

"A Quarterly
Published Strictly
Quarterly"

Works & Days

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Summer 2012

Nº 3

Scenes of Scent

by Hendrika ter Elst



Recipes:

Mise en Place

by Ashley Suzan and Eric Wines

Alexandria...

by Betty Beaumont



Our Trespasses

Part Three of Three

by Cara Marsh Sheffler

Darkness was general over Gabe's State. It was his time of day again. Twilight was almost gone and the only thing bluer than the grass was the stripe along the bottom of the sky. The power lines loomed here, too, pearlescent in the half-light, peeping over hills that crested as waves high enough to damn the strongest swimmer. Yet, Eisenhower's highway system cut through even these... {Cont'd}

Fiddler Mantis

by Sarah Marriage



"At dawn get to your fields, and one day they'll be full." - Hesiod



Sketch

by The Inner Banks

{ ʘ }



California Nocturne

by Gillian Louise Bostock



Poems

by Jessica Tyner

I drove to Irazú Volcano
two weeks
after being split open
and threaded
back together.

{Cont'd}

Barcelona's Multiverse

by Lluís Busse



Caught Up with the World of Fiction

by Mossy Pine

Ratatouille Linguine

by Gillian Louise Bostock with Cara Marsh Sheffler

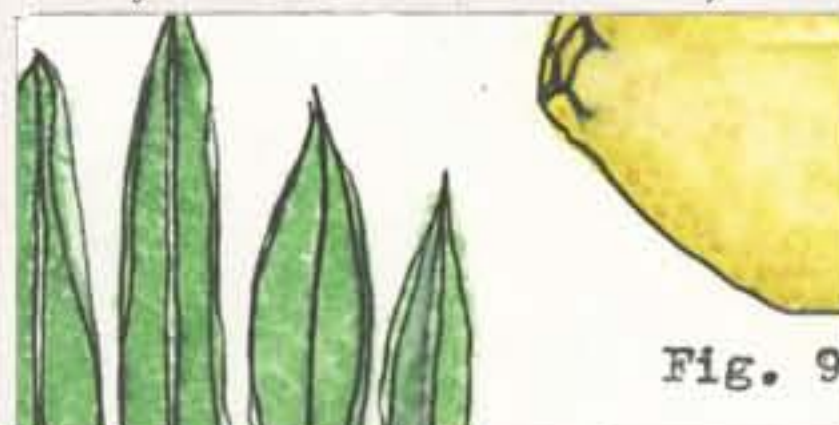


Fig. 9

Overpass

by Matthew Coulter



Spooning AND Sugar Daddy

by Rachel Lyon

We slept together curled like
curls in a locket in my small bed
when my mother was afraid of
the dark or of her husband, my
father, the third person in our
house. Her skin was always hot, I
remember, and our tee shirts
were damp under the down blan-
kets. One night when I was
little—I don't know how little—
not yet eight—I woke from a deep
sleep... {Cont'd}

Baltimore Beauty

by Hyeseung Marriage-Song



The Ambassadors

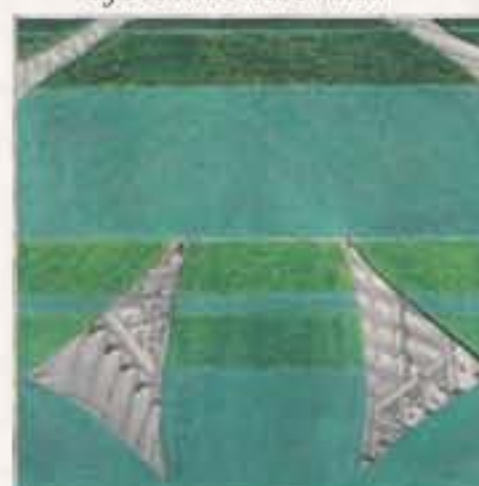
An Overture

by Luke Cissell

{ ʘ }

Interiors / Exteriors

by Melissa Haas Hinton



Our Trespasses

A Pilgrimage in Three Parts

"As I was walking, I saw a sign there
And that sign said, 'NO TRESPASSING';
But on the other side, it didn't say nothing!
Now that side was made for you and me!"

—Woodie Guthrie, "This Land Is Your Land"

"The moderns, carrying little baggage of the kind that Shelly called 'merely cultural'...are the true pioneers...Their computers hum no ghostly feedback of Home, Sweet Home. How marvelously free they are! How unutterably deprived!"

—Wallace Stegner, *Angle of Repose*

[READ PART ONE HERE](#)

[READ PART TWO HERE](#)

III

Darkness was general over Gabe's State. It was his time of day again. Twilight was almost gone and the only thing bluer than the grass was the stripe along the bottom of the sky. The power lines loomed here, too, pearlescent in the half-light, peeping over hills that crested as waves high enough to damn the strongest swimmer. Yet, Eisenhower's highway system cut through even these, merciless in its shape, monomaniacally level—a straight line leading West endlessly, leading to nowhere much at all.

It was all too heroic, wasn't it? Gabe asked himself this over and over, almost incantatorily, over and over, again and again. Gabe knew this feeling in such a way that he understood it as Uncle Dall's. *Planning? Planning was for suckers, stooges, dolts.* That was the tragedy: all these quixotic attempts to go straight pile up until *something happens* and it's time to fix everything all at once. As a bulwark against the inevitable, each microscopic victory is blown up into a fucking tickertape parade, until fixing anything at all is out of reach, simply too heroic. Belatedly, he realized that maybe he could have fixed it bit by bit, but now it was all too heroic to try to fix everything all at once and there was no other way to fix anything at all. The gesture was too grand; it was beyond him. *And then what?*

Gabe wasn't sure whom he was thinking about.

Nat was sleeping now, snoring lightly in her corner of the cab of the Ford, and Gabe was grateful for it. He hadn't told her about the birth certificate and, the longer he didn't, the more it felt like a secret he would keep from her forever, though there was no apparent, logical reason for this conclusion. Christian



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hadn't told him, either, but that was different: Gabe was the last person Christian would tell anything. For Gabe, Nat was another matter.

Aunt Addie had never given up on Gabe. Yet, now Gabe was almost certain she had known that she was not his aunt at all, but his first cousin once removed. It seemed the faster he'd run away, the more Addie would call and write. But somehow, he could never bring himself to reply to Addie and he always harbored the very specific—yet wholly unfounded—suspicion that she knew exactly what was holding him back. She had started haunting him before she was even a ghost. She kept sending those greeting cards right up to the terrible end. And she wasn't even his aunt: she *had* to have known.

According to the birth certificate, her mother was a local girl: her last name was that of a family which had been in the area just as long as Gabe's own. He knew the girl's last name as well as he knew the name of the street he had grown up on; he'd gone to school alongside her kin. *Girl*, Gabe thought. The piece of paper said she was only 17 at the time. That was certainly old enough to get married in these parts—especially in the 1950s. But, Dall had probably run away...Dall probably couldn't hold it together, so he had run away.

Gabe couldn't be certain, but he was pretty sure he knew *exactly* who the mother was. It wasn't so much detective work as gut instinct and something that only now added up to some degree. When Gabe was in grade school, he was once dragged along to a funeral for a relation of that family with the last name that he knew so well. He recalled this occasion for two reasons: (a) it was the very first funeral he had ever attended and (b) it was for a lady who did not live in town—or even in the State.

She had moved far, far away but was to be buried at home with the rest of her kin where she was from. She had been very sick for a very long time and, in the end, her family took her back home and took care of her. She wasn't young but she couldn't have been more than middle-aged, about the same age Addie was when she died and suffering from the same disease; simply, she was too young to die.

This last point was driven home because Gabe remembered that his own history teacher had taught that lady during his first year teaching. Gabe overheard his teacher say so one afternoon before the wake, when his mother had him over for tea in their kitchen—another incongruous detail that made the incident stick out in Gabe's memory. His history teacher said she was a brilliant student and had skipped a grade. Gabe had never heard of anyone doing something like that before; the girl had even been offered a scholarship to a fancy women's college somewhere East, but... And Gabe's mother had nodded and sighed. The funeral was strange and sad—foreign-feeling somehow—and, while Gabe had no specific recollection of Addie at it, he vividly remembered the occasion, mainly because he had no idea what he was doing there.

That had to have been her—and that had to have been how Addie came to be passed off as Celeste's twin sister. They were born only six weeks apart! It all made sense: why Gran always forced Dall to stay with her when he was in town, yet why no one else would take him in; why Addie had named her pet raven after her "uncle." Gabe felt actual, physical pain as his mind lighted on that terrible detail and he wondered when—and how—Addie found out he was her father. Was it before or after he died? Did Addie actually wish to be buried next to a deadbeat for all eternity or had Gran willed her idea of a whole and happy family upon her niece's corpse? Did Addie have any kind of relationship with her mother at all? Was this why her mother came home to die? How, despite it all, and despite her terrible, protracted illness, did Addie come to be so lighthearted and forgiving? Or, was that just a front? How much of her own father did she see in Gabe? Did she genuinely love Gabe as she loved the others—perhaps more so because of all the similarities? Or was it quite the opposite and did she extend herself his way with the hopes of tamping down Gabe's own potential to inflict pain and ruin?



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And what of Uncle Dall himself? What of this pathetic, venal man Gabe had so admired and whose belt he wore as though it were possessed of talismanic powers? Did he roam about the country with hookers and cardsharps while his own daughter was pawned off as his niece? Did he ever try to right it all when he returned home with all the frequency—but none of the predictability—of a comet? Was he scrappy and full of promise as a young man? Was that what his neighbor fell for? Or was it a quick tumble in the hay that proved her undoing? Was Dall not some rakish, lovable con, but simply an accidental parent too feeble and selfish to even attempt to stick around and provide? Did Dall love the mother of his daughter? Did he love Addie? Did he have any other children out there? Could Dall not cut it at home or did he *simply not care* to cut it at home? And, in the end, did that matter one bit? Gabe doubted it.

Dall had shaken off the weight of so many places and people and things that, as Gabe drove into the dark night on a highway that abutted leaky sandbags, he felt he had entered into a world of fossils: not even of objects, but of their ghosts. Gabe wondered not *if* he, too, were destined to become such a ghost, but *what* he would one day haunt forever. The end of his dream came back to him, specifically when the water was neck-deep and he discovered he had forgotten how to fly.

* * *

The Delectable Motel was a little under two hours from Beulah, the town nearest the cabin at Zion Bend. Madison said it was where her family stayed whenever they didn't get an early enough start or simply hit bad weather and needed a break from the road. Gabe and Nat would have been more than happy to go the full distance, but they would likely need Fearing's or Good-Slay's assistance when they arrived: in the same phone call spreading the good news of the Delectable, Madison let the two know that some of the roads were flooded and it would be best to arrive during the daytime. What's more, a nighttime arrival was highly unusual and might alarm someone.

—It's shoot-first-ask-questions-later country, so you *do not* want to alarm anyone you don't have to catch unawares.

This warning was a bit much: Nat understood it was rude to wake anyone up past his normal bedtime; that was not unique to "shoot-first-ask-questions-later country." However, since Gabe had found the admonishment more than a little tiresome—and had yet to relinquish his antipathy toward "*Madeline*" to begin with—Nat did not pursue the topic conversationally as they neared the place.

Gabe pulled into the Delectable parking lot with a flourish under the lights of the neon signs, raking the gravel like an interstate cowboy in a halftime commercial—however, when Gabe slammed on the breaks, the Ford's front bumper fell off.

—Fuck!

The night manager was already leaning in the doorframe to watch them as they both disembarked from the driver's side door to survey the damage.

—*Whoo-ee!* Sorry 'bout that, son.

—Yeah, well, she's old. Any room at the inn?

—Sure, c'mon in when ya sort out your vehicle! Ring if I ain't behind that desk and I'll be out *toot-sweet*.



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The bumper—made of metal, real metal!—was heavier than either anticipated. They picked it up and threw it under the tarp over the bed, next to the camera gear.

—At least cops can see the license plates, now, Nat said in an attempt to be helpful.

—Tags, babe.

—Whatever.

They turned toward the front office when suddenly most shrill, awful cry either of them had ever heard rang out from the forest. To Nat, that sound was the very sensation that inspired cavemen to build the first fire; to Gabe it was the sound of everything he had felt that day being released by some poor, karmically challenged animal. The source was discernable only in direction, but whatever creature it was that had come to harm, that cry spelled out one thing and one thing only: certainty that it was about to be killed. The screech rose again, but was suddenly cut short by a shotgun blast and some distant, wheezy laughter.

The couple walked briskly inside.

—You folks like your nighttime huntin'? Gabe asked the motel keeper in the local patois.

—Oh, I wouldn't recommend a midnight stroll down Lovers' Lane if that's what yer askin'.

With that, they were given the keys to the room that looked out onto the busted Ford. Although the Delectable clerk had not inquired into their marital status, his motel was surprisingly tidy, fitting enough for a family stay, as Madison's recommendation had suggested. Perhaps emboldened by her night at the defunct pet cemetery, Nat was mildly disappointed in this; the proprietor had not even been all that tooth-shaken or grizzled. The Delectable décor, however, delivered: midcentury motel gothic, which is to say a teal bathroom and wood-paneled walls with pictures of butterflies. The next town over was eight miles away, population: 82.

Nat hopped into the shower and Gabe paced about, still attempting to compose some text message to Faith. It seemed with every minute that passed, the task grew in difficulty and that difficulty was only compounded by the necessity of explaining his delay, now in excess of six hours. At this point, the funeral was little more than a school nurse's handwritten note, an excuse to change interlocutors at a cocktail party. It seemed telling that he was using the excuse of a death to avoid the discussion of a life—and he did not like what he was being told.

Half out of procrastination and half in need of a little inspiration, or some reminder of the world he was expected to contact, he checked Facebook on his phone, which somehow had decent reception again. With a certain nervous tic, he surreptitiously glanced at the bathroom door, as though to ensure it was closed, as he looked at Faith's page. Scrolling down, he saw Faith had just sent his roommate, the chef at the Blue Ox, a message: she congratulated him on being made a partner. Gabe had to sit down as the room started spinning. *He sold me out; they BOTH sold me out...*

When Nat came out of the shower, she found her boyfriend half collapsed on the luggage rack. He made up an unnecessary and completely incredulous lie about dropping his toothbrush somewhere and knocked past her, locking himself in the bathroom. As he emerged after an unknowable, indeterminate amount of time, he turned off the bathroom lights. Nat stopped him in his tracks,

—I'll want the bathroom light on in case I get up later; and I'll want the light above the bed on to see what I'm doing...



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All day long, Gabe had driven precariously alongside sandbagged riverbanks, toward the Floodwaters' source at Zion Bend. He was weak and weary. His mind was consumed with ghosts of the past, the present, and the future. Nat, meanwhile, had no way of knowing this.

—Oh God, Nat. I'm dead. I've been drivin' all day. At least let me rest a moment.

He undressed and collapsed onto the bed as she ignored him, set up the lights as promised, and crawled next to him.

—Too dead even for a little *motel sex*?

Her sex drive had always seemed like such an asset—to them both. But how she judged him when he didn't put out! Wasn't this supposed to be the other way around? Both of them thought it, but neither ever dared utter those words. It is a truism that men are at their weakest right before they get off and women right after, but this road trip had flipped around even that.

Here he was indulging her, participating in her photographic field study, so it followed—he supposed—that the subject never could demand anything, least of all how to be viewed. Gabe felt used,

—You know, this ain't exactly a goddamned vacation for *me*.

He smacked out the light above the bed.

Then, what was the point? They both knew she was thinking it: *What was the point of a road trip if they weren't going to fuck in each motel and then in the cabin?* She felt as guilty for thinking it as he felt guilty for deliberately holding out so that she would. After an emotionally harrowing, long day of driving, Gabe was not about to cede an inch of ground. However, as any student of warfare in this part of the country can tell you, home turf is an often decisive advantage against greater artillery—at least in the beginning. Gabe was waging a defensive battle:

Childhood bedroom sex. Motel sex. What was next? Gabe wondered, Pentecostal church sex? Whatever happened to good, old sex? With me? Her efforts to make everything a special occasion felt so contrived that Gabe could not let himself admit that he was worried she was compensating for something or trying to cover some horrible truth he was too slow to glean. Was he slipping a step behind even here? Was there anywhere he wasn't losing his touch? His touch had gnarled into a grasp and what Nat was telling him was that even that grasp was slipping.

Nat had dropped her towel carelessly on the floor and, as Gabe saw it out of the corner of his eye, he recalled the previous evening. Two syllables overtook his entire brain: WISEMAN. Well, Gabe thought, *this is his gig now! Good luck, pal!*

Gabe quickly kissed Nat on the cheek and turned over to face yet another wood-paneled wall. A slap, she thought, would have been subtler.

* * *

Once the lights were out, Gabe picked up his train of thought exactly where he'd placed it on the luggage rack: *I was set up.*



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Having admitted these words to himself soundlessly, he became somehow calm. His anger at Nat all but faded completely and he achieved the objectivity he craved. He saw, too, that he had simultaneously sought and hidden from himself this objectivity ever since the panic attacks began. This was his absolutely fundamental problem: everything he did, he undid with the exact fever pitch of energy he initially put in—no more, no less. It was as though his imagination for life were preoccupied with symmetry. Once this occurred to him, it was no longer an oppressive mystery that his conceptions of his relationship, his job, and his family should unravel all at the same instant. Rather, it made perfect sense: he had flamed out when asked to provide, when forced into a moment when he'd have to account for himself and all his actions and decisions.

His manager and his roommate smelled this on him and they cut him out of the expansion so that they themselves would have bigger stakes. This was both heartless and selfish, but—hey—who'd wanna throw his lot in with someone like me? Gabe wondered. Who could blame 'em? Maybe they wanted bigger pieces of the pie, but maybe they just wanted his sorry ass out; maybe Nat wanted to move into an apartment together but maybe she, too, just wanted his sorry ass out. Laying responsibility and expectations on Gabe seemed a surefire, perfect escape plan from further association with him: and, the beauty of that exit plan—for them—was that *it would all be Gabe's fault*.

More deeply than that, he had become unmoored from his family and he'd been used. He arbitrarily took the Ox on as the providers of a second home when he'd never appreciated his first. Now the *second family* sold him out. His mind flashed on how he'd always joked his roommate was like a brother he'd trust about as far as he could throw. He recalled how he had thought of Faith like a sister; what kind of sick shit was that? Now his manager had played good cop in the plot to fuck him over. Oh he was *in Gabe's corner, alright!* He was ready to push him through the ropes and out of the ring into oblivion.

Gabe had been nearly blacked out at the casino, but it didn't matter: he knew *exactly* what had happened. It was the Xanax. How could he have been so dumb? Who the hell knew what those pills actually were? Everything else he'd done, in terms of blow and booze, was par for the course. The "Xanax" was the wild card. And, as for the poker money, Gabe suddenly realized he had no idea how it got into his pocket because he hadn't put it there: his roommate had. His manager had drugged him and his roommate had stuffed the money in his pocket *knowing* he would gamble it away. Now the only flukey thing Gabe couldn't figure was how his hand got beat: *a straight flush to the Queen of Spades...*

That was the only mystery left him and he would keep it that way. Perhaps it was his own fate's way of telling him that even a nearly unbeatable hand wouldn't bail his ass out. He couldn't gamble anymore; he needed to honestly *work* for something, not just sweat before a rapt audience—one that waited with bated breath for him to fold. Even if he had come out ahead, they *still* could have said he had gambled it all and that it hadn't been his to gamble. He needed something that was honestly his own and he had to start building that now or never.

He reviewed the narrative almost to punish himself completely, to fully understand what a mess he had made:

His manager and his roommate—his coworkers and close, close friends—fed Gabe a high dosage of something. Then, they planted two weeks' take from the Ox on him and encouraged him to play high stakes poker, all the while buying him drink after drink. It was the sort of thing that wouldn't have happened if he could have kept it together, but then again it was the kind of plan someone could hatch because one could rely on Gabe to flame out completely when it mattered most. Even if they had set him up to blow it, it was still Gabe's fault.

Afterward, Gabe was positive they'd gone running to the owner with some outrageous, melodramatic lie about how they had tried to *drag* Gabe away from the table, but he had refused to budge or balk



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with superhuman strength! However, Gabe and Gabe alone had cast himself as their dupe. What happened next with Faith was all his doing—or was it? The most perverse part of this all was that even in a narcotic-induced blackout, he had still managed to get it up. But who knew if *she* wasn't in on it, too? Anything was possible at this point. Once he admitted the initial betrayal, *anything* was possible, or at least logically sound.

This was not a universe in which Gabe could abide living no longer—or one to which he could subject Nat, who was now sleeping soundly by his side. Anything was possible at this point. Only by turning away from the whole situation and admitting his complicity therein could he release himself from a scenario in which no betrayal was beyond the pale of reason.

One half of Gabe undid what the other half staked his entire future on. *But how could one half a person be different from the other?* A fucking night clerk in the Township of Progress (population: 667) was right. She was right! Realizing this felt as degrading and obvious as being moved by Top Forty song lyrics. Was he really this much of a cliché? It had to end here, now. He was sick of hating one half of himself, which is to say hating himself entirely. And, no one on this earth has time for another person's self-pity. He *had* to get over it somehow.

The real problem, he only now could glean, was not that two men he had thought were his best friends had colluded to fuck him over; the larger problem was that the possibility of Gabe fucking up *irrevocably* was entirely plausible—even bankable.

Gabe at once cringed and sighed as he prepared to humble himself before all the emotional blackmail that takes place in the name of honesty. Of course, what he was really preparing for was confirmation that he had a child on the way. He would wake up the following morning and hear just how closely he was emulating his uncle. However, in gleaning this, he decided he would not bear out the example of his beleaguered, *de facto* role model completely. Rather, he would emulate his younger brother (not that Christian ever would have gotten himself into such a mess):

He would tell Nat everything.

Some might say such a degree of honesty is selfish, but those were just the sorts of folks who look to cover their own asses. That was the sort of person Gabe could be no more. The truth does have a time and a place, but Gabe had postponed so many truths for so long that it was time to come completely clean. It ended here, now. Tomorrow he would tell her everything. He had to let her know what he'd gone and done with the future they were building. She deserved that much honesty and the simple fact that she deserved it was more important than unburdening himself.

They were a couple who had chosen to go through life together, even if they hadn't committed to the whole nine yards just yet. They had gone far enough that Gabe owed her this honesty, if only so that she could move on with a lighter heart and a clearer mind than his lies would allow her to. Only by granting *her*—not even himself—that clean slate could he live with himself. He doubted she would choose to share that slate with him, but that would be her decision to make. He had forfeited his right to it. Tomorrow, he would surrender his claim to agency in the relationship or what was left of it. At that point, and only at that point, could he get started with his own clean slate with or without Nat—though he ardently hoped *with*. (This, he mostly hoped because it was an outcome he didn't deserve. Even in his humbled state, Gabe was mapping his shortcut to redemption, though he didn't see it that way.)

Gabe felt lightheaded, nauseous, and overwhelmed—as though he had been so deeply burdened that the prospect of being unburdened were akin to inhaling a dozen balloons' worth of helium. He feared he would pop or go looping in cartoonish spasms around the room in a giant release of air. Mercifully, the fatigue took over, more sheer emotional exhaustion than even driving. More than anything, Gabe was



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deeply embarrassed at how obvious the answer to his problems was: *be open with the girl you love*...The only thing that embarrassed him more was how far he had strayed from simple honesty, how he carried so much rot in his heart and enshrined it as some congenital defect, complete with myth and majesty. It was fucking pathetic.

In the meantime, he would sleep. If not the sleep of the innocent, he would sleep the closest thing to it he had known in years. He would dream no dreams at all, just feel a vague, not unpleasant sensation of floating—of being in suspension someplace warm. Tomorrow he would surrender, and let Nat decide the terms.

* * *

The following morning, heavy artillery took the advantage: Nat already had her camera out by the time Gabe opened his eyes.

Gabe was awakened by the sound of the Hasselblad's shutter: *PLAH-schop, PLAH-schop*. She was fiddling with the camera and taking some test Polaroids of the truck out the open window; her camera had a different magazine that allowed her to change film type. Of course, she would have to figure out everything later on each time they pulled over, but she wanted to give it a whirl as she waited for Gabe to wake up—and she also figured it would be nice to have some Polaroids of that Ford with the bumper missing.

In a hollow voice, Nat said *good morning* and announced she had already showered. That was his cue to get his ass out of bed. He woke up feeling horrible—as though a small taste of proper sleep only served to remind him what he'd been missing. Things went downhill fast: on the sideboard—alongside some test Polaroids of the Ford—were pictures Nat had just taken of Gabe naked and fast asleep. She was sitting on the chair where they had thrown the motel bedspread, the kind of upholstered object that—even in a relatively clean establishment—might end up under a blacklight on 20/20. He got grossed out just seeing her sit on the thing and the pictures made his blood boil nearly to a full-on rage. He slammed the bathroom door shut and locked it as he went to take a shower, his contrition neutralized.

In the shower, a defensive mood prevailed against pictures that had been taken when he was at his most vulnerable. *All he was doing was trying to get by*. He was exhausted; he was not sleeping properly; he did not have health insurance; and he was not sure what to do about any of it. He would spend the day pretty much alone in his mind, figuring out just when and how to confess. He now had to leap over a gap made exponentially wider by Nat's selfish need to photograph his cock precisely because he didn't let her jump on it the night before. Even cornered, Gabe found a shred of something to call leverage: she had *no fucking idea* what she was in for that day. But, then again, neither did he. Surely, she had earned the right to use him, but watching her get ready to exploit this road trip further made him want to rip out his tired eyes and run them over.

As they pulled out the parking lot, she loaded the Holga. Now *both* cameras were primed to go. Gabe knew that this meant she'd be taking pictures the entire time: on the first day, it was just the Holga and, on the second day, it was just the Hasselblad. She could use the Holga from the cab of the Ford, but they had to pull over for the Hasselblad. How could he possibly confess to her when she'd have one of those two fucking things up to her face for *the whole day*?

At first, she was only taking pictures intermittently, though the pace picked up once they got coffee and a little breakfast to take on the road. About an hour after they left the Delectable, the caffeine kicked in and, before long, she was leaning out the window at a precarious angle:



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—Okay! Slower, slower... That's it... Okay, now *gun it!*

"Gun it"? Gabe repeated in his mind, *Oh, you're SO LOCAL, aren't you, Nat? Hell, you've just about gone native! Yee-haw! I'm sure all those Okies just ADORED Dorothea Lange...*

And, then he'd feel hollow again for thinking that way, for preferring the wood-paneled wall to his girl the night before, for dragging her down with him.

—Alright, now slow down! Great! Maybe change lanes? Yeah, okay... *Faster, faster!*

After another hour on the road, he could hardly stand it anymore. Gabe's mouth went dry; he barely got the words out,

—Hey, Nat...

She did not hear him.

—Nat, I—I really want—Nat, are ya listening?

No, no: this would not do. Not now. It was too early; he needed more time. Also, not while they were driving: he had to look her in the eyes and even give her a chance to hit him, if she needed it. He'd hit him if he were in her position.

With that, his mind wandered to how, just a couple of months back, Nat asked him to slap her during sex—it was another night brought to them by *The Glint*. At first, he thought nothing of it, since he usually indulged in a little spanking whenever he was behind her or she was on top of him, as she was at that moment (besides, this was *The Glint*, after all). He smacked her ass as hard as he could and ran his fingernails along the stinging skin as she sometimes told him to,

—No, not there: my face.

She took his hand in her mouth and bit it. He balked and ran his throbbing fingertips along her jaw.

—But I love your face...

—Does that mean you don't love my ass?

He laughed nervously and she seized his throat, nearly knocking he wind out of him. With that, she lowered her face and bit the front of his clavicle until he heard a tiny, horrifying crunch. He screamed, flipped her off of him, and in one frantic motion, heaved himself out of bed, spun around, and smashed her backhanded across the side of her face, catching her cheek with a ring he was wearing.

She felt the blood run down her face and suddenly froze; Gabe was sure he was going to faint, vomit, or both, until Nat leapt up to her knees and licked the blood on his collarbone, dragging her tongue all the way down his torso and nuzzling him with the bleeding side of her face as she sucked him off and then violently pulled him down, pinned him, and fucked him until the bed broke.

Afterward, he fell into one of the deepest sleeps he had ever known. It was perhaps the most recent deep sleep he had had prior to the Delectable. In fact, it was so deep that he wasn't awoken by the *PLAH-schop*, *PLAH-schop* Nat's camera made as she photographed the drying blood on his body, the broken bed, and her own face in the mirror.



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The few times he allowed himself to recall that night, the memory appalled him for a variety of reasons—he had even given that ring away and asked Nat to destroy the pictures, though she hadn't, claiming she never told him how to work. Yet suddenly, for some unknown, ungovernable reason, the memory turned him on more even than the tiny harelip she'd made in his belt buckle ever had. Nat was wearing a floral, slightly oversized sundress in a garish print. It was not his favorite dress on her; he had derisively christened it her "wallpaper dress." (Nat had, of course, simply smiled at him obliquely.) Now on the road, he hated the dress even more, and wondered if she would try to fit in at a local Pentecostal congregation later in the day. This, however, was not a point he would be making that morning.

Nat almost always wore dresses and Gabe almost always appreciated the easy access they afforded, especially in the earliest days of their relationship, when any space would do: the office at the restaurant, the bathroom at the corner dive bar, the janitor's closet at their favorite museum. He was especially proud of the last item. They had pulled it off at an opening the way they pulled off all the other locations: by simply pretending to get high, going so far as to sniffle on the way out afterwards. For some reason, this was more socially acceptable.

Thinking back on those times and seeing a sign for an upcoming weigh-station, Gabe's foot grew heavy as his hand reached for the inside of her thigh, only there was nothing where it had previously been, only moments before. This meant Nat was hanging a little under half of her entire body out the passenger-side window. The speedometer crept up to 80.

—*Jesus Christ!* Gabe shrieked as he pulled his foot off the accelerator and grabbed Nat by the calf.

She brushed away his hand as absent-mindedly as one would an insect without even the means—never mind the temerity—to sting. His hand was less a threat than a nuisance. After a moment, she returned, head, torso, and all, to the cab.

—You know that door's busted! Are ya nuts?

—I thought it was broken as in *it no longer opens or closes*.

—Well, I got no clue what's gonna fall off this truck next and I'd rather it not be you.

—Uh-huh...*hmmm...*

Nat was in her own world again, adjusting the settings on her Hasselblad, readying it for when they pulled over and checking to make sure the extra magazines were loaded. Once that was accomplished and she counted her remaining rolls, she went halfway window again with the freshly reloaded Holga.

It was as though she were listening to his inner monologue and deciding—perhaps correctly—that placating him was hopeless. That is, if she was even considering him at all at this point, which Gabe was loath to admit, beyond all things, that Nat was probably considering anything but him when it came to her work. And her decision to plunge herself into that work was his own damn fault.

Or was it?

She wanted this *so badly*, didn't she? Right, she wanted to see *where he was from*—as though this had anything to with him at all. What did it mean to her? What was her point of view? Or, more savagely, to whom did she hope to sell the finished product someday? What would that person get out of it?



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by Cara Marsh Sheffler

Nº 3, Summer 2012

Everyone fetishized this part of the country, didn't they? Wasn't its role as a fetish object the only reason the rest of the country even let this part of the country exist anymore? The City's image of the region was part of the grand marketing plan for anything from Budweiser and Marlboro to Chevy and Levis—or even the Reagan ads that showed our 40th President chopping wood. It was an image always sold, yet never actually extant, like so many shares of stock.

And, here was Nat selling it, too. And just what the hell was she selling? Disaster? Doom? Floodwaters? Why not just bottle them like the stuff at Lourdes? And what was she doing fantasizing that she wasn't somehow a tourist? How dare she own "her country" when it was so *obviously* his?

Even at that moment, Gabe knew that sentiment made little sense, but patriotism is an emotion that admits logic only after the fact—it's a shoot-first-ask-questions-later emotion, as his future sister-in-law might put it. He hated himself even more for this pride but couldn't help it. These small moments of chauvinism sometimes felt as though they would drown him, drag him down into those rising waters toward God knows what raging downstream.

The previous day, they had spotted a bumper sticker that read, AMERICA FOR AMERICANS! *For whom?* Gabe had wondered, *Who might they be? All we know is where we're supposed to find them.*

Of the two of them, who owned this patent: Nat, who genuinely cared to tour the place or he who had the birthright, but had run like hell? Again, Gabe thought, he couldn't win. Anyone who has left a small town knows what it's like to be told he doesn't appreciate "his roots." Whereas, in reality, the small-town escapee knows nothing better and nothing but "his roots"—and that is precisely why he has chosen to leave.

To an American, a road trip always sounds like a great idea, or at least Americans have been led to believe it's supposed to. But—here we go again—was that simply *advertising*? Gabe certainly wasn't stoked—and he was pioneer stock, to boot. *See the USA in your Chevrolet!* Sell cars, sell Eisenhower's highway system, and sell the image of the pioneer back to the descendants. Brilliant! Goddamned brilliant and goddamned depressing. Well, *there's nothing else for it*, as Gabe's father was wont to say.

How many pre-fab houses had he seen on wheels? How many "WIDE LOADS" had almost taken out the busted Ford? These were the descendants, still on the go, their loads ever wider. And here was Gabe, *gunning it* for Zion Bend, for the same place where his forbears saw corpses now and then pop clean out of the red mud upon their Promised Land, doing a dry run for the Rapture. And the ones that kept on going West dragged their wide loads clear across the desert, leaving wagon tracks across the prairie that can still be seen from space—but ones that will never again be glimpsed from the shuttle.

This, perhaps, was why everyone in the South and West and Middle parts of this county—the Heartland that bleeds most everywhere, pooling broadly between coasts—needs a pick-up or an SUV. City-dwellers, unlike country folk, let the City bear the brunt of their nostalgia. They remember and recreate communally. In the City, municipal taxes fund mass transit that drags everybody's cultural baggage around. Out here, everyone carries his own. *Schleps* it—as he'd learned to say back East. That summed it up: Gabe was pioneer stock, schlepping his voyeuristic girlfriend around the Heartland he'd fled. *Aye yei yei*—as he'd learned to say back East.

His line of thought increasingly felt reassuring. The more his anger vacillated between self-pity and accusation, the more those two pivot points evoked a gentle, rocking motion that lulled him further through the morning, pushing the confrontation off exponentially with each stop to take another roll of film. Gabe was looking to think any thought at all except for the most obvious, emasculating one: he'd completely lost his nerve.



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They next pulled over at a decrepit, fenced-in hillock crowned with a splintering sign that read, *The Enchanted Stables*. Nat was debating whether she should haul out the tripod or simply brace her elbow into a busted wooden fence to take a picture of a pasture spattered with figure-eights of water that traced the sodden hills and caved-in barns which had yet to drain. A few palominos grazed about, confused, malarial, but Nat was clearly going for the chestnut foal standing solo by a tree. She decided on the elbow.

Glimpsing once majestic creatures in such a reduced state only further fueled Gabe's rage, which reflexively directed itself at Nat. Gabe was even a bit surprised and appalled at its force, but he was in no mood to control it. And, as he gleaned his failure in his heart, he only cycled back through despair, frustration, and humiliation that manifested itself in a desperate search for higher moral ground where there was, in fact, nothing but a gaping chasm. He stood off to the side, rubbing salt in his own wounds so at least the searing pain could dull the clarity of thought he'd had the night before—a clarity that now only served to dwarf and horrify him.

What the hell could she be thinking? Gabe seethed in silence as he watched her click away: *Horses! Hmm, horses...Am I qualified to do horses? They're here and so am I, which must mean I AM! Yay!* Out here, with a native son behind the wheel, Nat could join the great tradition of all those photographers and painters and novelists who got back to the land—for a long weekend.

Soon, they were back on the road—and Nat was having none of his mood.

—Ya wanna *navigate* a bit? We're almost there, I think.

—Oh, I'm sorry: I thought you were *from here*.

—My family doesn't own a damn cabin on the lake.

—Oh right, that's just for *yuppies*.

—Correct. Everything's relative out here.

The ground dipped lower between the hills now and the floodplain alongside the river widened. Poplars and Virginia pines saw their lowest branches submerged and the houses nearby on slightly higher ground had already hauled out blackening, runny heaps of soaked, rotting furniture, clothes, appliances, lives. They once again pulled over, this time right next to one such pile that featured a veritable Noah's Ark of stuffed animals on top, blooming with mold.

* * *

And what a guise in which to espy Mount Ararat, poking through the waters of the Flood! Nat bent down low to frame the plushy berg as higher than its surroundings, determined to photograph what she knew she could show

These rolling hillocks of blue-green, slightly lower peaks choked in waters that rise and recede, rise and recede, as though to tick off the arc of decades, but this one looming higher, a riot of muted mildew color congealing into a topological formation beneath a sky of gaseous grey.



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*And wouldn't she be damned if that weren't a raven
winging low, a pitch-black stand-in for the dove, sharp-
ening its beak to grab—to grab what?*

*What was this waterlogged grass in the background if not more water and not
more earth waiting for the Flood as humans wait for the Rapture or for the
better or for the worse? What were these discordant atoms and why did they so
war, leaving only the heaps we make to serve as paltry higher ground?*

*Why do we so carefully pile in anticipation of the Flood? What
audacity our order has! What naïveté! What stupendous cleaving!
Why do we doubt Nature's grandeur or term it the grandeur of God
when we know for certain that it is at the very least the means for
creation, destruction, and the warring in between?*

*(Though Nat thought Nature was,
too, the ends, this picture would
refrain from an editorial.)*

*She balanced before a swamp of meaning indiscernible from its careful ordering,
a mangled constellation of someone's life or a child's childhood, left to rot and be
thrown away. It was a scene both primordial and apocalyptic, the alpha and the
omega of Chaos, the tension between color and not-color, which, too, was color,
but azure-lime-asbestos, dirty egg yolk sunlight that scraped, scraped, scraped
through graying white to reflect this mound of moldy multihued plush and then
die upon Nat's frame in a short and brutish final exhalation, snapped in place by
her shutter as a butterfly netted, etherized, and pinned.*

PLAH-schop!

* * *

Gabe had spent the entire morning scavenging for bile, adrenaline, invective—any fig leaf for his dignity, his defeated sense of purpose. As he stood watching Nat take photos of the sodden wreckage, he willed himself to have a very certain understanding of what Nat was selling: misery. Other people's misery. Poorer strangers' misery. To Gabe the Morally Convicted, this was simple devastation, and what Nat was doing was a greater desecration than taking pictures of a corpse. Nat had the temerity to trot out the tripod for the first time all day and Gabe thought a vein in his neck would explode, though his mouth did first:

—You wanna see *THIS*, don't ya?

The shutter made the surgically precise yet plummy *PLAH-schop* that is unique to a Hasselblad. Nat glanced at Gabe obliquely and then back into her viewfinder to snap another picture.

PLAH-schop!



Our Trespasses

by Cara Marsh Sheffler

Nº 3, Summer 2012

Gabe wondered if the Hasselblad wouldn't make an equally indelible splashing sound if he were to throw it into the floodwaters.

PLAH-schop!

This had turned into an art project: nothing more, as Gabe would tell you, and nothing less, as Nat would surely say. Gabe felt it and burned. He was so wound up, he'd at last forgotten that he was the one who had wound himself so tight. Yet, even in this wound-up state, he could sense Nat's earnestness—and her earnest need to use him to get the work done. *There's nothing else for it*, as his father would say. After a dozen photos, Nat extracted the film from the magazine and licked the roll closed like an envelope.

There's nothing else for it. Gabe finally realized why his father was so quiet, just clapping him on the shoulder now and then: there was nothing else to say. And so it was that Gabe could not communicate to Nat everything that was lost in the Flood—both the one before her camera and his own. He wondered what she would communicate when her turn came.

But, in the meantime, there was an intense communication breakdown that wanted tending; Gabe played his part, storming off to the pick-up and slamming its only functioning door, flouting all the caution with this museum piece that he had urged on his girlfriend all day. At the creak and crash of the door, Nat glanced over her shoulder obliquely, as though to acknowledge this hypocrisy. Gabe didn't give a shit: he needed to be alone.

No sooner had he settled into that special silence of the inside of an old car when his phone buzzed with a new text message. Gabe almost had a heart attack and, for a brief second, hoped he would: it would save everyone so much trouble. He shimmied a hand into his jeans pocket and saw the name of the sender: Faith. The settings on his phone were such that he could only see the beginning of the message on his screen—that meant it was a long one. It began:

Still need to talk to you, but I've come to a decision and need you

Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ... Gabe's heart began racing and all he could think was *Jesus Christ* over and over again. He was instantly soaked through with sweat and nearly dropped the phone, but managed, with clammy thumb, to open the rest of her message and read it with blurred eyes,

Still need to talk to you, but I've come to a decision and need you to know this now: I want to forget what happened that night. Please don't talk about it to anyone—if only as a favor to me. Jean-Paul and I are staying together. I feel like I've been given a second chance somehow... We still need to talk, but I wanted to let you know that I've made up my mind. Sorry to tell you like this, but I had to tell you now.

And, just like that, the hanging man was cut loose! Gabe could hardly believe the speed and magnitude of his own reprieve! His heart soared with total jubilation! He would start again! He knew he could do it, too! He knew he had it in him, he just needed *one more chance*—and now he had it! Oh, it had been a dark night of the soul the previous evening, but how he could now appreciate the light! Even the sun seemed to strain to poke through the clouds in the distance. It was the in the direction they were headed that day: *Ever, ever to westward! ...and follow the sea that is silent; did it not yet exist, now would it rise from the Flood.*

He could *and would* start anew: he needed to get away from all those toxic, backstabbing assholes sooner rather than later. He was walking away unscathed and the faster he kept walking, the better. The rest, he'd figure out and, in the meantime, he'd do right by Nat. He had only started to come to grips with how paranoid he had been, how much he must have blown out of proportion during this entire trip



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home. Suddenly, he felt as though finding Aunt Addie's birth certificate were more a warning from a friendly spirit than an omen from his future's ghost. He loved Nat and he'd do right by her. Tears welled up in his eyes.

But, then, it was Nat's turn to get a text, to complete the pair. She had left her phone on the impossibly broad dashboard, where it began to vibrate wildly against the scratched glass and rusty chrome. This time it wasn't Nat's mother: it was Adam Wiseman.

Of course, many hanging men who are cut loose immediately get up to their old tricks. So it was that Gabe indulged in a sort of emotional recidivism, all of his good will souring at that very instant to blind rage. He was utterly indignant: *how could he have been on the brink of prostrating himself to that liar?* Had he been so consumed with his own guilt that he'd simply *forgotten* Nat, too, likely had to come clean? This was her M.O, the same way she'd gotten him: Wiseman was lined up to take Gabe's job and she just wanted this little fucking road trip for a last hurrah and a chance to get some pictures. *That bitch!*

All the love he had felt moments before metastasized into a something equal in mass but entirely dark and violent, the antimatter of all his affection. He was new to this concept of valuing total honesty in relationships and he ripped open the door and hurled himself out of the pick-up with all the zeal of the freshly converted. Phone in hand, he roared,

—Just who the *FUCK* is Adam Wiseman?

Nat's spine snapped up ramrod-straight. As Gabe goose-stepped through the sucking, saturated turf, he watched her back expand and contract shakily. *He'd gotten her; he'd been right all along; he hadn't been paranoid about THIS.*

—Well?!

Gabe marched just two feet from her back and, with willpower he did not know he had, restrained himself from whipping her around by the shoulder to look him in the eyes. Nat swallowed hard and turned around in one clean, smooth motion.

—I was going to tell you, but when it made sense...

—Oh, ya mean after our *romantic getaway* was over and done with?

—No...No, I mean, I just wanted to wait until I had the dates—the dates for the show.

—Show?

And in this moment, Nat gleaned that Gabe had no idea that Adam Wiseman was a rather well known art dealer, whose gallery specialized in photographers on the make. Haltingly, she explained this to her enraged boyfriend, along with how, the night before she came to the funeral, she was introduced to Wiseman by chance at a party. Over the course of a long conversation, he had proposed that she take some pictures out here and send them his way.

Nat confessed with no small amount of embarrassment that she had jumped at the chance to drive out West and keep taking photos, but there was no right time to explain to Gabe the tremendous opportunity she had been offered. During the funeral, there was too much going on and she had hoped to tell Gabe when the whole show was a lock.



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She acknowledged that she was wrong not to tell him at the outset and she apologized for using him. She said she didn't want to risk explaining why she was so excited for the road trip because, *selfishly* (and she actually used that word), she was worried he wouldn't agree to go and would accuse her of exploiting the funeral, which she—admittedly—was. She hadn't told him because she had no alibi and she was sorry for that.

But, less selfishly, she did want the chance to get away with him and have some time together away from the City. She had hoped that she could tell him all about the show when the road trip was a fond memory; her own success would be a capstone, rather than the foundation of the trip. She supposed she had no small amount of hubris thinking she could fix everything at once, rather than never needing to come clean in the first place. *It was all too heroic*, you might say.

However, Gabe would not be calmed: her self-centeredness galled him. Somehow, even her apology was *all about her pictures*. Furthermore, as he saw it, not only was she probably cheating on him, she had sold him out for a road trip and already had a buyer lined up! He confronted her about the text from Wiseman saying he'd had a "lovely" time with her,

—So, when were ya gonna break this "business association" to me? When ya dumped my sorry ass? Guess what, Gabe? *I'm outta here, but y'all're gonna be on a rich person's wall somewhere! So's the family cemetery!* Is that art, Nat? Is that what success means? Is that progress?

—Gabe, no one is dumping you! And why do you think I'd have to fuck somebody to get him to like my photos, anyway?

This outburst quieted them both. Gabe became canny in his rage and saw Nat make a lunge for moral high ground, which he vowed to block. Meanwhile, Nat understood what moral ground she had already lost: she *wouldn't* be dumping Gabe. They certainly had been having their fair share of troubles as a couple recently, but now she was at the root of them. Gabe, on the other hand, only had to back off any mention of infidelity: he just had to stick to the world of facts, which was pretty damning.

Gabe's imagination for life largely sought out symmetry. There was a great deal of symmetry between boyfriend and girlfriend at this particular moment: Gabe had advanced his career on success that wasn't exactly his own; Nat had now staked so much on pictures she had not finished taking, let alone edited and shown. Though neither knew enough to admit it, each was not so much working towards a Big Break as waiting impatiently for a *deus ex machina*—something that would magically pluck them the hell out of Dodge.

What Gabe did next owed perhaps to the probable symmetry only he could perceive: that of their cheating

On the one hand, Gabe had a stunning opportunity to apologize, to achieve that clean slate he'd so desperately wanted the night before. He could confess to everything and perhaps that openness might inspire Nat to do the same, if she had any cause to. Nat might even be grateful she wasn't the only one hiding something. And, even if she were lying and decided not to tell the truth along with him, Gabe could at least know at that point that he had done his best and offered up all the honesty he had previously shirked. It would be her call to see what happened next, but that's what a relationship is all about: trusting and respecting another person's ability to make decisions. Right now, as never offered up before, was a chance to earn that trust.

On the other hand, *fuck that!* What good was karmic penance when he was already coming out ahead? She had just confessed to using *him* all week and she *still* might be lying about something! What had Nat done to deserve his humility? Besides, Lady Luck was *clearly* on his side that day and who was Gabe to



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dump her? Gabe's initial rage had cooled into a steady calculator which churned out the following sum: if he had the upper hand just a little longer, he could fix *everything* to *his* liking and then set the terms for what would happen next. Chances were that the Ox was over and he'd be striking out on his own now, and it was Nat's goddamned turn to pay it forward and give him his due, rather than nag him about every expectation she'd heaped on him without his asking. For the first time all week, Gabe was up and what idiot folds when he's riding high? Gabe would up the ante.

—And those pictures ya took of me this mornin'! What the fuck was that all about?

Nat defended herself meekly, sputtering and backing up over her logic again and again, circling tighter and tighter around another apology, but not quite landing there,

—I—I don't understand why it's insulting; I mean, I guess I do, but don't artists always have their muses?

—Not like this, Nat! They usually *know* they're posin', don't they? Isn't there usually some *consent* involved

—I'm sorry, Gabe. I'm *sorry*.

—It's not enough to drag me out on a road trip or to make me your own personal *chauffer*, is it? You gotta use every goddamn *inch* of me, don't ya?

—Gabe, I'm sorry; I didn't mean it that way! Honestly, I didn't!

Nat had not finished getting out the last sentence before Gabe was already stalking back up through the sucking earth to the old Ford, alone.

He watched with icy self-satisfaction as Nat ran about, clearly shaking as she packed up her gear. As she secured it all underneath the tarp, Gabe lit a cigarette and leaned against the cab smoking slowly as she scrambled into the car through his door. Even Nat could sense his smugness as she tried and failed to make eye contact, but she was too ashamed of herself to point out his power trip or feel anything other than that she deserved to do some time under its yoke.

Rather, she took out the case for her Holga as Gabe finally extinguished his cigarette. She made sure he saw her putting the camera away as they pulled back onto the road.

Beulah, the town nearest the cabin at Zion Bend, was now less than five miles away.

* * *

They arrived in the forest just past Beulah to discover the river had crested at 46 feet above flood level. Zion Bend was no longer a peninsula: the Flood had rendered it an island. The dirt road to the cabin was completely submerged.

The dam groaned mightily downstream where the headwaters raged. Even the trees here seemed to know it, feel it, though mostly the flora appeared confused, and nearly humiliated to be so submerged in muck and water. Driveways lifted up out of the river to frantically present houses, these teetering anthropological remains along the floodplain, more precariously perched in their places than ancient



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by Cara Marsh Sheffler

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archeological ruins. Everything level with the river was gone and what was slightly above it had flooded through.

A small group of strangers who had not been back in years held one another and sighed like those humiliated trees. The mud backed up onto the end of the road to what was once the peninsula and kept going, filling gardens and kitchens all the same. Nat and Gabe crawled out of the pick-up deferentially and quietly joined the crowd of people staring agape at the brown and loamy waters. Since it was yet off-season, many of these vacation homes were not inhabited and their actual owners, such as Madison's family, were many counties away.

The people said all kinds of things. They said everyone had built too close. They said it didn't used to be like that here, but then the real estate boom came and no one gave a damn about the town or the lessons the river had taught it. They said they had grown up here before the developers started stocking the lake with trout to sell cabins. They were, Gabe thought, just as cynical as any old artists he'd met in the City were about Downtown gentrification—speaking of that as though it were its own kind of Flood.

Nevertheless, this was not Downtown, not even comparable to the small town Gabe was from. There was not even a public school to feel sorry about losing textbooks, so there were no news crews, no orange electrical cords running alongside the sandbags for the local sheriff to scream about electrocuting everyone. The birds had flown to higher ground and the silence between asides was such that you could almost hear the clouds rustle as they moved across the sky. The doom was spoken for by the very callousness of those clouds.

The crowd, which apparently had gathered for a short, spontaneous, Greek chorus-like walk over from the post office, was began to break up and head back to individual cars. Gabe started skipping stones absent-mindedly, wondering what to think of the drive back East ahead of them. Without stopping for photos, could they manage it in a very long day? The first stone he cast skipped half a dozen times and finally sank nearly halfway between where they were standing and the rise in the road on the other side of the waters, where a weeping willow's branches swayed, lank and weightless in the water as a woman's hair.

The drive back would be miserable, he concluded. Yes, Nat was suddenly cowed. But, he felt hollow, as though all the serotonin had left his brain following a hit of something he shouldn't have needed or wanted to take. What good were the morning's winnings if he couldn't celebrate them with Nat? Worse, why did they have to come at her expense? As an inveterate escape artist, Gabe felt no small amount of giddiness that he'd gotten off without confessing—and he still felt smug that he'd reasoned his way into his own pardon—but now he needed his girl to celebrate with. He could be certain that Nat would be eager to please, but now they were flooded out of a venue!

Gabe skipped another stone and had another thought,

—You know what? I don't think it's that deep.

A local woman looked him over, puzzled.

—Oh, I reckon it's 'bout six or seven feet!

—But, watch!

Gabe skipped another stone,

—See how it's ripplin'? That's shallow water.



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by Cara Marsh Sheffler

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Nat looked utterly incredulous.

—Gabe. C'mon. What does it matter anyway?

Gabe was already taking down a branch from a weeping beech,

—I am sick of this Flood. We've been alongside it for days and now I wanna get across. We've driven for too long to just turn back: let's see what it's like over there and then make up our minds.

—So, how are we getting across?

—Walkin'! That's what I'm tryin' to say! I think it's shallow enough to wade across!

Nat started to smile.

—Test it out, then!

Gabe shook the branch like a javelin and smiled back as he dropped it into the water, only to watch it curl against the surface of the flooded road no more than two-and-a-half feet down. Laughing, he threw down the branch and started taking off his shoes and socks.

—At this point, why in hell not? *Madeline* said the cabin's on a hill, right?

Nat soundlessly mouthed *Madison* and Gabe winked back at her and grinned broadly as he balled up his socks. Nat called back at him,

—And yes, she did!

The local woman gave a you-crazy-kids shake of the head and suggested that, if they did go across, they leave a note for the sheriff on their car, so he knew what they were about. With that, she bade them goodbye and went back on her way to Beulah. Gabe rolled up his jeans and gave the river a tentative wade almost to the halfway point, where he turned around and called out to Nat on the shore.

—I'm game! Are you?

—Amazing! Let me put on some shorts!

Gabe could barely contain himself as he negotiated the slippery mud beneath the water and the sharp pebbles that now and then slashed at his feet. He hardly felt the pain as he ran across the gravel and back toward Nat, who was bent over, rummaging about the cab of the pick up. With a balletic vault, he jumped up to where she was balanced, craned over her, and kissed her on the neck as he grabbed her about the waist. Nat laughed and handed him a pen,

—Get cracking on that note! I'll pack up the rest back here.

Within the space of 15 minutes, they had everything they wanted to take across the river ready to go. Gabe felt so reinvigorated that he offered to carry the large case for Nat's Hasselblad on his head, as long as she took his clothes. This offer so moved Nat that she walked up to Gabe, threw her arms around his neck, and apologized over and over, only stopping when Gabe deigned to kiss her cupid lips. When this interlude ended, he hung Nat's Holga around her neck and handed her his duffle bag, taking up the Hasselblad's armored suitcase himself.



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Having proverbially caulked the wagon, they set about fording the river. It was a tricky business, walking along that mud with a balance that always seems so effortless in *National Geographic* pictures. Yet the water was warm enough and the sun was now pleasantly shining so that the only noise in the forest was their laughter darting about the leaves. It was completely ridiculous, delightfully so.

Gabe insisted on going a few steps ahead of Nat, who admiringly watched his lean hips and broad shoulders carrying her camera aloft, as though no one had ever bore any burden so gracefully. Her only regret at that moment was that her hands were full and she had no way of photographing him. They waded mostly through twigs and glimpsed a few pieces of household detritus, namely a volleyball and a yardstick, but mostly they were breathless in the stippled sunlight and mud. The water bubbled now and then and each took a turn almost slipping, but ten minutes later they were across!

Gabe hit dry land first and put down the camera case so Nat could throw their other two bags at him. He then carried her the last three steps and swung her around before easing her down on the earth and kissing her slowly, the Holga's strap now wrapped about both of their necks. Laughing more, they disentangled themselves and Nat took a few pictures of Gabe at the water's edge, asking his permission first. Once the landfall was adequately documented and that particular roll of film was finished, the two put their arms around one another and surveyed the surrounding landscape.

Gabe held Nat's hand and brought it to his face, kissing each finger in succession, Counting down,

—Five, four, three, two, one... Time to check out our digs?

—Yes!

With that, they were off! The dirt road rose at a steep angle and they raced one another up it, ignoring the intermittent rocks stabbing their bare, wet feet. Carrying their shoes, their bags, and the cameras, they ran like refugees and laughed like newlyweds, when Gabe reached the summit and froze.

Nat was less than two steps behind him, too winded to notice the change in his demeanor. She reached Gabe in a matter of seconds, but that was all the time he needed for it to sink in: the road dipped twice—and this dip was far deeper. The water circled ominously about what had to have been an overfilled and now flooded industrial dumpster, which could only mean two things:

1. The water here was at least eight feet deep.
2. They had just waded through garbage.

Smell is a funny sense. It usually precedes the other senses in its ability to evoke a specific recollection, but sometimes it requires a little boost from one of its four companions for genuine context. They looked down to see their legs were slathered in Flood scum and, finally, the smell kicked in. It was around this time they also realized the true nature of those little bubbles: a gas line had ruptured somewhere in front of the dumpster. Without a word, they sat down in the middle of the road and watched a two-by-four bounce about the fenced-in area of the dumpster, dragging potato chip bags and moldy chunks of styrofoam.

* * *



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They felt the rocks acutely as they started back down the hill, cursing the entire time. Gabe wondered if Sisyphus had, in fact, been lugging a Hasselblad while Nat was too deflated to even try to keep up. When they reached the water's edge, Nat eyed the bubbles warily:

—Do you really think we should be crossing near that gas line?

—I don't wanna find out the hard way that it's not as shallow off to the side. I've no idea where the water's edge is supposed to be. Never been here before.

—God, I don't know: this *cannot* be a good idea.

—Well, I won't light a fuckin' cigarette when we get close by, how's that?

Nat glared at him.

—I'm sorry, I—fuck it: let's just go.

With that, he started into the water and Nat followed, wondering how she would kill him if he dropped that camera case.

Once they were back at the truck—Hasselblad still dry—a new problem presented itself: neither one of them had brought linens. A slight skirmish broke out about who should sacrifice a shirt, but since Nat was holding the bags of clothing, Gabe lost out. He walked off in a huff, declaring he would try to find a hose before he dried himself.

As Gabe disappeared behind the nearest house, Nat turned to look at the river and saw the bubbles from the gas line had started roiling the surface of the water, sparkling in the dappled light like a phantom. The Holga, though far easier to set up for a shot, was out of film. The Hasselblad was loaded from before, but she would have to get out the tripod. Was there time? What if the flow ceased? She thought about it for a split second and made a grab for the case, figuring she would brace her elbow against the bed of the pick-

As these thoughts went through Nat's head, she also registered that Gabe was now talking to someone, whose voice was escalating in volume and pitch. Finally, as she took out the camera and went to walk toward the back end of the truck, it was directed right at her,

—I said, where ya from, boy? And what's *she*?

Nat's head snapped around in a quick motion as though she'd been slapped.

—Excuse me?

Nat turned to be greeted by the sight of a round and pinkish man in late middle age seated in a golf cart with a large Old Dixie decal on the side. A single-barrel shotgun was nestled against the front-facing seat.

—Whatever ya got there, ya better drop it *now* if ya know what's good fer ya! Yer on private property!

"Trespassing" is a word seldom heard in the city, where everyone has the right to be on top of everyone else, quite literally and even in transit. Out West, the trade-off for taking care of all of one's own baggage is the promise that no one else's will intrude on one's space. In the Heartland, nothing is so sacred as private property.



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Buck Fearing—who wouldn't give his name, but who else could this be?—maneuvered his golf cart deftly, until he'd cornered the city slickers in a promontory surrounded by water that was once a driveway and home-made basketball court. Yet, for all his skill with the golf cart, Gabe would have wagered Buck Fearing hardly knew the difference between a nine iron and a gap wedge.

—It's a *camera*! She's a photographer! Calm down! Can we at least talk?

—Camera! Ha, that's jus' 'bout as bad! I'll say it's worse n' a gun! Who'n hell sent ya? Whatcha nosin' 'round here for?

—He thought I was getting a *gun*?

Gabe pinched Nat: this was no time to be incredulous.

—Sir, we are *not* nosin' around. My brother's fiancée—shit, girlfriend—has a place here. Or, I mean, her family does. She lent us the keys. We parked the car here and tried to get over, but we didn't realize the road had a double-dip—and that it gets deeper over there.

—Well, then jus' who is yer brother's "*fee-ahn-say—shit, girlfriend,*" anyway?

—Mad—Mad, Christ!

—It's *Madeline*, Gabe! Oh, no! I mean Madison! Madison Baker! Sorry, he's been getting it wrong all week and it's rubbing off on me.

—I don't know what y'all're gettin' at, but what I *do know* is that y'all better *scram fast*.

—Sir, that's what we're doin'! We jus're tryin' t'wash up a bit, is all.

Even in her panic, Nat mentally noted that Gabe had slipped into an incomprehensible drawl, syntax and all. She wondered if it would "work."

Buck Fearing reached for his gun; it didn't.

—I said *scram*!

—Oh—okay—I—just hang on n' we'll be outta yer hair!

Gabe fished out the keys so spastically that he dropped them on the ground. Both he and Nat dove for them as a violent rustle overhead resolved into a considerable *THUD* and a cloud of dust rose up from the grave

Nat screamed and fell backward on the ground as Gabe jumped.

—No!

—*Jesus!*

* * *



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In the puff of dirt and smallish pebbles, a few feathers spun about and, in a pool of blood, the three plainly saw before them what appeared to be a raven with its head twisted back at a gruesome angle and its wings mostly detached from the force of the impact. It had fallen clean out of the sky.

—O, Lord, 'nother'un, Buck Fearing sighed.

Gabe was panting and feeling for his limbs involuntarily, as though to be sure they were intact. Nat could barely speak and was certain she was about to vomit, but somehow she managed to blurt out,

—This just happens?

Buck Fearing did not respond to her question immediately—the answer was self-evident, anyway—but walked over to the bird and with great gentleness bent down and stroked its tattered wings. He doffed his cap and moaned. Slowly, Gabe and Nat drew closer, huddled together. After a minute or so, he looked up at them:

—You may recall down in Arkansas for these past coupl'a years, one thousand red-winged blackbirds have dropped clear outta the sky on New Year's Eve. Here, we don' make the news. In these parts, this happens real regular but it's jus' a drip, drop, drip, drop of birds, sometimes blackbirds, sometimes ravens. Never a whole flock like in Arkansas, so we don' make the news, but jus' like in Arkansas not one damn person can tell ya *WHY*. They say it's the fireworks, but that's horseshit: we got fireworks and guns goin' off here all the time. So, I figured it was jus' as well that I should make myself a theory.

He paused and grunted a little as he rose to his feet again.

—I think it's all 'em souls that're leavin' this place, I really do. Not jus' goin' on up to the sky and tradin' a dead bird back down like that, but somethin' more. Everybody's leavin' here. Nobody stays: there ain't nothin' for no one here no more. Man's hard work's worth nothin', he works 'til he dies, and there ain't no room for his son while he's still workin', so the son leaves. Hardly 'nough for me here these days and I'm jus' 'bout the only one who's left year-round.

Gabe and Nat watched in stunned silence as Buck Fearing returned to his golf cart and popped open a small hatch underneath the backward-facing seats. He took out a shoebox.

—So it is that I've come to bury my flock.

With that, he bent down and tenderly flipped the mangled raven into its cardboard coffin.

—I usually bury 'em down closer to the river, but the Flood's all over there. Guess I'll have to find some higher ground.

Without a word, Gabe and Nat numbly followed as Buck Fearing led with way with a common garden spade. Gabe felt no sensation in his legs as he followed, certain he had already begun to turn into a ghost. Would *Zion Bend be what he haunted?* His mind would never relinquish that image of torn wings which would never fly again.

The earth was soft and Buck Fearing made quick work of the grave. Once he had placed the box in the ground and covered it, he stood to utter a quick prayer in a strange tongue the couple could hardly hear. Buck Fearing explained:

—Good-Slay taught me that.



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He nodded quickly to a silhouette further up the hill.

—He's jus' 'bout full-blood Cherokee. I say these birds're souls, but Good-Slay, he calls 'em *The Shinin' Ones*.

Nat looked up again, but Good-Slay had disappeared.

—Spirits, souls... Same thing after all, ain't it?

Nat now glanced over at Gabe, who had started to sob so violently, he could hardly make a sound. Buck Fearing sidled alongside him, clapped a hand on Gabe's shoulder, and whispered closely in his ear,

—*There ain't nothin' else for it.*

And then Buck Fearing continued on his way. As he pulled away in his golf cart, Gabe looked as though he might honestly convulse, he was so completely overwhelmed. Nat tried to lead him toward a rock to sit on, but he would not move and finally crumpled almost to the ground, until he sprang up again in total shame and shock at his condition and staggered toward the Ford, where he braced himself against the hood, dry heaving.

There was nothing else for it, was there? Gabe would never move beyond himself. Gabe would always be the fossil of his actions, a ghost. The only matter left to settle was where he would haunt. Everyone knew this—everyone but Nat over whom he'd lorded a pathetic victory so as to keep her eyes averted from the obvious. *There was nothing else for it.* His father's meaning could not have been clearer: they all had given up on him. Dall had broken their hearts and they wouldn't be so fooled again. They were protecting themselves from Gabe and only Gabe's own mother and Addie—poor, poor Addie—couldn't quite bring themselves to withhold their love.

The only reason Nat—otherwise so terribly bright, the proud possessor of a dick-shrinking diploma—didn't perceive Gabe's doom was because she was so profoundly selfish. Nat would make decisions both abominable and brilliant because of that selfishness; her priorities and motives were egregiously confused, but Nat was not doomed like Gabe. Nat was blinded both by the very qualities that had gotten her ahead and by her urge to create and, in this, Nat would manage well enough, perhaps even thrive at some point. Gabe could no longer share his doom with her—or with anyone, for that matter.

Sure, it was just a bird. Birds die all the time, but not like *this*. In fact, it didn't even matter if it was an actual omen that some deity had taken the time and care to send Gabe's lowly way. Gabe had no recourse; he would forever ensnare himself on the easy way out of problems he allowed to accrete. Gabe was all about shortcuts and, when those failed him, there was always the back door, always the escape. Gabe could abide anything except confinement and he would damn himself to everything just short of it.

Nothing grave had happened yet. In fact, he'd had one hell of a close shave that very morning, but it took a dead bird to remind him that what hadn't happened that day someday would, precisely because of how he'd acted right after his reprieve. *And there was nothing else for it.*

Gabe remembered the words from the story of Dall's belt that had been passed down to him: *Throughout the ages, Raven neither learned nor tired of his trickster ways; sometimes he won, sometimes he lost. His delight and his doom were one and the same. Raven, like his fate, was never to change.* In that vaunted family myth, the rail agent had added that he was a simple workingman, but he did not like the idea that such a character might've created the good earth willy-nilly. Gabe wasn't much more than a simple



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workingman himself (if anything, he was less), but Gabe knew better: Gabe knew this didn't matter at all.

Nat was frozen in place, unable to comprehend what was happening and unable to comfort Gabe whatsoever. After nearly a week of finding him listless and irascible, she now could not meet the pathos in front of her. All she could do was watch as Gabe completely fell apart. Slowly, quietly, and with little real purpose other than forward motion, she made her way back down the hill.

To Gabe's mind, the Flood had always been violent, vindictive, stalking human life and happiness, but he now could see that to think this was to flatter oneself. The Flood was not even a dumb brute: the Flood was simply there—the fact of Creation, both precursor and destroyer. Life is merely the time between Floods. The chaos of the floodwaters is the soup we slither out of after its recession. In pitching himself in existential battle, in picking an enemy that knew not even its tides, Gabe could only now perceive the nature of the Flood's destruction:

You think of the Flood as something that rages, but mostly it just collects and you can tell by how slowly and how ponderously the water moves that it is too deep to do a thing about it. In the end, the Flood is not a wall of water, but the seepage that encroaches, erodes, and destroys less with currents than with mold. The Flood is not what it brings: the Flood is what it leaves behind.

* * *

As they drove through the wilderness of this world, they lighted upon a certain place that Nat would often ponder. She would think back on that place and on the shot that she had missed—spectral as whatever ghost Gabe had seen, Buck Fearing had buried, and Good-Slay had blessed. To Nat, it would always be a shot she had missed. It's what haunts, what steals, what wasn't. The past we leave, but the future we lose. She would think about this as she drove and listened to Gabe's lamentable cry as he wept and trembled for any number of dreams he had dreamed:

What shall he do? Whatever shall he do?

Nat would wonder this as she drove, but more than that, she would wonder about her dreams in the ether, the solution of what was yet to be developed and aired, but already determined by light dead and gone. She would think about what to her was an image was to Gabe a place, but to each an idea impossible to share. She would think of how suffocating it was to share dreams any longer and that maybe this was why she felt so compelled to document them. But, someday, she would run out of room for that, too.

When the world was bigger, anyone could dream. She would consider the lost arts: the melodies of the Ancient Greeks; the statues of Easter Island; the two dozen languages that die each year; the pigments of the Middle Ages, azures and ochres we no longer know how to create, but that remain to float down from stained glass windows or hover above us on vaulted ceilings, coloring and sheltering our imaginations. She would consider how craft gives way to the analogue of dreams and, in so doing, shapes the dreams themselves. She would consider what it means when individual crafts are forgotten.

She would ponder the light upon her images, the air in which they would develop, kissing the paper and dying there. As she flew home, holding steady in the sky, she would consider the elements she had left behind, but how they would remain with her, as ghostly as the images she had missed, as everything that had gotten away. She would ponder the impossibility of return as she soared over the face of the Floodwaters.



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However, she would try *not* to think about a shot that she did manage to capture, this one at the regional airport. The last she ever saw of Gabe, she knew what he was doing. She was heading back East, but he would go West, wander off to nowhere much at all. In the end, he had snuck off; in the end, he had dared not point his face her way. However, Nat could not call out to him. She wanted to think she failed to do so because it would have done no good anyway, but really she could not bring herself to call his name. As in a nightmare, she opened her mouth and her voice did not rise to the occasion. So, instead she'd taken a photograph of him disappearing to another gate—the final picture of their pilgrimage together. It was not paralysis, she would reassure herself: it was art.

Was it not so unlike a dream? Soon, she comforted herself, she would awake. She would awake alone, but she would nonetheless awake. They had spent so much time alone, hermetically sealed in her apartment, isolated in their brutal physicality. Their time at the funeral, their time on the road, all their time together—what was it all if not a dream? Soon, she would awake and find out what was next; she would make her progress from this world to that which is to come, delivered under the similitude of a dream. But, only by transcending that dream to wakefulness would she attain a state, or at least a sort, of grace.

In her coach seat with an empty one beside her, Nat would feel strangely unburdened, if plainly devastated. The flight attendants and her fellow travelers would give her wide berth and that berth would only embarrass her further. Gabe had always teetered on the verge of falling apart and running away and now he'd gone and done it. At least she was no longer stuck wondering when it would all give way. Their time at Zion Bend had broken Gabe in such a way that Nat could be confident that there was nothing she could have possibly retained by calling out to him—but she wasn't thinking this way, was she? Understanding a situation has no real bearing on one's application to it.

All that would remain were the photographs—her photographs and her point of view. The rest would be memories and what are those but dreams? Memories are distorted the more often they are recalled, worn down to their keeper's wishes. In this, Nat, an expert at bending perspective, had only herself to fool. The dream would be hers and hers alone; its photographic record would be her final word. And that record would soon be mounted on white walls for foreign eyes to approach with their own perspectives, memories, dreams. They would invest her images with meaning in equal parts misguided and noble. But, the genesis of those pictures had already passed away.

She was flying back to a brand of sorts, to the flagship in the great global chain of Big Cities. Nations were extinct: now there were only demographics. Nat would consider how she had always been so thrilled to touch down on any runway the City—no matter where she was flying from—but was less so this time. She would have her reasons, but she would not admit why and that stubbornness—willfully blind as it was—would allow her to pick herself up and at least get as far as the baggage carousel.

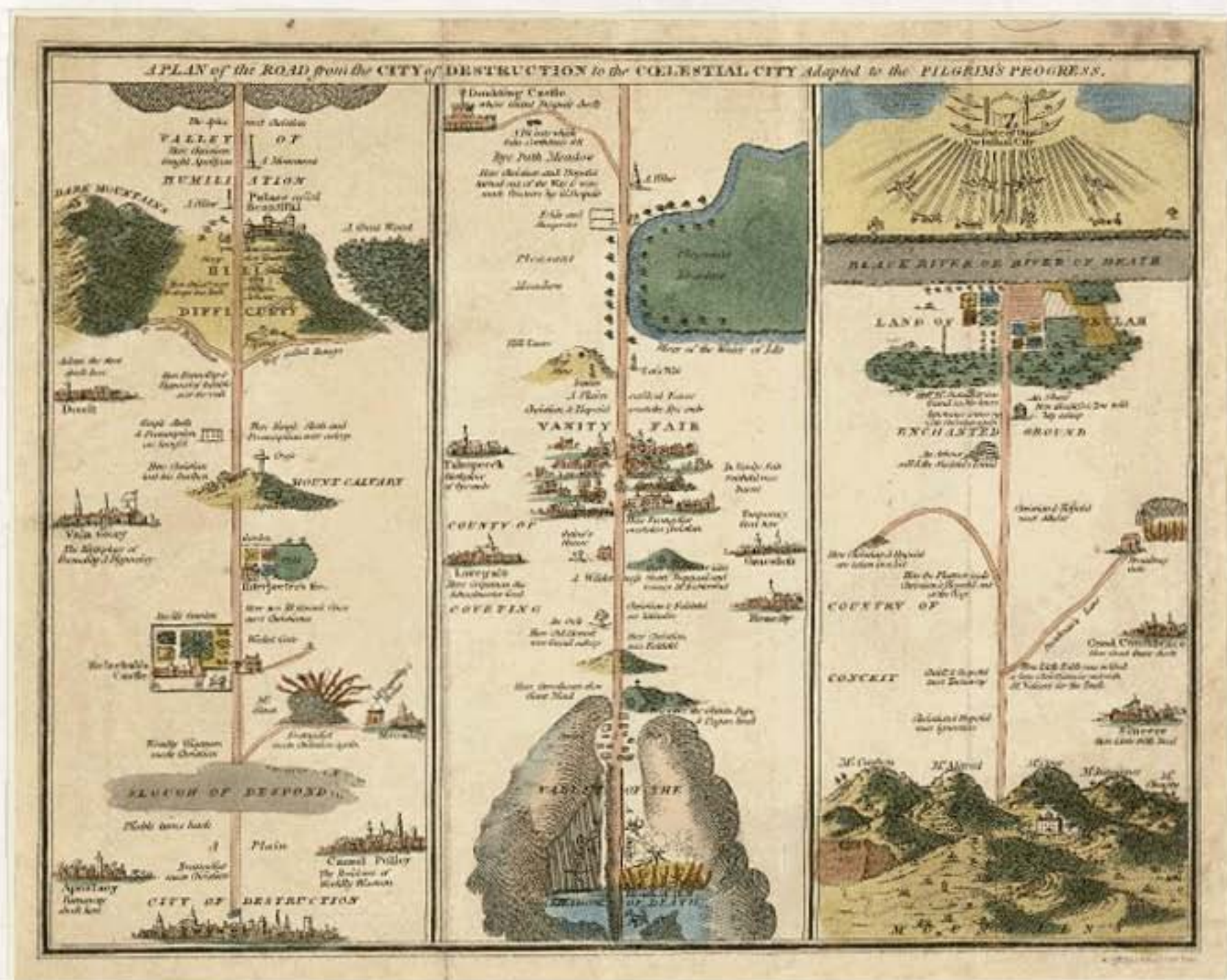
After that, man at the taxi stand would successfully guess the neighborhood in which she lived and hail a car for her. He would say, as he held the taxi door ajar and helped Nat in,

—Don't let anyone breathe on you now, honey.

‡



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Editorial Staff

Luke Cissell (*Overture from The Ambassadors*) is a musician and composer who lives in Lower Manhattan. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, he was a fiddling champion at the age of eight and went on to train as a classical violinist. Cissell's recent work includes a collection of chamber music, a full-length album, and a suite for solo violin written as a companion piece to Cara Marsh Sheffler's *Guide*. He is currently at work on his second studio album and an opera based on Henry James's *The Ambassadors*. Play with his jukebox at <http://www.lukecissell.com>.

Sarah Marriage (*Fiddler Mantis*) is a woodworking student at the College of the Redwoods Fine Woodworking program in Fort Bragg, California. Sarah studied architecture at Princeton University and has at turns worked in the fields of architecture, structural engineering, occupational health and safety, dog-walking, data management, physics, youth empowerment, and construction supply. Recent projects include the rehabilitation of a nineteenth-century townhouse in Baltimore, Maryland. She also serves as Art Director, Designer, Programmer, and Calligrapher for *Works & Days*.

Cara Marsh Sheffler (*Our Trespasses; Ratatouille Linguine Recipe*) is a writer who lives on Manhattan's Lower East Side. In her past life as an actress, she was featured in Woody Allen's *Celebrity* and in The Looking Glass Theatre's Off-Broadway production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. A recipient of the Eagles Prize, she has most recently been working on *Our Trespasses* and another novel about the guidebook used by the Donner Party, *Guide*. She will perform an excerpt of *Guide* in tandem with Luke Cissell's (*The Myth of*) *Infinite Progress* at the Suffolk in September. Sheffler is also providing the libretto for Cissell's adaptation of *The Ambassadors*. She likes road trips.

contact@works-and-days.com

Contributors

Betty Beaumont (*Alexandria...*), an internationally recognized artist, has been living and working in downtown New York since 1973. She has produced thoughtful and provocative work in a variety of media including photography, installations, public interventions, and new media. Her work challenges global social awareness, as well as socioeconomic and ecologic practices. Beaumont has had over 150 solo and group exhibitions and her work has been shown extensively in New York and Europe. She has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, New York University, and at Columbia University. Beaumont exhibited the *A Night in Alexandria...* (video projection) in *Interactive Alexandria*, a participatory online media work and a series of 168 images that also presents the physical installation, *A Night in Alexandria...The Rainforest...Whose Histories Are They Anyway?* This venue presented the entire series together for the first time. The physical installation was previously shown at MoMA PS1 and at The Hudson River Museum.

Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, **Gillian Louise Bostock** (*California Nocturne; Ratatouille Linguine Watercolors*) left New York last year to return to the West Coast and focus solely on her own work after years of putting aside her own artistic goals to become a real-live sponge of photographic extrapolapagus. Predominantly photographing interiors and landscapes, she employs the medium as a means to dabble with philosophical questions concerning the meaning of life and lock its fleeting beauty into place much like a butterfly pinned beneath museum glass. More of her work can be found here (www.gillianbostock.com) and on Cowbird (<http://cowbird.com/author/gillian/>).

Born and bred in Barcelona, **Lluís Bussé** (*Barcelona's Multiverse*) is a Phd in Philosophy who also holds a fine arts degree. He works in Barcelona as a visual artist, photographer and poet. *Barcelona's Multiverse* was recently published in its entirety, containing both Bussé's photographs and prose. In 2013, Bussé will publish his upcoming book of poems simultaneously in Spain and Romania. Additionally, *Musée Magazine* (Nº. 3, "Breaking Traditions") will feature his latest photo project. This summer, Bussé's work may be visited at Sala2 of Palau Robert (Information Centre of Catalonia) in Barcelona. More information is available online at <http://lluibussewordpress.com>

Matthew Coulter (*Overpass*) grew up in Melbourne, Australia. After studying photography, he relocated to London and then to New York City, where he worked as an assistant to a wide range of fashion photographers. He is now back in the Motherland, focused on capturing the natural beauty of the east coast of Australia. Stay tuned to future issues for new work.

Melissa Haas Hinton (*Interiors/Exteriors*) is an artist and art educator residing in Southern Indiana. As an educator, she has been given the opportunity to explore a multitude of art media and to devise unique projects that incorporate historical and contemporary connections and imagery. Observing her students develop ideas and nurturing their capacity for individual expression are extremely rewarding for Hinton, while allowing her daily opportunity to explore her own creative ideas and projects. She received a BA in Fine Arts from Indiana University with concentrations in painting and drawing and an MAT from the University of Louisville.

Brooklyn band **The Inner Banks** (*Sketch*) is the musical alter ego of married couple Caroline Schutz and David Gould and their revolving cast of talented friends, including Jim Mansfield and Zach Lane. Since forming in 2006, the band has eluded easy categorization, and in its upcoming third release, *Wild*, the band shows no sign of bucking that trend. Schutz first made her mark as the principal singer-songwriter for Folksongs For The Afterlife, whose 2003 album, *Put Danger Back In Your Life* earned a devoted following and critical praise. Gould holds a Master's degree in ethnomusicology and has a background in composing and producing. A multi-instrumentalist, he played banjo and upright bass in his previous band, The Bootleg Remedy, but has added lap steel guitar, acoustic finger-picking, sound collage, and various analog synthesizers to his Inner Banks palette. David also founded DAG! Records in the early 2000s, which now serves as the vessel for his and Caroline's music, as well as a few acclaimed outside projects. Visit the band online at <http://theinnerbanks.net/>

A native of Brooklyn, NY, **Rachel Lyon** (*Spooning; Sugar Daddy*) received her MFA in creative writing at Indiana University. From 2011-2012 she was the fiction editor for Indiana Review. She was the recipient of a scholarship to the New York State Summer Writers Institute in 2010, and in 2012 she received a fellowship to the Ledig House International Writers Colony at Arts Omi. Her work has appeared in *Hobart*, *The Saint Ann's Review*, *Arts & Letters*, and *Toad*.

Hyeseung Marriage-Song (*Baltimore Beauty*) is an oil painter who lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Born in Seoul, Korea, and raised in Houston, Texas, Hyeseung studied painting at the Water Street Atelier in New York City and philosophy and law at Princeton and Harvard Universities. She teaches in the Foundations Department at the Maryland Institute College of Art and is represented by the Eleanor Ettinger Gallery in New York City. See her figures, landscapes and still lifes at www.hmarriage-song.com

Mossy Pine (*Caught Up With the World Of Fiction*) is the songwriting project of New York-based interdisciplinary composer and performer Chris Seeds. *Caught Up With the World Of Fiction* is the title of the project's forthcoming studio album. Chris's other recent work includes collaborations with choreographers Juliana F. May/MAYDANCE (*Gutter Gate*) and Lindsay Gilmour (*Aaaaaah*). Chris studied at Oberlin and played in indie rock bands in NYC throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

Willow Jane Sainsbury (*Summer Cicada*) is an artist and illustrator, who is currently relocating to Dunedin, New Zealand. She has lived in Vicenza, Italy; Melbourne, Australia; Auckland, New Zealand; and Oxford, United Kingdom in the past three years where she continues to teach, learn and work as an artist. She most recently returned to education, learning printmaking at the Australian Print Workshop. She is currently working on her own illustration project and a study of landscapes. She is not on Facebook.

California-grown and a New Yorker at heart, **Ashley Suzan** (*Recipes: Mise en Place*) is a graduate of the Gallatin School at New York University. The youngest of four, Ashley was raised in the kitchen. An avid yogi and spinning enthusiast, her creative passions include drawing, food, and beverage. Follow her on Twitter @AshleySuzan.

Born and raised in the Netherlands, **Hendrika ter Elst** (*Scenes Of Scent*), lives and works in New York City and Upstate New York. She is a self-taught painter/printmaker and perfumer who has her own organic, handmade skincare line. In her work, she keeps challenging herself with new ways of questioning and re-seeing, defying traditional forms and classifications to breathe new life into the age-old traditions of painting and printmaking. For more information: send an email to hsterelst@gmail.com. For organic skin care visit: www.bsoapure.com

A member of the Cherokee Nation, **Jessica Tyner** (*Poems*) hails from Oregon and has been a writer for ten years. Recent projects include travel writing with *Mucha Costa Rica*, copy editing for the London-based *Flaneur Arts Journal*, and contributing to New York's *Thalo Magazine*. She has recently published short fiction in India's *Out of Print Magazine* and poetry in *Slow Trains Literary Journal*, *Straylight Magazine*, and *Glint Literary Journal*. She lives in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica.

Eric Wines (*Recipes: Mise en Place*) enjoys trolling flea markets for treasures, playing with plants, and distance running. He is co-owner of Tre restaurant in Manhattan and a member of The Skylight Group. He hosts candlelight suppers and classy cocktail parties. Wines was raised in Detroit, MI and lives in New York City. Follow him on Twitter @EricWines.