

estuary

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High Society

Dakin McDonald

I take another sip. I'm eyeing the elderly lady in the blue dress. She's clearly over eighty. Her grey hair is uniformly cut the same length, just a few inches about her scalp. In an attempt to disguise her age, she's obviously tried to bleach the grey into submission. She has not been successful.

I glance at her face. Her skin is wrinkled, her eyes sunk deep within their watery hollow. She opens her lips, emitting a false chuckle. I see her yellow teeth, scarred by decades of a vile habit. Two of her teeth are white; clearly, they're new.

Now, she raises her glass, downing the drink in an effort to maintain interest in the conversation. The glass is clutched in her right hand, the flesh on her fingers loose and lined with crevices. Her fingernails, painted a vibrant red, extend well beyond her fingertips.

The skin on her neck is wrinkled, too. It hangs, drooping under the force of gravity and pushing her breasts towards her waist. She tries to hide this with a tight brazier that pinches the skin on her back and creates three distinct folds in the blue fabric.

I glance at my watch, frowning as though the time will tell me something important. Really, it's only a momentary escape from the bore of society life; one of many strategies we introverts use to avoid striking up a conversation. By now, it's late enough to respectably depart, and I return my glass to a waiter's silver tray.

Slowly, I pick up my feet, nodding to several business acquaintances as I pass. We have all been attending the same parties for decades, and it is no longer necessary to speak. We have nothing to say.

Approaching the lady, she glances in my direction, her eyes focusing on mine. As I reach her, I lay my hand gently on her forearm and ask, "Darling, shall we be on our way?"

November

Robert Mousseau

You know, it's hard
to stand apart
from the slavery
as it passes
by the crooks
of academia.

Oh – what the scholars would do
if this jangled madness
would slip away
without a fuss.

But the legions are gathering
and the critical armies
are closing in on all sides.

With an assembly this riled up
peace doesn't seem like an option.

The poet's war drum
is sounding
from over the hill.

Lift your spear
and prepare
to taste blood.

The King of the River

Noah Gataveckas

The tattoo proclaimed “King of the River”, and the sailboat beer in his hand matched the other tattoo on his arm, and his whitetrash family drinking beer on the lawn all day, and dinosaur rock radio loudly permeating his property, and horseshoe playing field, and all this cemented his status as legendary. LEGENDARY. We did not dispute his divine right. Normally he who has the gold makes the rules, but in His Majesty’s case it was he who had the most disposable inner tubes lying around in a shed. The legality of the operation went as far as a cardboard magicmarker sign forgotten somewhere face-down on the lawn saying “Tube at you’re own risk”. He offered off-colour jokes and creepy pickup lines for free, but then again he saw so many healthy young female bodies that you couldn’t blame him for trying. The women tolerated it because he was the goddamn King, and he alone held the key to the river and with it could unlock its underwater playground filled with amazing delights. So we’d give him pocket change and he’d rent us his patched and funky tubes. We plunged them into the river with fanatical zeal, despite the chill of that purest of running waters. People would attach cans of beer to their tube, keeping them chilled in the freshwater, and they’d pass joints at random to whomever they bumped into, letting the river decide the rotation. It was totally rational to want to get a buzz on for the excursion, but really there was such a natural buzz in the air and water that the drugs were superfluous. And it was exhilarating because you really were in danger – this was no lifeguard-presided waterpark, no Disney foolproof fake-log jamboree. Bouncing off rocks we spun and got carried along, and made sure to duck our heads for the low hanging bridge and not to twist our ankles in the jams under the current. If you got in too far upstream your ass would scrape the unmovable boulders lurking below, the most fun pain you’d ever experience. We’d wade through fields that reeked of manure and swamp funk at the speed of snails. At the end we had to panic for our lives and swim to the shore against the rest of the river sucking us down through its straw. If it was your first time you’d never see it coming and end up too far downstream in the bushes with twig pokes in your feet. “What fun what fun can we do it again?” “Of course!” “Yay!”

...and when we left His Majesty’s magic kingdom, we were fully satisfied because he was a sovereign who delivered.

Transparency

Emily West

My small mind were a blind spot
Poor she not ever known
Kind was in the eye not
In the heart I never shown
Clip ins scat and heard to the wind
Pick em up and throw em by
Was never sense I had but those
flew hers and knuckles pried
open, open, open

Stray Chairs

Mallory Crew

We hold your hands
like crooked signs;
you ask what we think
about the idea of stray chairs
we say we do not follow
again,
guess at the path
you will take,
today

you are re-learning the pieces
of being "alive"
the breathing, and feeding
excreting and sleeping:
surrounded by lines
of coloured pills that border the bureau:
they will slowly take you
and your pain

we've long past the point
of remembering names:
only we know your own, and remind you
in steps, how to dial home
until you retreat, again
further
into your mind, as your body
claims a little more of your past,
a little more of your words

you are smaller now than we've ever seen you,
torn open, reverting back to childhood,
asking for a nightlight, demanding where have we been
life has become simple, the opposite of death:
a day with a pulse

I wait to feel you breath.

Halifax

Rachel McLean

We made an illegal pathway through the park
not hitting any trees
casting a maniac light on the parking lot
I lost my clothes (for a moment)
and in the morning
angrily regressed upon your compliments that
(honest and truthful: the things I have yet to become)
Hit upon my ears a little too sharply

Quiet in the Library

John Barnes

Quiet in the library /
Steaming cup, an unread book— /
Hush amongst a tributary — /
An archive of the shook.

And a boy tries to feel the literature, /
But he sees you instead. /
Cold syllables, it's nearly winter; /
You're a fire in his head.

And who knows?—it's never easy: /
Hyperbolic is too simple. /
He wants to tell you, but understand, please /
Those words can't write a dimple.

So last night he touched you with his eyes /
His iris composed a poem. /
Across the room, the volta flies, /
But can't turn when it's alone.

Instead, he types 'alone', /
And thinks of you, goes home.

Old Friends

Kaitlyn MacPhee

He uses and uses and uses and uses
his skin transparent rice noodle white.
Pale cheekbones cut glass, lips turn blue like eyes in water.
He says, "I have a helluva crush on a beautiful woman, I'm happy."
Fragile constructions existing between sheets of summertime
you wore your heart on your music picking fingers
that you picked at, the skin torn
abused.

Cold January new years he says,
"I just stayed home in bed.
Me and buzz, we had a blast."
Snorting laughter,
it's not quite a joke.
A needle in a bleeding haystack
your hay coloured hair
"A blast."

Downtown in front of dollar stores and garbage cans
death camp eye sockets
"I'm not afraid anymore," he whispers.
"I'm not like other people
I don't have that fear anymore."
Freezing hands pressed to skeletal ribcage
you're out on a limb
brittle thin limbs
you've forgotten
what waking up feels like.

And I've forgotten
what it feels like
to kiss you.

Flora

Alexander Kaul



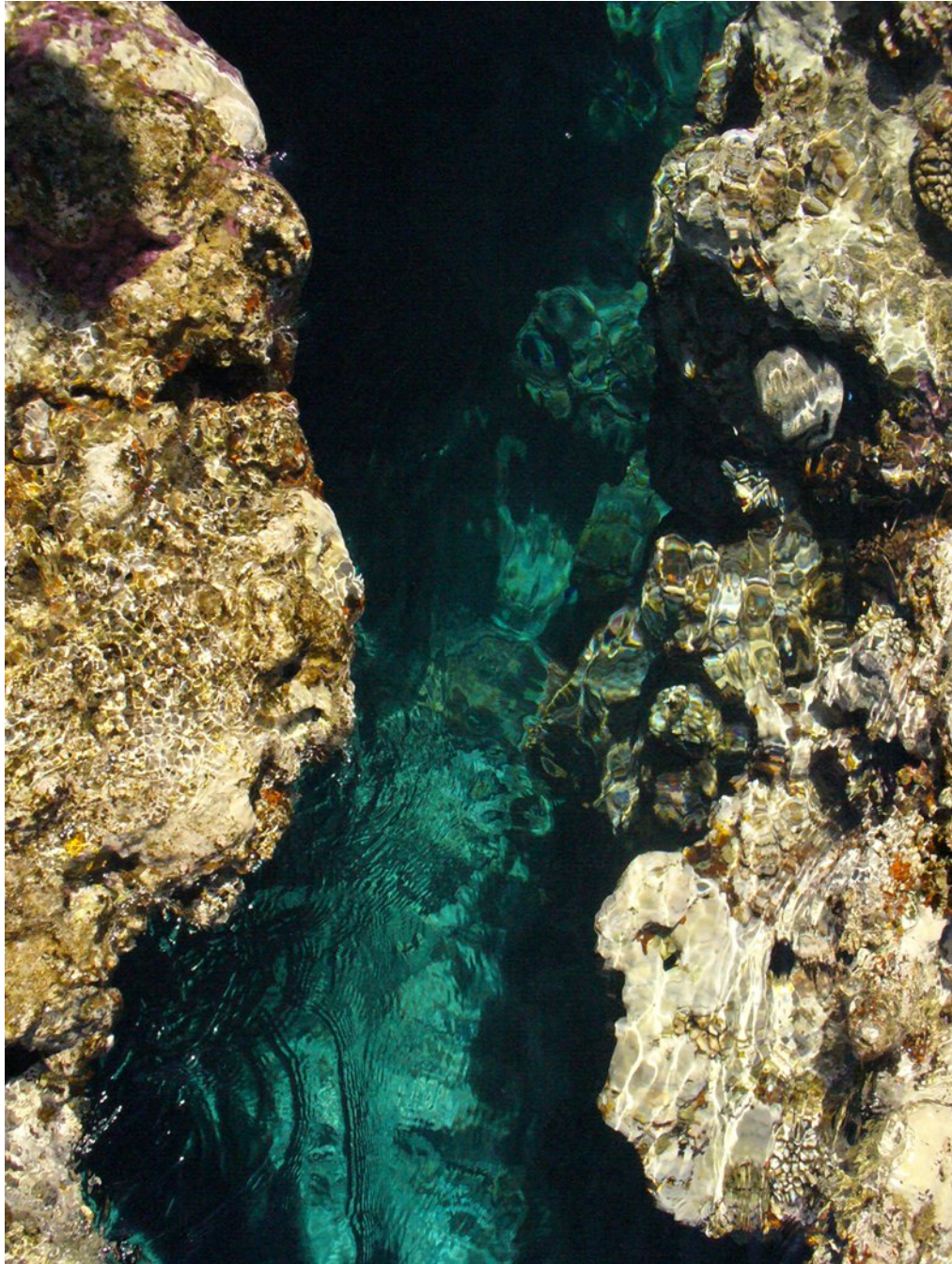
Season

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Face to Face

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Past, Present, & Future

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