

# ICARUS

## MAGAZINE

VOLUME LXVI ISSUE I

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VOLUME LXVI, ISSUE 1

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## EDITORIAL

“in ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds”

— Wallace Stevens

Dear reader,

Please find some worlds enclosed. They are worlds of confinement, awkwardness, and pain; worlds of humour, mischief, and love. Please also find language that refigures the massive and lumbering totality around you. Please find certain notes to mark uncertain lives.

Reading is such a strange and wonderful practice that paradox describes it best. It is anti-socially social. It occurs with others and without, between belonging and observing. Words are windows of a kind: open shelters; the fabrication of strategic distance. To read, then, is to connect from afar. Think of phone calls and emigration; of maps, lucid dreaming, and translation.

Enclosed are a group of writers offering these mediated worlds, such worlds that might make us see our own more keenly. They make the strange familiar and the familiar strange.

Where will you find yourself? Our advice would be do to yourself as you would do to this magazine: open up.

— Dean McHugh *and* Michael Kemp

*Icarus* is proud to present new prose by Cathy Sweeney, this issue’s featured writer, alongside the work of Trinity students and alumni.

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# Across the Pond

*by* KATIE BLACK

She says something like, we've got to get out of here. He says I'm working on it, I'm working on it babe. She's listening to the news, she's thinking—this is bad. She tells the kids not to worry cause Dad's gonna sort it, right? Time is of the essence though and he's taking his time, all those long nights out with strangers, all those days saving money. She doesn't know what he's on about when he tries to explain, she just tells him—get on with it. And every day Ms. Nextdoor is asking what the story is and she says nothing at all and she says the fighting's getting terrible and she agrees, it's very scary. The roads don't look the same anymore and the kids have to stay inside, nothing new there. Only Ms. Nextdoor's kids to play with now. One day they come into her and say Mammy they're leaving, they're going away. She says nonsense but it's true, she's gone already and they've left everything behind, even that doormat she always had a liking for. She says to him hurry hurry hurry! And then one night he doesn't come home and the kids are crying and she tells them he's just on a little holiday, and three days later he finally walks in and his nose is broken and

his ribs are bruised and she's thinking it's all over but he says pack the things. So she packs some clothes and food and the toothbrushes and they leave at midnight, the kids waving bye bye house. The truck is dark so she holds the kids to her and says we're playing hide and seek, isn't this fun? They arrive at the beach and the man says get in, she sees a crappy little rubber thing and her husband says are you serious? He says get in. He says I'm not putting my kids into that are you mad? He says get in and he takes out a gun. She almost gets sick but she smiles because the kids are watching and they get in with a load of strangers. She is thinking, we're gonna die now. But she tells the kids some jokes about boats and adventure stories and now everyone on the crappy little boat is listening to her like she's some kind of priest, and they're crying and everything and even when the man who's supposed to be bringing them across jumps out of the boat and swims back to shore and leaves them there in the sea, even then she keeps telling her story, a particularly good one now about the promised land and a place where everyone owns ten pairs of jeans.

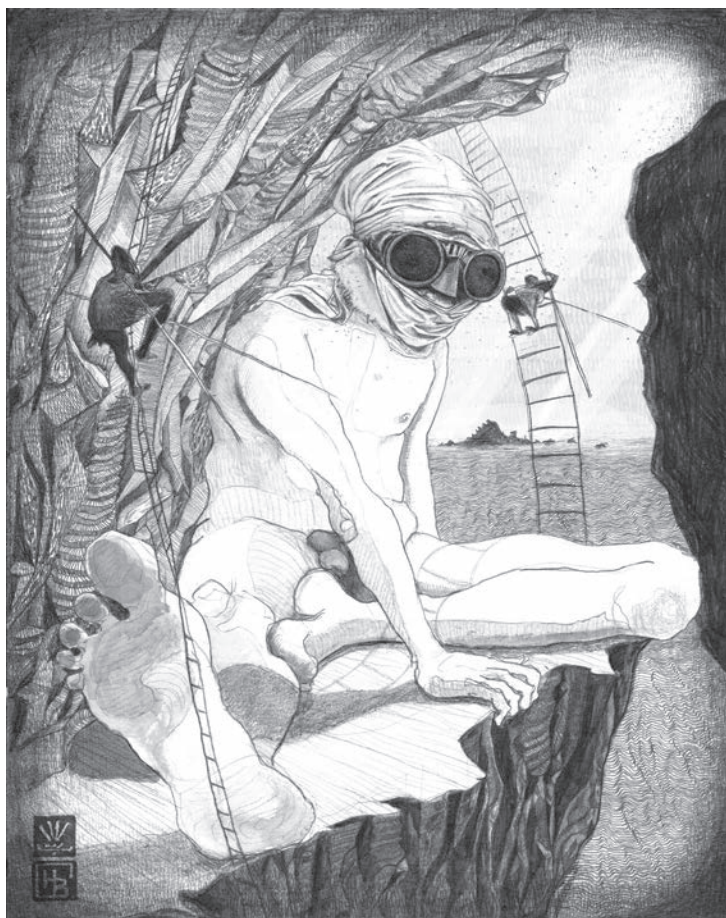
# Tennessee Williams

by LEO DUNSKER

when I am alone, I can hurt myself in new ways  
and as much as I want for example,  
I was found two days ago in a hotel room in another city  
with my back covered in third degree burns  
I am told that I had fallen asleep while leaned  
against a heating vent and that drinking  
was perhaps involved in the hospital  
my loved ones are visiting they are all concerned  
I cannot get a moment alone just yesterday  
a friend of mine visited me here he seemed tense  
he asked me *why do this to yourself on your vacation*  
and I told him *this is my vacation*

# “Fallen but not yet fallen, still unfallen, but about to fall”

by HARRIET BRUCE





# Featured Writer:

## Cathy Sweeney

Cathy Sweeney's stories have been published in *The Dublin Review*, *The Stinging Fly* and *Young Irelanders* (New Island Books). She is currently working on a collection of short stories and a novel.

### I. The Coin Machine

Today I have no money. I don't mean that I haven't much money or that I am a broke or things are tight; I have no money, not a rouble, two pennies, nothing. Pater is pleased. He thinks now I will sleep with him. He has a donkey's brain and breath and his soul is old soup, brown with fleshy beans in it. He watches out the window as I hang the clothes on the line. The wind is stiff and the sheets balk against the cold. My skin is pink like a petal. Pater watches, all the time his hands in his pocket. At night he drinks gin and gets angry. I bolt my door. He does not understand how I can work in the coin machine but will not let him in. The lack of logic makes his brain fly out of his head. 'It makes no sense,' he cries, thrusting his fists at my door. Poor Pater's brain it is so donkey, he does not know the simplest thing there is to know about life, that there is no logic. I could grow fat like him and not wash; I could mix my soup with his soup, and wait to die like dying was a novelty.

I am hungry. My stomach rats against itself and my limbs loosen from the core, but my head is clear like water. It is always so at the end of the week. It

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is true, as Pater says, I earn less money than I used to, but I am past twenty-seven and that is life. I do okay. My only concern is not to get too thin—rib cage tits, hips that throw their own shadow; the schmalzes don't like that and I don't blame them.

I could work more in the coin machine. In my first year Boss begged me to take more shifts. But a rule is a rule, it does not matter how perverse it is, every human being worthy of the name must have one rule that they would rather die than break, even if it is not to eat apples or sleep on open ground, it is immaterial; the point is the rule. Idiots have lots of rules; rules are their God and they live as children, always scolding themselves or praising themselves, measuring life out with a wooden ruler until they ascend to finity. Donkeys, like Pater, have no rules. Of course, that is not true; they collect rules like postage stamps and glue them half-heartedly to their lollipop hearts, and then they break each one, crying syrup all the way home. I work in the coin machine one day a week, no more, no less; whatever I earn has to last me until the following week. This is my rule and I do not break it.

Today I have no money and I am hungry, but I am not saturnine. I tear strips off an old sheet and dip them in melted wax. I lay the hot strips against my skin and rip. Afterwards I burn the strips in the stove, stiff with downed hair, like rat skin. They blaze and then stink. I heat a kettle, bathe and go to bed where I dream molten sex; the body is always throwing fertility at death, what else has it got?

I like it when a mean schmalz, intending to grant himself mean pleasure, gets carried to the moon and drops in coin after coin until his pockets are empty. Boss takes half the coins, ten more go to costume, two to security and one to Elena who can no longer work and is fed crumbs like a bird. Elena does not speak, she barely moves; she has passed through a ring of light and elucidates beauty we grub for but cannot find. Every girl gives Elena a coin, even the crude ones and the stupid ones. We all want to touch beauty.

After work I buy spicy wurst in brown paper. I chew as I walk a thousand paces, past gold and silver, past copper and nickel, until I get to my feather bed and sleep a dream swept out with an old broom.

# Exit Up your Practice Tongue

by NIALL MCCABE

*After Ronan Murphy*

*—what shores what islands*

How many times have you seen me  
leap through clotted air, ferment in daggers,  
throw my wishes to a wedding in the west,  
follow a tiger through a hollow elephant  
and drink the floor of a daydream  
only to tremble with the same hello?

You streak naked on the back-strand  
unzip the blue from a Post-Redemption kiss  
as the sea gargles its pigs and fishes.  
But no one will see us gnaw the egg  
or blow the blue back into larkspur  
because nobody ever comes to this beach.

Wearing the rattles you squeeze another kak,  
sew your blotted bladder against the swell  
of salt-green dunes and khaki-coloured trees.  
You sweat and swoon to Scion o' the sorrows  
and shit behind two burnt out cars (once yellow Mazda GTRS)  
and swear to Michael Onion withered leaves.

How sweet come the sores of another zero summer  
daring you to deign the D to fight deep down in torrent O  
and Don Poldo de la Flora sighs, he signs  
because he knows today's the day he has to fold  
your jackknifed arms into Krishna's toes—  
locked in lotus you'll never shush the sea in seal.

Someday I'll swim home via your intestines  
—citadel of jumpleads—  
and watch myself as if I were a star  
in a westerly b-movie moving to the east,  
metalled in the mash of electric wires and burning tyres  
(You know, I know, we'll shiver on this beach)

The fire's cracked with enough clicking  
to peace a genocide from Mona Lisa's tash  
prize gelignite from Savello's curling fingers  
and blue apples off the veritable shoulders  
of saints, who meandering miss the meaning  
behind the wall of a well-mannered mark.

Because sunlight sometimes needs another  
brute to burn, to blow open sweet storm gobs  
to sing. And Seraph watch how Phlebas  
plucks himself from all those whispers  
and twists the word to love inside the whirlpool—  
as violent as the violet crimson sea.

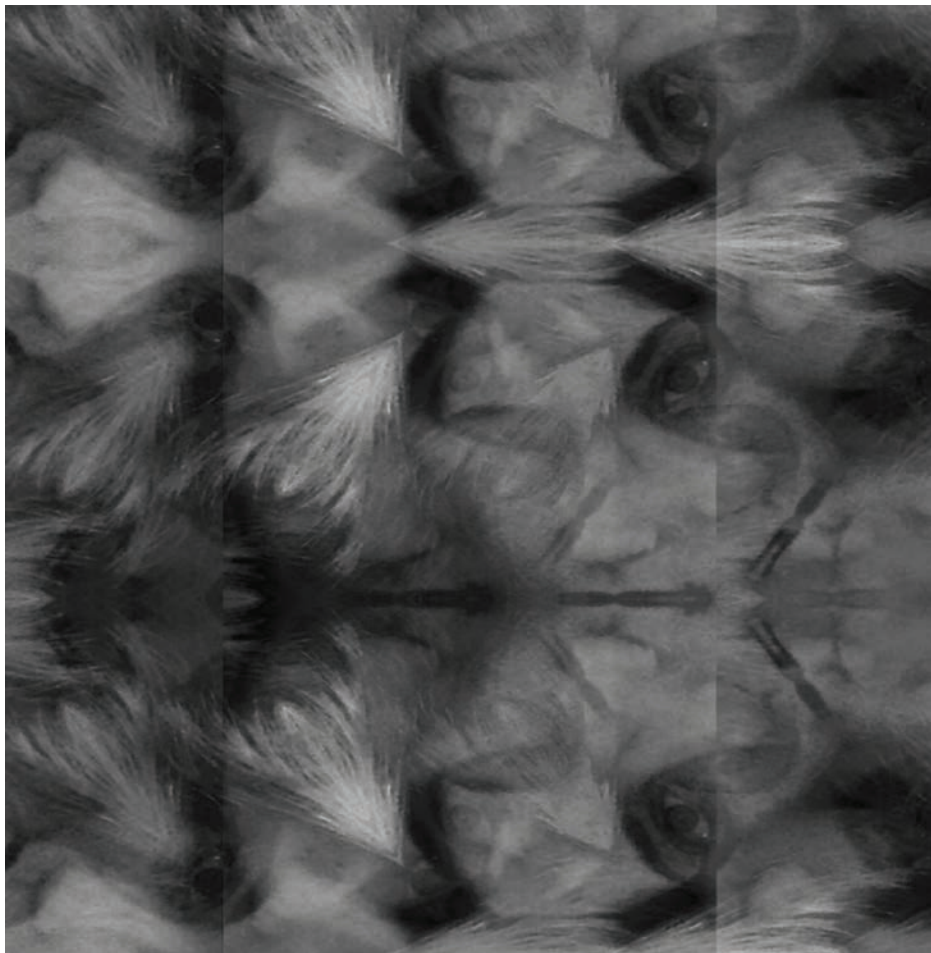
# Oranges

*by* SG

Talking to me  
you pour orange through my ears.  
You pour in the orange of oranges  
making me see in citric instants  
making me magnetic through the nose.  
I don't know how you do it.  
You know about my history of fruit  
and so know how to talk to me  
you with your oranges.  
There is something of the crow about you  
but really perhaps nothing of the crow  
except that when I imagine the orange of you  
it is always pitched against the dusk of the crow.  
Perhaps you collected a crow feather  
from the ground along your way  
and slipped it under the folds of your shirt  
so neat to your chest  
that now new crow feathers  
sprout from the skin  
and I have seen them dark behind the folds  
because you are more the vagabond  
with shadows flooding your clothes  
carrying oranges in your big hands  
and sacked up in your folds.  
I know no history and nothing except this.  
Your eyes flushing green like a cut stem  
are lightning to your big electric oranges.

# Composite II

*by* SORCHA KELLY



## 2. The Station

by CATHY SWEENEY

Ten men lost their job in the city, then a hundred, then a thousand, then a million. Every man who lost his job went to the station. The first time Michael Pavlov went to the station he was in an upbeat mood. The spring sun was warm on his back and glinted off the mica schist in the granite steps that lead to the platform. All his life Michael Pavlov had harboured proletarian dreams and now, as the wave of need spread through the city, he could not suppress the belief that here at last was an opportunity to bond with his fellow man. It was an uplifting image—worker and boss, blue collar and white, shoulder to shoulder under the metal framed roof of the station. Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité. And so, in a state of tiny rapture, Michael Pavlov ascended the granite steps and found himself on a concrete platform. Momentarily his eyes were clouded by gusts of steam but when they cleared—what a sight; a thousand men, most of them in blue overalls, standing together in broad-shouldered clumps, smoking cigarette butts, shuffling their heavy boots and, from time to time, spitting globs of yellow into the firmament. In a moment of doubt Michael Pavlov reached into his brain and found the following: Pain and suffering are always inevitable for a large intelligence and a deep heart. He was reassured and took his place in the line.

Days passed, nights passed, until Michael Pavlov stood at the wooden hatch and marked a crooked x against his name (signatures having recently been ruled inexpedient by politicians). He received his rations and emerged from the station, walking down the granite steps in a jerky motion that put one in mind of a long legged insect. The granite steps no longer shone; and Michael Pavlov, a man in a soiled white shirt who had recently lost his job, walked down a city street full of horns blaring and women in high heels.

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The next time he went to the station it was summer. All along the boulevard awnings were stretched taut to protect the espresso crowd from the sun. Strolling in the direction of the granite steps it occurred to Michael Pavlov that he was no longer one of the crowd and so he did not stop to sit under an awning, but continued purposefully to the station, where in all probability the mica schist shone, but on this, his second visit to the station, stepping into steam and cloud and the close proximity of a thousand blue men smoking cigarettes, Michael Pavlov made a discovery: there was not one white shirt among the blue. He had washed and ironed his shirt and now it stood out among the blue and the smoke and the yellow globs of spit almost, one might say, like a white flag. And just then, standing on the concrete platform, he experienced the same sensation he had experienced as a boy when visiting the bazaar, that nothing was real; and suddenly whatever chance he had of objectivity crashed into his boyhood self.

Days passed, nights passed, until again Michael Pavlov stood at the hatch ready to mark a crooked x. And so it was with great surprise, muted by sleep deprivation and low glucose levels, that Michael Pavlov learned that the marking of x had been ruled unproductive by politicians. A pint of blood was now required. He rolled up his sleeve and put his arm through a mouse-shaped hole where a woman's fingers took it, strapped it, slapped it, put a needle into it and withdrew the requisite volume of blood.

The third time he went to the station Michael Pavlov wore an old blue shirt that had survived entirely for the purposes of changing the oil in his car and winter hedge cutting. He had lost weight, and walking in outsized strides he saw nothing—no awning, no mica schist, no espresso crowd. He saw only himself. Bones and skin, and between the two, summer fruit; flesh that must be fed or fed on. Summer had died in the city, and need ran through the sewers and up into apartments. But when he stood on the platform of the station a temporary ecstasy ruptured through his pores giving rise to a sensation, powerful in its realism, of his existence as a former self. Aware of the delicacy of memory and the counter-production of strain, he stood still as a light box so that the sensation might linger.



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The fourth time Michael Pavlov went to the station it was under the cover of night. The cover was not a weight of silk cut through here and there with paper stars; it was the heavy lid of a black pot and it stank of old metal and old men and things we want to forget. He had brought with him a knapsack. The station was crowded with a million blue jellyfish men washed up on concrete sand: boys hardening their pelvises against futures of procreation and wurst; lone men standing at exit points watching the unfurling of value systems, clinging to the inner eye, aware that there is nothing else. Michael Pavlov thought back over the time that had passed since he first visited the station. Life is not soft, he wanted to shout, and without marking x or queuing for days he signed up to suffering as the only way left for a free man to assert free will.

Years pass. And then on a windy morning trip to the market, the truth will touch Michael Pavlov's cheek, but by that time he'll have fallen prey to the abacusing of the poor, his brain softened by eternal calculation—two roubles by pi plus infinity—his lips tightened, a lost tolerance for sun. But on that morning, when he remembers mica schist and summer and espresso and awning, all the brain in the world will not stop him from sitting all day on a rusted bench watching a line of white sheets waving in the wind.

# Everywhere there are fires

*by* ANNA D'ALTON

First I lowered myself into an incubation tank,  
hesitantly, muscles pulsing and closed  
it over, filled with red lamp, stained breathing  
Eating heat, it tonguing out my pours, firmly  
cross-legged there, thick skin like a quick-foot gecko,  
made to raze and regrow, evading  
Hot particles, gases, spilling up the glass, all over the ground  
artificial grasses, shaved branches and such still, so still catching,  
stifled dive into this red suspension

# A Dream

*by* WILL FLEMING

Tonight,  
My muse eludes me  
In a stand of trees;  
A strain of eyelids.  
So I sing:  
    a solitary living;  
    eternal spring—

I do not mind  
Another notch in my belt  
Anymore:  
    I feast to the  
    hilt of hills out west;

I feed  
On the chalked flesh of a mountain's cheek—  
The life organic;  
    sweet ascetic;

I work the axe  
To keep an ember  
    awake  
    in my chest—  
An atrium of sticks;

I take a drink,  
    a breath to make

A diorama of each lung:  
a pastiche of Sioux Indians;  
a wagon-train of frontiersmen—

To think that every pioneer were poet first.

On the summit:  
Snow poised on little rocks  
As dulcet  
notes,  
struck to perfection.

Up here, I dare not blink—  
I dare not blink  
Lest exiled I  
arise  
in corduroy fields;  
the crop in rows

No jagged struts to burst  
that clothe the plains—a bubble-sun;  
no golden yolk to  
Cloak the vistas of the morning,  
vast; distant—

no.  
I don't blink,  
For I marvel at this;  
I call hell anywhere else.

*...Tonight,*  
*I plan my passage*  
*West...*

# Ireland

by CHERYL JULIA LEE

*"It's a costly thing living here..." —Dermot Healy*

I moved to your hometown to forget you, to replace you with any other passer-by; after all, if you come from the same place, you must be alike. All around me I found bodies like yours, willow-frail and time-thrashed; I stood in the gaze of similar tender eyes; heard again voices carry the clumsy and terrible weight of having to say: I have love in me for you. But mostly, I found the swelling sea and the crying wind that taught me it is a costly thing to live here. Things are always pulling away, without warning, before we are prepared, more consistently than we expect. I haul stones and build walls with the best of men; we fill the gaps, soothe the fissures, shore up our bulwark piecemeal. Each time the coastline draws closer still so we tell ourselves the gales and the rain are reshaping us into forms of majestic beauty, that flowers will grow between the cracks we cannot heal. And when night comes, we retreat and repeat the gestures with words, drink, memories. We set the table with sturdy solitude. We save places for the tides. Tomorrow, we do it all over again.

# A Conversation

by RORY MCNAB

“So there we were—”

Hands thrust into the Barbour jacket’s pockets and pull out party paraphernalia.

Searching. Bottle-opener? No. Lighter? No. Not yet. Smokes? Yes.

“—utterly smashed in this real dingy club—”

Yellow-tipped fingers tease tobacco from a yellow pouch in a yellow box.

Sprinkle in skin

Pinch flick lick twist

Raise to lips

Spark—the lighter—

Inhale

Pause.

Languid eyes reopen and stare listlessly out from under heavy lids. Continues.

“Absolutely no fucking idea how we ended up there—”

Smoke-infused words roll from mouth, hang in the air, blow away in the breeze. “No idea who was playing or what. Didn’t seem like too much was going on so we went to the bathroom, did a few bumps of Ket—”

A second drag. Cigarette dangling from lips,

A can cracks—

Hisses fizzes foams

Slurp

Glug.

More smoke and more words tumble.

“—suddenly these absolute tunes start blaring, and we were going mad for it.

The DJ was properly on it, and throwing out belter after belter. Literally some

of the sickest House tunes I'd ever heard man, the whole floor was bouncing! And we were like who is this guy? Turned out it was Damian Obek playing! And I was just like, no fucking way! He's like my second favourite Ibiza DJ!"

"Wow shit! No way, I love him!" I enthused.

"Haha yeah, he's sick. So who'd be your favourite then?"

I knew this would happen. This is where pretending gets you.

I thumbed the lid of my Volvic water bottle. I'd bought the lemon-kind as I'd had something of a cold coming on all day and hadn't been feeling the best. Darina, a pretty Moldovan girl in work, suggested that I get the lemon one as lemon contains anti-oxidants which should help make me better. I'd never taken my oxidation-levels into account before; I didn't know they needed addressing.

Anti-oxidants seem to be the preserve of the pretty. We, the poor common looking folk, apparently seem content to struggle on with what must surely thus be considered a surplus of 'oxidants', doing nothing to combat them. It is only the pretty who decide to take matters into their own hands. It is only they who choose to take decisive action and say; 'Enough!' to their excessive levels of oxidation. I am unsure as to whether they are pretty because they fight their oxidants or whether they fight their oxidants because they are pretty. It somehow seems immaterial. Regardless, I was happy to be welcomed into their pro-active sphere.

Even when I pointed out that the water was merely 'lemon-flavoured' and thus in all likelihood contained no real lemon, Darina reassured me that it would probably work all the same. I'm almost certain this is untrue yet because she's pretty I seem to trust her more. I'm afraid this might be sexist; but I don't know who to raise the issue with.

I'd finished the bottle several hours ago yet was still carrying it round.

I still felt rather awful. My oxidation apparently remained an unaddressed problem. "Umm, well I mean probably DJ Flash..."

"DJ Flash...?"

"Guerrero. Flash Guerrero."

"Don't think I've heard of him—"

Because he doesn't exist. "He's niche."

“—What kinda stuff does he play?”

See above.

“Oh ya know just techno, house. Deep house.... Deep Techno. That sorta thing.”

“Wicked yeah, I’ll check him out—”

Catch a unicorn while you’re at it.

“—ya want a smoke man?”

The return of the yellow box.

“Ah sound, cheers man.”

And both boxes Checked. Chatting about preposterously obscure music made by computers—Check. Smoking—Soon to be Check.

To the casual observer walking by there is nothing to distinguish me from the man in the Barbour jacket. We are both, by the no doubt gaudy and glitter-covered yardstick of fashionable society; ‘cool.’ Oh the casual observer, how easily fooled you are!

My fingers fumble tobacco from the pouch.

Plonk in skin

Pinch lick flick—

—Or is it ‘flick’ then ‘lick’?—

—Pinch flick lick twist

Raise to—

—The filter falls to the grass, I scramble to pick it up and stuff it back in the frail paper pipe. I wonder whether the 5-second rule applies to filters. Lemon or no lemon, my cold is not going to be done any favours by this—

—Raise to lips

Spark

Inhale

Cough. CoughCoughCough, add nausea.

The languid eyes stare on, with a look somewhere between amusement and bemusement, at me, the explosively heaving heap in front of them.

“You ok man?”

No.

“Fine, yeah—”



Hacks up remaining lung.

“—just...not used to this brand. I’ll be fine. Ibiza sounds class though.”

“Aww man, you’ve never been?”

“Never, I’ve been to Magaluf though. 6th year holiday.”

“Haha—”

Head thrown back in the sun, yellow rays lighting up yellow teeth, looking like the honest and sullied portrait of his own hedonism

“—class! I’ve heard wild things, I’d say it was pretty mental!?”

“Yeah man haha—”

Debauched dancing. Cocktail glasses full to the brim with cargo so precious it warrants protection by tiny umbrellas. Herds of flesh, his and hers, heading from beach to strip to pub to beach, alternately sweating under the blaring Spanish sun and the glaring neon lights. The incessant throbbing bass which droned through the night acting as the heartbeat of the picturesque resort, pumping hordes of cavorting teenage hoodlums, slaves only to alcohol and their own inchoate hormonal whims, from club to club. ‘Drink, sex, drink, sex, breakfast, sleep. Repeat.’—The aspirational itinerary clutched to the chest of every new arrival.

Vincent and I sat, removed from all this, in our room in the Sol Wave Hotel clad in dressing-gowns, nursing mugs of milky tea, taking it in turns to read passages from *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* to one another. We’d found the days too oppressively warm so had rarely ventured outside and I had thus retained my Irish pallor; almost transparent, like the ghost of some milk. Incongruous. Regis Philbin and Woody Allen holidaying in Sodom. Whenever we put our tea down on a table, the booming sounds of revelry outside would cause the surface of our tea to ripple, like that clichéd scene used in every Jurassic Park movie to indicate that a dinosaur is swishing about nearby.

We’d had to order our dressing gowns from reception. In party resorts a dressing gown is never anyone’s priority, even if the hotel says they’re provided, they assume that most people will be too caught up in the ensuing bacchanalia to care about such tame creature comforts. It took the receptionist of the Sol Wave Hotel some 15 minutes to source a pair for us, eventually striking gold after sifting through a musty old box in a back room—a truncheon, some

pepper-spray and three sets of hand-cuffs all lay on her desk within arm's reach.

To look at, the two of us lying there on our beds, swaddled in our vaguely damp dressing gowns, cradling our tea, the whole scene possibly had the appearance of a relaxing trip to a budget spa. Except, instead of there being perhaps the sound of whale music piped in to aid our relaxation, there was the sound of some incredibly loud sex happening in the room next door. It was near deafening, and went on for what I will begrudgingly admit was an impressive amount of time, and it made our attempts to read to one another next to impossible. Sex that loud ceases to be about the act itself. It becomes theatrical; a hyperbolic, Shakespearean version of sex. It becomes competitive. Two people sonically daring each other to declare through any combination of groaning, screaming or whooping that they are in fact the one who's having the better time. And thus, with this much attention being paid to achieving decibel levels similar to those of a jet at take-off, the sex itself can't be very good.

At least this was the thought which we used to steel ourselves against our own sexless loneliness.

"—it was pretty crazy alright. Such a cool place!"

"Ah wicked, getting out, bopping, cheeky bitta MD was it?"

Not at all. Calling drugs by a nickname? Abbreviation? That's a level of familiarity I maintain for close friends and my dog Butters (Answers to: Butterskins, Big Booty, Ghetto Booty, Utterly Butterly.)

"Ah yeah, ya know yerself man, just having the good times."

"Ahh a bitta MD or ket are key for that, here—"

Furtive glances over his shoulders, a dirty finger nailed hand reaching up to slick back his slick-back. He leans in. Tobacco-tainted breath.

"—ya aren't looking to buy are ya?"

"Uh, maybe yeah."

Not at all.

"Deadly, I got great stuff man."

"Cool. Although, actually, I am trying to cut down—"

How do you divide o by o?

“—so...probably best not to...for now.”

For ever.

“Ah fair enough, well if ya know anyone buyin’—”

In a moment too well-timed to be believable in fiction, a man in shorts pulls up alongside the man in the Barbour jacket, hunkers down on the grass with a jovial “Alri’, what’s the craic!?” and a slap on the Barbour’s back, and begins to clandestinely whisper.

Furrowed brows accompany increasingly zealous muttering.

I take a sip from my can, and bravely manage not to wince at the taste of the sun-warmed metallic trickle. Christ that’s bad. I surreptitiously empty some of the awful amber fluid on the grass beside me and watch it sink into the earth and wonder if I’ve just accidentally gotten a worm pissed—

The haggling continues. Haggling in a lingo I am not privy to. I am a third wheel in this deal; a third wheel with brakes on.

—How would you be able to tell if a worm was drunk? A tiny breathalyser? Ask it to try wriggle in a straight line?

Crescendo and hands clap, a tiny bag, a flash of cash and Done.

The languid eyes turn back to me and under drooping lids light up. “Hey man, we’re gonna go light up a J. If you’re free, wana come get baked.”

Oh that reminds me! The Great British Bake Off is on tonight; evening sorted. “Nah actually, you know what, I think I’m grand thanks.”

# Untitled

*by* REED VAN HOOK



# The Middle Way

*by* LEO DUNSKER

Dreams of a white elephant entering my side

\* \* \*

At midnight I am lying with my arm beneath the pillow  
Lazarus whispers in my ear the things he saw in hell

\* \* \*

Admit me into the hospice of you

\* \* \*

Dead leaves imprisoned in the wind  
Who promised you that these things would always  
Hurt you the same way they do now

\* \* \*

Rain pounding dead magpies into the pavement  
I speak to you in the names of places

\* \* \*

In a field behind the church  
A hundred legless lambs  
Drink blood from a silver pail

\* \* \*

A dream of your missing hand

I wake up    your back is turned

\* \* \*

With my hand pressed between yours we are like the skin of an onion  
Put your words in me    I feel you in my neck like the fear

\* \* \*

In the  
afternoon you are gone  
I nail your stockings to the wall and sleep the sleep of hell

\* \* \*

Blue mountains meet the sky in the distance  
Cold rain for whole miles  
You tell me you were a church  
And I think of all the people I have killed in your name

\* \* \*

Rain falls all night on a detention center in the suburbs  
The death row inmates are up late trying to guess  
What their last words will be

\* \* \*

It is Sunday  
I am throwing your stockings off a sea cliff  
My linen shirt hangs drying on the temple wall

\* \* \*

I am asleep beneath the fig tree in the fifth lunar month  
This is the story of my victory

# Orthodox at the Liberal

*by* ROSIE WOOLFSON

Rushing ahead I felt her stuck behind the  
Film of antiquity which sealed the entrance.  
'And who are you?'

My mother

Who dropped my reluctant body at this door

On grey Sunday mornings.

Her eyes told me to go on

And sing Modeh Ani with the rest.

The ache of the mahogany

Resounded through the pews of silent disapproval

And my footstep quickened

Across the cobalt nylon pile

To find him;

A creased tallit spread over his hunch

And his gold-trimmed yarmulke slipping

From the crest of his balding head.

I followed his vitiligo hand

Pointing right to left,

Tracing the mélange of letters

Which formed themselves into words

Foreign to my eyes.

I let my little hand move with his,

Pressing up and down his bumpy veins

In time with the rhythmic hum

Of obedient voices.

'Please stand.'

The bodies peppered across the pews rose in unison  
And the alien letters of the page mutated  
Into familiar melodies.

The words filtered from my mouth  
As if natural.

My cautious tongue had found its language  
And for one moment  
The hardened stares melted from my vision.  
But the new smiles were taught,  
The draft bit hard at my ankles,  
And my goose-bumps  
Stood up in quiet protest.

Afterward, wrinkled hands forced greetings  
Out of my limp paw  
While petty whispers suffocated my ears.  
In the midst of yarmulkes my eyes found his,  
And I retreated  
Into the smoky broth of his cable-knit.  
Drowning out the stench  
Of instant coffee and empty words.



# From *Analects*: Fisher King Sequence

by RUAIDHRÍ MAC AN TSÍTHIGH

## *Sleeping*

The Fisherman stood opposite the sleeping Fisher King, pondering the nature of the king's dream, oblivious that he was in and of that dream.

## *Jealousy*

The Fisherman, jealous of the Fisher King, who, though crippled and impotent, sought and won the admiration of the Fisherman's wife, would set out in vengeful jealousy to the castle of the Fisher King, who slept soundly when visited by his subjects, and whose need for rest was respected by his wife.

## *A Note on the Dreams of the Fisher King*

The Fisher King's dreams were usually set in the vicinity of his sleeping body; his consciousness inhabited one of his subjects standing before him, his dreaming mind's inclinations in unity with their intentions and actions. Sometimes his consciousness wandered afar, even into the sea.

## *The Condition of the Fisher Kingdom*

The Fisher King, ill and impotent in the flesh in which he was primarily resident, was impeded from conjoining with the flesh of his kingdom's women; sober and dignified, he resigned his waking mind to sustaining his kingdom with wisdom and propriety, but left, in his sleep, his dreams in their full impropriety with the purple splendour of imperial plenitude, and allowed them their due as lascivious conquerors of his kingdom's waking constitution.

### *Royal Presence*

The Fisherman, when he kissed his wife, would close his eyes and pretend he was the Fisher King, whose royal presence of consciousness in fact permeated every pore and particle of his kingdom, and thus enabled the Fisherman to justly feel majestic and distinguished in her company.

### *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife*

The Fisherman's wife, when she kissed the Fisherman, would close her eyes and imagine he was the Fisher King, whose mind and body extended beyond his impotent and crippled body, who permeated the land and sea in his being, and whose coastal kingdom's quintessence of unusual seductiveness she found in the luscious and muscular enveloping tentacles of a certain marine mollusc.

### *The Task*

The land of the Fisher King was a function of his mind, and was maintained, Atlas-like, by his task of thinking it. His dreams roughly followed the rigid course of his world-carrying waking thoughts, but things of secret nature unfolded sometimes, and exercised themselves upon his kingdom.

### *Sea Creature*

Guided by the grail-lore of the kingdom, in the noontime when the Fisher King was sleeping, and her husband was visiting the castle, the Fisherman's wife went looking in the rock pools for a small spiral-shelled mollusc whose sound was said to echo the grail, when she spotted in the sea another mollusc, of sinuous elegance of body, oceanic muscularity—and royal gravity.

### *The Fisher King's Wife*

The wife of the Fisher King, joined with the man whose flesh and body were one with the land of his kingdom, found the rugged land's erotic quintessence in the strong body of a Fisherman who visited the royal palace while her husband slept.

### *Daydream of the Fisher King*

The Fisher King, half-longing beneath his decency for an archaic and brutal feudal privilege, would sometimes close his eyes and pretend his wife was that of humble subject, a fisherman who sailed everyday beside a great sea cave.

### *The Fisherman's Catch*

The Fisherman had a colossal octopus which he killed with intense, inexplicable ferocity delivered into the court of the Fisher King, presenting it ostensibly as a gift, but with some bitter accent of threat, or of revenge.

### *Marginal Note on an Abbey Manuscript*

Perceval, enthralled by the splendid plumage of the Kingfisher, and feeling, without knowing why, that it would lead him to the grail, followed it wherever it deposited its feathers, using each one as a quill with which to write, in the third-person, notes like this in the margin of manuscripts.

### *The Fisher King's Daughter*

The Fisher King's daughter was kept in a tower by her father. Perceval requested her hand in marriage from the Fisher King. He refused. Perceval became enraged and killed a bear.

### *Beyond the Kingdom*

The Fisher King, knowing that the kingdom his imagination was carrying was merely dream-stuff, consecrated as reality by his scrupulous administration of consistency and coherence, felt suddenly that there was another thing beyond his sleeping and waking dreaming; a thing to which his own mind entire was the mere breeze of a dream.

### *Prophecy of the Fisher King*

His subjects would dream themselves into lucidity by dreaming themselves to be him; they would sever their separation from him, and awaken him unto himself.

### *Coincidence*

The Fisherman, commandeered by a dream of the sleeping Fisher King, was himself asleep, uncharacteristically, in the noon when the king's dream struck...

### *The Dream of the Fisherman*

The Fisherman dreamt that he was no ordinary fisherman, but was rather the Fisher King, the king of all fish and fisherman, a king like a god in thought and deed. He awoke to find this was true.

### *Gust*

The Kingfisher, itinerant monarch of the fisher-birds, was diverted by a gust into the Fisher Kingdom as sleep descended upon the Fisher King, and stories soon circulated about a kingfisher flying above a great sea cave.

### *An Anamnestic Dream?*

The Fisher King dreamt that he no human king, but was rather the Kingfisher, the king of all fishing-birds, a king like a god in thought and deed. This kingfisher was no subject of his, and it was rare for him to remember his dreams—had he found who he truly was?

### *Kingfisher and Fisher King*

The Kingfisher, swept into dreaming sleep for an instant of flight, felt, on his awakening, as though he had been the king of a Fisher Kingdom. The Kingfisher wondered whether he was a kingfisher who dreamt he was a fisher-king, or the Fisher King who dreams he is a kingfisher.

# IMG\_07I3

*by* SORCHA KELLY



# O Navis et Charon

*by* SEBASTIAN KENNELLY

The large old man comes to the corner of Dameson Street and Bernard Street in the fictional city of Washington. He waves down a cab. After three minutes, he successfully procures the services of a driver. He threw in a coiled twine rope and a brown paper bag which was spotted by moist stains.

Do you know the hardware store that is just outside the city, right before the bridge?

Yes.

Take me there.

Ahem.

The large fellow looked at his bag and rope.

I have a couple errands to do. Could you cover me today?

Ahem. But I'll charge you on destination and distance.

Hm?

For every destination will be a base charge 3, and every mile will be 2.

Oh yeah, I don't care.

He grumbled and looked out of the window. His right hand was attached to the hand grip above while his left supported the greater part of his weight on the cushion.

Out the window, the city sped by. It was a pleasantly gray day. A cold wind gave a pinch to everything. People walked as if they were cold. The buildings appeared as if they were cold.

His head followed an infant running ahead of her father across the street before the stopped cab. Her galloping rhythm could be felt deep in his large gut. There it played familiar melodies. He watched as the child hopped upon the curb before assuring her father with her assertively individual gaze. Her father scolded her yet for the precocious departure from his hand. The light carried on to green.

How's business?

It's good.

Do you enjoy it?

Yes, I do.

The fat man acknowledged the unamicable driver with another grumble.

He wore a large dark nylon coat which extended his girth into fluffy warmth. He wore layers of clothes. The few hairs he had left were overgrown and unguided. They grew haphazardly. His beard was asymmetrical and as accidental as his hair. He wore dress pants on most occasions which were brought together high up on his belly. His nose, cheeks, and lips all approached a single point. His lips appeared pursed and confused. Only his eyes held distinction, wrinkled, shaded above and by purple circles below, centered by their dark green dots. His eyes leveled upon objects at random, as kelp in the random stream of tides.

Otherwise, his body sat still as his arms defied the force of the cab in motion.

Lovely day.

The cab driver grunted.

A man in a clean black business jacket and dress pants with polished black shoes and hair peddled by the halted cab. The cold and wet wind pulled his bright blue striped tie along his shoulder and let his jacket trail slightly. The fat man's eyes floated past this figure toward the trees passing outside. There were those deciduous trees not yet bare, but their leaves enriching in their gold and red hues.

Colors are nice.

Ahem.

It's too bad my old gray hairs don't turn golden.

Hm.

He let his eyes follow the changing streets. He was at the hardware store. the cab. He stepped into the brisk air and looked up to the sky for an extended moment before he turned into the open door of the cab.

I shouldn't be more than a minute. Mind if I leave the rope and bag?

Ahem.

His steps fell opposite to the sway of his heavy arms as he traversed the crowded parking lot. The large fat man purchased a package of 12 six inch

nails, a hammer, and a small slab of wood. As he returned to the cab, his head turned to admire the great bridge under the hazy bluish gray overcast.

He threw everything in.

Do you know the pharmacy across the bridge? Could you take me there?

Ahem. But first, that's 6.27 to here.

The large man searched his coat for his wallet and procured 20 dollars in mixed bills.

Keep the change, I'll pay more later.

No, let me just give you your change.

Are you sure? I will pay you more, I really don't care.

Ahem.

The large fat man let his eyes wander between the cars, as if they were following a child running amidst them. The cab ignited and carried him on. His eyes sailed over the sea passing below.

I'd love to be there now.

What?

The colors are nice today, aren't they?

Ahem.

The supports of the bridge riddled his sight of the blue-gray world as he passed. His eyes drifted over the outside world. The cab passed over the crescent of the bridge and declined speedily. The sound of descent raised, as the pitch became higher and higher until it was inaudible to his ears.

Only so many days.

What?

Do you know what I do? I am a retired dentist.

Hm.

Actually, I am just an old man.

The cab turned into a parking space, pushing aside crackling leaves.

I'll be not more than a minute. Just picking up a prescription.

The cab driver looked listlessly at him and then forward. The old man left the cab. The pharmacy was close to the sea. The old man watched as great mighty ships passed below the bridge.

He turned and he himself wondered.

He walked without noise through the empty parking lot.



# Return

*by* DEARBHAILE HOUSTON

I have studied the pomegranate  
skin to seed  
stained my fingernails and lips  
with the marks of initiation.  
I am unwilling to go back.  
Even lost girls return,  
however briefly,  
in tendrils and blooms of their mothers' memory.  
A version of you is kept by them  
each time you descend  
into some lapse of the earth.

### 3. The Majesty of the Night Sky

by CATHY SWEENEY

It is a tableau—a plywood box painted crimson and gold. The curtain swishes back and a thousand hands clap. Entertainment deserves the smacking of one hand against the other; smack, smack, smack. The figures dangle in front of the audience. They are attached by powerful cables to a pulley system somewhere in the sky. It yanks them from the seat of their pants and makes them look ridiculous, but all the more real for that, the audience thinks. One of the figures is thin, with a thin moustache and glasses; it is Frank. The other figure is Alexander, a man of appetites that eat him; he is prone to jocularly and depression and has a fat gut. There is a woman, but she remains undeveloped as a character.

The scene is a flat that belongs to Alexander. Frank is staying there. From one window of the flat, a cathedral can be seen, and from another a launderette. Above the launderette is a brothel. At night Frank chain smokes and listens to light opera. He is an out-of-work engineer, recently divorced. Alexander is a failed writer (deservedly so) who drinks in the bars of hotels. The men have been friends since their student days.

One night Alexander insists that Frank accompany him to a bar. Alexander has been paid for writing articles in a compendium and is eager to spend his money. While Frank shaves the outline of his beard, he reads over a letter his ex-wife has sent him. His daughter is engaged to a man he does not know. They are as happy as young people in love should be, he reads, then folds the letter, places it between the pages of a large dusty book, and dries his face with a towel.

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As they walk, the men's boots shatter the shapes cast by the moon. The trees and telephone wires, the leaves rolling in drains, the bark of dogs—all suggest that the future exists in a few black hours. The two men turn into an alleyway with yellow lanterns set at intervals along a stone wall. Alexander gathers pace. Frank stops to light a cigarette. If happiness is a leavening of emotions, then Frank, in the low glow of the lamp, with his lungs drenched in nicotine, is happy. He quickens his pace and catches up with Alexander. At the corner of the street a hotel glistens. The men step into the bar and sit in a red booth. Alexander orders a carafe of pastis while Frank wipes his glasses with his handkerchief.

'Have you ever experienced real fear?' Alexander asks. He moves the vase on the table to clear the space between himself and Frank.

'Of course,' says Frank. He flicks open his metal case and puts another cigarette in his mouth while he roots for matches.

When they were students and Alexander would launch such opening questions, Frank would place his hands on either side of his friend's head and exclaim, 'Enlighten me!'

'There is a powerful connection between fear and beauty', Alexander says.

Alcohol throws a silk cloth over Frank's weariness. He listens as Alexander continues. Frank taps ash into a glass dish on the table and smoke wafts in Alexander's direction.

A young woman walks by. Despite his myopia, Frank can see that she has a large bosom. She places a bottle of wine and two glasses from her tray onto a small circular table at which a couple sit. Her bosom drops low to the woman. Their nipples are moments apart, Frank muses. The young woman laughs at something the man of the couple says and the laughter jellies her bosom. Alexander is still talking, but Frank is not paying any attention. The young woman turns in a blur of skirt that causes Frank, for a moment, to distil the female form into one pure atom of longing.

'Do you know her?' asks Frank.

Alexander glances up. 'One of the girls from across the way,' he says

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and prods the air in the direction of the launderette. 'She waits tables here sometimes.'

The men pour more pastis, each serving himself and then adding water until the mixture clouds. They drink quickly. Alexander talks while Frank feels sweet collapse all around him. Alexander calls to the young woman. She brings a fresh carafe to the table and tops up their glasses. Frank almost touches the woman; his imagination making everything loose between them. When her face comes under the lamp, she has, he notices, pockmarked cheeks when her face comes under the lamp. Alexander pauses to chew invisible words and then speaks again.

'Fear keeps you alive. Only when man is free of fear can he think about other things, such as, why he is alive'.

'You are right, my friend,' Frank replies, without listening. 'But who wants to hear truth? They are all dogs. Did I tell you that Breshnov is going to publish the poet?'

'There is no art without beauty,' Alexander says, stoking up a tiny epiphany, 'but to achieve great beauty, fear must be suppressed.'

The young woman pauses at the table, her bosom dropping to Frank's eye level.

'Another carafe?'

'Yes', Alexander says, smiling at the woman. 'And have a drink yourself.'

The young woman's skin between her breasts is as white as paper and, as she moves away from the table, Frank experiences an absurd sense of loss (once it starts there is no end). He plunges back into conversation.

'You are a fool Alexander. Fear has nothing to do with beauty.'

Alexander catches the black look in Frank's eyes and opens his palm in an effort to attract an (invisible) audience.

'Take nature. There is beauty in nature, but the preservation instinct forces man to tame nature. Yet how much more beautiful is nature when it is frightful to our senses?'

Frank nods. So long as he does not look at his friend, he can take tolerate

## FEATURED WRITER

the conversation. 'Yes, yes. But you were talking of art, not nature.'

Alexander's pupils dilate. He has arrived at the epicentre of his thesis and is suspended between the desire to surge forward and the desire to hold back.

'For a work of art to possess great beauty, fear must be suppressed; fear of chaos, of depravity, fear of evil.'

Frank's mind is suddenly uncharacteristically dull, as though ether had soaked through his memory. He can only muster examples that testify to Alexander's thesis; an alarming thought. He moves his small heavy glass counter clockwise in his palm.

'The sublime!' says Alexander. He bangs the table and takes a single cigar from his inside breast pocket. The cigar had been intended for smoking after a visit to the launderette. This is how Alexander chooses to live; from one small gratification to the next. Frank takes off his glasses and wipes them in a paper napkin while Alexander, exposing layers of crumpled cotton and tweed, reaches into his trouser pocket and takes out a Swiss knife. He neatly chugs the end of his cigar, lights it, and fills his cheeks with smoke. The smoke steals towards Frank, and with it the knowledge that the night is over; but the carafe is still half full, and so the men talk some more. The conversation settles on people they know—Breshnov, the poet, the old woman who lives below them—until an invisible rapprochement is reached

and the men can part on the same terms (or similar) as when they entered the bar. Alexander tops the half smoked cigar and places it back in his breast pocket.

When Frank looks at his watch time has disconnected itself from memory. Dark thoughts blot his mind. He goes to the lavatory. When he comes back the chairs are upturned on the tables and a boy is sweeping the floor. The young woman is gone. Outside, the night air is still. Alexander jiggles his hands in his pocket while Frank extols the majesty of the night sky. They bid each other goodnight and Alexander turns in the direction of the launderette.

The street is empty. The future has resigned itself to beginning again. Staring at the night sky, Frank's thoughts turn to his wife, to the daughter

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he no longer knows, to the woman who ruined him; each image dispensing a higher dose of melancholia until the wind is nothing but human sighs. He leans against a brick wall. Such sweet thoughts; to be alone, drunk, cold, in the dead hour, with such sweet thoughts; fate had singled him out to understand suffering. Of this he could never be deprived.

The epilogue takes place in the morning. Yellow light exposes the figures. Frank sits at the table drinking black coffee and reading a day old newspaper. He is dressed in the same clothes as the night before. At intervals he grimaces at what he reads. It is a symbol. Frank feels contempt for his failure to be faithful to suffering. Alexander, wearing a dressing gown, is ravenous. He pushes wurst around a blackened pan while throwing out comments about corsets, but he has no audience. Frank finishes his coffee. He looks out the window at the cathedral, which is golden now, and out the other window at the slumped outline of the launderette. Above the buildings, in the vastness of blue, a thin cable is visible, attached to a pulley system somewhere in the sky.

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