



Hole the Romance: an automatic biography

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by
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An Oppressive Yawn

As promised, as the ways deliver, there it is in the Earth and we're all going to fall right down into it. That's good, builds character, builds immunity to saving insignificant little chunks of the days that play once, spinning on the crooked turntables, RPM distorted by the perception of time, the needle chipping away the solid waves as it plays them out for the first, the last time.

You sleep, sometimes. The grooves fill up with new waves that kick, one hit wonders and you stay up all night, dragging your pointed beak across the paper label, with the unchanged ink of a passed day. Those things can shed away like the old tune that hopped your feet out of wombs and down aisles.

The chasm swallows up whole Thanksgiving bites without giving thanks, thanks? Not for peace. You carry those artifacts against nature, which only learns new every dawn, against the crisp husk that time sheds and dissolves into the dirt of the next hour, next day. It's a blessing from burnt-out memory evolution, from radioactive toads leaping before your vision, taking your thoughts as a tanning imprint upon its salt hide.

It's camel legs splintering into flimsy stilts over a lifetime, that water stagnating into microfilaments the priests used to wrap the dead, and the whirlers for their vests.

And the poor little pigeon-shit mounds, the poor little bundle of rags animated by tips, the scaffold hand upturning plastic bags like a nose.

And the pretentious, holier-than-thou garbage expelling its weight down, down, down, the shed of potential energy. The theme of letting go, buying into the disposal, not roses. When she tosses those floral forgotten into the depths of unforgivable freedom, no clippings will take root, no seeds will sew - they are forgot and forgot. The bouquets die and the diamonds hidden away in darkness, slipping into early morning

shadows, intentionally scooted into the void, behind jewelry-box curtains, where the trick is always successful - memory slain.

Temporal rounding down. The echo decimating against surfaces, repelling vanish by decrease. And without that possible eternal race, chasing ancient sounds back and across the room, the far mason grunting stones into place? No.

No, dancing into the disposal unit of the world was not keen, but it did seem to help.

The Moaning Landscape

Stupid rough bodies clasping together, "I got the lay of the land, twice. Heavy glowing vignettes of skin, presented by the red neon of a rotating monolith across the way." "Yeah?" "Lush forests, golden streams, supple islands planted atop piles of warm flesh. Not a desert to be found." Her face dim lit, "I'm pleased by your reaction."

He should have rested before that last transaction. The two consecutive lovers, occupying separate domains, miles of road standing firm as a wall. Rolling off one pillow onto another in such a short time took skill, speed, and a head that wasn't easily made ill, rolling over those miles of barren chill - stone lizards biting your naked ass.

However, the rolling blur allowed him to function with no real sense of time or direction, only when his neck pressed against cotton, his body pinned well down by a moaning landscape, did he come back to himself, lengths of blurred lines collapsing into points, falling into long coves of hair and he could breath in the sweet scent of body and stillness.

Breathing was only possible when that wave of perfume hit the air in and around his body, when the rolling subsided and his was bond, held fast for the moment. He would take deep selfish gasps, forcing to excited energy, trapped, down into his legs, into slamming and groping, into his heart ripping out of its organ cloister, where the jukebox boy sings on and on.

His was the life of spins and tosses, little tricks of physics and subtle muscle spasms. The only fear blossoming from the momentary silence after, his head taking on a vague vulnerability, if, in a case, he had not performed properly, her awakening to his game, her anger taking mantis personalities and decapitating him before his next roll-spin through town.

But forever, since he had conceived it, he always made a successful escape, his body toward next rest, his memorial twin, his carbon from their minds sliding into that wide-open black mat speckling the floor of Earth that begs for temporal treats. He was satisfied that his copies, those private constructs, tumbled down that hole, bumping into separate iterations born out of different beds.

Bravado wasn't his style, even if it was his brand of cigarettes. It was hard to keep a stick lit in the vortex, but he clung to the grey pillows for comfort when his head felt so tasty - repacking his box with every new bed, the bits shaken loose by the spin of travel.

He hadn't held a job in weeks collected into months, the toast hot sun drying the paths to a packed dust imported by the river channels that divided the two towns, the previous and this frontier, and he had shed off his responsibilities to feed on the dwindling skin of a winter's isolated toil. This town, he was invading.

For bars he would revisit and the tabs awaiting, he carried the contents of his wardrobe. His eyes trained and scanning the twine connecting branches, the woven fruits hanging their. He would buy the label pairs at pocket price, adorn himself, and crawl out of the pieces for whole bills in the vintage shops.

He relied on this trained eye to guide him to supple bodies with overflowing closets, for prowling while layers of filth were scrubbed from the owners, caked on sweat for tight jeans and pre-Nike sneakers shoved into his duffel. It was a parasitic bond, crippling the host's fashion arsenal.

A Firefly Bed Game

Onto the next afternoon, heavy feet dragging pounds down the sidewalks, rolling. The diner scrubbed counter filling plates with antiseptic-laced mounds of egg and slop-jam toast. He hoarded over the dish, feeding, plugging the holes he had fucked away. Huge gulps of lukewarm drip charging the veins of his eyes, clots of creamer as spackling for the cracked lining of his stomach, vision ever vigilant.

And there, that face unrecorded, undocumented, a face that had not found its moment in art, to crystallize it. The face that had somehow matched his frequency, had stalked him through so many iterations, no matter how much he heaved the image into the chasm. Always catching up to him in a cloud of smoke and must-filled shirts. Goddamn, goddamn.

Sweet metal tweezers prying into his chest, bent bowing for a touch even when he knew it would take much less. The initial rush of recognition, the cognitive explosion of adrenaline that many fools had matched for love. The stampede of energy illuminated his abdomen, and the thought of another night with that face winked back, his past a firefly bed-game of light points.

When the night finally arrived it was filled with an overabundance of moons and not one North-star by which to navigate the twisted corridors formed of networking bodies. He swung about through the crowd and soon enough he saw the search light swinging, highlighting foot falls. He traced the source across the floor, back to the ghost, eyes marking his stare, face narrowing an approach.

After the drinks, after yesterday, after the lights slid across her windshield, he realized it all as a ploy. By then, her eyes had already cast a steel-cable net over him, fingertips fastening the knots until they sliced at him. She was not directing the vehicle to her modest apartment, not to her worn sheets to slide about on, they were rolling downtown, side roads, to a place his doppelganger frequented, along with distant relatives and socks falling behind dressers. She parked the car just before the edge, her edge. She didn't speak at all, getting out, adjusting his seat, arm between his legs in a final tease. "Your's?" She shook that mask quietly and took him by the hand. Around the void, both peering in as they passed, until their dance ended at his edge.

"And that's it then?" The mask wagged at the seams as it moved up, and down again. His gaze followed the pointed finger, pale-slender down into the pit. Below swirled his past steps into the brook of life, not only his recent rolling, not only the pillow saturated, but everything prior his stand below the radio-emitter as well - those ancient bits. His Mother and Father orbited in those depths and he chuckled, "You know Freud is dead?"

The Liquid Equator

"Before my double-gainer, you have to do me a favor," her head cocked quizzically. "Look," and he took a hold of his ribs, pulling them back, exposing a gaping orifice, a fleshy diorama. She bent at the hip peering in, closer for details. The Organ-Donor Diner, open till the end of time, filled with insomniacs and college hipsters nursing their buzz-

heads, the jukebox of an animatronic tramp hum-pitch, vibrating out Patsy Cline songs every time the hearty waitress was tipped.

The mask giggled inside him, placed a probing finger atop the robot's matted hair and set off the poised cage, spring-loaded. It clamped around her, the late scene pressing hard against her cheek, fry-bath splashing hot grease that singed ear-brows. He twisted both bodies over the cusp, "Now, now, now, I have someone to listen," he exclaimed as they rolled through a slide-show of his past.

Passing through the portal deceives them both, rather than a tumbling, shaft rushing by little Alice, they submerge into a thick blackness. Pieces of places, images, people, things, emotions, balled into spheres that orbited along a liquid equator, lowering at a relative speed, the points rising to the top, some settling, others sinking once more into the distance below. He extracted the tiny face, scalded and blue, "Now, I'll start to start. I'll sing my song to sing my town."

Above the Level

"First, I should set the
There is bubbling, a soft alkane rumble
up from the ground, through the waves
slimy and worn,
where the fishes swim, as big as the Wagon
that could climb the hills, steeped in snow.
But what of the vapor, unseen by the eye
as the catfish,
it eats at the sky;
it is from a town
forgot by we, the folks and I,
for we stand on the hills
animate and dry
to fish and make merry, as the day fades to grey,
thankfully lucky and seemingly glad
that we are not the homes with boards to green
and wash slowly away
and to leave foundations, of the church, the school
and the dwellings
hearths of persons unknowing
graves of those untelling, -

those of our kin
whom upon their foregrounds shalln't be seen
with natural lung, again,
but to toil upon wave, Tuners of engines,
locked to the will of the passer.
Though it is said,
"Cast out thy line to the dead,"
no soul was wrongly cast out here,
but the memory does remain,
of a drawn out line, North and South,
a border to divide,
by a young man bearing the Hollow's name,
finding his bride in the Irons,
to toss aside chain and theodolite,
and upon buying the 449 from Mr. Martin,
after having purchased the Obey's cradle
from Chief Nettlecarrier, in the start,
did build a family and raise a farm,
until, as we, you and I, stand and know,
it was put under, by the new chiefs,
those of Corps signed,
under as William,
after fighting aside Jackson,
and hearing that white-eyes bit.
And of that other wall, dreckly to split,
which you may have heard
from the preacher or widow at church
singing off key and once out the door
spouting gossip of thee and of them?
Does it know of nature's previous way,
of the ebb, of her furry,
to take out homes and displace love;
has it seen the opposition,
which everyday it retains, and
if once to let go?
What pain!
Well, with plaster and clay
plug it up tight and strong,
as the men say is right,
those same chiefs, now old,

less the fate of that place be that of here,
where we reside today.

The Flattopped Winner

She floated nearby, as he sang his gentle and angry tribute his home. It carried her in to that valley place. She turned a bit too sharply and ran her greasy face through the window of a small building. His voice faded, but returned, closer, in a fretful state. The view of the shop was blurred when looked at directly and the echoes of the movements reminded her of a stage, a fabrication.

In the shop,
the tired narrator began through imagery,
the scissors act as a gavel, possessing the power to kill, resurrect, and create discussion topics on command. Able to, most importantly, nullify a rant, "Maybe the three of them will come together and decide it would be better to form a council, rather than fighting like ... " Snipped short like a lock of baby-hair, "I haven't smoked in two years, today. I was so afraid to cough after the surgery that I stopped for two months. Didn't cough once. Figured if I could for two months, I could leave it off for good. Actually, I figured it up and it was costing me twenty three hundred dollars a year to smoke. In those twenty years, I smoked up a farm. But if I hadn't, my first wife would have ended up with have of it and then I'd be her neighbor, so I s'pose it works out."

That is, of course, the one-armed military barber giving away free flat-tops on the square. Like some passive-aggressive style fascist, wielding clippers sucked dry by the vacuum-hose draped from the ceiling. He waits only to go home and drink.

The kids dangle their feet and try to look idle in searching the torn issues of National Geographic. And there, toward the back of the copy, the perfect explorer, mustached and wearing a panama hat, he is flanked by tanned natives with hanging breasts. And the boys mark the page with pinkys and pretend to look at the worlds oldest toothpick. Methuselah - diseased by time.

The tube clogs between cuts and the breast markers are lost to the spectacle. The veteran sways, balanced on a stool, and even the men watch close. But he successfully frees the impediment and dismounts. The sighs blow clumps across the checkered tile. Back to the breasts, save the next boy who must climb into the chair.

He shivers at the ominous buzz, as they all do, twiddling hands under vinyl. He'll probably bleed before the shell-shocked grip, but he'll come out a flattopped winner for his Dad. And that's quite a bit better than screaming in a basement as a banshee pulls your body about by the ear.

Yoke-fry Bouncing

She extracted her head from the dream and looks around for him. Over in the distance he fumbled through torn at bubbles, little fragments, arranging them about him, floating cross-legged. "Here's some good stuff."

The house had a trampoline. It was pulled by springs taught enough to launch you into the heavens, into the overhanging branches of maple trees. Our momentary grips, small elementary grasps, sliding over, collecting the seeds, the twirling toys. Thrown up in hand-fulls to fall slower than yourself, to tell your future in their orientation upon the ground, to be scrutinized, the best specimen collected and sealed away behind scotch tape, mounted on poster board and labeled appropriately, without the Latin - we were children.

And from the backyard where the springs stretched, the friend, who excelled at sports, surpassing my abilities in most everything, would retrieve his clubs from the attic over the garage and strike balls far out across the sloping terrain, slipping down into the riverbed. Once complete, all slices made, back up the folding ladder to observe the location of each shot from the window that opened like a door.

His Father was not with the Corps of Engineers, not directly, but lived on a hill overlooking the dam and power-grid that fed our town in so many ways. No, his Father helped maintain the fish hatchery, and on shady noons, deposited by bus under rows of pine trees, we moved through the gate to the concrete filing cabinets of aquatic life, to the handfuls of compacted corn meals, little pebbles to be thrown into the raging throats of catfish, of trout, of gilled treasures to grow and sparkle and become the bait to lure the money-fat yanks. And in to the lobby, past the display tanks, into the tub-filled labs, smelling of iodine and caviar. The fry and yoke-fry bouncing off the fiberglass banks, only to do so in the concrete raceways and skin their faces into sick white tissue.

So many projects, so many attempts to pull in the yanks, who, though despised in casual conversation, forced the blood down the raceway

veins and floated us all just high enough to keep our faces free of scars.

The archery course, hidden 'neath a veil of cedar, stands and targets placed along a winding path, finding difficult angles, finding where the night-runners dropped off machines that won't spin, won't cool, rubber that won't hold air.

In this Fall landscape of BB-guns and the graves of cats, I set for one afternoon, it being as simple as hopping aboard a different bus. But walking from under the foam ceilings of my grade-school, I was apprehended. What was my Father doing here? He should have been asleep, at home, in bed, after a long night with his forearms swimming through machine oil. Walking toward as if he knew I would be exiting at this predestined moment, camo-jacket in the breeze, "Want to go quail hunting?" "But I was supposed to go to his house and spend the night ... " "Well, it's up to you." And I go into one of those switch-face dilemmas, back and back, creating double stress, "Ah, well, we can hang out later, right?" "Sure, go ahead," bounding for his bus and maple tree futures.

And I'm in the back of a truck with my Dad and Pa in front, the wheels resting on the long shoulders of a highway that parallels the river. Our windows are up and beginning to fog by baited breaths, I look through to a freshly cut field being rained upon, with tears coming down. I whined, I had made the wrong choice, but the shower would soon subside, my face and sky clearing, drying up.

In the mounted mirror, I saw that old man's face as I would on another day, early morning, ever topped by a cap, body perched on the front of a bass boat, like an Ahab, a needle sturdy in direction down the river
Obey. And over it, that bridge.

The Muffled Artist

His hand slid over the cover, and he knew what he held immediately. It was a copy of the journal he had been published in - "The Muffled Artist," chronicling the real life dramas of young meta-artists, children of the burst bubble. He reclined in the abrupt warm spot that had enveloped him from top to toe, and read the issue to her:

First, there was the tale of a video game enthusiast that had graphically mapped the evolution of crowd animations in sports games as a social commentary on the artist's view of the masses. Superimposing

animated pixelations over the faces of the designers that rendered them. This commentator had a penchant for drama, thus the artists were usually cast in an accusingly harsh light.

Second, a backstage story of two longtime friends filming an incendiary re-enactment of two friends identifying their first streetwalker encounter and their realizing the sad state of their city, and in the same time realizing their deep bond to their hometown. The self-referential movement of identity leaked, unfortunately behind the camera, namely in the post-shoot, fast-food run, prior to the uploading, editing, and full tagging. While one of the artists joggingly pokes at the other for not being completely motivated, whilst the other, his co-director, took harsh offense and stood up, clearing the room. Then, to the piece's climax, both friends realize how strong their bond stands.

Third, was the harrowing tale of drug abuse. The use of steroids coming only through the intense research lengths made when tracing the professional wrestling league's use of plot construction as a cultural echoes. It contained almost text book side-effects as a conscientious landscape, making the read quite terrifying. The reader could feel the tension through his words, sweating as he edged his way back from an inclining cliff.

Fourth, written in traditional European form, again followed two friends, in the space of an hour, filming the shopping networks feature-length film, a two hour long commercial. The filming time was quite shorter than the actual run-time, commercials of the sort naturally being looped and re-aired, ensnaring the viewer in its subtle hint at infinity.

The kicker being the set was constructed of found objects in a friend's house just before they had said goodnight, the time limit being imposed only by their conscience.

His piece followed his weeks of recording speedruns of the game 'Seaman,' achieving the virtual creature's indoctrination in various conversation genres, creating harsh images of the way in which people communicate to those they perceive as below them socially. A true twist of humor coming his experimentation with faux-beards, as one actual play-through would have taken the full time set out for research. This eventually led to defeat and the concept of running several iterations of the game parallel in time, recording his natural course of facial hair. Confusion soon ensued, thus rendering bred masochist amphibians into sadistic vermin. The article recounted the awkward conversation over breakfast with his roommate, who expressed concern about the conversations he was over-hearing through walls at night and the sudden

abandonment of shaving. It was an intricate conversation, containing frustrated symbolic expressions communicating the technical details of the project that were covered previously.

Finally, he reached the last article, concerning the writing of a story about two young girls running from the law, and realizing halfway through that a fall into the young adult genre was inevitable, which was the only thing keeping him from diving deep into their psyches.

The journal birthed in him the image of reading one afternoon, in the park, feet bobbing to the far off voice of Pete Yorn. That had been the afternoon he met a girl there and, as the song said, "I sent a bottle of whiskey, as you choked, I knew it made you feel dirty." Her drunken request for sex had thrown him off and he became paranoid. The feeling returned to his stomach, humming, "I was killed in half a day, I hadn't time to regret you," and he threw the journal away from himself, into the black, out of his slowly cooling shield, only to be giggled at furiously.

Amazing Rabbit-Ice

He huffed, "fine, you want the rough stuff."

Down the river Obey, and over it, that bridge, after the crumbling foot-falls of the elderly rushing, running from the tones released to release the believers. We head back to my house, little me churning it over in my head, "What happens to those that never hear about the bible? Like native people?" Native people having been a term captured from history class. "They are sent to a lesser Hell." And then I fumble a sweet little faith that I was growing, it rolls out the window, bounces on the asphalt, and plunges deep into the Obey river.

I hear a splash, my body is curled into the front compartment of an aluminum craft. I try to cradle my sleepy head on my arms but the waves slam against us and throw me down. Dad pilots the two of us across the lake as I drift in and out. The black-lights that revealed the lines we cast illuminate my swimming mind, like the monitor that will keep me occupied long into the summer nights, learning the arcane and viewing the forbidden. That is, after he trades the craft for the family's first tower of silicon, and the fear that I will transform into some nocturnal lizard.

The paper-mache dragon, animate and carried through the gymnasium by so many feet, wearing so many sneakers adorning my classmates. His name is Puff, he's full of magic, he roams my dodge-ball court. And I lace my movements in and out of the crowd, trying to avoid the silvered principal out of sheer embarrassment. "We're punishing you because you lied," they said. My parents finding the detention slip with their forged consent.

But what, I search, had been my original offense? When had the hulking gym-teacher looked out across the yard, toothpick ends protruding like tusks, hands for palming small heads, and witnessed my sin? That grass field served as the immortal stage. Its hidden paths up creeks with rabbit-ice and forgotten bridges to nowhere. The thickets of brambles that we cut through a summer. Mazes to find coyote dens, hives of insects.

It was surely my brawl with a friend that left me streaked with blood from the concealed ball-point. Or the rock I threw that sparked a gaggle of tarts to encircle me, crushing toe to sensitive crotch, and snatching one up from the air to twirl her about by the locks, the one I'd fall in love with only to be her personal shoulder, council. Or having to execute the flailing groundhog, heel into skull into mud, after the glue-sniffers had encircled it, punting the flabby rodent to shoulder height. Perhaps he sees deeper into me, into my incubator of antagonism.

My unnatural insistence to film wildlife rather than murder it, and my hatred of tradition, superstition. Tears running down my face, thick blood flowing from my thumb, and Dad demanding I close the knife I so carelessly misused. I had been well informed. He doesn't remember it. I'll show him the scar. No, I know, the walrus sees my weakness of heart. He sees me face down in the carpet floor of the entryway, crying salt and snot until I'm dry, after walking frozen steps from heartbreak. I stood in the alleyway alone, speechless in the moment, air biting. Though still with the knowledge that an ill fated relationship exists in a realm far above that of none, or one that consists of my use as a stepladder, wait.

The Loudest Fruit

He cheered himself up, whistling a preserved tune from the world above. She recognized it immediately and sang out the words:

As the bugs start crawling
chlorophyll coursing through branches
all for the sun

only a little bit closer
the girls spin about
flip-flop their minds
and down through the valley
the fashions take a turn
causing boys to ring
the bells on barbershop doors
off with the locks
and out dragging
their knuckles like Samson.

But he lifted her, somehow, and placed her in a cart. Pushing her through long aisles, archives, he spoke with humor.

As I checked out a young man, swiping aspirin tablets, I met the gaze of an elderly lady, standing next to the row of carts. She held her finger to her ear as if checking for blood. As the man took his receipt, she kept my eyes and moved over with her cart.

"Heh, I just had surgery and they put in a new hearing aid."

"Hearing things?"

"I guess I just hadn't been hearing right for so long, I can't tell. Am I talking really loud?"

"No, no, you're about normal."

"I don't know if I'm going to buy anything. I'm just going to walk around."

"Alright, I'm sure it'll take a while to adjust."

She smiled, unsure, and turned down an aisle. I looked up between customers for her, after the man whose friend vanished a month prior and his lament.

I couldn't help but wonder into that mind, hearing things now above the waves of old age, floated to the surface by technology - hearing people whisper, paying attention to the whimper of children in metal baskets, the fuzzy notes of piped-in-pop music flowing against her electronic membrane.

And then, still swiping, the woman out of sight, I felt it swell up inside of me. I wanted to grab this woman by the hand and run out. I wanted to take her to a concert to hear true art. I wanted to stand her in a field at dawn for the birds to sing up the morning. She needed to hear life through this re-awakening.

When she finally returned to my register she had a few items. "I don't know about this. You were the one I talked to?" her eyes glinting like a child's.

"Yes, I'm sure it will just take some time," I said and worried about her first night, trying to sleep in a house that was still creaking, even though it must have settled to her ears long ago.

She paid for her things and tentatively moved out into a world populated by sound; a bag of bananas tucked behind her purse.

General Upheaval

She looked up at him, smiling, "We should go now."

His face turned hard, "No, we're here for a reason."

She looked down at her hands, "Yeah, you're right. It's no use anyhow." Heaving her body out of the cart she looked around, "There's a lot here."

"And more."

"One more story, come on. Before we have to hate each other."

His eyes soft, he nodded her way.

The General must have wilted the old ladies, sitting in the pews. It would have been more likely to see his gnarled face at a church burning than opened to sing the good lord's praise. But the doctor had given him two months to live on a liver so poisoned with distillation that it very well should have collapsed on itself long ago.

Actually, doctors were a reoccurring theme for the General. In through emergency doors.

"How are ya, General?"

"Eh, not so good," and as to give proof, removed his hand from his belly, which no longer properly contained his innards without the assistance of the overlapping tape. Because you don't win them all, it's vital to win the important ones.

The preserved body flailed close to them, for examination.

Actually, the General's hide could be an attraction at the county-fair,

"Those pock-looking marks? Rock salt to the back, fleeing a bar."

"The hole in the ass? After trading insults with a black man, he traveled the next town over to get his pistol; only to return, have it taken, and struck by his own side-arm."

"This long slash? Could be one of the hundred knife-fights (he loved those), or it could have been the work on a tree branch caught mid-fall

from a deer stand, which would shatter most other legs. That sleepy morning sun can be harmful to a drowsy bastard."

"This burn? Surely from the car ride into a deep hollow and sleepover with the burning vehicle and a concussion."

However, the General held a somewhat moral code, at least to his family. As with that year of perpetual boozing and gambling. Cutting out at just the opportune moment to seal the earnings in a tight envelope and fund his Father's corn crop, but you know it failed that season.

Now you mix that with the Cave-Dweller, chasing teen-laden cars across county lines, waving his umbrella down the shoulder. A hidden stash was said to fund driving cinder blocks from town, up into the hills, three at a time, to be painted black and placed into the arrangement that would entomb voices. All with a clunky Lincoln, load after load.

Before his home was half-cave, he rented a trailer from the General. Apparently, the rent came due too many times, perhaps gone to the tank moving blocks. The General, in his logic, with the future caveman inside no less, sets the place ablaze.

Though both lived to embody their roles, people still ask, half-joking, half not, if the church burnt when the General walked in to sing.

Beneath Beacons

"Now," she coughed from the smoke, "now, I need to hear how you got here. Why I exist."

They continued to swim through his past, his hand guiding her along. Her eyes caught sight of a tall steeple and his muscles reacted. This being where they had been destined to come all along, the head of the stream that ran back to his love. He grinned a bit at her and warmed his throat for his song's climax.

Floating across the lake with Derek steering the vessel and conversation, "Yeah a few weeks back in my brother's boat, floated out and just made it in the lake. Saw her last weekend taking on four guys at a party." I looked across the lake.

"You had her too, didn't you? When was that?"

Last spring, before it got warm, when she was new in town, before she dove headfirst into the town's underlying teen-septic. I stalled the car by the tall grass, her head peaking from the foot path that led downwind from the yelping dogs. It was jacket weather but she stalked out of the

weeds wearing a small denim skirt, naked legs making way to my car, I popped the passenger door open.

"Where?"

She shrugged, she was a quiet girl, sitting in the hallway to herself. I was surprised she had accepted my offer at all. Shifting in my seat, I headed toward the large church, the small car shuddering up the winding hillside.

I thought back to the last time I had been up that track, passing smoke between a few coworkers and friends, then those headlights and my failing heart, but they were friendly cops that didn't care for paperwork. Though I had smashed my spinning head into a window, trying to lean out and greet them.

Now it was late on a weekday, rather than a weekend, and the spot below the beacon-blinking-tower seemed perfect, safe. I parked, extinguished the headlamps, low music nervous. She admitted she hadn't done anything like this, a meet-up, and I hadn't either, not like this. We got out into the night air, pressing her against the car, and we sunk mouths into each other.

Fumbling clothes off, sliding black panties out from the skirt, I pondered logistics for the first time, though of bending her over the hood, but that dance always felt too impersonal, at least on a first-go. Hinges screaming from the sudden jerk as we fell into the backseat, running hands between thighs too smooth, finding a field only detectable against the grain. I worked fingers in and a tongue into her mouth, she buckled against, my mind and body on fire boiling the wet, I jumped out and fumbled on a condom, lunging back inside just as quickly. But the area was cramped in just the wrong way, "Okay, no, get in the front seat."

"But ... "

Smiling and we back pedaled out, she removed the skirt, and slid in. I leaned in, ran a hand under the seat adjusted, and placed it back where it had been. On knees, we pulled close and eased myself in.

"I don't make much noise."

"That's okay," I smiled, liking to know how I was doing but a show of honesty was appreciated also. Pressing hard against her thin tank-top, finding rhythm, and ran a hand up her shirt to feel the giving flesh there, but she pulled back slightly, and hands retreated like a stuck rabbit exploring the wrong tunnel.

Setting her down, back into the tall grass, head spinning from the gravity of a first stand and dehydration. Examining the red knees, a

mutual friend, "She said it was good." And I gave the shy little mask folded into the corner a slight wave.

Now eyes set upon him from that same haunting stare, though he had never recalled his first encounter with the species in such a way. A boozy breeze wafted in his direction and the specter, having floated slightly off, rode it back to him.

Staples and Eels

The mask seemed angry and eager all in the same, as if wishing so strongly to be thrashed about, "But when did it happen? When did you look to a girl and feel that deep response that you had never felt before? When did you melt, initially?"

The woman's grim approach threw him into a nervous fit. He looked deep into her eyes, and cried out:

There is the girl, that upon my proposal for a relationship, using my outstanding performance in battle as sound reasoning, when I brandished the stapler, promptly refused my proposition and, steadying herself with the aid of a desk, planted her feet firmly atop my in refusal.

My eyes crushing, filling with liquid, dreams invading day-thought, she stood close to me rather than above, running her hands through my hair, giggly caressing me in my backyard. She proposed intercourse and I tentatively accept. Her grin widened and she threw me gingerly onto the grass. Embarrassed, I attempt and push pants to my ankles, causing her eyes to sparkle with deviance. She pulled up her skirt to reveal some sort of twisting eel where her smooth crotch should have been, but she fell on me and the toothed mouth latched onto my hairless scrotum, drawing out a fluid. She moans over me and I struggle uselessly, knowing it can't be right, not like this. Finally she finished and stood, the mouth depositing a small shriveled piece into her palm. She tossed it around, and laughed as I struggled up with my pants, heartbroken.

Forgotten Fireflies

The mask struck out at him, scratching his neck, "No, give me that first pure love. I need that one."

He looked her straight, "She doesn't exist."

"Yes, she must."

"She was a dream, an old dream love."

"Fine, then she exists here, as real as real."

He took the burning mask around the waist and opened a large umbrella, "Now, here it is, and should be." A misted cloud surrounded them, worn from times trying attack upon dream substance. They both hung above, in the sky, intent tethering them both to the image like rope to Fellini's foot.

A small boy lays in a quiet field with a pretty youth beside him, her face mirroring the unrecorded mask, though her expression fills the face with an irresistible warmth. They nibble carrots and sing songs about the clouds, where the old bodies float.

He points out a nearby wheelchair to the mask, "I met her here, in this half-existence. But we were together only in twilight hours. She was bound within conceptual perfection."

A sweet rain begins to fall over the grass. The boy helped his first love into her chair and they escaped into a misty willow tree. "Come on, this is the best part," grabbing the other and pulling her into a new fantasy.

As the day cooled and the fog set to thickening around them, the two watched over their young selves, resting on the edge of the crooked porch observing the far off memories oscillate slowly across the sky - simulated stars.

He looked again at that face that had haunted him through nights of endless groping, glancing across rooms, and moving down long hidden paths, and as he traced the eyes, peering away into the inky display, he caught hint of something different, something tender and forgiving. He saw something soft. The children held hands and the warm face rested on his shoulder as the spring rain wrapped the little house in a shroud only penetrated by forgotten fireflies.

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