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ALL SHORT STORIES AND POEMS BY BEN JOHN SMITH

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“It was best to view such an event as an implacable ‘act of God’,
as it was defined by insurance brokers. People could accept a great deal
if it was presented in the vast star-wrapped packaging
of destiny.”

~ A.S Patric “Bruno Kramzer”

“The stick up”

Have you ever had diarrhea so bad you shit a bit
On your own dick

Take a minute

To

Think about that.

I get really stressed that Kim Kardashian
Might not get along with Beyoncé
And maybe her and Jay Z feel awkward about it

I stayed in bed 'till 3pm watching the Ray J
Sex tape on Repeat But I didn't wank
Cause that would
Be like
Fucking a friends
Wife

If I could change one thing about my wife
It would be that she
Would wear my jumpers around the house more often

Sometimes I look at my news feed
And think what the fuck are you awake at 2:40
Liking ANZ bank pages on Facebook?

I never understand people who take a newspaper
To the toilet

I haven't had a solid shit since 1995

But I do drink a lot of
Wine and I'm also a compulsive liar

I knew a guy when I was younger who got so drunk he told me he once
Spread his ass cheeks in the bath and swayed back and forth

To see what it would feel like to be a woman
Having sex;

That drunk guy was me.

That bath
Was my mum's.

I'm still floating
around waiting for the final **kick.**

“Birds, flowers and All that really matters.”

I really want all the birds
Not ALL the birds,
Just the small ones I mean.

Some flowers,
Not many,
No more than a handful

All of them
In a cage,

NO

IN A WINDOW!

A HUGE WINDOW!!!

So that once a year
We can put the flowers,
the birds,

All of them in the window of a
Really busy street corner,
With heaps of lights –
Lights everywhere,

Like a television!
Or a film!

Like an event,

A place everyone
In the whole world would visit!

A romantic night outside for
families

Lined for a million kilometers

To see the small birds –

A handful of flowers.
Not many flowers,
barely a handful at most.
A perfect love story.

Behind glass;
As it always is,

Bustling with people hustling and
Peeking over each other's
Shoulders to see the birds

To see the flowers.

The way the birds and flowers
don't dance together

They just share the room
In the lights, a warm light.

Everyone is cold outside watching.

So many lights!

But

That room, that window!

Gosh that room would
really be something

On the busy street,
all them people

Humming
With something

...*something like*
the way I hear you in bed.

Coughing as I sit here
in this dark room,

Very little light,
a candle at most.

The window
An event everyone would go to,

the whole WORLD would be there except us.

Because you're asleep and I'm writing this

And while they trampled each other to see the birds
I had collected,
Only some birds,

Some of the small ones

The handful of flowers.

I would run into the bedroom
to wake you
and SCREAM!!!

D'Arne! YOU MUST COME NOW!

I HAVE THEM DISTRACTED!

And I would have
the rest of the flowers,

The rest of the birds,
even the big ones,

THE HUGE ONES!

Dancing in our living room.
Together
No glass, no lights, no crowd.
Just me, the flowers and the birds
and the only thing that matters

at all.

“My second Olinda.”

Once

In the woods

I wore a woman's

Face as a Mask

Cut out the

Eyeholes

From a blow

Up doll

Me and Simon

Found tied

To a tree.

Now

What feels

A million years

Later

I'm in

Murwillumbah.

With my sister

And my wife.

My sister has been

Sober 8 months.

Some dick

Head carved

“N.V

Love heart

B.L”

Into the wood

Of a thousand

Year old

Tree

I only write

On trees

When they are cut

Down

And slithered

Into white

Sheets

And slipped

Like papyrus

Into my Olivetti.

A water fall

Ran over

A tree,

Over rocks

Next to a cave

Filled with

Glowworms

That have
Evolved over
A million years.

Just green
Specks
Inside a cave's roof.

Asian tourists
Wearing
Hospital masks.

Stacks
Of
Wood
In front
Of white-painted
Haunted houses.

Salvador Dali
Said

I don't do drugs
I AM
DRUGS.

After 6 weeks
Sober I realize
I don't do poetry

I am
Poetry.

The world
Doesn't do
Life,

It is
Alive,

Life
Is drugs.

Years
Of getting higher.

But we are
Still all alone,

I'm sure of that.

God didn't
Make glowworms

But that's okay.

The glowworms
Lasted
A million years

alone

Still
Shining

In the dark.

Quietly,

In a cave,
In the middle
Of nowhere

Stars
In a cave

A million
Years
Alone.

I'm happy.

I am really, really,
Happy to be alive.

To be life.

“Taking Notes”

In the art room'

Someone is playing the piano

But it's not like it is in the movies

She is not a genius savant

With nervous twitches

And sensitive ears

You imagine the crazies to be.

***Real life
Ain't as dope as the movies.***

These people are better than that

Better than Bach,

Sleazier than Mozart

True ebony on the ivory.

The keys are bashed

Like a hammer

In a babies

Face.

A man down the hall who

Keeps asking me for

Cigarettes and if

I know about the eight and the zero

Tells her to

“Shut the fuck up!”

She closes the lid
Looks at me with my pencils
In a margarine tub
And bows.

The whole ward is silent again
Besides a children's
Program on the television
And her
Shoeless

Genius

Feet

Shuffling back to her room.

Sometimes I wonder
When I look at half open
Flowers

Or just single
Little shop of horror buds

And wonder if they
Are opening or closing

Especially the

Small yellow ones

On the sides
Of foot paths
Freeways
And grave stones.

And then,
When I'm not looking at
them any more

I couldn't give a flying

fuck any way.

“SOBER AGAIN”

People drink coffee and the pay phone never rings.

She comes and sits back down on the
Couch and we watch Australian idol

Moves to the other side of the room
And puts the money in her
Pink dressing gown pocket.

She put the money
In the phone,
Hangs up

I leant her 30 cents for the
Pay phone.

And at the top of her
Wet soggy shirt
Her old
Pancake
Boob falls out

“Don't be so reckless”

She sings

“Do not tumble dry ~ A week in the Broady Psyche Ward”

Cigarettes are a problem around here. Everyone is trying to scam \$3 dollars from me to use the massage chair. And a gay man with bi-polar keeps trying to get into my room to play baccarat. He tells me he is a billionaire but needs a couple of smokes until his boyfriend comes on Monday. He offers to pay me thousands of dollars to lay 1000 tiles at his mansion that he is just “so sick of looking at”. The other woman, the woman with the dog haired whiskers on her chin, has wet herself on the double couch and a nurse is steam cleaning it as we watch television. No one, I mean, NO ONE, is wearing shoes because they either don't own any or one inmate keeps stealing them. I keep my moccasins under my pillow when I sleep. At first I don't leave my room but to smoke and take my medications. Fill my water bottle and sit in the sun for a while. It's not that I don't want to be bothered, but the sad people here exacerbate my sadness and that's not helpful for me right now. I ate in the toilet for the first two meals, Lunch and dinner. There is a chair in my room but I don't like to sit in it. Or on the bed either. I don't really like standing there too long either. There is a fan covered in welded steel on the roof and I do like to watch it spin around.

In the morning a woman was making a coffee but the hot water tub was empty so I lifted it from the back and she filled her cup. She didn't say thank you. I felt like crying but I didn't. The walls are manic and if that fat fucking Albanian man doesn't stop screaming in the table tennis room I am going to break a pool cue over his head. Honestly. The blankets are not wooly, more like knitted hessian and the bed is plastic so it's easier to wipe away shit and piss, or so I guess. I feel sicker each day here, I don't want visitors but they come and sit with happy eyes. The Albanian man calls a young girl a fat slut and hands me a rolled up cigarette, I light it and he tells me I should move to the country of Camden. That “country” is heartless he says. My wife cries at the door when she leaves and the nurses look at me like a criminal. We listen to Enya in the relaxation room and I watch a fishing program at 4am with a man named meatloaf. I gave an old woman my black hoodie because she was cold, I knew I would never get it back. Her name is Joe, short for Joanna. The opposite of the Mona Lisa. At 8:40 she asks me what time it is.

I say

"Twenty to nine."

She shows me her purse and says

"I could keep A hammer in here, don't think I'm joking"

She borrows some shiny yellow boots with no laces from the gay man and walks around the living room showing them off. Sayin' things like:

"I usually charge 25 dollars for shellac nails"

Then she touches her tongue to her finger, then her ass and makes a "Hissssss" sound. The night shift watch behind the window and laugh. At 8:46 she asks me the time and I say,

"Fourteen minutes to nine."

Under a blanket she changes the television to 60 minutes and it reminds me of what my wife and I would do on a Sunday. Her feet in my hands... There is a toilet that wont flush but I keep using it and the shit just keeps piling up.

"Its ten to nine" I tell her again.

She says sorry, *"I forgot"*.

I say, *"it's okay"*.

She puts the hood of my black jumper on and closes her eyes. It's nearly 11 o'clock she says. Divorce is asleep on the couch, his name is Iggy with a pop. He is holding a banana and a coffee filled to the brim in a milk container. We sing Cold Chisel and Rodney picks butts from the ashtrays and smokes them in leaves. The gay man says, that's okay, that's what he does, we don't judge him. I sit in the Japanese maple trees and something about their pink blooms makes me wish I was writing love letters to my wife. But I'm not. The psych ward has no time for love letters; only cigarettes, money for the pay phone and bare feet. Burps, farts, shits in the shower, black coffee. I'm hooked on peppermint tea. I wish I was writing love poems but I just fucking cannot. I wish I was writing a love poem to my wife about flowers but there is no poems here and I am not a poet. I could write a poem about trying to write a poem but I think someone has done that before. I could write a poem that might make me a million dollars, or a smoke, or a pair of shoes. She is coming with my little cup again, it's 10:20. We sing Cold Chisel again. I'm fitting into the crowd.

"What's your name again, is it Ben?"

Someone asks, and I say "Yes, that's right, I'm Ben". Most people are already asleep and uninterested. I'm bored with myself. 16 minutes past 10 with no more Valium, no poems to write. I go back to watch the fan spin around in its metal cage and try to sleep.

“The art of dead babies”

He has a 5-dollar note in his sock
and tells me he has lots
of money

Says his wife left his baby
in a bath of cold water for 3 hours

She is dead now,
the wife too.

He got a payout of some kind.

He paints houses.

If he painted on canvasses
he would probably
be a millionaire.

A world famous
heartbroken artist.

The back-story of even mindless fools
Make legends of artists.

Philanthropists and the bourgeois love that kinda shit.

Dead babies in cold baths of water.

There is no one to find balance now,
we have become what we will always become.

There is a very fine line

Between murder and suicide

I keep my door locked,

I don't care

If they steal

My wallet

My phone

My shoes.

But if I lose my Dr Pepper

Or any of my books

Or that cool King Kong poster

I got in an empire magazine

I will kill every last one of them.

Seriously...

“Broadmeadows P.H.”

Lock someone up,
Isolate them.

Worst thing you can do is ignore someone.

Behind a passive, transparent wall.

Meanwhile,
In control

The seats are warm and comfortable.

Like a convenience store at night.

Or nothing like that.

Let the vending machines hum.

They remind me of the refrigerator at home

And her

Always of her.

Anything reminds me of her.

A wet towel on a bathroom floor.

A hand full of coins on a corner settee

An empty cup of Milo.

I will still write,

To the hum

And they will

Still ignore me in their light.

“Lucy and Joanne”

“I always wanted to be a ballet dancer”

she said.

But she has told me very clearly

“Ben, you need to be in charge of the pastels,
colored pencils and the sharpener.”

I wrapped them in a pillow-case.
A blanket.

Put them in a brown bag
I found in the craft room
And hid them under my bed.

I put a pillow near my door
So if someone tried to enter
They would trip
I would hear them

and

Beat the thief to death with my
Novel tied to a string.

I'll be damned if someone steals
Lucy and Joanne's
chance to create art.

Even if it's a horrible tree,

A sick figure,
A house with smoke from its chimney.

A woman outside

A woman maybe crying,

Possibly forever.

“Mr Willow

Jasper says

*“I just want one small room
A mini fridge to keep the milk cold
And a microwave,*

*If I’m lucky;
Maybe a kettle?*

*A man gave me a drink at work,
I don’t drink*

*I went home and went into the wrong room
And a lady was screaming at me
Because I was pouring salt on her floor.*

*In my culture
Is good luck*

*I spent 12 months in prison,
6 of that time here.*

*I just wanted to go to my home,
And cook toast*

Whisp””

*You are a good friend”
he tells me...*

“You understand me.

*You understand the need for
Cold milk and some eggs.*

The need for a small room.”

I have never been lonely.

Loneliness requires the need for
People.

To shake
Olives,
Sundried tomatoes
And
Break beans

In a wet pan for nearly
Four hours

Nearly 50 minutes
Of conversations

Homemade mayonnaise

Vinegar and eggs,
Nothing else.

I forgot really

I went partying with
Karoline, Jack and Joseph.

Lots of uncles
Aunties.

25 minutes

One full hour of nothing

Recipes,
Fairies
Families.

To me,
nothing.

Everything heavy on her chest
Rape, a stolen baby, welfare.

She ate all my chocolates

Her chest still full.

Mine layered in a thick
Homemade paste of her
white

Vaseline
grief.

Homemade mayonnaise
Vaseline grief

“This is
getting
me nowhere”

“The rawest shit you ever did eat”

Like boxers
Who like hugs.

Bears in trash cans, finding a cheeseburger.

A feast

The end of ink in a pen

A bricklayer laying 500 bricks a day
For 60 cents a brick

A woman saving straws wrapped in paper
For her grand kids.

Kids drowned in bathtubs.

A cotton ball in a wet sink.

Nurses on call, all night television.

A sock with a hole in it
On a foot

A taxi driver lost

The bath water
A water line
We suck

But sometimes the hands of bricklayers
With the soft skin of a child,
The cotton drying out – warm again, dry.

The television turned off.

A quiet amongst the noise

A soft kiss
From a pair of sun broken lips

They take me
And it feels

I shouldn't say sorry
To anyone
Anymore.

“Watching a black woman dance in the sun”

It's hot,
Well, hot enough,
Like left over soup.

Warm, even.

Warm to the stomach

To the soul

Like a rock on the moon.

Like the end of a very fine pen
Running out of ink.

A man's hands shaking a stick

Rubbing his fists into his eyes sockets.

Warming the ink.

The soup.

The mind.

I know it's corny

But it's true.

She shook the branch of a
Cherry blossom tree
And danced as the petals fell
Into her hair, her black skin,
Her black hood.

Peppered in white and pink

Small yellow sun
In a fog
A blue chair

That didn't need to be there,
Not right now, anyway.

Spinning around she was

A cherry blossom lamington.

A boxing Samoan cherry blossom lamington.

Caught in a moment
When the flowers were finally happy
To leave their branches,

Settle on her hair.

The wood a gentle skeleton.

The blind,
The teachers
The soft white pebbles in a fish bowl
Covered with green moss.

And her...

with

Cherry blossoms in
Her
hair.

“Time, Goes by I suppose”

For 3 months

In September

I missed 3 hours a day

I don't know how.

Work got in the way.

Life

Feeding the cats,

A single hour a day

Gone...

3 of them in fact!

I ended up in a coffee shop

And the waitress,

My wife

Gave me the bill and said

Is that all?

I left a

3 hour tip

And cried for the 3 months of September.

“All I need
right

All I need...

now”

I need the fucking sky

I need a biscuit with sugar on top

I need a god damn crab outside of a bucket.

A loud room with no one inside it.

A soft hand on my shoulder
that punches me in the face.

A program-less television
A simple line of static
Something fixed

That wasn't broken

I'd love to have the east

THE WEST!!!

OH THE WEST!

If possible a mandarin,

The wet juicy center
on

My teeth,

My tongue a soft slug

Chalk on the road on a rainy day

A whisper

A tag on a wall that says

“Ben waz 'ere”

“Off with my head!”

I have headaches.

Something like your head in a gallows
And an axe made of ice
Cutting off your head

The ice splintering like glass shards
Of blue and white

The blood melting
Seeping into the melting ice on
The concrete.

The warm blood from your throat
A steam in the water,
The vapor
your last poem.

Small drops,
No bigger than a 50 cent piece

The cliff notes,
The Google how to's.

Siri.

Like a tickled dog
That lays on its back
And closes its eye lids

A leg of lamb.

Your skull just dying
To feel the warm glow of the summer
morning

And a man drinking a cup of
Coffee

not

too far away.

“Something’s aren’t important to people.”

Noah built an ark
To save the species of
Earth

Because God
Told him to.

If I was god,
and a flood was coming,

I would place
Two ants on a small
Leaf

And push them
Into a creek.

Ants never
Hurt no one.

So small.

Like pebbles
On a beach,

In your shoes,

A diamond on
Your finger.

Ants never asked
To
Wipe out
The human race.

I think
Two
Ants on a leaf
Is fair.

Fair, and just.

Finally the meek
Would
Inherit
The
Earth,

Maybe do a better Job
At not breaking people’s
Hearts.

But we use
Poor

Lots wife (don't know how this should
read?),
The pillar of salt

To season our meat,
The thick beef

And warm chicken.

The cat of course
Saved.

The marbled
Meat

Flavored by the saved

And now
The
dead
Beasts of the ark.

Noah is the fool now.

Handing out
Menus
For the end of the world

And we eat
Quietly
Without mouths
Closed.

While
My ants on
The leaf
Raft

Wonder what
The hell they're going
To do with
All this
Spare time.

All this space around
Them.

Just alone;
But together

With nothing
To
say.

“Thick Skin”

I went out side

For a smoke

And stood

On a snail

I felt bad for

That poor bastard

With all that weight

Till I remembered

What it was like

To be a slug

With a soft

Shell

That people could

Break

easily

Like opening

A take away

Cup of coffee

“All for you, dudes”

I have gotten my self
blind drunk
and taken a
shit in the cats
water bowl

just trying to figure out
how you guys did it;

and what was the secret
to fighting through the
hangover

when my stomach was eating
itself

and I was shitting out
green snot
for 3 years.

So this poem
is for the one-off's

The ones that got old
That stayed forever
The fighting kings.

I think the holy secret
of the BEATS

was not to write for the
down and out

the underfoot trodden
but to become one,
stay one

no matter the
hangover
even if the hangover

was copy cats
like
me

“Milk and wood - for Dylan Thomas”

A man who could turn
wood into milk
didn't need dollars to live
he would survive on the word
nourished by

a thirst he would never satiate
by any amount of milk
or wood.

The ocean
like a great
glaring queen
of felines

a lover
never hearing your calls

A brutal blast;

A dark and white twist

like a pint
Glass of Guinness
thrown
straight
into
your
face.

“Dead voices on the radio”

If half the
dead
men

had half
the life

left in the pages
you
left behind

the ocean
would have
lazy tides

the moon would
have floated
far away

the stars
bored in the
sky

Best it was left

for you

to keep them
burning

still.

“You ventilate”

Short of breath

the best
needed no breath

to

write.

The work

like the fog
on a pane of glass

ready to be rubbed
away with a palm

to expose the ocean

a woman

or death

outside.

“Tjurkurrpa, jukurrpa, tjurgurba”

When Jill Marr
was violently murdered
walking home from a
bar in Brunswick

An Abo bloke
I worked a factory
With in Brooklyn
Said
*“Okay,
I get it,
she’s a
bit of a
looker*

i get it.

Rape her

*But there aint
no need ta
Fucking
kill ‘er.”*

The dream
Times elders
of Australia told
Story’s to children
Of lizards
Drinking entire billa-
bongs

in a single sip

Now
Ash has been made
to kings
Of the land

that is sun burnt
to a crisp.

“A plain envelope”

The stick insect

shaped into stick
before it
even knew what one was.

Like god could have done,
if he was around.

i keep asking
for some kind of
reason

but why should there be?

And there is nothing tongue
in cheek about it

No great ant secret
of the ant eater

The
long road
shaped
By 15 million
Years of

Nothing
But hunger and
Exhaustion

And doing every
Thing and nothing
To
Quell
Both.

No reading

Or taking a woman

To a film
Before
You fuck.

A million billion
Eaten ants,

A small few less
Million
Aardvarks
with filled bellies
of death

And still

We wake up.

Make our bed

Go to work

And sleep

In between

Cause it's

All so god damn

Exhausting

1.

When people say go hard
or go home I usually go home.

2.

You ever wake up
at 3am and wonder
why Bob Marley didn't
shoot the deputy

3.

I saw three kids
throw a puppy
From a railway bridge
and it's tail wagged
the whole way down

4.

I'm paranoid of being paranoid.

maybe

The butcher isn't as important as the pig.

Bitch.

“Fit for a mummy”

She hated the way

I made the bed

I had put the sheet

Over the pillow

Like they do in hotels

“I hate it”

she said

The Egyptians

Used to build

Pyramids

For the dead

So they could sleep

Well.

A man can't always

Please a single

Woman

Let alone

The whole fucking

World

I never made the

Bed again.

Just left all the

Sheets in a bundle

On the mantras

Man can't please

A woman

By making

A bed.

Egyptians don't build pyramids

for the dead

any more

either

2.1

The sky diver
Who cuts his wrists
Mid jump
had
Kite trails
of red swirls
streaming in a double helix
above his falling body
like blood smoke signals
for the clouds
fleshless ears.

2.2

If you wipe your ass
while urinating
the sphincter opens/relaxes
and you can clean the shit up better.

The same goes with
drinking
while writing.

“A very slow murder”

There could be
nothing Or don't
Sadder
Than the one murdering you
You love
killing as brutally as the
You blast of a butterfly's
wing
killing you with a knife breaking

killing you by watching
TV

killing you with silence
killing you by being
nothing.

Anyone

The one you love

The labor
For the ones
Who missed
Class

Got
Drunk
At lunch time

Thought Mud
And
Only Late nights
Of youth With bad mornings.

the
early Fluro orange shirts
Unbreakables. A couple of dollars
finally now broken, Left over
Before pay day
like for a few
Horses beers
With a trailing
Cart, Ready to white
Knuckle again

Callous hands,
Bent back, Through the hangover
And Of our
Long bumpy truck Wasted
Rides Youth.
in squashed cars.

We bite
Through

Steve had been hav-
over a week. Light
eyes water and he
red erection for the past 13 hours. It was like his whole body was stiff, even his
brain was rigid and taut, tight and tender.

“Plato’s Cafe”

ing headaches for
had been making his
had had a blistering

I could be wrong but I suspected nervously that it was a tumor pushing on his cingulate sulcus. He smelt like he had a tumor. He smelt like cheap amphetamines. But being Steve he still looked a million bucks. Expensive suit, shiny steel cufflinks, a porcelain tile smile; Steve had a certain style to his manner.

He stirred his coffee slowly with a plastic spork, dropping in two small lumps of brown sugar. It was early morning but as was his character, Steve had arrived 26 minutes early for his morning meeting. The client was a short Asian man with a comb over named Michael. Michael was suing his oldest brother over a failed business venture. If it wasn’t resolved soon Steve feared he would be fighting a murder case instead. He took this free time to relax, drink his coffee and nibble at a glazed Danish. He was feeling content, besides the constant headache and stiff erection tucked in between his leather belt and sweaty belly button. He could feel it there, like a stretch of raw shoulder beef, thick and purple.

It was a hot day in Queensland, muggy and moist. Sporty women were running along the streets in tight skins with their sweaty little red faces and pink jiggling boobs. He watched them through the glass of the cafe, the Pacific Ocean behind them rolling in small white bubbles. Some families threw open rugs on the sand.

The cafe was quiet, only Steve and a handful of other customers: An elderly couple that looked fit, the kind of old bones you find on a cruise ship in Egypt or getting drunk in a cheap Vegas casino. They looked of rich cloth, her earrings shooting white diamond reflection stars over the roof and pale blue floors. They were talking loudly with their hands. The other man in the café, aside from the staff, was a tradesman in fluro orange coveralls. He was doing a crossword in the paper and playing with his mobile phone at the same time. He caught Steve watching him and cast him a sharp head nod hello. He was some kind of Wog, Italian or Maltese,

his thick skin was a creamy brown and his nose splattered all over his face. On his hand was a tattoo of a trident. The light above his head was malfunctioning and flickering on and off intermittently, but the ambient light of the rest of the room left its presence only slightly noticeable.

Biting into another warm mouthful of Danish, Steve put his head into his hands for a short while and squeezed his eyes with his palms in an attempt to quell the hot and sharp pangs of his skull. Squeezing the soft tissue of his eyeballs behind the thin lid of skin, he made purple, red and rainbow colors with the dark light behind his eyes. He had done this many times as a child. He remembered that for a while and smiled through the pain. He thought of his dad and his smile faded. When he pulled his hands from his face it took some time for his sight to readjust. Everything swam in yellows and whites, like the middle of a candle flame or a drop of milk on polished wooden floorboards.

When the color had come back to his face, and the double vision had again melted into one clean reception, he noticed another customer in the café. She was standing sternly at the counter ordering a small decaf cappuccino, her hand on her hip, her thick bust wrapped in a red maxi, a large pillow of hair on her head wrapped tightly in a thick bun. Steve let himself linger for a moment, his eyes moving up and down her body, staring hard and long at her fat ass and the material spread tightly over her two cheeks, the little pink asshole burning in the center like a bull's-eye. Her clean white skin was lighted warmly by the neon light egg and bacon roll toaster. She had class, but her thickness and measurements made her slutty. Steve noticed the tradesman sneak a photo of her ass on his phone, flashing Steve a quick grin as he put his phone in his pocket, packed up his paper and left two fifty cent coins on the white table. A skinny waitress with a perm snatched them up and squirreled them away in the front pocket of her plastic apron. A large and noisy truck had pulled up at the front of the cafe, filling the room with its shadow. Steve felt a little cold in the darkness. Going back to the counter to prepare the new customers' cappuccino, the now one dollar richer waitress flicked on a spotlight as she passed the coffee machine and a beautiful warm yellow light cast across our new visitor's body.

Steve leaned back into his chair. His eyes were not on the woman's ass any more. His head was down, his brow was furrowed and his line of sight was pointed directly at the feet of the woman in red. From the soles of her heels, casting out maybe 5 feet, was the black puddle of her body, defined by the absence of light.

Her shadow lay on the floor like a drunken child, dead and quiet and as thick as the gristle on a roast pork. Steve immediately started to sweat. His hands massaged each other in furious movements. The hard cock in his pants like a burnt sausage, boiling hot with pumping blood, almost ready to burst from his pants in an explosion of meat and matted hair. Steve was drooling out of the side of his tightly closed mouth, leaning further over in his seat, bringing his eyes and head closer to the floor, closer to the woman's shadow, closer towards the black blanket of the woman's body, the dark menacing the light harshly on its edges, as crisp, sharp and perfect as a paper cut. Without consciously knowing it, Steve was out of his chair now and walking along on his knees towards the woman and her gumshoe partner. The old couple had stopped talking and were watching Steve with a concerned stare, the woman of the pair kicking her husband under the table. He was perplexed; you could see he didn't want any trouble, not with a man in a thousand dollar suit sneaking across the floor.

Feeling the floor beneath him, Steve realized he was on the tiles, but it didn't faze him, he was completely unabashed. He had meat in his teeth; this was a haunting. He fell to hands and crawled across the floor quietly to where the woman was standing, her bright red back and round mounds of ass just a temple to what Steve was really paralyzed by; her shadow. The shadow was three forms of circle and perfect. Her legs, flawed by the angle of the light and the degree of her stance, just a single short little parallel line running into the roundabout of her ass, a glorious black pit, bound by yellow, more form in its nothing than the meat from which it was born. A smell, a feeling, the shadow was alive with size and bubbling from its paper-thin existence. The hips had a curve to them that Steve had never seen before, a vase shape that singularly balanced the piece de resistance of this black oil painting; two simple circles. The chunky tits of the woman splashed across the floor, deep tight light condensed to the extent of its limit. The breasts, the nipples unneeded in the perfect circles at Steve's fingers, the head and the bob of the woman, the finishing touches, the blood cherry on the chocolate ice cream. He

fingering at the tiles, running his hands across the darkness, tracing his nail across the curl of the ass outline. Again, he thought of when he was a child. He thought of his mother and a smile cracked across his face.

Steve had been quiet enough in his approach that the woman had not noticed his presence. She was rocking on her heels and Steve could smell her perfume, cascading down from her neck and settling on her toes. The old couple were gathering their belongings and heading towards the front glass door. They had sensed this madness from the start but were too proud or afraid to intervene. Steve barely noticed them. The light the waitress had switched on was still flickering, sending the woman's shadow into different shades of black and nothing; a hue of 00000 jumping slightly to a hue of 00001. It was tense; Steve's cock was softly rubbing against the tiles of the floor, burning white-hot. As the light flicked, Steve bent down in a downward dog yoga pose and parting his lips, pushed his tongue from his mouth and in a long, serious lick, ran his wet slug across the floor that held the woman's shadow on its surface. He did it again, between the light flicks, the on and off motion. Steve licked harder and harder, further and further. From the feet to the asshole, the vase hips to the tits, the head and the bun, he licked with the fury of a pit pull bobbing for apples. His body shook with pleasure. His teeth gritted between licks. His cock was SCREAMING inside his pants. Still unaware of her devoted lover, the woman took a step back, parting the single shaft of black of the leg shadow, exposing a brilliant white slither of light pointing like a beacon to the shadow's cunt.

Steve, entranced and transfixed by the new form the shadow had taken, rubbed his cock across the new crack in the shadow. His belt buckle pressed hard and painfully into the soft tissue of his exposed knob, his foreskin running back and forth in hurried movements. His eyes wet and wild, his tongue still running across the flooring, butter and dropped food fat made his mouth and cheeks shine in the light, covered in a thin greasy layer. Fucking the blackness faster, Steve smashed his pelvis hard against the shadow, dick bleeding from the steel buckle, spots of red forming on his white briefs. Steve worked with gusto; each thrust sending deep glows into his soul. The feeling of falling into a pool and getting water up your nose, that's how he felt. He was red hot, his headache a beautiful contrast to his

growing orgasm, fucking the floor to the metronome of his pounding, throbbing brain.

Steve had started making noises and the woman, looking around at eye level, saw nothing. It wasn't until Steve grabbed hold of the woman's feet to steady his body as he smashed away at the ground that she noticed the flailing man, furiously masturbating at her feet. Startled, she threw her coffee in the air and grabbed her face in a tight ball, screaming bloody murder as she kicked at Steve with her pointy, glossy and latex high-heeled shoes.

In that moment, with her scream bouncing loudly around the walls, the kicks of her legs making and moving the shadow into spasms of light and darkness, solid and stark, the truck at the front of the store pulled away, washing the entire cafe with natural sunlight. The coffee came down, spilling across Steve's white skin and white shirt as he unloaded a thick rope of cum onto his stomach. He writhed on the floor, twitching in a powerful orgasm that ran across his body like a hot ray of sunshine. He felt like a new born baby as he lay in the flickering light, covered in coffee, slight yellow bruises already growing as the woman continued to scream and lay kicks into poor Steve's face.

The one-dollar richer waitress had called the police. They arrived in seconds and Steve just lay across the floor, his head cocked to the side, staring patiently though bloated broken eyelids at his shadow cast long ways across the cafe floor. There were bullet holes of coffee on his shirt, the light globe still clicking on and off to the up and down rhythm of his breathing. He felt warm, his headache hurt and his penis was limp and flaccid. He was wrapped up in a blanket and put in the back of a police van by two Negro officers. One was named Reg and the other Patrick. Both, coincidentally, had white wives.

Steve's cell block was a small room in the Queensland main strip. It was comfortable as it was only a holding room. There were

three other men in the cell and they seemed kind enough. As it was drawing night, the men had eaten and the screws had built a small fire that was burning right behind him, casting the shadows of the guards on the walls. He enjoyed them for a moment, his back pressing toughly against the cell wall.

Very carefully Steve reached into his pants and gently removed his penis. Slowly stroking, he watched the dark clouds move across the stone, wondering how he was going to explain to his father that he was now having homosexual tendencies. The other men slept.

“Family Affairs”

Six hours dead, and the porter still had a fresh, healthy grin spread across his face, head pointed skyward, arms reached out to his side as if floating in a warm sea. Considering the hammer blow, there was just a sharp ‘ Rorschach splatter’ splashing out from behind his right ear. If I had to guess its shape, I would have to say “Lucky”.

Rachel, the travel partner I had been paired with had minutes before been led away, John Venables/Robert Thompson style. She walked over the mountain face holding hands with two women in black and yellow latex that only modestly covered their assholes, nipples and cunts in thin, single strips. The man who killed the porter stood before me and impatiently rubbed his hands together.

“That woman is going to have a machine I call “The Hermaphrodite” cut off her feet. It’s basically an angle-grinder with small welded hammers attached to a very thin, finely sharpened blade.

Very thin and very quick; it basically smashes and cuts the flesh perfectly at the same time...

Then her hands; fingers first. All the open wounds are cauterized and wrapped in soft, fluffy cotton ball tourniquet, then wrapped tightly in duct tape. The two woman that led her away, my daughters, they will be kissing her very softly as this happens. Kissing her mouth, her nipples, they will massage her vagina. They will be nibbling on her ear lobes to make her comfortable; maybe even aroused. We can keep her alive for almost 24 hours using these techniques.”

He let out a sigh and continued

“Then she will have just the thin blade placed on the soft bone above the clit and on the pubis. My girls will open her up and replace her heart

with a fist full of silver coins. She will die very confused, alone and in a tremendous amount of physical pain, I assure you, it will be a horrible way to die."

He said "I assure you" with a breathy, tired accent. I shuffled uncomfortably, silently. I had spent the last number of hours pleading, crying, offering everything I had and things I didn't to this man. I explained in almost poetic detail the adoration I had for my wife, the recent birth of my second child almost 10 years after her sister, how long we had tried to get pregnant again... Not for a single second did he turn around. Not even when I shit myself. Never once did he turn away from his view of the lake. He just stared peacefully at a small hut that bobbed on the water only a few hundred meters from the shore at our feet. Only now as he spoke to me with his face near mine I could see his eyes. He was a beautiful, tanned man, with perfect teeth and the most gentle, soft green eyes that turned grey when he started to speak.

"It will be a very conflicting time for her..."

A very horrible way to die."

He shuffled on his haunches and came closer to me, running a hand across the soft earth at my feet. It made a pattern. If I had to guess its shape, I'd say "Rainbow".

"The women never have an option. I never give the women as choice. Women upset me. Women are, by nature, selfish. Their needs are always hormonal. I think it's something men lack. Man, by nature, carry a physical pain already. It's in their bones, you see? They have earned a permanently bent and broken spine. They carry the weight of God on their skinny shoulders, you understand?"

He said this almost in a whisper, pulling and exposing his penis from the side of his leather chaps and rubber undies.

"We carry our curse as an appendage, not a void. The ins VS the outs. Heaven VS the Earth."

He bounced a very large, thick, uncut slab of dick in his palm.

"You have a choice, I can give you an option."

Placing his tanned cock back into his rubber undies, he looked again toward the hut that bobbed away on the frosted white splashes of the coves grey and watery surface.

"I give you my word; no harm will come to you while you are inside that Hut. This small vessel will take us out there"

He beat the claw hammer against the thick materials of a basic rubber speed boat.

"...and I will let you out in 24 hours. You have my word."

He crossed his heart with his left hand; a rose gold wedding band with yellow diamonds wrapped around his ring finger. With his right hand he offered me a lift from the dirt and shepherded me into the boat.

The porter's blood slowly became thicker and blacker in the hot sun, spreading around his armpits. If I had to guess a shape I'd say *"Re-Birth"*

Wind off the water was always at least 10 degrees cooler than land wind, but the purring motor blew hot diesel air onto my face and I felt comfortable and warm. I was still bound but my hands where in

front of me now and I had a garrote of sorts between my legs. I let my head rest in my hands and bounce with the motion of the water.

"When you are freed for the first time, you will say the same thing every man says, or a variation of such. Men are predictable - like dogs. Women are like cats.

You will say the same thing"

He had sweat patterns running down his face, like the lines the rain makes on a frosted windowpane. If I had to guess its shape id say "Heaven"

Opening the hut door with his wedding band hand and guiding me by the neck with his right he said;

"Real feeling is only heightened by human suffering"

Letting a hand slip from my face, his eyes cloud grey, he said;

"Why do you think men seek a female mate? What do you think love really is?"

The hut door closed, the thin slither of light from outside narrowed slowly 'til it was a final knife slit, cut white across my face. A lock clamped into place. There was no room to move inside and it smelled sweetly of the sea. I could only see the colour swarms you make when you press your fingers into your eye sockets with the lids closed. If I had to guess the shape I'd say "Alone".

I hear the motor of the boat start and I miss its exhaust on my face. I think of my mother when I think of that warm air. The next sound I hear is the crackle of a speaker popping into life above my head.

I can hear a newborn crying through the speaker. Another voice was asking for her daddy, a young girl, she must have been around 10. The calming lulls of a very familiar female voice was assuring all three that everything was going to be fine. That daddy would be here soon.

Then the sound of something mechanical, a whirl, like a blender, or a grinder kicked into the perfectly machined bore of something very circular. Then two women laughing. Laughing and kissing something soft and white.

“Understanding; Killing myself before I’m born.”

He has not been here before and neither had himself.

He stands directly beside himself and strains his eyes in the soft neon glow of the museum’s light. Behind a sheet of glass, smudged with little children’s fingerprints, in a white wooden box secured to the white wall in front of him, is a collection of insects pinned to a corkboard. Small little labels with (difficult to say) scientific. names like;

Phasmatoptera, Exopterygota and Neoptera.

Himself doesn’t need to point but he knows he is looking directly at the *Phasmatoptera*, better known as a Stick Insect. You know these things about yourself. Without speaking or pointing, himself says the name, pronouncing it perfectly, even accented in a slight Latin enunciation. Without opening his mouth or lifting his tongue he says

“The stick insect was destined to imitate the twig of a branch before it had ever even seen one, before it knew what stick was, before it even knew what the concept of being a stick was... Molding it’s body as an embryo to mimic wood, the entire symbiotic and evolutionary process destined to become the exact organic replica of a single strand of wood. A survival mechanism. An instinct before his brain had the ability to consciously act instinctively.”

“Becoming a stick before it even knew the concept of a stick...”

He repeated.

Himself turned to face him, still not speaking, narrowing his eyes on his teeth; just a couple of snapped rotten brown and gold semi ivory stumps in his small broken and round lipped mouth.

“And millions still believe in the concept of a participating god. All these dead insects a very clear proof there is no creator but our selves, yet here we are. Standing next to each other, the same person – just separated by our years in the tubes. A new version of me – you, and an older, forgive me for saying, disheveled version of myself.”

His self said quietly, inaudibly, like electricity. A current in His brain.

Himself (*Nico of the future*) was Dressed in a woolen knit jumper over a red shirt, the material at his neck pressed sharply, nearly popping from his collar and spread open on his breast, his perfect teeth white and bright reflecting the sterile room with a quarter crescent moon on the bulge of each molar, incisor and cuspid.

In that small moment of mutual adorned silence, a small pistol, the single shot of a Steyr Mannlicher M1901 slipped from him self’s (Past Nicolas) pocket and in a single arched motion pressed gently against Nico’s head and in a boiling hot pop, a sliver of metal pushed the entire contents of Nicos head; The face bones, eye ball liquid and brain matter across the fresh white walls of the museum. A two second red and white splash and 2 more seconds of silence before he opened his freshly formed eyes by the side of a turquoise and light blue pool in Istanbul. He was in Istanbul for sure. He had been here before. The old yellow stone stacked walls are convexed around him.

He looked at the watch on his wrist that wouldn’t be invented for at least 200 years and watched the zodiac hand click from a odd to even number and sub-consciously sighed. Wouldn’t be long this time, a few minutes, half of a clock watch if he was lucky. Knowing the environment meant that this moment in time had already happened. It wouldn’t take Nicolas long to find him. At his feet,

gingerly but sure footed, traipsing across the mosaic tiles of the sauna room a Persian cat rubbed its ear across the peak of his fresh white, red trimmed 2014 Reebok Cross fit sneakers. He looked again at his watch, in a few moments Nicolas would be walking through the arch to the right of the Blue Mosque in his shabby brown coat with his hands in his pockets.

The kitten mewing at his feet was irritating him, terribly. It was someone's cat – it had a piece of string with an Arabic symbol carved into a small piece of steel tied to its neck. Nico picked up the cat gently and wrapped his beautiful soft white hands around the cats neck and tightly squeezed the throat for a few thrashing moments until the cat hung limp in his hands, like a wet sock alone on a clothes line he remembered once, many years to pass yet, thinking now, in the past about a future that hasn't yet happened; when he was a small child.

As the zodiac clicked over to the exact time that Nico had anticipated, in walked himself. Dressed exactly as he knew he would have. Putting the kitten gently onto the floor, taking a long drag of, and stubbing out, a cigarette, in an ash tray beside him, he did not remember lighting, he stood up, brushed white cat hair from his shoulders and stood, slightly turning so his back heel was just hanging over the lip of the swimming pool.

"It would be a lie to say this is an unexpected surprise, wouldn't it, friend."

He said, staring straight forward, hands behind his head.

"Don't shoot, I'm unarmed and I come in peace."

He said laughing loudly and raising his hands palm open to the sky.

"I love Istanbul in the morning, I wish we could stay longer. Well, you at least, it fazes me not wherever I am and for how-ever long. You, my Carmen San Diego, I know you are a man of France at heart. Don't be silly, you know this wont hurt."

A small boom, like the strike of a match head, or a flint stone rubbed together and there it was again, the split second infinite red hum. Like a car crash sped up 10,000x, then nothing, then nothing. Not even a thing.

Nicolas woke up again somewhere in the future, sometime after 90k. He knows this because he remembers the TV ad for womb on T.S.E.V.N that's broadcasting on the airport terminal television screen. The television brightly spews out the pop-out hologram of a white woman in a lab coat and her blonde hair tied in a bun above her head. Smiling. Smiling, really, really big. As she opens her arms in a welcome hug, a collection of other white, blonde clinically dressed woman huddle behind her. Same stupid arms out, same stupid smile.

He would have to find Nico sometime soon but he knew where he was and was happy to rest in his chair shortly, watching the television screen as the modern age hustled around him. He sighed
Perfectly queued the television says;

"Welcome to The Womb TM".

The idea of WOMB, was simple.

Starting in Japan, basically the company offered any one over the age of 50 the opportunity to crawl back into your mother's vagina and be reborn.

Not even digitally, the whole concept was physical, small clinically white rooms, thousands of them, in an conglomerate set of ware houses that would eventually take up 1/5th of the entire country.

On the television the smallish slit of the pink womb, more like a ribbed salival cocoon was yawning and slowly vomiting the fully grown larval human embryo, soaked in shimmering translucent goo, his adult eyes full with the bewildering wonderment of a freshly developed child. The newborn already born licking the slimy gel from his hands and rubbing a hooked hand over his face like a grooming cat, thin sinewy ropes of rubber like mouth spit bridging from any convex angle the twisted fragile unit of humanity squirmed into. The throbbing mound of polyester meat pulsing out the grown man like the split side of a whale and its blubber. A hand full of WOMB nurses smiling like proud mothers, TSEVN filming for a real "take home and re-live" DVD experience. Re-live your birth. Re-live the reliving of your rebirth. Live anything but your life.

We come out and after a million, million years of the same thing, it just is. All we want to do is reverse the process. Crawl back into the warm, wet, safe crevice of our creator and sleep forever in the unconscious abyss of pre birth. But we can't, well, not yet anyway.

The slight running text at the bottom of the television rolled across with news stories. The time stamp in the corner read 2:4-25. At 9l:13 he would see Nico stumble over a couple leaning in to hold hands. This time he would not greet him, he will not even let his presence be known. He will watch him pass, enter the departure lounge to France and use a payphone nearby to call Womb. The time now was not for death, but for rebirth. Everything else could wait; he had all the time in the world to kill himself another day.

La fin.

