that effect on people."

"Thanks."

"Just saying."

He looked up at her, half smiling. It unnerved her how he seemed to look into the well behind her eyes, easily moving past her practiced reserve.

His hands and his eyes, she thought. They weren't like those of other men she knew.

"Can you do something useful? Slice the onions—thank you."

She picked up a small shallot and attempted to crush it, to break the skin off more easily.

"No—that's how you peel garlic. Have you never sliced an onion properly? Hold on a sec."

He washed his hands, then came up behind her. He slipped his arms under hers and closed his hands over her fingers and the knife.

"Half it, slice vertically, then horizontally, like this."

He lingered after helping her slice the one half. He moved his hands, crossing his arms over her waist, hugging her from behind. His head rested on her left shoulder. Then he let go, moving back to sprinkle parsley on the sandwiches.

"I've got a dime left from the weekend. Smoke a joint and watch a movie?"

"Sounds good," she said, looking down at his hands.

He put the second slices of bread on top of the first, then pulled a bag and the rest of the weed paraphernalia out of his backpack.

He deftly rolled a joint.

"You're going to have to learn one day," he said.

"I don't think I would be any good at it."

"Probably not. It's a good thing you're pretty."

"You know, I remember when we met during frosh week. The first thing you told me was that you'd gotten a 32 on your IB score."

"Don't I sound like a douchebag?"

"You really did."

"Probably trying to impress you. How can you remember something I said two years ago?" He paused. "I remember the first thing I thought when I saw you."

"And?"

"I'll tell you that one day when you least expect it."

She crossed her eyes at him.

"Attractive. Now I see why these guys fall all over themselves going after you."

They went to his room to smoke, the window opened to a furious December snowstorm.

There was an empty condom wrapper on his desk. He saw her looking at it and swept it in the trash.

She sat on his bed, the way she always did, holding herself erect on the edge. He sat at his desk and twisted the top of the joint.

"Ladies first."

When they were done, they wandered back to the couch and put on a movie.

John's phone rang.

"Sarah...nope, just here watching a movie with Lauren."

Lauren, sitting beside him on the couch, sighed nonchalantly.

"Okay. Yeah, see you soon."

He hung up. She didn't ask because she didn't care to know.

The pot was really strong. She felt her blood rushing through her head in waves. They ate in silence, which suited them both.

"You good, Lauren?" She smiled up at him. He put his hand on her shoulder, firmly pressing like she was one of those tomatoes.

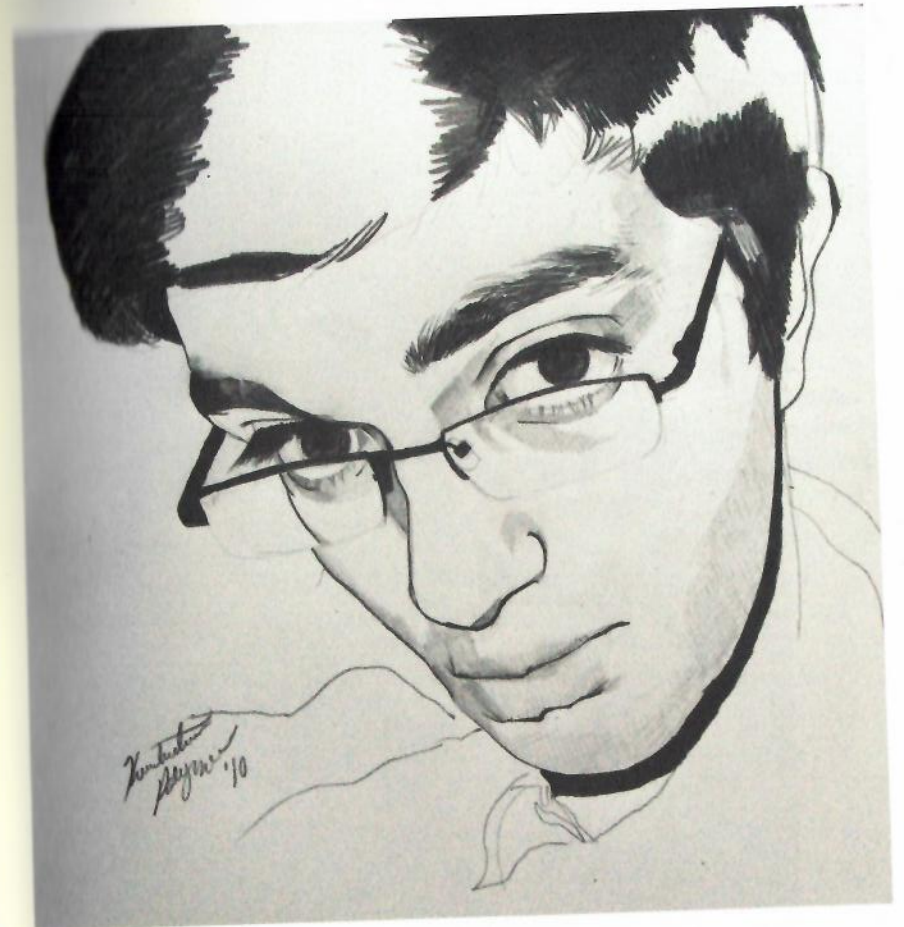
She rested her head on his upper arm. His way was so familiar. She felt a powerful urge to sleep. She was drifting off; more of her weight came to rest on him. He kept watching the movie, his hand on her shoulder.

THE UNEXPLAINED

The baby delights in the geometric way
I pull her fruit apart
The banana lies in woolly threes,
The tangerine in segments
Dried strawberry trails on the plate
We trace the juices off, and now
It snows, our breath all white,
Melting before it lands
The ground too hot perhaps
From departed summer sprawl
That day our puppy sprang
Across the stiffened field
That day, we had our bit of pain and cold and dinner
Then forgot it
That day and this, every now I know
Had I no body, no memory of consumption
I'd think these grapes to be eternal,
So stealthily replaced in the house
And in the market, in the city
Spring is replenished again
And each day I am drawn right up from sleep,
As if by magic.

VICTORIA HETHERINGTON

SELF PORTRAIT



KONSTANTINE POLYZOIS

MOHAIR

Like tall grass leaning through a warm wind
its green frays
into the indigo mouth of sky

Its wavering
is the shape of breath
hazy, waning into rest

Or your lover's waving hair,
shocked by the weather, growing against the horizon
her easeful diadem, gently as sleep.

Lusting upward,
wandering feelingly,
hovering, somehow conductive

10
UNTITLED

"One wants for nothing, generally, more than water, inspiration, and of course a good knife." My father had this way of speaking that would just make me impatient. I loved my father, but there was always something that made me impatient. I felt something squeezing in around my neck and that feeling started to stir inside of me, the same one I get when I am about to eat a bowl of hot soup. "There is something slanting off the side here, we have to stop and fix it." My father would not listen to me, he was certain his knots would hold. "There is something coming down, father, it is right in front of my window here." I was now ignored by my father who had taken a call. It was around this time that I had the feeling that there would really be no other way out of this, but to give up and make my whole life become normal, to make my emotions one with someone else, a strong girl with good hips who could stand straight in a doorway without feeling the incredible weight of the house breaking and bearing through her. Yes, I thought, this would be just fine. Finally the sack of sheets that had been attached with my father's knots to the top of our black utility vehicle was taken by the strong wind on the highway. His knots had failed and he knew they would. He told me later that he intended for them to fail, which was, of course, a lie. Our vehicle had lost one of the mirrors and had a large scratch down the left side. I had told my father that I would direct him while he backed up, but he would have no help, he could back up all the way home from work. That too, was a lie, but one he said so often that he knew it was a lie, not like most of his lies, that would sit on the kitchen table and wait for one of us to suck them down like sardines with our potatoes. What could I have done though at that moment, I was, after all, fat, and travelling through Europe with my father was the last thing I wanted to do. My father insisted on doing certain things: staying in hostels, tying things to roofs, and letting a scratch fester with rust until the whole vehicle is overtaken by auburn spores and it wheezes and cranks whenever it makes the speed limit, so that he could hold up these things in front of my face and say, you see son, you see how I am living now, still, despite my success, despite my comfortable life and a considerable fortune from your mother, you see how I have remained frugal, and so that he could pass these things on to me, once I came of age. The rust ball would be mine, he told me calling it by another name, and he would be proud to see it in the family, he said, but he really meant, he would be proud to see me struggle and I would still be fat. He jerked the car to the side of the road, and when he did this I saw the gap where his tooth had been removed last week because of gum disease. I

saw him sticking his tongue through it as he weaved through four cars on the highway to reach the shoulder. I saw him tilt his head towards me and I saw the light in the car reflect off his face, that face, that skin hung off so you could see the skull hiding, and the nose bone holding the whole thing up like a tent, an old tent, in the family for a long time, pitched wrong with ripped and stretched fabric and taking the shape of bent poles. That face looked down at me as if to say, you see how much you have to learn from me son, and after all you are still fat. He looked back and saw the sheets strewn over the street, and he smiled at me with his incomplete smile, he took me by the scruff of my pants and pulled me across to the side of the road where he laid me as if to say watch me son, I will show you what a man is called upon to do in this world. I watched him, there, pathetically scurrying around the cars and requesting their stop, always ready to jump from their paths in case they did not like his look. I saw him struggling and sweating, he was hunched over and looking back at me. I wanted to look at him and show him I was proud, but, like I said, I am fat and easily occupied, I was reading a package, a business package he had left there and I had put on my headphones. I was fat he would tell me in the evenings when we were eating at restaurants on the side of the road. But it was all right because "one can be fat and happy, there is no question, a boy of your age wants for nothing but water, inspiration, and of course a good knife". My father gave me my face, and I looked at the whole world with it, I loved the world with it and because of it he could make me do things to please him, and I did them, for him and no one else, because I was fat and he was wise, and I was bound of course to love him.

485 COSGRAVE

tappa tap tap go
the chestnuts on
my window
head out and
an upturned face
in the blue dark light
saying a happy
something, that
the opera was grand
and my shoes
are ready
so goes another
conversation from
the fourth storey

BLOOR

sunny street
leery man
legs nice legs
sick fuck

HOUSE PORN

On this month's issue
Of *Architectural Digest*
Brad Pitt's the covergirl
Inside, there are six photos
A full-page spread
It's about waking up everyday
And saying
I just really love my stuff
It was a balancing act:
In western ranch interiors,
The spectre of what
Might be called
The yipee ti-yi-yo style
Is always looming

EVAN JORDAN

PENCILLED-IN

The first time Victoria did something violent, the first time she could remember anyway, was when she was nine. She was sitting in a classroom beside a twitching red-headed boy named Kevin, and they were supposed to be helping each other complete a set of math problems.

Victoria was trying to decide whether fifteen was a prime number when Kevin whispered, you're a moron and you can't help me. Without thinking she took her pencil and pounded it down as hard as she could into the back of his hand. He cried. Parents were called.

I don't understand it, said her mother later. You've always been such a quiet little girl.

Now that she's twenty-nine, Victoria is still quiet. Kevin later became her third boyfriend, third out of five so far. The stretches between boyfriends are getting longer.

She's at a party and there's a red-haired man who reminds her of him, talking stocks with a man in a turtleneck. They're nodding at each other, with arms folded in front of their chests. She hears scraps of their conversation and clenches a fist around an imaginary pencil, because they're getting it all wrong.

Men who get their stock tips from Details arguing with men who get theirs from GQ. It's a line she's rehearsed in her head many times.

In her head Victoria pulls out a graph of the tumbling Dow Jones and begins drawing circles around each peak and valley, the pencil tip grinding into the page. She draws one circle and says, *this is your waterfront condo.* At the second circle she says, *this is your Hugo Boss tie.* *This is your big promotion,* she continues. *This is your subscription to Forbes.*

It ends with, *and this is the end of your dick,* said with a flourish. Is the effect better when the Dow is up, or when it's down? She has never delivered this speech to anyone, so there is no way of knowing.

Victoria leaves the party early after the man in the turtleneck says he thinks it's a good time to buy Citigroup. Her friend clutches her by the arm at the door, asks her to stay. I don't understand why you're always so quiet, her friend says. You'll never meet anyone that way.

CECILY CARVER

FEAR

The photographer takes my face
with warm hands, presses his thick thumbs
into my temples, and tilts my head.
He frowns at me like a lover,
runs his fingers through my hair,
smoothing strays. My graduation photo
will peer from the library wall,
thirty frames away from my mother's.
I am not afraid of time,
of its wrinkles, extra chins, of the marriage
or divorce that wait for me.
But I am afraid, at night, of my mirror
when fumbling for forgotten pills or ointments
I stand before my dresser in the dark
and in the dark, my own eyes stare
blank to my own eyes.
In grade seven, the girl of fabulous tales,
—who tilted, I swear, the Ouija board
to make it spell my name—told me
that she woke once from a nightmare,
barefooted, out of bed, gaping
stunned into her bedroom mirror.
I used to wonder whether it was she
who made me fear my own face
when shadows thicken my eyes and blind
myself to my reflection. But now
I think the same fear flashes in daylight.
The photographer plops his tasselled cap
onto my head, his camera clucking
like a mouth. Fact, not future, frightens me.
I look out and somewhere else
my eyes hang, peering.

CLAIRE MARIE STANCEK

SLEEPING DOGS



JENNY KIM

THE FEEDERS AND PANCHO LOPEZ

for Roen

"It's snowing in Iqaluit, today." The dusty announcer drawls. Then there is a pause: he or she must be looking out the window. From above, the snow flakes onto the four-dozen black roofs, and the boats in the harbour. He or she thinks to themselves that we hardly ever have a gentle snow.

Fernando gobbles clumsily, the milk drizzling down his fat hairless chins. The grimy bowl of cheerios and seal meat is nestled like a child in his enormous palm. He eats face two inches from the brownish surface, pinkened by the splashes of Tabasc. The sheer seal gristle glistens dully in the vacant mustard living-dining room. The seal pieces in his bowl remind him of worms in the rain. He hears Araceli march in and pick up her bottle of leather-care, then begin to rub it mechanically into the porous black leather jacket she has been wearing for the past eighteen years—he didn't dare offer her a new one. He inhales the leather, mixing with the aromas of his haphazard breakfast.

Face down, he imagines Araceli, with her long black hair and dull grey eyes, flipping her mane gloriously behind her and rubbing the leather-care onto her rigid breasts, which shine and harden in the Iqaluit cold. He looks up, and is stupidly surprised to see her hair shortly cropped and her wizened brown face over-ripened at 56 years old. Her leather pants constrict her pudgy legs, like sausages casings about to burst and spew their contents. She places her hand on her flat chest and belches.

"What's that smell? It smells terrible in here," she says in English. Her cracked English voice persists to remind Fernando of the announcer during "Ancestor Hour" on the CBC radio, every Friday night at 8:30. He squints his beady black eyes, staring at her greasy upright hair. "It smells like blood." She says, the look of disgust on her face accentuating each crease.

"I—I..." It was the young seal carcass, exploded on the kitchen floor from last night's harvest.

"You don't need to pick us up at the hospital." She says carelessly, while taking inventory of the duffle bag she has packed with old cloth diapers, and rubber soothers—unused memoirs of a failed pregnancy.

"Oh, Hannah!" He says with quiet enthusiasm. "Did she? I mean did her..."

"Her water broke." She snaps. Hannah, nineteen-years-old and built like her father, heaves herself into the living room like an asthmatic walrus in flower-print overalls. Fernando's face pinkens and he looks to his cheerio mush for consolation. He feels like he has just seen his nineteen-year-old daughter on the toilet. "Don't forget the toilet needs to be thawed." Araceli says to the top of Fernando's shiny head.

"Mom, it hurts, I think...its coming out." Hannah moans, sweat

trickling down onto her tremendous pink face from the hive of black tattooed hair towering above it. The lines of pain creasing her forehead are deep, the expression of a grotesque cartoon.

"It's not coming out, dear." Araceli coos, her withered lips imitating sweetness.

"It's not?" Fernando asks with concern. "Then what's it doing?" The women look at him with bland annoyance.

"I'm sorry." He says immediately. The women pull on their white fur anoraks—along the Inuit tradition of clothing, making their already impressive silhouettes double in volume. The huge empty hoods are meant to carry a five-year-old child.

He opens the door facing the ceiling, to let out the two bustling polar bears, one moaning and the other comforting. Araceli waves to a cheerful Mrs. Piugattuk, who is shovelling the snow out of her eaves rough wearing a bright red Gore-tex jacket and black neoprene mittens. Fernando watches out the window as her friendly shouts to his wife and daughter make her warm breath visible in the freezing air.

Once he's heard the rusty blue pickup pull out of the frozen driveway, Fernando returns to his breakfast. He savours the odd combination of flavours on his tongue, and thinks about a nineteen-year-old Araceli, misted in sweat and strewn naked across his parent's bed in the Oaxacan afternoon. Then Hannah came, feet first as she had explained it to him. He imagines the two sets of female genitalia, one coming out of the other, like the face of a bloody flesh-eating insect.

Fernando pulls a tiny plastic troll out of his back pocket. Its hair is spiked upwards, and is the three colors of the Mexican flag. It's wearing the green Mexican soccer jersey and has large, earnest brown eyes. He sets it on the barren yellow table, and smiles back at its ugly grin.

"All I'm saying, is it would be nice to have a flower vase on the table. Or a dog. Wouldn't it be nice to have a dog?" He says, in Spanish to his troll who sits on the windowsill as Fernando scours the dishes, using the right kind of detergent, scrubbing carefully as to neither tarnish nor scratch. His Jupitorean silhouette occupies most of the kitchenette. When that's done, he sets to cleaning up the remnants of the seal carcass, whose blubber and blood are caked onto the cheaply tiled floor. He opens the flimsy door of the dirty mustard coloured oven and places the pan of seal meat inside—eating it raw, and watching the women eat it raw has always revolted him. Araceli had never noticed the difference, and it was the only thing he does behind her back.

He vacuums the forever-stained shag carpet. The troll rides the front of the vacuum. Together they salt the driveway, manage to thaw the ice in the freezing toilet bowl, iron the moldy sheets onto the beds and sit down to polish the stainless steel cutlery. Fernando makes conversational

faces into the curve of a spoon. When he has finished his chores, he is at ease: this is the way a house is supposed to look when he's done: immaculate, vacant, sterile. He its comfortable and solitary inhabitant.

Fernando tries to listen to the 5 o'clock news on the CBC while munching on stale peanuts he plucks out of a foil package on the coffee table. He kisses his peanuts before placing them safely between his gaping lips. He listens, never understanding much because the announcer randomly switches from Inuktitut to English then back again.

The doorbell has possibly not chimed in the fifteen years that they have been living in Iqaluit, because everyone here just opens the door when they need something. Yet, the doorbell is chiming. Fernando gets up, and tucks the troll safely into his back pocket, tuft of blue, red and white hair peeking out of his enormous buttock.

"Hello?" Fernando says in his rusty English one tiny black eyeball peeking through the crack of the half-open yellow door.

"This is for you," says a man in a toast-coloured suit shiny combed black hair. He hands Fernando a small pink envelope. Araceli had always professed how similar the Mexican and Inuit were, racially, and there was some complex anthropological reason for this. Fernando agreed that neither Inuit nor Mexican face churned like that of the white man—it was a blank façade no matter what was going on behind the eyes. He had observed it in the mirror, with his own features. The only difference was a mischievous gleam that seemed to lack with the Inuit. Fernando squinted, and saw such a gleam in the eyes of the man in the toast-coloured suit.

"Thank you," says Fernando, hesitatingly plucking the envelope from the stranger's fingers and closing the door carefully behind him. For a moment, he is confounded, had it been that many years since he had seen a new face? Then he opens the door, again. The man is still there, with an expectant grin.

"It's minus 13 degrees outside, you know," He grumbles, then shuts the door.

Back in the mustard living room, Fernando and the troll look at the envelope on the pastel yellow tablecloth.

"Pancho Lopez." Fernando thinks to himself, rolling the four syllables over repeatedly on his tongue.

The words "Pancho Lopez" are spelled in bold block letters across the envelope's back.

Fernando thinks. He is the only Mexican man for thousands of kilometres. He diverts himself by imagining that inside is his chance—given to him by the Lord—at a new life. He pictures new sons and daughters, land deeds, entitlement to drug cartels, shares of a successful company. He has seen it on T.V a thousand times. He thinks about buying a new suit, combing his hair, growing his moustache out. His fingers rest on the paper surface, anxious to rip it apart—and simultaneously already feeling the guilt of such an invasion. The phone rings.

"Hello?"

"We are looking for a Sr. Pancho Lopez."

Five minutes later he puts down the phone. Pancho Lopez has genital herpes. Maybe he should think about buying some life insurance. He looks at the troll. Or a Plasma T.V! Or order a bunch of food from that Indian restaurant. Maybe he should just swallow a cup and a half of Clorox.

"What is that ugly thing doing on the goddamn table?" barks Araceli, her stiff leather arm outstretched, hand open for the surrender of the plastic figure. Behind her Hannah waddles in, wheezing and looking altogether indifferent to the recent experience of childbirth. Fernando picks up his envelope and shoves it in his back pocket. The troll gets thrown in the trash, but it's not the first time.

"Where is the baby?" Fernando asks quietly. Araceli gives him a sarcastic glare, her hand on her hip.

"Are you trying to be funny?"

"No, I just want to see him."

"It was a her." Hannah volunteers, wide-eyed.

That night, as Fernando lays alone in the pullout couch in the living room, it occurs to him that maybe Pancho Lopez makes love.

Araceli, trapped underneath the tightly tucked sheets is racing. Great leathery paws pounding the Arctic desert, a mile is nothing but a single stride to her. In the depth of her fur, her belly is the host to twin prophet cubs who jiggle from side to side and her great furry breasts are engorged with the milk that will nourish the babes. Snapping viciously at her white fur legs, the wolf army pursues her in their masculine heat, meaning to defile her on the snow. They are drunk on the scent of her childbirth blood, which bleeds into the snow leaving a veiny trail behind her. The pursuit lasts for days, until they reach the most northern tip of the province, and she has nowhere to go. The wolf general, his black coat gleaming in the moon shadows, speaks to her in a growling Spanish.

"Do you recognize me, the father of your child?" his voice is the sound of two glaciers crashing together. She moans for the child is coming.

"Be it a boy, you will be my queen. Be it a girl, you will be my dinner."

A bloody human girl—not a baby but an adolescent—drops onto the snow. The furious wolf ferociously tears out her stomach, murdering the girl's twin brother who still writhed within the great white bear. The blood and milk, spurting like magma out of her up-turned stomach. The human girl begins to sob, loudly.

The envelope is in the same place next morning after the two women return to the hospital for a check-up. "It would be nice to be called grandfather." Fernando suggests to the Troll.

He clicks on the morning news on his radio.

"Today" says the announcer, who is being unusually monolingual; "We only have three late books at the library. Mr. Okutpik, would you kindly return The David Milgaard story, Mrs. P. we need the Handmaid's

Tale, that's four days late I'm afraid. And finally if Mr. Lopez could please return Lessons in English. I would like to remind everyone that the library is now wheel chair accessible, thanks to a generous donation from..."

He goes out to shovel the driveway, in his white Inuit Parka, so that Araceli can pull in without trouble when she gets home. The neighbours call to him, saying hello. Araceli said they had never noticed that they weren't in fact Inuit. She had insisted on telling everyone that they came from the smaller town of Ikaluktutiak. Fernando had said they might as well have told everyone they were from Paris, France. He wouldn't dare say anything like that to her, now. It is his personal conviction that they all knew exactly where they were from, and that's why nobody had really warmed up to them. Nobody liked Mexicans.

"Comando!" shouts a grinning Mr. Dawson, from the window of his beat-up red Toyota, clad in a bright blue gore-tex jacket. He holds a red Tim Horton's paper coffee cup in his one pink ungloved hand. The town had fought tooth and nail for the Tim Horton's—and Araceli had been in a real heat over it because she said that's a Torontonian place and we didn't want any of it here. Dawson works for the local council—Araceli hates him, his family is from Toronto, she says. They're not, actually, they're from Vancouver. Same thing she said.

"Ternoon, Dawson." Fernando replies, reluctantly.

"You get to that a-shovelin', cause they're sayin' on the 'BC we're going to have a demon of a storm tonight, eh?" Fernando nods and thinks about telling Dawson about the demon he lives with, and when they let her reign on Iqaluit, then they really will have a reason to complain.

"She's going to be a real howler." Mr. Dawson adds, wide-eyed yet not seeming to fully care about the words escaping his mouth, looking out onto the dashboard.

"How do you find the seal this season?" Fernando asks acidly.

Dawson looks confounded. "We don't eat seal, Obragin. We're Unitariuns."

Back inside, Fernando sets the envelope back onto the tablecloth for the final time. Pancho Lopez probably doesn't even eat seal. Maybe he has multiple lovers, who come to him by the dozens in tight bright little dresses and sit on his lap. They dance with him: gyrating, sensual feminine dance. Pancho Lopez wears a cowboy hat and boots instead of mukluks.

"Mukluk." Says Fernando "Mukluk." He thinks about giant cock-tails.

His fingers are poised on the envelope.

The doorbell chimes for the second time in 18 years.

On his recently salted cement doorstep stands an astoundingly short man with a long moustache wearing a red baseball cap with a glaring white Canadian flag in the center. His large brown eyes are honest and welcoming, and underneath his neatly combed moustache he is smiling widely, revealing cigarette and coffee-stained teeth. He is wearing at least three thick cotton hoodies, whose hoods accumulate behind his neck, pushing his head farther and giving the impression that he is being suffocated.

"Hello." He says in bad English. "It seems that my direction has been confused with your direction." By direction, he means address, but no one understands better than Fernando.

"I am at 101 Niaqunngusiaq Road, you are at 110." The little man continued, all the while with his massive grin. He smelled like pancakes and maple syrup. "It's a mess up," he says, noticing no reaction from Fernando "A misunderstanding."

"I have your mail." Fernando says in his booming Spanish voice.

"You speak Spanish! Imagine the coincidence... Yes; it's just the directory of neighbourhood Catholics. Fernando starts to laugh and laugh: neighbourhood Catholics. The Iqaluit neighbourhood Catholics. If ever there had been a joke...

"Where are you from?" Pancho Lopez exclaims.

"Ikaluktutiak." he says with a large grin and with that clicks the door shut.

As he watches the little man slip on the ice back down the road, Fernando shouts loudly in frustration, and yanking it out from his giant back pocket, he hurls the troll into the yellow plastic trash bin next to the door.

That night, he is sitting in the freezing yellow living room. Araceli has gone down to the coast to watch the seal hunters at the bay. The phone rings: Araceli Obregon has genital herpes, says the doctor's secretary. There is another phone ring about half an hour after. Fernando drives slowly to the hospital, in a snowstorm that rivals the hysterical fits of Inuit maternity goddesses—the ones Araceli would talk about when they were young, and he would listen, entranced by everything she knew.

It's like driving in a bowl of milk while cheerios bombard the side of the pickup.

Once inside the cold, singular hall of the faded white hospital, Fernando approaches Araceli, lying rigid on the mold-spotted cot in her leather jacket. The javelin pierced her stomach lining and broke several ribs, explains the doctor. Fernando sees her discarded, bloody anorak in the corner, looking defeated and flaccid. A thick piece of the javelin is still embedded below her breast; they must have cut it down. He thinks it would have been appropriate to leave the yard-long weapon penetrating her stiff body. Her grey eyes are wide in perpetual surprise. The doctor asks what she was doing in the water. Fernando replies.

"Probably looking for Polar bears." He imagines Araceli, long black hair whipping about in the wind, naked in the thick of the storm, calling out in a bearish roar for the cubs so they can come and feed at her breast. "I should take her back to Ikaluktutiak."



TREVOR KARSON

LEWIS, ROSE, BEN

Computers won't start, passwords are forgotten, invoices are misfiled, cigarette breaks missed. Hissed phone calls and hospitalizations all go on, all around him, and then they pass. There is shopping to be done and helmets to be worn to and from work for those who are cyclists. There are things to spend money on, there are methods for sleep, for waking up, for learning to begin and finding out how to stop. E-mailing back and forth with Rose, sitting idly in his cubicle, reading school textbooks on his lap, Lewis hears it all— the yearning for the evening, the moaning over ailments, detecting the unmistakable pride of those who have weathered several ages of computers, the curling, inventive personal retrospectives of those who have worked here the longest. He has come to know the smell of workplace depression, the unannounced shocks of births and deaths, the tidal swaths of paper and soiled, spidery, flecked Post-it notes, the deskfulls of accumulated company mugs with shit on the bottoms. He knows the limp sticks of food at lunch meetings, the flat folded sandwiches, the polite lineups, and afterwards all the empty plates stacked like hummus- and paper cakes. He knows the pep and camaraderie of regular work hours with their long, long, long, long stretches of silence. Lewis understands that each hour rakes in several dollars, and that this draws his coworkers several hair fine notches closer to a mortgage on that house for their ultimately ungrateful children to eat meals in and learn to speak in and develop disorders in and lose their virginities in. They eat rushed lunches and continue on, for these kids, for something, and Lewis cannot wait for the summer to be over, so they can be rid of him at last.

It takes a month. Rose calls Ben a few times during the day, asking him how he is, reading him facts from National Geographic. Ben begins to call the apartment on his lunch breaks, and then even more frequently - she supposes his hours must be laxer than Lewis's, that the mail room guys can do whatever they want once they finish unloading the truck or whatever. She is delighted to have someone to teach things to. She and Ben learn how to joke with one another. She begins to be excited when she wakes up. She buys groceries carefully and starts waking up earlier than Lewis does, so she can cook for Ben. She feels like a mother, a housewife, a benevolent goddess. She wears dresses and starts shaving her crotch. It takes a month — and then it happens in the back of the mailroom, after she had been visiting Lewis for lunch, after she came down to see if Ben was there, just to say hello. And then in the unisex bathroom of a Tim Horton's near the office building, and again in the mail truck in broad daylight, up against great big boxes of mail in the cave-like dark. Breathless. Grunting. Terrified.

It's a Wednesday. Ben parks several blocks away and walks to the apartment. She sees him cross the street toward the building, and buzzes him in. He never touches anything, unless she tells him to. He doesn't touch her, either. Ben says he isn't hungry. He sits and watches her boil water and drink a mug of tea. She knows they won't do it until she reassures him that he is special to

her, that she loves him—which is possible. Every time she's felt in love with a person it's been disproved by the next person—which could be a matter of personal difference or complex emotional trickery—so who is to say that she has loved all the men in her life, or none of them yet? He is utterly hers and she adores him for it. "I hit a squirrel," he says. "This little gray squirrel. I'm a bit shook up."

She tries to pity the squirrel and finds that she can't.

"You should take the bus," she says. "The subway. That way it's not your fault when you hit something."

"Haven't took the subway in maybe a year." And only then because he was blind drunk and vomiting helplessly, and it was free on account of it being New Year's.

She asks him how he gets home when he's drunk and he shrugs. Taxis. "That's expensive."

"Specially for a guy like me, right?" He pulls his shirt over his head and off. He puts it neatly on the back of his chair. "I make good money. And what else am I going to spend my money on? I don't have kids. I don't have a wife."

He stands and pushes his chair in and she gets up too, turns her back, and puts her mug in the sink. She addresses the dishwasher. "So you don't like the subway?"

"I just hate that there's windows. Sometimes there's some sky or whatever, but usually it's just the inside of a tunnel. And you can watch people in them. And they can ignore you by pretending they're watching all that black flash past. Or they can watch you back."

She realizes he could be lonely. She breathes deep, turns around and grins at him until he smiles back. She has some quick half-thoughts: I want to be his whole world, I want to be needed by him completely, the only person he phones—I can take it; I want to, and feels a deep ache in her throat at how twisted those desires are. He comes over and kisses her. He lays her down as gently as he can on the table, and eases himself on top of her.

"The bus is worse," she says a couple of minutes later, prompting him, and they talk about what the bus is like. And all of a sudden, lying there with both her palms pressed to his back and his shoulders pressing into her armpits and his face smushed in her hair, she cries. She cries so hard she has to roll to her side and hold herself. She thinks she feels his resentment. "You're a good man," is all she can say, several times—"A good, good, good man."

Cautiously, by degrees, he takes her body against his again, and kisses the back of her neck until she stops.

Rose picks up the phone on the first ring. "Hello."

"What are you doing tomorrow?"

"Lewis is sick, so..." she says, clearing her throat, then—"would you like to talk to him?"

"Oh, he's there."

"Yeah."

"Rose. I really need to see you. Can you come meet me tomorrow at

like noon? The place we went Tuesday for lunch? Say yes or no."

"Sure. I'll tell him for you."

"Thanks."

"No problem."

Rose hangs up and tells Lewis that it was Ben calling. "He says he misses you."

They start cooking again. He puts his hand on hers as he reaches over her for the cumin. She drops the wooden spoon. Lewis jumps. He looks at her.

"Honey, what are we doing?" Rose says.

"We're making dinner, aren't we?"

"We're playing house."

Lewis sighs. "Relax. Not all the day is like this. Most of the day I'm at work, and you're here at home."

They're quiet for a bit. Lewis puts the lid on the pasta, and then asks, "What do you do, all day?"

"I don't know. I clean. I miss you. I study." She pauses.

"Let's just enjoy this," he says after a while. "All this, right now."

"Sure, I am, and it's nice, but it's like holding your breath when you only have twenty minutes of air left, you know? You'll go to work again tomorrow, in like ten hours. Not even."

"And we'll both get old and die. So what? We're just making the best of a moment of perfect peace. Or maybe we're doing our best to set up the ideal conditions for it. I don't know. Whatever."

Things boil and are chopped. Then—

"Are we succeeding?" he asks.

"Kind of. What do you think?"

"Yes. I think so. I don't know," Lewis says.

And he begins to guess.

Ben never looks at the clock. When you start looking at the clock you remember how long minutes last and you start counting them, and pretty soon thirty seconds feels like a long time. The mail is in huge stacks in big white wire cages. He needs to shift stacks from one cage to another and eventually to mail bags, and it's slow going, because you have to read and weigh every one. They sort and deliver inbound mail and packages. They package orders and outbound shipments. They handle inbound package receipts. They stock raw materials. They package the raw materials into finished goods. They stock the finished goods. Ben will never look at the clock like the other guys do, the big clock with the wire cage around it, so he can be surprised when it's lunchtime and he can head out with the guys. He can't go up to visit Lewis anymore.

A box arrives with a dozen severe dents in it and a long label on the side with the word "LENS" in the largest print. They separate broken ophthalmic lenses from good ones, and then put them in a new box. Davis, who has handled a ruined shipment like this one before, tells him that the smallest lens in the box costs fifty thousand dollars, and they find them broken everywhere, sliding through the packing paper, ground into the corners of the box. They

are the brightest blue Ben has ever seen.

"You eating lunch with the temp today?" Davis asks, referring to Lewis.

"No," says Ben.

"With his girl, then?"

Ben looks at Davis.

"Does she know, man?"

Ben throws down a handful of envelopes. "Does she know what?"

Davis is quiet for a second. "Like how old you are, man. She's what, eighteen?"

He starts sorting again. "Twenty-two."

A couple minutes pass and then Ben leaves the mail room for a break. Outside he goes, thumbing the pack. Hi Marlon, how's it going Richard, hey Ming. Most of them look up. One of the things he'll die with is a clear, burned-in memory of bent necks over the long, long rows of wire cages. Out he goes. Smoke. There's his car. August ninth today, the clouds heavy but the air easier to breathe; not too hot. He can smell and see the pigeons bobbing in the shit on grass. Poop and walk, poop and walk—he could think of worse. He could learn from these birds. If he had spent two minutes every morning watching the pigeons toss hot dog bits up and down, he could say he spent a whole two months learning from birds before he died. Maybe they'll live longer than him. He can't reconcile pigeons being without him being too, standing there and choosing to watch them or not.

He can't reconcile emphysema, either, with the white packed smokes he smokes at nine and three and eleven and six; during a phone call or on a walk with Davis or Rose, apologetically shaking one out, blowing smoke toward cars—em pha ZEE ma, a slick coiled-up word he didn't know until he was maybe thirty-six, thirty-seven. Watched some cancer programs—on VHS, banged-up, smelling like the doctor's office—and he thinks about what the balding lady said, how she feels more alive than ever, now she knows how long she has. For him, it's all the same set of nows as there were before—the ripe gray outdoors now, and the washroom stall now, and the noon now that yields middle-of-the-day aches in his belly and ass. He masturbates more than ever. Anything'll do it. Sometimes he thinks about Rose walking into his apartment unexpectedly, seeing him on the couch with his mouth open, making himself come. One o'clock lunch. Hey Richard, Ming, Davis: coffee? Sandwich? Davis was probably expecting them to eat together, go to a bar and grab a beer, but he doesn't feel like it. Davis is the only person who knows. He started telling Davis when they were drinking one night, sort of offhandedly, sort of oh-well-who-knows-fuck-it. But he was too drunk to keep it up, and ended up crying.

He makes up his mind to tell Rose tomorrow. She expects him to know what he's doing, because he is old. She expects him to have seen everything before, and be able tell her what it's all like. And what to do about it.

Out he goes again. The Starbucks chair is stained a deep peach pit color and he sinks into it, to eat and read the paper. Rose's kind of place. He tries to read all that talk of the rotting economy, blackened by someone else's debt: they've pissed in his cereal, they won't know his name. He practically

doesn't exist compared to all these downtown young people, and he passes his mounting lunch hours watching them mid-shop, mid-dart, watching their chapped hands and their razor burn and seeing his own face reflected in the shop window and realizing, now and then, that it's his life he's really watching, passing like a still or stilted life parade, still directed by him alone, and passing slowly faster.

Lewis sits on the couch and empties a candy dish, finishing every mint and caramel-filled piece of chocolate, wiping his streaming nose on the backs of his wrists. Rose, changing in the bedroom, asks him how he's feeling. "Shitty," he calls.

She leads him to bed and sits on one end of the bed until he makes his breathing regular. After a while the bed lifts as she gets up. He can smell and hear, ever so faintly, a hiss and whiff of perfume from the bathroom. She sniffs and walks and leaves. He struggles fiercely with himself for a few moments. And then he gets up and gets dressed, as quickly as he can.

The elevator takes him down to the lobby and he hangs back by the front desk, looking outside. He spots Rose and watches her stand on the curb, and pause. She rubs a spot on her nose, glances over at another woman on the street, and they make a few seconds of fleeting eye contact before Rose looks away and starts to walk. Lewis watches her back recede in the foggy mid-morning. She looks to be in a rush—but it could just be the rain. She has heels on, which is a funny thing to see Rose wearing, especially in the middle of the day. He does not want to let her out of sight. After a pause, his stomach gurgles and he begins to follow her.

They go down a number of streets, avoiding the same puddles, both of their heads angled against the slant of the rain. Eventually Rose slips into a restaurant and forty seconds later Lewis enters too, head down; darting to the back of the restaurant and sitting in a booth. He opens the menu lying on the table. He peers over it. Rose peels off her coat, slick and wet as a skin by now. Any minute she will see Lewis and explain why she is here. Meeting a university friend. Dining alone because she feels like it. She is wearing the polka-dotted dress she saves for dinners. She sits at the bar at the front of the restaurant, pulling the material over her pale knees, settling in, flicking out her hair. She puts her cheek on her palm and gazes out the rain-flecked window.

Lewis looks down at the menu in his hands. He might as well order lunch.

He sits straight in the booth, eating meat and potatoes with a bit of salad on the side like garnish, gripping his knife and fork like gardening tools and wiping his mouth and nose every time he swallows. He folds his paper napkin as smooth as it'll go and his cutlery glitters, crossed, on his plate. He picks up the fork again, drags it over the plate, accumulating sauce. His eyes rarely leave Rose, still sitting at the other end of the restaurant, still cross-legged and rumped-looking at the bar. His forehead feels slickly wet. It could be the fever.

Ben arrives.

Rose gets up. She hugs him and he bends to kiss her and his mouth

ends up on her cheek. He comes to sit beside her at the bar and orders a drink but maybe they will part; maybe he's just passing through – both of them pause a lot, staring into their drinks. Rose must've eaten before he was awake – he watches the curve of her belly through her dress. Ben puts a leathery hand under her elbow and squeezes, and as he moves, his shirt shines cheaply. He's growing one of those thin, scraggly mustaches women find outdoorsy, and men find pubescent. The hand stays but Rose eases her arm closer to her body and it ends up gripping the material of her sleeve. They are looking at each other.

A waitress takes Lewis's spit-shiny plate, his gloppy cutlery, and he thanks her quietly, reading her name off her tag. Barely catching his murmurs, Rose rotates on her barstool and sees him, and he feels his throat go tight, like he's stuck in a room full of truck fumes, like he's been caught at something. He doesn't know what to do next. Rose tilts towards Ben, towards the bar, and her mouth wriggles—excuse me—and then she gets up. And she pulls her skirt down over her ass. And she moves. She moves over to him.

Fifteen minutes later Ben finds her, sitting on a sidewalk bench near the restaurant. He parks sloppily and yanks out his keys and runs out and nearly drags her to her feet, holding her to him—Rose, Rose, Rose, oh, I didn't know what to do.

"I didn't either," she says into his chest.

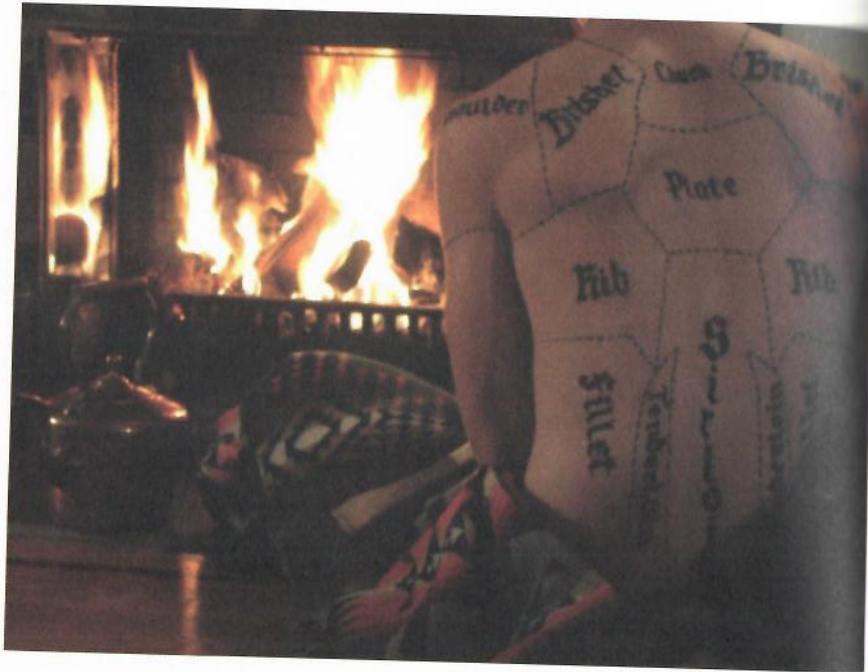
He asks her if she wants anything; a drink, a Band-Aid, a plate of pasta, anything at all. She puts her hands in her pockets so he won't try to take her hand, and they walk to a nearby pub. He buys them drinks—beer—and they sit out on the patio. Rose takes out a pack of cigarettes and offers it to him. Ben knows that it's his fault both she and Lewis smoke; that she has been drinking colourful diet drinks with liquor in them for months; that she stomps around that apartment in platform-heeled shoes. He listened to Lewis fuck her in the bathroom at that company party, the first time he met her, Rose so drunk she could barely walk. He has seen the bright orange points of their cigarette-ends when they sit on the balcony of the apartment at night, when he happens to drive past. They talk about what has been happening (mail, studying, work, sex) and what will happen later (making dinner; going home) and that is all there is, and it is all so frighteningly plain: they sit out in the damp humid sun (the rain has nearly stopped) and they drink their drinks, and they sip at their cigarettes, and Ben closes his eyes and feels the sun. And he wants it all to last. And he finds he can't tell her. And his whole body aches with love.

Look at the old drunk, she thinks. Who am I to pass judgment? And who is he? She thinks, the lasagna must be nearly thawed by now. I should be getting home.

WORLD

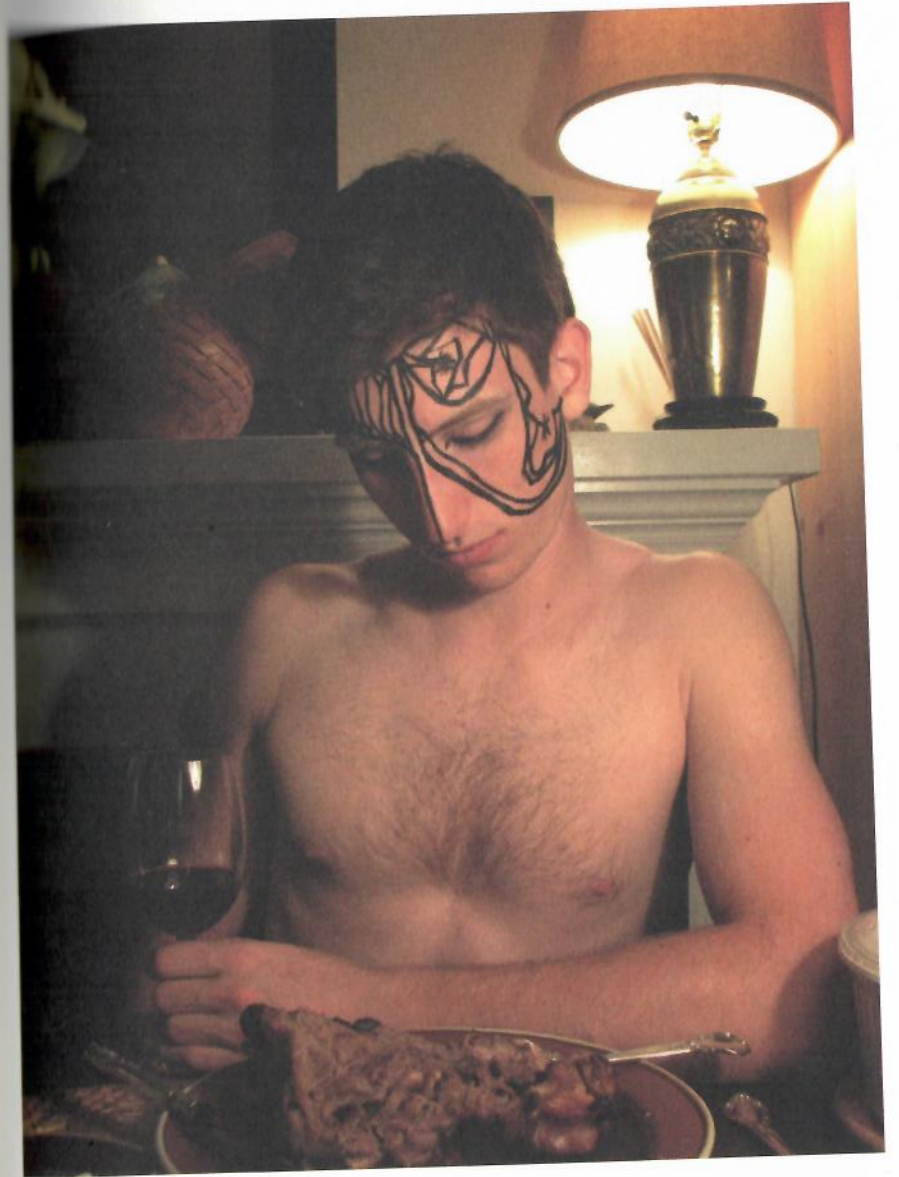
My grandmother feeds toadstools to my grandfather.
Every spring, grandpa picks his
"chanterelles" in the local forest, throws
the basket on the kitchen table and
demands its content for dinner.
Grandma never argues.
The doctors will heel him—
she smiles and sighs every spring,
throwing thinly sliced toadstools into the boiling water,
where the pale veiled caps wed.
(There is something idyllic in their conjugal dance).

UNTITLED



ALYSSA HAUER

UNTITLED



ALYSSA HAUER

RED TRUCK

Bare foot scrapes into snow,
 gravel, strangled flowers, journeys
 deep to bone—a rooted mess—
 then steps into cab of a red truck.
 Bare foot layers pressure onto
 accelerator, feels rumble-ache of
 wheels' decision. A trickle at the base
 pools with the surge.
 Bare foot steps into gas station
 with intention to retrace—the stamp
 and return address left at the heart
 of each stride.
 Railroad tracks run parallel
 with highway. Trucks drive
 immaculate and continue—some red,
 others fading into the seam.

ANDREW MCEWAN

PILGRIMAGE



WERONIKA CZAPLA

WHEATON AND ME

Wheaton and me
crouched in the shade

painted our toenails
and set ourselves

on that year's mottled crop
of snowy backyard lilacs

picked and secreted them
inside the sandbox

they turned sand-coloured slowly
flat and sour from heat

next it was noon
hot dogs in the playhouse

we confirmed we were married
and dashed out again

he moved two months later
but I see him sometimes

my red-headed husband
seven hands high

VICTORIA HETHERINGTON

SPRING FORWARD



MAEVE DEVITT-TREMBLAY

ORAL TUMOUR

Did you feel it?

Of course.

At first just a small bump
On your tongue,
Growing large and tender
It caught in your teeth and tore
White and dark pink.

Are you fine with blood?

The nurse asks,
Before he pulls the curtain.
You strain your mouth and eyebrows
When you see me.
I smile back
Your thumb pummels the morphine drip.

Before the visit

I grab a flower from the table,
Place it in a plastic bottle.
A fuchsia peony bought on Sunday.
So gorgeous, says Mum,
They start as tiny balls
Then explode into bloom.

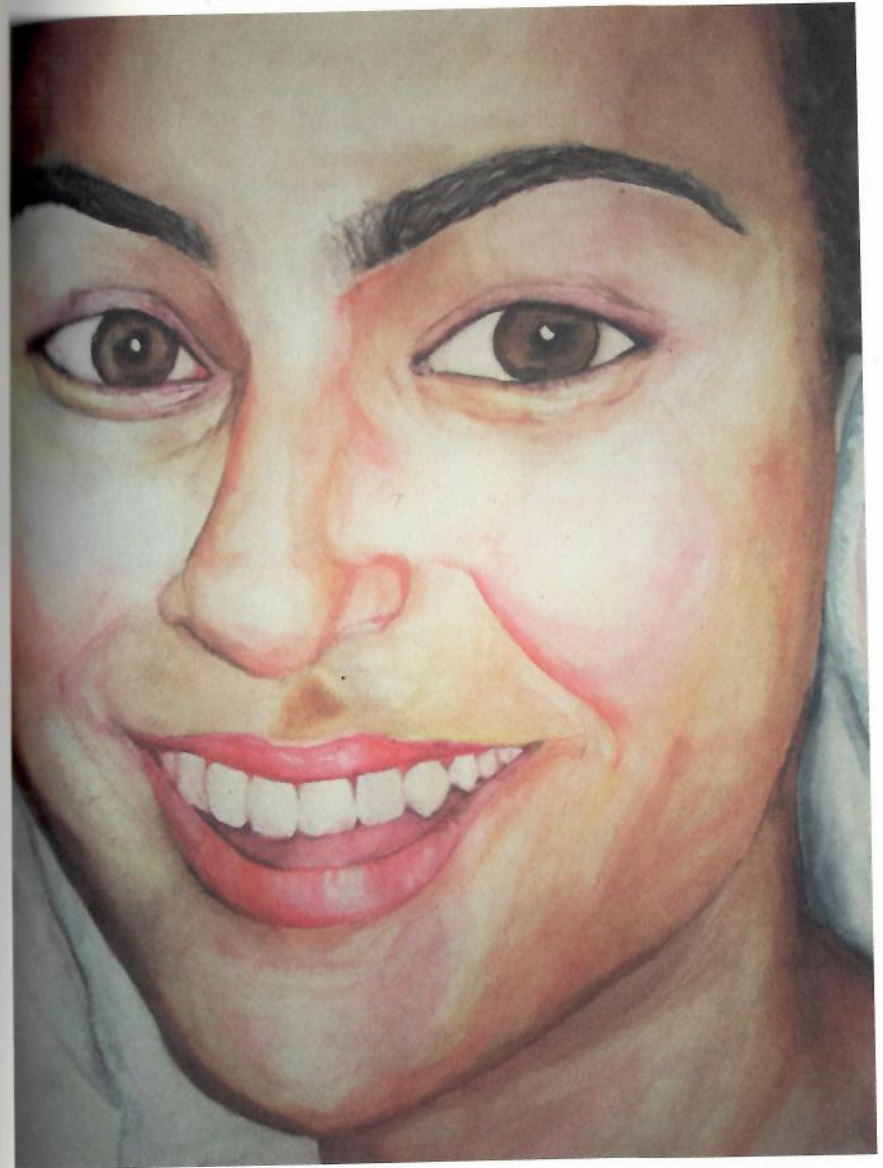
As we drive over

I hold the bottle between my knees,
And watch the explosion
Of dark pink blossom.

Look, you said,

Stretching open your mouth, that soft
Torn flower bursting with life.

ARWINDER



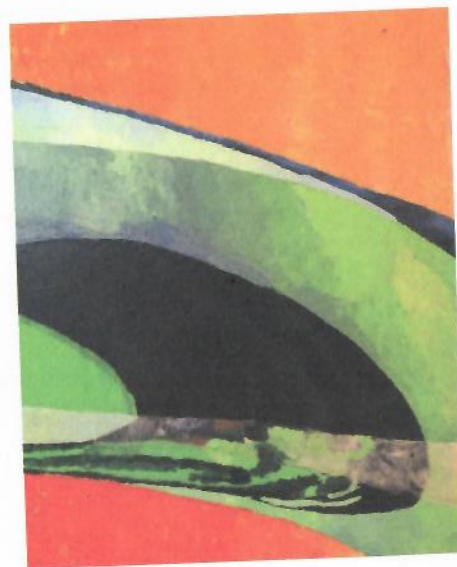
THE POET'S MOTHER IN HER ROOM, 1973

Wearing cardigan canary yellow
And a grass green skirt
You match the sunflowers on the wallpaper
As, laying on the shag carpet (still in that room),
You whistle softly trying to solve a small puzzle
Who promises that its pure blue, green, and red pieces will only fit together
one-way.

Water beads on a glass beside you
And crickets brave the mid-day heat below in the garden
As you come to nod your head slowly and reach
A small hand out towards a certain blue block
Placing it into that puzzle
In such a way that I know
All this is essential.

DAVID STOKES

UNTITLED



HE ZHANG

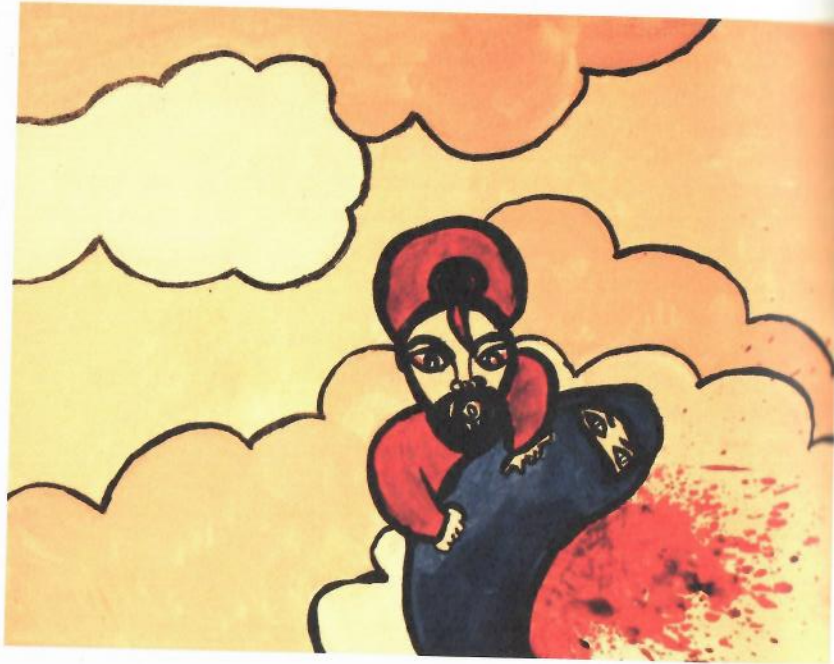
BORIS PASTERNAK

This is for Andreyev artist
 And Chopin's dark doctor.
 An ode to Zhivago's dream echo, enormous garden carouses and everyday
 Feeling fences
 Images,
 Stuck inside my mouth,
 Of Kvass, Leningrad and lilac lyric poetry
 mirror Moscow's night
 And of that novel, old language, all I could say is
 Pasternak looked! Pasternak's house!
 And after all
 The road seemed to be singing,
 "Sister...Sleep...Snow"
 and now alone,
 A table candle, a tangerine.

LIGHT AND LANGUAGE

The lady on the bus
 pulled a transfer between her thumb
 and index finger
 the way I rolled over the words
 that I had meant to say
 when I stepped into your room,
 ready to puncture the silence
 that seemed to trail you like a spirit,
 and found you painting.
 What I was trying to do with language,
 you did with light.
 You didn't paint in metaphor: your art
 stained your hands. I looked at you grinning,
 decided not to enter, and went back
 to the bus stop, not leaving a note;
 instead, I arranged a blank paper,
 a pen, and a half-drunk mug of tea
 so that you might know what I had meant later
 when you would come into the kitchen for your break
 and see the afternoon sun illuminating
 this story of objects.

CLOUD STORY 3



SOPHIA BALAGAMWALA

THE BIRD CATCHER



SOPHIA BALAGAMWALA

STORY OF HIS LIFE

Skritch.

Skritch.

Randolph writes frantically, tapping... something out onto the egg shell wall. Louise can't quite make it out. It's clearer by the far wall, where he started. Also where the bottle of champagne she bought a few years ago in Paris and was so terrified about smuggling through customs sits half-empty and flattening. What a waste, she thinks. She's naked, lying in his bed. Vowing not to have wasted two hundred euros and an hour of fear in the customs line, she reaches for the bottle. The Egyptian cotton duvet slips off her, but she doesn't really care.

Skritch.

Skritch.

Nothing.

She pulls it out of the bucket, now full of cool water. Droplets raise goosebumps where they hit her body. She covers up, frustrated. The last few bubbles in the champagne sparkle to the surface; the fizzing approaches inaudible.

"Randolph?" she asks. Nothing.

"Randolph!"

He jumps, the chalk breaks. He curses under his breath, then turns around... almost surprised to see her.

"Wh... oh... yes... Louise. Umm..." he tries to find the words. He has no problem finding the words, or now, hieroglyphics, for his wall.

"What are you writing?" She asks.

"Things. I needed to write. Publish or perish." He shrugs and makes to turn back around.

"Why on the wall?" She asks.

"No paper." No further explanation is offered and he finishes turning around.

Skritch.

She sees his ribs clearly above his checkered pajama pants. His face did look a little pinched today.

"Randolph, when did you last eat?" She asks. He turns around again, still a little startled to see her. He has the memory of a fucking goldfish.

"I dunno?... three-ish? Days ago?" Each word sounds like a question. He has no idea.

"Whatever. I'm getting us some hummus or something." She gets up, not bothering to take the duvet with her. The goosebumps spread to the rest of her body. "I can see your ribs, darling." She says.

"Don't call me darling."

Skritch.

Skritch.

Louise fumbles her way to the kitchen by sheer instinct and memory. She bumps into a coffee table that she was sure wasn't there before. She jumps back, clutching her shin, when she bowls backward over an armoire. She screams quietly and falls onto... the avant-garde, ribbed carpet she hated so much. That definitely wasn't even in this room before. What happened in here?

Hopefully he hadn't moved the lightswitch too, or the button for the blinds.

There was no light in the loft besides the glow emanating from the bedroom and what meagre offerings penetrated the thick blinds. It was probably daylight out, though she had no real idea of the time.

Her hand finds the button for something—the lights or the blinds or the garbage disposal—and pushes it. The blinds shoot up; she is blinded in a flash and deafened by the blare of fighting taxicabs. She turns around and—the room is covered in chalked writing of various colours. The furniture has all been pushed to the centre and...

"Bernard?" She asks, forgetting her own nudity.

"Mrn," he mumbles, and turns back over on the couch (which is pushed up next to the chair, where one of the end tables is stacked), putting his hand through some print or another. She yanks the sheet off him and wraps herself up in it. He's naked too. He might mind if he hadn't fallen back asleep. She put the time at 3 pm.

Her eyes turn back to the walls... much clearer here. The lights had been off when she came over; she went right to Randolph's bedroom. Had Bernard been here the whole time?

She started reading at random.

"...and that was that. 'Blood is thicker than water,' my Dad said to me... back when I lived on the farm in Montana or Missouri or Wherever-the-Fuckistan. It was when I tried to publish the family poetry anthology. He hid it from me. Brilliant, it was. Secret, too. Why the fuck, I don't know. Seven years, four months and two million dollars after that, I came up with a retort. L'esprit de fucking escalier, but I mailed it to him anyway. 'Blood may be thicker than water, but take two million in twenties and throw that in the blender 'till you get liquid. Measure it against some blood and then you tell me what's thicker.' My sister says my card's still there on his grave..."

She wondered if it was autobiographical. If Randolph was so... something. Heartless? No, that's not it. Just then, she noticed something weird. The skritch stopped.

His figure was silhouetted, leaning against the door.

"Get distracted?" He asked.

"What made you finish?" She knew a real answer was a lot to hope for.

"I'm done. What do you think?"

"I think this whole... work was fuelled by too much coke and," she looked around, spying the empty bottles on the floor, "liquor way cheaper than what you can afford." The sheet is slipping off her back. His pants would fall off his shrunken frame if he didn't hold them up.

"I'm famished," he says. He goes to the fridge and roots around, throwing some things on the floor, throwing other things on the cutting board. Suddenly, he spins. There's something in his hand pointed at her... a flash.

"Smile," he says. Her eyes are dazzled for a second, then he puts the camera down. Hugging her sheet around herself, she steps gingerly around the half-snoring, half moaning Bernard and inspects the camera while he chops some onions... or maybe it was peppers.

She scrolls back to the last picture taken... there she was, in her used sheet, obviously naked, the words "...L'esprit de fucking escalier..." and "...throw that in the blender 'till you get liquid..." clearly visible in offensive neon green behind her. She looked enveloped by the work, hypnotized. Eyes wide, childlike. Her posture was bent and natural. She looked like the first monkey seeing the obelisk for the first time. She hated the picture.

"It's going to be the cover," he says without looking. "I don't think I'll name it."

"No way!" Her voice goes higher than she hopes. She goes for the delete button. He turns around, knife in hand.

"Don't!" He points the knife at her, then realizes what he's doing and drops it, ashamed. "Don't delete it. I need that. It's what it's about. You, the words, the shock. I need that." He bends over to pick up the knife and continues chopping. "You want eggs?"

"No," she says, "I'm vegan now."

"It's just egg whites. You can eat that."

She thinks about this for a second. It doesn't seem right.

"Sure, yeah." She pauses. "What about him?"

"I'm making three." The whites slosh from the carton. Most of it lands in the bowl. He doesn't wipe up.

She wanders out of the kitchen—it's mostly covered by poetry—and into the more autobiographical living room. She would never say this to his face, but she hates his poetry.

"What is this? What is it really?" She asks.

"It's going to put me back on the literary map." He answers.

"Yeah, fine, but... what the fuck, Randy?" She asks, forgetting he hates being called Randy. Now she'll never get a straight answer.

"Don't call... It's everything."

"Everything?" She asks as Bernard stirs.

"I think he already mentioned," Bernard said, stifling a yawn, "Everything. It's an English word, and like other English words, it has a meaning. Look it up in the OED. Quietly." He rolls back over and tries to go back to sleep. "Where's my sheet?" he asks the pillow.

"Everything like memoirs, fiction, poetry, biography, everything. It's never been done like this." He turns his sleek range on high and puts the pan on it, onions already sizzling. "I'm telling my publisher to get a team of..." he pauses in his excitement, "like ten photographers in here to take pictures. It's gotta be read in raw form or it's just like," he pauses, "like all the other drek."

Louise wonders how recently he and Bernard did a line. If Bernard did it with him, he probably snorted a crushed Halcion right after.

"How long have you..."

"My whole life. I've been working on it my whole life. I just never wrote it down."

The eggs started to bubble. It was one hot range.

"Randolph..." she stopped. He sounded crazier than normal. Just then, Bernard got up. He didn't seem to mind his nudity.

"Sleep alright?" Randolph asked.

"Yeah, fine. Those for me?" He asks, looking around for something to put on.

"A third. Get a robe from my room. If you can read the short story in there, criticize it or something. I can edit before I call my publisher to take pictures."

"Whatever dude," his gait looks like he's controlling a fall as he goes to Randolph's room, "You don't need to edit this. It looks better with some mistakes."

About five minutes pass. We eat in silence. Bernard hasn't come out of the room yet. We think he fell back asleep. Randolph drinks something from a bottle with his breakfast. I have water.

We finish and recline where Bernard was. I tell Randolph I want to fuck him. Twice. I don't think he heard me. He slumps over on the couch, asleep. I think hours passed. I drifted in and out, but couldn't stay asleep or awake. Five hours of daydreaming and real, bona-fide REM sleep dreaming makes you so goddamn tired.

A shadow falls across Randolph's face as the sun sets. He almost looks like he's smiling.

Almost.

An hour later, Bernard comes back into the room.

He pauses.

"It's pretty good."

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