Leviathan

Poetry
Prose
Visual Art



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The Body Knows

Helen Wick

Your body doesn't want to hear excuses – your body wants to move you and it wants to be moved by you.

The body knows what you are today who you felt lust for how much you slept last night (and who slept in your bed)

Your body wants to be alone, it wants you to leave now.



Abigayle Cosinuke



The Coffee Shop

Madeline Pillari

He decided that it was in the way that she held her coffee. The way that her pale, slender fingers wrapped themselves around the blueish-gray ceramic, knuckles white with the force with which she pressed her hands into the heat. The way her body slightly hunched over the mug, too, as if her entire being yearned to be enveloped into the steaming, delicious warmth. She was thin, and he liked to imagine that winter was hard for her. That maybe she took longer showers and drank more coffee and wore two sweaters underneath her jacket. The walk to the coffee shop must be hard for her, too. And he knew that she walked. Based on the redness still bruising her nose and the way she didn't take off her scarf for at least ten minutes and the desperate way her fingers clung to her mug. She came almost every morning, at almost exactly eight, spending almost exactly an hour at her usual table. It was a high counter in the corner, furthest away from the door. He knew it was to avoid the drafty opening and closing that would compromise the warmth she would procure for herself.

The coffee shop was small, locally owned. It was intimate, unabashed in its simplicity. No shining silver finish to polished mahogany, but soft and worn wooden tables, sagging and comfortable chairs with corduroy covers. It was busy in the mornings, well-loved by the town. Not too busy though, just lively and full enough for him to blend into the background. She probably thought she was blending, too. And maybe she was, to everyone else. He liked to sit in the deep, fraying armchair in the other corner. Far enough away to watch, and low enough so he could see all of her, perched and lean-

ing forward over her steaming drink. Her ankles were usually crossed and to the side, and she wore thick socks that peeked over wool-lined boots. It bothered him that she was so cold.

She always had the local newspaper, and her laptop. He liked to imagine that she was some kind of journalist, or writer, and spent her mornings here, reading, a kind of preliminary hour before her frenzied news-collecting began. He hoped she worked in a warm office.

She always added a dash of cream, and some sugar too. He liked that she sweetened her coffee. He drank his black, but he liked to watch her carefully pour the milk, watch it cloud and stain the dark, hot drink.

Her hair was in a loose knot behind her neck, the bun resting on the back of her thick, cream knit-scarf. Her auburn hair was unruly, stray pieces falling in front of her face. She was constantly tucking the loose, reddish and curling strands behind her ears, impatient with the pieces that fell in front of her face, in the way of her reading and of her writing. He wanted to help her, to stand from behind and tuck them behind her pale lobes for her, so that she wouldn't be interrupted from her reading, and from her writing. Her ears were unpierced, no earrings puncturing her snow-white skin. In fact, she wore no jewelry, only a black hairband on her wrist when her hair was down. Her wrists were deliciously bare, now, the elastic circlet currently tangled in the wavy, rose twist of her bun.

Her favorite colors, he assumed, were soft blues and grays. He liked to think that she wore these hues almost exclusively to match her eyes, to bring subtle attention to the translucent and bottomless tie-dye of her iris, like a cloud-patched morning sky. Her eyelashes were unusually dark and thick for her coloring, and he liked his vantage point especially because when her gaze was directed down, towards her newspaper, it looked like her eyes were closed. That was his favorite, the way the dense lashes tickled her cheeks, the blush of the cold on her nose making the surrounding skin look even whiter.

Sometimes, she would glance away from the paper, and away from her laptop, and around the coffee shop. He would not break his stare when she did this, and he waited for the moment when her eyes would lock with his. Still, he would not discontinue his study, and she would, when this happened, blink. Her almond-shaped eyes reminded him of a doe, the innocent confusion and embarrassment of eye-contact with a stranger not unlike the animal eyes lit-up by car head-lights at night. It would be a dark, winding road. A fast car. She would look down quickly whenever this happened, back to her paper, biting her lip. Out of nervousness, or maybe, he liked to imagine, to draw attention to her pastelpink mouth, teasing and shy and offensively innocent.

He had a large black, leather-bound sketch-book. Well, actually, he had three, the first two already full of his graphite reproductions of her. Hands had been his initial study, but there were pages of crossed ankles, of her virgin ears and bare wrists. The second notebook was almost exclusively a study of her mouth, the disproportionate thinness of the top lip to the heavy and full bottom, so carefully sketched.

He was only on the fifth or sixth page of the third notebook, and was focused, today, on her eyes. She was still reading her paper, and he feverishly drew her apparent unconsciousness. She looked espe-

cially cold, and had yet to have a sip of her coffee. She had brought it to her lips twice, but her intention seemed not to drink, only to hover in the small cloud of steam that rose out of the mug. Her lashes, downcast, appeared to nearly dip into the searing contents. She had to take a hand off the coffee once, rushing to fix the displaced hair behind her left ear and return her palm to the warmth. It was so easy, now, with her gaze down, to imagine she was asleep, a dreamless and deep catalepsy. She wanted that, too, he was sure of it.

He had filled four more pages this morning, all drawings of her downcast eyes and the unconsciousness he fantasized. She glanced up from her paper to routinely venture a scan of the room. He grinned, openmouthed, he couldn't help himself. He hoped it didn't scare her, his pristinely white teeth. He made sure they were that way, reflective, and sterile. His eyes locked onto hers, and he didn't close his mouth, his toothy-smile not reaching his eyes. He consumed her, his predatory scrutiny at its apex. He watched her hands release themselves abruptly from the mug and grip the edge of her table. She blinked that doe-like blink, her lips parted. And he promised himself never to forget it, the way the headlights of his eyes shone into her animal ones, to forever savor the moment before the car struck her, that suspended instant, out of place and time in it's eternal return.



Anna Kelly

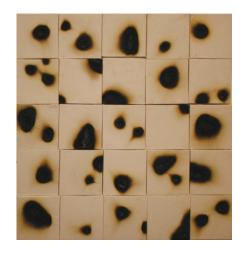
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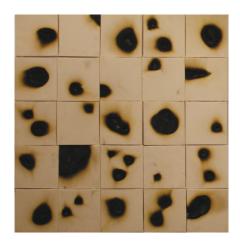
Edith Lee

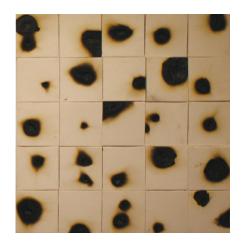
The flesh of you is being eaten day by day I cannot help it.

I see your ribs emerging from the feast. Your vultures are kind enough to leave ruins from your bones.

They must know they hold collapsed kingdoms in their beaks.







Alexander Wilson



Arielle Drisko

While at Topaz

Kimiko Tanabe

"Sorry, Fumi. No mail today."
"You sure?" I asked.

"I can check again." The man behind the counter was Mr. Mori who lived three apartments down and sometimes saved small pieces of candy wrapped in yellow cellophane for me. He peered into the back room and popped back out shaking his head.

It was the third week in a row that I hadn't heard from Michiko. Mom told me to stop waiting in line for the mail every week. She was afraid I would get sick from the sun or that the desert sand would cook through the rubber soles of my shoes.

Mom was afraid of a lot of things lately, but mostly the sand and dust. Before we were relocated to the camp in Utah, Mom would spend hours every day sweeping underneath the tatami mats that lined our San Francisco house and sometimes she made me help. She said if we didn't keep the dust out, it would attract little samurai warriors who would run around the house swinging their katana swords.

Now it was almost impossible to keep sand and dust out. Mr. Takanori told me that they built the barracks with pinewood that hadn't been dried out properly so it had shrunk leaving wide-open cracks. When we first got here, I could peek out from inside our barrack and see all the kids lining up for the Sunday mass that mom would never let me go to. But now mom had started filling all the cracks and knotholes that fell from the wood with whatever she could find. Our walls were stuffed with old camp newspapers, stray socks, and sewing scraps she had saved from old kimonos. Everything was sacrificed to keep out the dust. I came home from school one

day to find mom in the middle of our apartment cutting apart my only two cloth dolls. She used a sewing needle to rip open the body and pull out the white cotton stuffing. She didn't look up from her task when I walked in, she just handed me the cloth scraps and the white insides and I walked over to the wall and jammed them into the crack above the shelf that held the photograph of dad with his first fishing boat. "We can't have the samurai running around our house," she would say.

Her job was never ending. Dust and sand blew from underneath the floors of our barrack and in through the walls. I had never seen snow. But when the wind would pick up and swirl the sand into our apartment through the barricades mom tried to create I imagined it looked something like it.

I usually spent mail days sitting outside the convenience store reading my letter from Michiko and thinking about what I would write back. Utah might not have been so bad if Michiko was here too. We used to walk to the San Francisco fish market together everyday after school. But her family got moved to a camp somewhere in California. With no letter to read or write I wandered aimlessly through the camp looking for something to do, wondering if something had happened to Michiko. I thought about going back to the mailroom and seeing if Mr. Mori had any candy, but he probably would have offered if he had any and it would be impolite to ask. I walked home to our apartment and found mom ripping out pages of my math textbook, rolling them into long tubes, and placing them into the cracks of the wooden walls. "The samurai have been coming," she said. "We have to be better about keeping the

dust out."

The next morning was Saturday and as I was walking to the bathroom barrack I saw Mr. Mori. He was running towards me kicking up a dust storm in his wake. He held a newspaper in his hands. "Fumi! Fumiko!" he called. He coughed from the dust and handed me the Daily Express he had been running with. I opened it up and looked up at Mr. Mori. He was beaming. Printed on the inside front cover of the newspaper was a copy of a letter, a letter from Michiko to me with text underneath explaining how it had gotten lost in route and had fallen into the hands of the publisher. I read through the letter and started skipping. I began dancing. People waiting in line for the bathroom glanced over and two elderly ladies walking by stopped to watch but I didn't care because Michiko was okay and we were in the newspaper and we were famous.

I ran home to show mom but stopped outside of the barrack when I saw bits of newspaper peeking out through a crack in the door. I carefully folded the article into a small square. I walked inside and placed it underneath my blanket when mom wasn't looking.

After dinner that night I ran back to our apartment hoping to beat mom so I could steal a quick glance at the letter in the newspaper. I looked under the blanket but it wasn't there. I looked at the walls, at all the newspaper scraps pushed into the gaps and turned cold. I ran over to the far wall and began to pull out pieces of black and white print that had been shoved into the gap. But they were just old camp newspapers so I tossed them on the floor. Michiko's letter could be in anywhere in the walls, maybe even placed between the floorboards. I looked at the photographs covered in dust and saw something new hanging next to the photograph of dad with his fishing boat. I looked closer. My letter from

Michiko in the newspaper was hanging on the wall. My mother walked in and I started crying. "The samurai were here," she said. "They handed this to me," pointing at Michiko's letter. "It must be important if they saved it."



Emma Kearney



First Point of Aries

Gabriel Fine

The earth tips its head toward a star

We know the star well, and thank it, bowing

The star burns us, to remind us that we exist

Painting by Sabrina Piersol

CC VISITING WRITER'S SERIES 2015

MUSIC & WORDS

DANA GIOIA

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH
A CONCERT OF GIOIA'S POEMS
SET BY VARIOUS COMPOSERS
7:30 P.M., PACKARD HALL

Author of "Citizen: An American Lyric"



Monday, February 15th 7 p.m. in Celeste Theatre

Water Psalms

David Melone

On the night after all this happened, Father peeled back the blockade of elk antler's that I had taped to my doorway. Glossy and stern, in his hold they unfolded to an inanimacy previously unseen. The ghosts fled at the light he opened into my room. The mirror image of our beginning moment: he, stepping towards me, formless Father, softest psalming sound of water.

But I wanted to fight him, for settling in with forgiveness on the foot of my bed, he said, with a heart kin to mine, how "its hard to know whether or not the things we do matter." At that I moved to slap him, reached out but missed in the void of dark, and fell in my fumble suddenly out of breath and devoid of violence. I do not know if he registered what I did, for his breath did not jump - just strummed, expressed itself subtle and clean into the blankets in which we sat. He stood to unlatch the windows: that other strum of riverwater, steady, unceasing charm of crickets, mother's weeping somewhere by the water's edge.

I could not read his face in the dark. His outline was more boundless than bordered. But there is that other sense we have - to know by some other unknown faculty - register the proximity of another soul by mere felt partnership. Yes there was his breath, distinct and soft and strumming. But that sound too, as the stream came in, faded unspecific and universally surrounding. "All we ever choose to do," he said, "and it is important that you remember this, is the thing we are shown to be the most good at in that given moment." He paused for a forgiving length of breath. Some small animal in me sweltered and softened to a pelt of grief. "I don't know where

your sister is. Or if she will be coming back. But you must know, that whatever you have chosen to do, it will never be a mistake."

He stood and watched over the dark patch where I laid for a very long time. Part of me wept, part of me burned in haste to avoid. But knowing his presence I quickly slept, and did not wake until the following morning.

He stepped outside in the orange blur of lantern-light and relieved mother with a soft hand to her shoulder. She crawled into bed beside me, lulled me further into formlessness with the heat of her breath and closely wrapped shoulders.

The whole night through, and for the following four weeks, Father stood post, watching lanternin-hand over the moon-traced streams of the delta. During the daytime he would process east, further inland from the lapping ocean, into the regions of forest where the thousand year trees still remained. At dusk he would return west, again stand the night through in watch over the water.

At dawn that following morning I woke to find his silhouette there, through the fog. I shuddered from the house, wrapped in my grandfather's bathrobe, and came to stand by his side, waiting for acknowledgment. But he did not move. The delta water, he saw, was sliding west and slow across the palm of mud. The welts where my feet had fallen running the previous day remained, though softened and filled with water. He was watching for your blouse, I think, for a shoe, for a ghost of your fabric to pass through the water.

A thin sediment was rising from the place in the water where he stood. I watched it lift, and eddy

eighteen

and twirl, and become drawn west towards the well of the pacific. The fog, laid thick like grief around our necks, slid stiff to the east - glacial, it seemed, broad and baying with the sound of tension.

I had to sit. My butt became muddied and slowly grew cold. From my lowered position his face seemed to again take on that unspecific shape. Another man I do not know. His eyes were cast out like a fly-fisher; his body was poised, patient, immersed waiting. And it was in a flare of hatred that I realized that I, the still-living twin to the lost one he sought, could not break his watch.

Mother came and gathered me as she always does in time. She took me into the house. Settling in a sinking whicker chair beside the kitchen table I was shocked to find splayed out all about the room the chaotic and tense evidence of a forming search.

We had no phone or internet in this house, and moreover, no roads of contact to the rest of the state beyond the ridge to the east. They had all collapsed in mud-slides. She held uncle Riley tensely on a thick black radio. He was out at sea, visible through the fog for moments in his trawler, and he was communicating, via another radio, with the Whitehorn Coastguard Station, who was communicating with the King Range Search and Rescue, who were passing down, through the chain, details to my mother's pen. She had laid out on pink and yellow post-its all throughout the kitchen the itinerary and timeframe of the search. She was breathing rapidly, clenched and waiting always for the crackle of Riley's tone back through the earpiece of her radio. Her eyes were wallowing to a dark and dooming purple. She leaned to me over the radio to ask, "Honey, can I make you breakfast?" But I didn't even have to tell her no. It was apparent in her strain that she could barely stand, barely consider more than one thing at a time, and so I rose and poured us both bowls of

cereal and left her a cup of coffee before I went to sit again silent beside my window. The white light half-filled the indent you had left in the sheets of your bed, which sat, as I cried, beside mine.

Riley returned at night with the slight smile of confirmation: that the search was underway, and that we had done all we could possibly do. He bore up a small silver salmon he had drawn from the sea. He split and emptied it into the delta beside where father stood. Riley tried, without success, to talk to him. He seared the halves of the fish in a black cast-iron pan over a fire, peppered and salted and dropped on lemon, and cut each half into another half. He distributed these quarters to the present members of the family. Father saw the plated fish, broke his absence to smile in gratitude and sat to pick apart the flakes and bones.

In the morning Mother brought some fruit: a halved melon and some peaches packed from the week previous. They were softening and skinned with a white dusty fur. But again Father took the food with a grateful smile. Mother left him to eat, satisfied, silently reconciled with the necessity of his watch.

It was beginning to become evident, to all of us, that father was within something. It was hard to tell what it was. From the outside, it seemed to be the water. He seemed to be within the way it curled, and talked, and took at every moment a new, speaking shape. Standing, Father bore his hands rounded about his naval. His eyes were closed and his face had fallen loosened into a broad, gaping question. He was listening.

At noon that day the unbelievable rattle of a helicopter swept overhead. It skimmed the flats of the delta, loosing up a spray of clay and water into my father's face and chest. He stumbled for a moment, as if attacked, but fell again more soundly into his position. He did not look up. The helicopter was red and white, and a helmeted man leaned down from the driver's side window. He commanded from a loudspeaker, "Sir, you must vacate the area. It is not safe." But as it was, my father did not move. It seems absurd to suggest that Father did not notice the machine, did not notice the mess it was making all about it. It is absurd to suggest he was locked that deeply within the language of the water. But whatever it was, in a minute the helicopter did leave, did tilt east and sweep away. And Father did stay.

The pilot had told Riley that they would search the forest. They had boats skirting the sea. The helicopter hovered and watched for hours. The redwood canopy stirred beneath to a froth of green. They retired by evening, and came back in the morning to look again. And again they left at dusk. At the close of the fourth day, the pilot touched down on the grassy flat of the headland west of our house. The man walked with his wired black helmet to his waist, and met my mother, who was closed in her bathrobe, arms folded and frowning. I watched from my window as the pilot then left, and as my mother cried, hands raised to her eyes and forsaken. Her body was blowing apart in the violence of the machine's lifting wind.

Walking to Father that night to bring him his food, I said, in a scared sadness, "They didn't find anything." And I swear, it was the strangest thing, but he smiled at that. And seeing this reaction, my anger voiced itself clearly that I was appalled by this man, that I felt betrayed to be his son. And so I lifted a small hand and struck him on the ribs. But at contact, an alarming peace came to me. It was as if he had given me his own thought. For it seemed to reason that if you were dead, as we had supposed, they would have found you exposed and in pink clothes on the dark forest floor. These men are

professionals, and they find the bodies they look for. But because they did not find you, it not only meant that you were alive, but that you were alive and did not want to be found. You were still out there, in the redwoods, of your own accord. In control, and waiting. Wiser than our search. Somewhere beneath some ferns. In the cavern of a fallen tree. I left Father then, as he knew that I knew what all this meant, and I slept soundly and alone in the quiet of my bed.

At the end of the twenty-eight days Father returned inside, as Mother, Riley and I were not expecting. He held up, with his eyes wide at the power, the candle flame of a single, fragile Oriole feather. "It came from the water," he said. Center-bolted orange steam, folded with the balance of black and white. It was an obvious sign. Placing it into the palm of my hand, he said, "Its time for us leave." And surprised at our own silent movement through grief and time, mother, Riley and I agreed.

Riley lifted us in his boat from the shore, carried us back south to the Sausalito Marina where our car waited. We drove north through the evening, back to the ferns and closure of our quiet kept home. Over the course of a week we disseminated the news, slowly, and only to those who necessarily needed to know. There was no funeral, Father forbade. In us there all grew a willingness to wait.

At night he still stepped outside, a practice of paternal devotion at this point. He would listen, as he had done before, steady into the current of the stream. The cricket noise and the sleeping; the slow-building voice of an emissary; the formless other father, coming to him with psalms from unbounded bodies of water.



Kate Guynn



Fouiller

Kailee Stiles

J'ai trouvé une etoile dans un forêt noir.

Serene nights cracking at the seams,

I am a loose diamond falling far away, it is so quiet my edges scream as I rest on glass corners:

Photograph by Corey Boeschenstein

Water Too Deep To Warm

Emma Martin

We were bickering the morning we heard Thomas had rolled his pick-up into Hungry Horse Reservoir. The morning was sweltering, the sort of heat that rarely reached the mountains, but, when it did, beckoned swarms of horseflies that bit at the back of our necks and the gaps above our work gloves. We were each feeling the weight of a fourman job carried out by only three.

We begun in the ashy light of advancing dawn, and by the time the sun squatted full and bright overhead, we'd only bore up two rotted railroad ties from the dry earth. Thomas's absence jarred us from our routine. It was August, and by now we had unearthed hundreds of deteriorating ties. Without Thomas's vigilant eye, however, every motion felt like a question, every reverberation of metal against metal caused a flinch. Neither Nelson nor I had the body mass to wield the crowbar, and our impotence put us on edge.

"God damn—" Nelson's glasses slid down the bridge of his nose. He dropped the crowbar at his feet.

"Here," I grunted. "Let me."

I swung off the flatbed trolley and gripped its rusting beams with one hand while I pried at the railroad tie with the other. Flecks of rotted wood flew up at my face. The tie heaved, but the earth would not release its thirty-year grip.

Nelson rattled on as we worked. "The politics of war just haven't set in over there," Nelson shook his head. "I heard our soldiers are told not to call them Vietnamese. Call everybody gooks. Dinks."

I spat on my calloused palms to better grasp the crowbar. Nelson leaned against the flatbed trolley. He gazed out at the narrow valley that cut below the railroad track.

"I heard our soldiers are told that the Vietnamese would blow up a hundred babies just to kill one GI. Can you believe that brainwashing?"

I looked forward to the days Nelson took a shift up at the wheelhouse so I could hear the silence of Mystic Lake—a deep, primordial quiet, so quiet I could hear the spray of dirt as I worked. So quiet I could hear my sweat beading.

"Did I tell you of the time last spring? Several other university boys and I burned an American flag outside of Congressman Pray's place. It made the front of the local paper and everything—"

"You have a student deferment," I growled, lowering the crowbar. "You haven't ever, not for a minute of your life, been worried about shipping off."

Nelson straightened. "Neither have you," he sniffed. "You have the highest draft number of anyone I've spoken to on this side of the state. How did your brother take that?"

I hurled the crowbar over the trolley bed towards Nelson's chest. He yelped and dodged. The heavy piece of metal started to skidder down the side of the mountain, and Nelson leapt for it, grabbing several handfuls of dry dirt before finally catching the bar in his fleshy fingers.

When we saw our overseer's dusty white truck pull into the yard below us, we did not ask questions. We only wanted to get off the edge of that mountain and away from one another. I signaled to Eli at the wheelhouse and he began to lower the trolley, foot by foot, down a 1¼-inch metal cable to the

base of the valley.

Thomas wasn't coming back, our overseer told us. He had rolled his pick-up into Hungry Horse Reservoir. We stood in a semi-circle. Nelson's hands cupped his jaw; Eli's and mine were stuffed into our dirty denim pockets.

"Had he been drinking?" asked Nelson. Eli tensed. His dark eyes remained on his boots, toeing the gravel.

"Oh hell, Nelson," I said. "What does that matter?" The overseer shrugged. No one spoke for a long while.

"Who found him?" asked Nelson.

The overseer shrugged again. "Don't know," he said. "His body is with his people now."

The overseer carried a clipboard with no paper. Every few seconds, he turned it on its side and checked it like a watch. The turbines of the small power plant near our cabins hummed a familiar pitch. Eli stared at the concentric circles of gravel he created with the steel edge of his work boots.

"Who're they going to get up here to replace him?" asked Nelson.

The overseer shook his head. "It's nearing the end of the summer," he said. "No use finding another hand so late. You boys will have to pick up the slack for the next couple of weeks."

A protest gurgled in the upper register of Nelson's throat, but he covered it with a cough. We knew the bleakness of this. Thomas had been the only member of our crew not resigned to brute manual labor—he made things work. He looked at things and saw their moving parts, their utility, their potential for manipulation. He welded parts of complicated machinery and fixed stubborn tools and knew the solution to any snag we met on the railway. The rest of us could have been replaced—and

should, really, have been replaced by men stronger than us, men more capable and less fearful than us.

"You boys can take the day," the overseer said. He spit a mass of phlegm into the gravel and I watched it ooze through the pores of the small rocks. The overseer tipped us his plastic orange brim and climbed into his truck cab.

We watched the truck disappear down the drive and onto the hazy dirt road that wound the wide perimeter of Hungry Horse Reservoir.

The water of the West Rosebud Drainage fell from the ragged slopes of the Beartooth-Absaroka Mountains and carved out a narrow valley from the granite cliffs. The valley lent shape to the torrent of water, called the West Rosebud River, which flowed from its craggy headwaters out onto the rolling plains of eastern Montana. The West Rosebud River provided me a job that summer.

In the 1940s, Montana Power built a dam across the four-hundred foot mouth of Mystic Lake. The forbidding peaks of the Beartooths had been hiding Mystic Lake for centuries. Few men had seen its waters before the dam was contracted, and few men have seen its waters today. A pipeline, three feet in diameter, ran from the dam and around the lip of a narrow valley. The pipeline ran at an imperceptible slope for three miles before plunging 750-feet of sheer vertical down to a power plant at the base of the valley. As the pipe approached the drop-off, its three-foot diameter split into two pipes, each six inches in diameter. The massive water pressure that built at this split drove generators that produced the electricity for much of eastern Montana.

A narrow-gauge railroad track also ran the length of the pipeline to assure it could be properly maintained. Over the decades, the wooden railroad ties had rotted out in several sections and had eroded

entirely in others. For the last several summers, Montana Power had hired crews of young men to replace the deteriorating ties, and that summer—my summer—we began with the 750-foot vertical stretch that clung to the side of the valley.

That evening, after we had heard Thomas rolled his pick-up into Hungry Horse Reservoir, Eli and I retired to our sagging chairs on the front porch of the cabin we shared. Eli hunched forward over his broad knees. His hands moved the blade of his knife rhythmically over the edge of a dark obsidian arrowhead. He sharpened his knife every evening; I had never seen him remove it from its leather sheath otherwise.

"Should we do something?" I asked.
"For what?" Eli's hands stopped moving.

I gazed out at Thomas's shop, a shack at the end of a row of buildings belonging to the power plant. Several windows of the shop had been busted out years ago, and grey grime had begun to creep up the whitewashed exterior walls. It had the look of a building altogether abandoned, except that Thomas had kept it alive. All day long, he had darted in and out of its sagging side door, carrying armfuls of metal scrap or rusted tools or crude woodcarvings. The shop hummed and squealed in the tune of Thomas's various projects. In the late afternoons, he would heave open the shop's wide overhead door and expose its bowels to Nelson, Eli, and I, sitting on the porches of our cabins. He weaved between his halffinished works, one arm crossed and one hand on his chin, surveying with the detail of an art curator. The last I'd seen, he was welding together a squat metal fish smoker.

"Would it change anything?" Something caught in Eli's deep voice. "Would it change how you feel?"

I watched small sparks dance off the arrowhead. "How do you know how I feel?"

Eli smiled slightly. "You're shitting your pants, Johnny."

A wave of heat rolled up my chest and into my cheeks. "I don't—"

"What I mean is, you're walking around here all wide-eyed with your mouth opening and closing like a fish choking on air," said Eli. "You're not sad as much as you're shocked. And you're scared, 'cause it could have been any of us on that road."

Eli returned to his blade. "Didn't none of us know him," he said, his voice again quiet and resolved. "It wouldn't be right to do something for him just to make ourselves feel better."

In this forgotten place, sixty miles from the closest town and a world away from the bustling, the cosmopolitan, the dirty, the crime-ridden, I was the closest I had ever been to death. Only a turn in the road and a few evergreens obscured the place where it had happened. The dirt becomes softer on the road around Hungry Horse. The dirt is eroding quickly, making its return to the bottom of the reservoir from where it was once dredged.

In June, my brother deployed to Vietnam and a week later I drove to Mystic Lake. There had been no tears when I left for the summer, and that was all right, because what I was doing was not brave. That summer I expected to develop a permanent soreness in my back and to smoke trout filets over a fire and to take all the space and silence of Mystic to learn something about myself. I did not expect to come across death that summer; I reserved that for my brother.

Chad worked as a field radio mechanic for the 329th boat company stationed in Danang, an eviscerated city slumped at the southern edge of the

demilitarized zone. Bombs rained morning through night outside of Danang. Chad and a fourteen-man crew navigated flat-bottom boats that rode three feet deep in the filmy water of the Perfume River. The boats carried supplies—ranging from food and livestock to full tanks and armor—to remote units beyond the demilitarized zone. American soldiers had christened the Perfume River in dark humor. It stank of sour sewage brought to a boil by the hemispheric sun. Chad said he often passed animal carcasses spinning in eddies beyond the river's swift current as his boat chugged upriver. Once, Chad saw the body of an entire bull, its face and undercarriage submerged in the river's frothy green thickness. Its spine rose above the water, like a mountain range, and Chad said he could see every vertebra in the bull's gaunt back.

On his days off, Chad and several other soldiers drove to China Beach, a rest and recuperation center several hours away on the thin coastline. There was a United Service Organizations office in China Beach with several phone booths the soldiers could use to call home. Chad tried to call me every Friday evening at six o' clock —eight o' clock Saturday morning in Danang. His calls came less frequently, more sporadically, as the weeks passed and his patrols increased. Every Friday that came without a call left me with a sense of unease.

That evening, though, the shrill phone rang in its warped wooden booth at exactly six o' clock.

"Hello?" I exhaled. "Chad?"

'Tell me, Johnny, about the Mystic," said Chad. I heard deep longing in his voice.

I leaned against the phone booth, toying the corrugated silver cord between my palms.

"It's beautiful up here—"

"Describe it."

I turned towards the deep fissure of earth-

stretching behind me.

"The valley's only a half-mile wide and about that long," I said. "But I still feel so small, you know. Imagine this, Chad. Sheer, ragged cliff on one side, evergreens sticking off at all strange angles, and a bear of a mountain on the other—just massive, this thing—and in its depth of rock, somewhere, is Mystic Lake."

"Have you seen it? Have you seen Mystic Lake?"

"Once, as part of my training." I said. "I had to get up there and see the dam so that I knew how to shut the whole thing down if something went wrong. You know, water wise."

"What could go wrong water wise?"

I didn't have an answer. As far as I knew, or had been steadily flowing from Mystic I al

water had been steadily flowing from Mystic Lake for decades.

"Nothing," I said. "There's a pipeline, Chad, which winds around the top of this whole thing, like a noose around a neck—" I caught myself "—or like a drawstring bag. It's incredible."

"Incredible," Chad breathed.

"As in beyond belief. Unimaginable, improbable," I said.

Chad let out a slow whistle that sent static rushing through the receiver.

"How are things with you?" I asked.

"Oh, it's hot here, Johnny," Chad laughed.
"I'm wet all the time. My feet have been prunes for weeks, and I'm running a hole in the rubber of my boot." An echo appeared on the line. Chad sounded far away. "The fighting isn't going so well, either, but I'm sure you've heard."

He was holding back for me. He complained about the climate while bemired in blood and misguided nationalism and staggering explosions and death, so much death. If I made it into town,

I would read the tolls in the Sunday paper and I ached.

"Is it cold?" he asked.

"Cold? It's August," I snorted, and then I thought of Chad, in the steaming jungles of Danang. "You know, yeah. It's cold, Chad, it drops down to the forties or fifties at night and the air starts to bite. At this elevation the breezes are cool and stiff, and the water, oh—the water is icy."

"The reservoir is too deep for the water to warm up," murmured Chad.

"The reservoir is too deep for the water to warm up," I said. "Exactly."

A raucous chorus of young men entered the range of the receiver. Chad's voice rose in pitch, straining to be audible over them.

"What did you say?" I asked.

"The smell," Chad shouted. "What about the smell?"

I hesitated.

"Like pine and warm soil," I said, but I don't inhale. "It smells fresh the way mountains do. But there's also this chemical stink, sour like asphalt on a hot, hot day. It's this tar we put on the railroad ties. Lately it's been much more—"

"Hey, listen Johnny, I have to get off the phone. Another one of the boys needs to call his mother; she's worried sick about him. Hey, listen, aren't you happy?"

I picked at a loosened callous on my palm and the raw flesh stung as it made contact with the air. "Yes," I said.

"Promise, once I come home—on that very first Sunday, whenever that Sunday is—promise that we'll go visit the Mystic," said Chad, and then the line cut out.

On a mild winter evening in 1969, Chad

and those young men who shared his birthdate were summoned to serve, one of the first numbers drawn out of the Selective Service System's deep glass jar. Chad received a notice several weeks later to report to the Selective Services Office for his scheduled physical. Chad told me he remembered walking into the draft examination room and thinking it looked like a slaughterhouse. He and a dozen other Midwestern boys, pale and blonde as wheat chaff, took off all their clothes and sat on hard plastic benches. They bent over their knees to hide themselves under the fluorescent lights. They waited to hear the last names and their birthday—that damning April 24th—called out across the sparse room. Chad had a distinct image of cattle being led off to slaughter, which was exactly what was happening, although he did not know it then. He remained half-inflated with the hubris of youth.

Chad shipped off in early June. He did not want us to accompany him to the train station for fear that he might cry. We said our farewells on the front porch of our sagging childhood home. The house, though old and cramped and paint-peeling, had a wonderful porch, wide and wrapped-around with newly varnished grey planks. Chad leaned against the porch's wrought iron railing, facing our parents and me. My mother sniffed, the end of her hooked nose red and moist. Her eyes brimmed with tears, and she pressed her gloved fingertips underneath her sockets so the tears would spill into her hands before they ran down her face. My father put one hand on Chad's shoulder and lifted the other to a salute.

"Keep your head down and your nose clean," my father grunted.

My father stooped from the shrapnel lodged in his spine. He had to raise his eyes to meet Chad's. He lowered his hand.



Chad looked pale. I hesitated, and then pulled him towards me. In my arms, I could feel Chad's flushed, almost feverish, skin under his sweat-soaked shirt. He smelled sour and I released him.

"Good-bye, brother," I said.

Chad heaved his khaki duffel over his shoulder and descended the porch steps to where a friend waited to bring him to the station, car engine idling. In that moment, I did not mind feeling like the lesser son.

"I can smell him," I said. "Thomas." I spoke low so only Eli could hear.

It is early the next morning and dew clings to our clothes.

"Not now, Johnny," grunted Eli. He heaved a jack onto his broad shoulders, the metal leaving streaks of oil and grime on his forearms and denim shirt. He swung around. "Thomas?"

"Not him, exactly, but the creosote," I said.

"That junk is lathered up and down all of the new ties," piped in Nelson. "It keeps the wood from rotting, so they won't have to pay people like us every summer." Nelson laughed at this pathetic realization. "Of course you smell it. The whole valley reeks of creosote." Nelson continued lobbing tools onto the trolley, whistling a Redding tune as he went.

I leaned closer to Eli.

"But he smelled of it most strongly," I muttered. "The cans of creosote were kept in his shop. He always had it on his hands and his khakis—" "Will you cut it out?" Eli hopped over the trolley and positioned the jack at the base of a rotting tie. He sounded uneasy.

"Do you not smell it?" I asked.

"I'm used to it by now."

"I was, too. I haven't smelled it since our first week here, but this morning it's overwhelming. It's crawled into my nostrils. I can't smell anything else—not the trees, not the patches of Indian paint-brush, not Nelson's stink, nothing."

Eli inhaled deeply through his hooked nose. He closed his eyes.

"Nothing," he said. "Let's get going."

The squeal of the jack pierced the valley's heavy silence. No one grumbled over the heavy workload that morning.

Every morning after, I tied a scrap of grey t-shirt over my mouth and nose, cinching it at the base of my skull. Nelson, in his perpetual obliviousness, made no comment, but the rag seemed to trouble Eli.

"It's all in your head," Eli said as we stretched our stiff backs on the porch.

"What?"

"It's all in your head. It doesn't have to be like this." He was bent over at the waist, his nose to his thick leather boots.

One unusually stifling afternoon, I untied the rag as I climbed the 750-foot vertical to the wheelhouse. I took the precipitous climb hand over foot, the rotten ties giving slightly under my weight. The climb felt slow in the heat. By the time I reached the wheelhouse, sweat had soaked through my denim shirt and my radio buzzed impatiently from the men below. I gripped the wooden crank inside the wheelhouse, smoothed from years of sweating palms, and began to inch the trolley up the side of the valley.

It couldn't all exist in my head—the saturated smell, the unearthly quiet, the heaviness in the

I gazed through the streaked wheelhouse window at the two men toiling below. Eli, on the right side of the track, powerful and methodical;

Nelson, on the left side of the track, quick and scrambling. I gazed past the squat white power plant and past Thomas's shop and past the unfinished wood of our sparse cabins and found my eyes fixed on Hungry Horse Reservoir. A small chill swept up my arms. I had not seen that body of water since the word of Thomas's death. I squinted at the turns and switches in the road, wondering which fateful one had given to gravity and tugged the wheels of his pick-up truck into the navy depths.

I shot Chad once. It was the dead-end of a grueling summer; I was twelve and Chad was thirteen. We had spent the last twelve weeks at a wrestling camp in Lodgegrass, a town thirty miles away on the Crow Indian Reservation. Chad had eighteen months on me, and he was broader, stronger, better—on the mat and on the runs and on those summer evening skirmishes where fifty boys pounded their fists and chanted around a circle drawn in the dirt. We were brothers, and we competed with the senseless, bellicose ferocity of brothers, but I fell short. I ran longer times, I leaked more blood, I bore darker bruises, I laughed less.

Our camp ended in late August, and Chad and I did little more than grunt at one another. We spent the final week of our summer on the slow and wide river than ran below our house. We fished from dawn until quiet, cicada dusk from the back of our father's boat, The Lame Duck. The morning I shot Chad I sat on top of the boat's cabin, facing the rear of the boat, while Chad hunched over the motor, steering us between logs and out of eddies. The sun bore down on the deep river and no fish were jumping and so I abandoned my fishing pole for our pellet gun and spent the morning shooting at driftwood and flotsam and rotting leaves. After awhile I began to see how narrow of margins I could put between

the rubber bullet and my brother's head. I was doing well at the game until another boat passed us—a sleek speedboat, churning upriver. It created four sets of waves that rocked The Lame Duck just as I took aim at the air inches above Chad's head. The red rubber pellet grazed his forehead and Chad howled, nearly launching himself backwards over the side of the boat. My father set down his newspaper on the boat's thin aluminum floor. He stood up, yanked me off the top of the boat's cabin, and struck me once on the broadside of my jaw.

No one spoke. Chad turned the boat towards home and I stood braced against the boat's cabin. I refused to touch my jaw though it ached from my father's gnarled knuckles. He resumed reading his paper, but every few minutes his eyes would shift beyond the edge of the newsprint towards me.

Chad did not call that Friday evening. I sat in tense silence on the front porch and Eli sat beside me, carefully sharpening his knife. Sparks skitter across the knotted porch planks. Nelson stood on the opposite side of the porch rail, resting his chin on the chipped wood.

"What a drag," Nelson yawned and stretched his arms over his head. "Americans have this belief that winning is everything, but now people can watch a war play out, live at six, on their television screens and their pride just shatters."

Eli's hands slowed in their rhythm. He glanced sideways at me, his lips pressed in a thin line.

Nelson leaned his body over the railing. "You know the papers have stopped publishing the American body count, right? I checked—"

"My brother might die, you asshole." I leapt to my feet. My plastic chair pitched across the porch. "He might die. Why don't you care about young men dying, either of you? In countries far away, or at home, in a reservoir not a hundred goddamn yards from where you sleep. How can you feel so removed?"

The air fell silent save for the thrum of the power plant. Nelson kicked at the rotting porch rails with his boot. I felt a hot, nauseating anger in the pit of my stomach that sliced through the bleak paranoia I had felt since Thomas's death.

"Look, Johnny," Eli said. "We're each trying to deal with why this is all happening. We're just doing it in our own ways." His voice sounded thick. He spit a glob of tobacco into the empty coffee can at his feet. It hung in the air for a moment like cold molasses. We retired to our respective cabins early that night. The power plant hummed its mosquito hum as darkness fell over the Mystic.

Chad did not call the next evening, either. I finally heard the phone ring early on Sunday morning, and I leapt across the cold cabin floor and out the slumping door to reach it.

"Johnny, my boy," Chad answered. He sounded bone-tired.

"It's good to hear your voice," I said. I couldn't catch my breath. "How are things?"

"Not much to complain about over here," he said.

"Of course there is."

Chad's sigh sent a long rush of static through the line. I heard the echoes of young men and of what sounded like a poker game.

"We've started burning parts of the jungles, just like the papers said we would. Everything north of me is scorched or smoking, and there are screams at night, Johnny, unlike anything I've heard before. One of the guys says there's a sort of monkey species that can make that scream—" Chad cleared his

throat and spit. "—But I'm not sure."

"God damn," I breathed.

"I'm going on R&R tomorrow, though, down on the southeastern shore. It'll be tremendous. I feel so lucky, Johnny—just noodles and women and the back of my eyelids for the next two weeks."

"Paradise," I hummed. I almost believed it. "So, Johnny" said Chad. "How is the Mys-

I could so easily give him what he wanted. I wanted to; I wanted to tell him of fat, glistening rainbow trout and of scarlet patches of prairie-fire blooming in the shade of the northern slopes and of haunting Blackfoot hymns sung by Eli on the porch when he thought I was very asleep.

"Things here aren't so good," I said. "I'm sorry."

There was silence on the other end of the line.

"Well..." said Chad. "What is it?"

"Someone's died, Chad, a boy from our crew. His name was Thomas. He drove home for the weekend and never made it back and no one's saying a word about it."

"I know," he said.

"I feel like I'm wearing his death like a second skin."

"I know," he said.

"You know?" I lean my head against the splintering wood of the phone booth.

"We don't talk about death here, either," said Chad. His voice sounds far away. "Sometimes we can't. We're young men. We've only lived a little of this life, and try as we might we'll never accept or comprehend."

I looked down and saw my knuckles had turned white from gripping the receiver.

"But it's less about death and more about

tic?"

my expectation of death," my voice cracked. "Meaning I didn't expect death this summer. Meaning I feel shaken and I feel alone and all the space I sought out to find myself suddenly feels like too much."

"Too much space."

"Yes," I said.

"Sometimes we go out on patrol and nothing will happen and so we just idle the boats in the water," Chad spoke slowly. It sounded as if someone else were tugging the words out of his mouth, to his disbelief. "We just idle. We look at the moonlight on that rotting river and listen to bombs burst as villagers sing and pray inside their hovels. It really hits me, in that moment, like a fist to my gut and I can't get enough air—why is this all happening?"

"Everyone's asking the same thing," I said. I looked up at the darkening sky. The sun slipped behind the mountain ridges earlier and earlier every evening, a reminder that summer was coming to a close.

"Brother," Chad said. "Brother." He was crying.

"I'm here," I said.

"I don't know what I can save you from," Chad said. "Just make it home, Johnny. For the both of us, promise? You can go home."

"You have to come home, too, Chad." My voice cracked.

"I'll meet you there."

I had never heard such a forlorn promise.

I received a phone call a week later, from Eli, in the still gray of morning. I was sleeping a deep, hard sleep on my mother's beige couch, and the shrill ring of the phone sent me flying off its narrow frame. He called to tell me that it was gone, all of it.

He had returned from town the night before and realized, as he wound around the reservoir, that the light above the wheelhouse—our landmark in the night—had been extinguished. He didn't think much of it; he parked his truck in the yard and pulled off his heavy boots and drifted off to sleep. He woke, sometime around five a.m., to see 750 feet of metal rails twisted like pretzels and wooden ties violently uprooted and thrown a hundred yards in each direction.

The great pipe had burst. A hole the size of a basketball had disgorged a torrent of water that rushed down the valley's path of least resistance. A fifteen-foot wide chasm, a cruel riverbed, lay where our railroad track once lay. No signs of our work remained. The river took and it took and it was as if that summer had not happened at all. I set the receiver back in its cradle. In the end, everything was lost to water.



Elle Casey

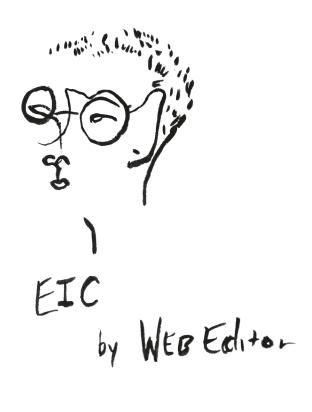
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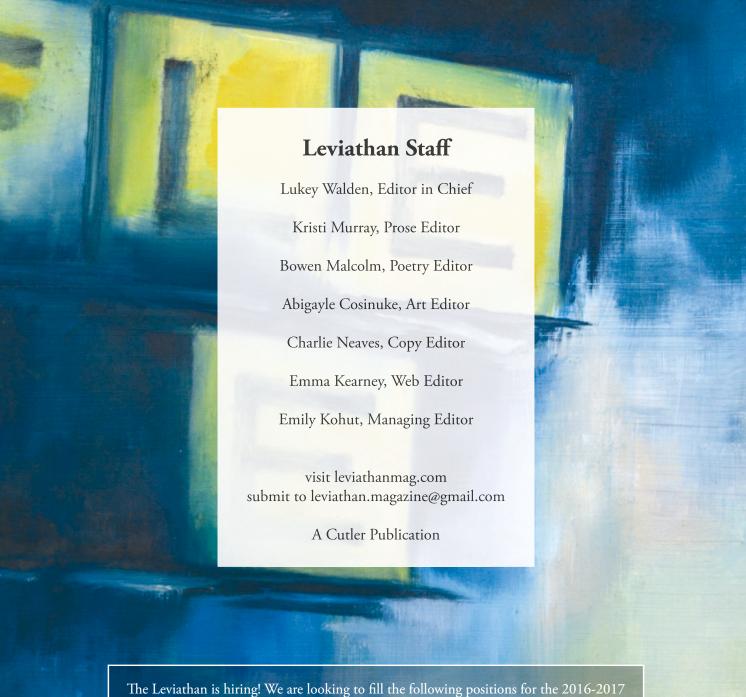
Andrew Kirvin-Quamme

One morning in our Madrid hotel I watched a single drop of sweat Emerge on the edge of your brow

With such lambent beauty
The sun filled this quivering gem
As you lay naked on the white sheets
Dreaming you were somewhere else







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