Dead Peasant

Stories by Lisa Baldissera

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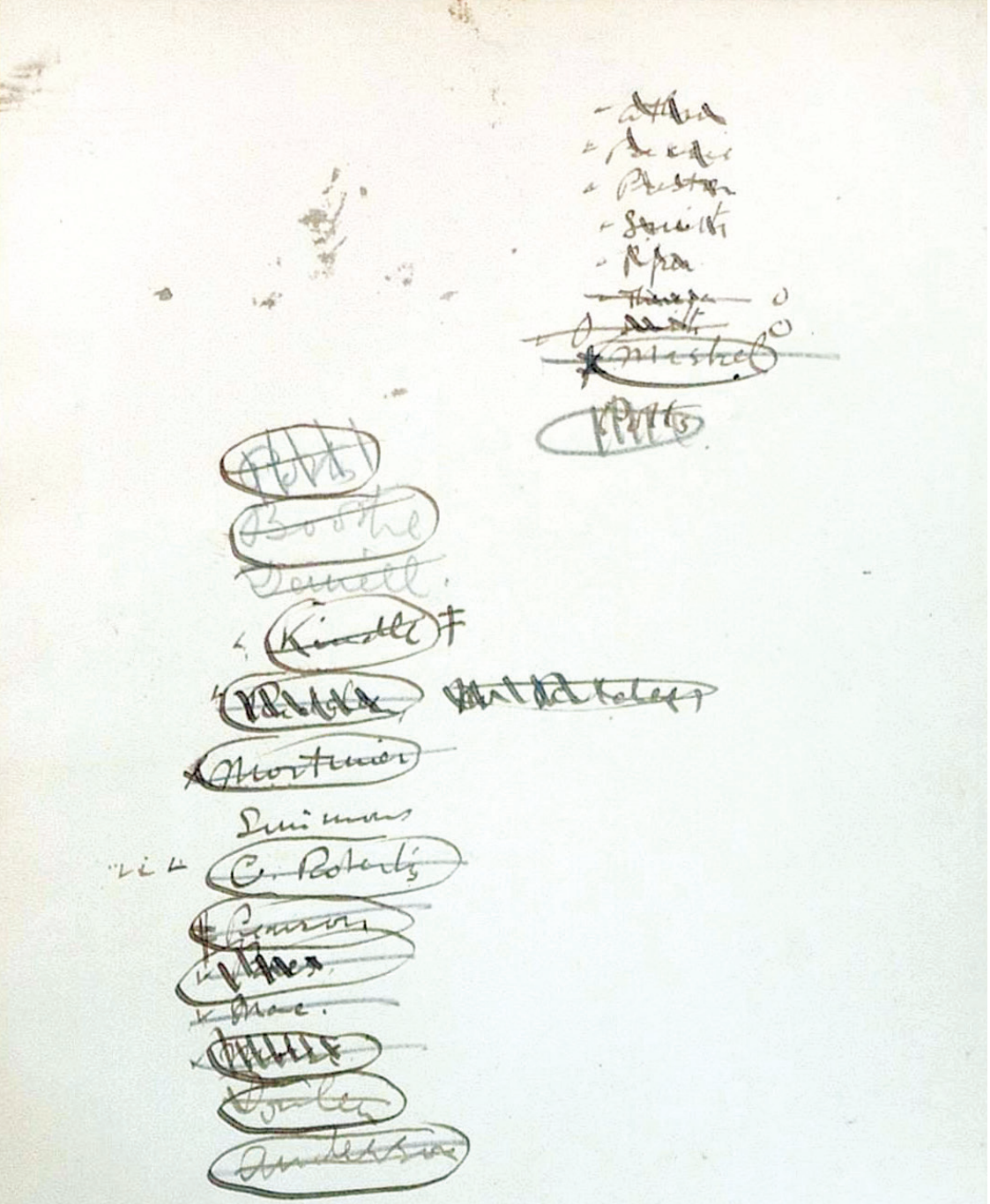

Sometimes “here” has no walls. There are some pieces of corrugated cardboard, a square of tarp and a sleeping bag, a deck of cards for solitaire. Or, following the movement of thinking, a woman escapes the confinement of identity, moving into the open of language as it discovers her. The most temporary membranes serve as shelter, and the city is a density of desire. Amidst this flux speaking begins, makes its tenuous continuities near and in spite of the accreted institutions that compel anyone to obey, violate and buy, to be placed on identity’s grid.

—Lisa Robertson

1

Weepers I/ Curator

The weeping started at conferences. When asked to speak about my work, my eyes began to water. I thought about the unpaid wages. I thought about the free labour. I thought about what it had been like to be an unfunded doctoral student for six years. The terrorization of poverty. Three people had been killed on the street in front of my student apartment on Hackney Road. The buses had driven around their bodies in large arcs; people were impatient with the obstruction.

The dead are a strange and obstinate work crew. They labour silently to tell us what we should prioritize as the living. They remind us that punishment awaits those who get it wrong. You could be dead, they say, you could be dead, so do what's right to stay alive. We don't listen too closely to their admonishments—we know the dead's stories are puppet shows we animate, and this is why the dead are so frightening. We feel their longings, the things they left undone and unsaid. We want to believe the dead now understand what it is to be free but they press at our windows, whispering their regrets. The dead chide us and we strain to hear their admonishments that there are some things capitalism cannot extract.

We are rushing. We don't have time to sit and wait for the words to become clearer. Capitalism is unable to exhume the body's desire, they say, for instance. It's only materiality—something mitochondrial, for example—that they can conjure a patent for, they say. We might ask what they mean by desire then, or what desire might will into being but who has time to decipher their answers?

On my way to Yorkshire to Charlotte Bronte's house—to see the long modest wooden table in the living room in front of the fire where she and her sisters wrote three novels—I had been surprised when my journey was rerouted due to a "person on the tracks," a transit euphemism for bodies, for the dead. These bodies embroidered rail lines with their refusals and sadness, their pre-track thoughts and grey messages, like the ghosts of World War II fighter pilots, young German soldiers who, losing their will to fight, might discharge bombs or bullets along a long country road in Devon. The modern dead are unlike our own. Our dead have failed to stay alive, but theirs are heroes. They marched unflinchingly into their destiny, decided by others. They are not entrepreneurs. Their dead still had the capacity to elicit awe.

Had the German bombers seen the boy beneath them, late for school, the only one on the road? My father had run to the farmer's house for refuge, and then resumed his walk to school. A child dodging bullets in 1940 would be given a short reprieve inside the old farmhouse—perhaps a cup of tea, a quick pat on his shoulder, before being sent back onto the road to continue his journey. A farmer's wife had been kindly and opened the door to him. She was an anachronistic trauma counsellor in disguise as a country wife, with dirt enfolded into the creases of her neck, the cotton at the inside of her elbows wrinkled into an accordion of days. Their shared poverty was enough training.

The weeping started at conferences. I had graduated and secured my first position as an academic curator for a small liberal arts college. At our conferences, we talked about art in neoliberal times. In one paper, I described the stool at the gallery where I worked reception as a doctoral student for £7.50 an hour. The too-tall stool was an expression of repressive design: the dangling compressed my hamstrings and made my back sore at night. I had used the silent time to read. I realized privately that I had not felt tears in those instances. I did not tell them that it seemed to be the speaking that provoked the crying now. After this happened in public a few times, I began to ignore it and continued to

read my papers with full eyes, without pause or stop. I read on and on. Each time the tears came when I read about the osteoporotic economics of art. This leaching of our bones as art-workers and academics, of the supports that are the architecture of our bodies and our lives, comes through many forms of violence: the extended periods of sitting or standing, the regulation of the body down to the second—either as self-regulation toward a desired productivity, or as adaptive behaviour driven by the new smart-academies that now download data at every gesture and betray us by logging our pauses, our daydreaming, our necessary breathing-madness, or the spaces between thinking and action that had, since the Renaissance, been considered a form of productivity. Before this violence, to dream was to deepen knowledge—to know, rather than to work without knowing—to know the constellation to which our work and our dreaming belonged. More worrying now, my tears, filled with calcium, seemed to leach my bones further.

I hired a wiper. She was a retired page-turner, who had once specialized in page-turning for French horn players during performances of Wagner's Ring Cycle. She was discreet and deftly wiped my cheeks at regular intervals, pacing the gesture with the turning of a page. She could find no work since the smaller orchestras, having lost their funding,

began to shy away from large orchestral works. She liked the modesty of my project. These tears were just enough to keep her in practice.

Sometimes she brought scented pink tissues balmed with moisture cream. If she was in a hurry, it might be a small packet sitting on the table in front of the microphone, or perhaps Wet Wipes, which left my cheeks glistening. She began to carry her card, since people started to ask for her contact information. The crying had become more commonplace at conferences, and it was difficult to find good help, difficult to find someone who understood the professionalism of invisibility.

Several months into this new career, the Wiper was asked to give a performance as part of the opening of a conference. She had been asked to attend to the keynote speaker, whose face was magnified on a large video screen, so that the audience could spot the eyes welling, the moment just before the spillage, when the wiper's expert hands, brown, veiny, and sensibly unmanicured, would intervene. The piece was later played in slow motion throughout the conference, her hands appearing at regular, mesmerizing intervals. People discussed the flick of her wrist, the strength in her fingers, the quiet sensuality of the gesture. They wondered if the

gesture could be truly considered empathic if she had in fact been paid. What was the relationship between compensation and care? Was there a place for unpaid internships in this new industry of Wipers?

New conferences were established to discuss these issues. The Wipers, now a unionized fleet known for their sensible hands, came to these. The industry flourished and branched out, as some came to hold the hands of speakers who were unable to cry, and in some cases, also attend to the audience members who were moved by the speakers. Tear-capture became another important sub-speciality, predicted by artist Mika Rottenberg, who became a cult celebrity figure among the Wipers. Mika wrote an opera for Wipers, which the first Wiper dismissed on grounds that it was a *gesamtkunstwerk,* its totalizing façade a form of authoritarianism. The spectacle had overtaken the gesture of care once again, she said.

Wiper retreats were held, most often in Italy or the South of France, and sometimes in Cyprus, where one could become a citizen simply by buying a house. They formed collectives, since their wages remained low because they worked primarily for conference speakers, who were often academics, museum workers, and artists. Their new houses were organized as neo-nunneries, with service, meditation,

gardening, and collectively undertaken care at the core of convent life. An optional residency Master's program was developed and the original Wiper was again invited to offer wisdom, her specialization having evolved into The Intuition of the Wiper. The industry depended on tears the way pipelines depend on fossil fuels. Renewable industrial wiper practices were discussed and smaller breakout groups formed to resist weeping as an economic mainstay. This was after Cyprus reported that their industry was singlehandedly responsible for a rising percentage of its GNP. The Cypriot economy reported growth and jobs, but it did not report their wages or the number of these low-paid workers required to buoy up the dragnet of its national debt.

When I read out my research at the last conference, I was at first celebrated. The Adam Smith Institute had published a paper, I said. The oversupply of labour—the Institute maintained—could potentially bring down labour costs for these jobs even further, I reported. For these were jobs everyone wanted. Pay is determined by how much people want to do a job and have the skills to do it. Working less improves productivity, I argued, and thus four-day work weeks are more productive. It would be necessary for the government to legislate a Universal Basic Income.

Outside the windows of the conference room, the dry hot air was carrying sand from North Africa to Southern Europe, distributing its dust over migrant boats. The breeze that day left us parched. Many of us drank coral- and purple-coloured juices during breaks, which stained our teeth.

The Wipers' hands paused after I had spoken. Then, they arose gracefully, in the kind of collective unison the neo-nunneries had engendered, and left our stages. We watched them, weeping. Our oversupply of tears was the crux of the matter, they told us. If we could just stop weeping, we realized, even for a few days each week, we might save our saviours. Their work would not be so expendable, ubiquitous, and poorly paid. If we could legislate our weeping and recover ourselves, they might reconsider. And so this is how hope returned to us after all.

2

The Unionists and The Three-Comma Club

The unionized preparators had walled themselves off in their workshop area at the contemporary art museum. They ignored emails, text messages, Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Instagram and phone calls. Requests had to be made by hand-written note, tucked into a dirty mitten I had previously seen lying for months in the snowy loading zone, being driven over by delivery trucks. Now the mitten hung attached to a clothesline with mud-grid traces of tire tracks, to be wheeled squeakily towards their service area by hand-cranked clotheslines that extended above the wall, over which one could regularly smell Vape smoke, and hear scuffling, grunge music and the occasional fart.

These happy Marxists enforced labour regulation like suffragettes, refusing to perform domestic services within the institution: Say No to Endless Vitrine Dusting! one note said, posted to the metal doors of their workshop chambers. Mopping is Madness! And best of all: Refuse violent display cultures—do no display! Sometimes the burly technicians would appear at gallery staff meetings in ruffled gingham or floral pinafores, their fabric faded as though passed on by their grandmothers. Grandmothers whose endless

laundering and boiling of clothing on slate stove tops had made the pink rose patterns faint as lipstick traces.

I had some sympathy for the gallery preparators: they handled all of the artwork, priceless or worthless; they fussed and hammered and built—they were the midnight elves of every institution, the magic hands that ensured every piece of artwork was installed as though it had, by its own accord, leapt from the walls of one institution to another. They were never invited to receptions or donor dinners, they rarely showed up for openings at all, preferring mostly to put up their feet after the sprint to the finish. They were not the attention seekers of the gallery business—they were the stalwart rescuers of its most formidable projects, coming through at the last minute and ensuring that an artist's works were hung on time, and safely. But the day after the last opening, they had learned their pay was lower than a contract worker's, lower than that of a communications assistant, just above the receptionist's pay grade. Finally, on the day before the last exhibition had closed, the Director had shooed them back to their quarters out of sight when Prince had come to visit the museum, accompanied by his entourage. And it turned out that Georgie had collected every record this King of Soul had ever recorded. Then, the Director had insinuated that in fact he had directed most of the installation

of the work, and had had to badger these workers like insouciant wretches to complete their work, when it was well known that the Director preferred to watch all installations through binoculars from a small peep hole in his office. It was the final insult.

God is a Preparator, I saw Georgie write, on the top of his staff meeting agenda. He slipped it across the table to Erik, the IT technician known for his rules, neo-empiricism (mostly an evangelical belief in data as theosophy) and humourlessness. They loved to bait Erik, with his own laundered white shirts and dull, look-away ties.

Erik had taken the job because he liked Monet and elderflower water, which he had experienced regularly during his visits to the major London art museums: the Victorian arcs of the café at the Victoria and Albert Museum haunted his dreams. He wanted to be part of the clean-up of the gallery here in Canada and aspired to berry scones in the café, art talks about brushwork and the sublime, and silk scarves with the stencils of Old Master paintings in the gift shop. It seemed to me that Georgie found Erik inspiring too, because so much fun was to be had in any encounter with him that he always returned to the preparator's cave with a smile on his face.

Georgie was not fat but solid, his impressive belly which overhung his beltline could be used to push temporary walls into place, and to rest painting stretcher bars against while the curators made up their minds. Georgie had both patience and precision when he was on the job. I remembered this from before the Bartleby days. “It’s your call, Kate,” he’d sing, his arms raised, the blood running out of them, holding a work in place. “Take your time.” If it went on too long, he began to sing, “K-K-Katie, Katie, give me your answer true...” We had all loved Georgie for this, and felt rebuffed by the pinafores and clothesline transmissions.

The gallery preparators didn’t exactly call it a picket line, but if one of the contract technicians showed up to do their work on one of their self-enforced “retreat” days, they would hurl bags of sawdust over the wall while the contract worker stood frozen, as if he were Lot’s wife covered with a dense, cedar-scented salt.

“Assholes,” I overheard one contractor say as he left the building. “I’ll bring my own tools next time.”

And when he did, they delighted in taking his stud-finder and propping it like a fine, decorative artwork, high atop a dividing wall in a Plexiglas case and bolted down for good measure. Visitors stared at it thoughtfully before sitting down

on campstools for an art lecture. Inside the cave, the walls were now papered with soft-art-porn images of Matthew Barney in climbing gear, Vanessa Beecroft’s pseudo-feminist installations of eye-popping nude young women arranged in grids or Pipilotti Rist’s *I Do Not Want What I Haven’t Got* on endless replay, her lovely blue tinted tits projected to lush scale via video projection. No matter that the expensive projector bulbs had a limited life span and the gallery was on an endless austerity budget due to shrinking public funds (which incidentally had no impact on the Director’s travel fund). This was part of the revolt.

The museum Director was not happy but going down to talk to them seemed to bring on a kind of ennui that was noticeable. He did not wish to bother with staff problems or to mediate their complaints. He sent Stacey, his deputy Director on these kinds of missions, who often returned with cedar dust on her Vivienne Westwood power-jackets.

“Well,” he would say, as we all sat waiting in his office for the update. He looked over his bifocals like Jean Luc Godard regarding a pre-pubescent actress. “Did you achieve anything?”

And when she replied, he would sigh, and say, “When I tell you to do something, you do it. Now go back in there.”

Stacey would then walk across the street to the Starbucks, where she would stay for a plausible amount of time before returning. Sometimes we watched her through the plate-glass guillotine of the Director's enormous office window, bigger than anyone else's in the building. There were no windows in the prep area. The Director told us he hadn't seen the preparators since last Christmas and we were now into our fall programming.

Friday nights, the union preparators raised funds for their informal strike action by holding raves in the loading bay. Georgie would mix themed cocktails, taking his model straight from the V & A Late Nights programming for young professionals. These attracted the men in town who had read *Catcher in the Rye* in high school and liked it. They were culture-curious, but preferred the back alley to the front museum entrance. Georgie would disarm the security system when the Director went home, turn up the music and give tours of the collection by strobe light. Georgie had been at the museum for twenty-five years, and he knew each object by touch, weight and scent. Georgie's art history lessons were a phenomenology of fingertips, trust and censorship, of things withheld on purpose to make way for things more generously shared in the collective world. He sometimes let me attend these functions, likely due to

our past camaraderie. I would slip in furtively amongst the guests, strangers I had never seen at the gallery during daytime hours.

"What does this smell like to you?" he would say, holding a leather pouch containing a miniature 10th century Chinese travelling icon.

"Cuttle fish!" Someone shouted from behind a blindfold. He was epileptic; the strobe light was a no-no but he still liked to attend.

"Magic mushrooms," chimed in another.

"My grandfather's top drawer," said Punk Maxine, who came regularly to these nights, having long ago eschewed the yuppie culture of the official evenings.

"Disaster," said Georgie finally, who I once asked to install a plate glass ceiling sand-blasted by an artist into waves that grew thin as minnows, and that later shivered and broke when the first earthquake happened, raining down on the viewers like deadly comments in a California art criticism class for freshmen. Later, the museum had staged a fundraiser, and sold ice cream with sugar candy shards to raise money for the victims of the accident; our Director demanded that we

hire a performance artist to lower them into her throat like a flame eater.

But let's face it—our disasters, until the earthquakes, had been internal issues: a painting hung upside down by accident or a sculpture accidentally hidden behind crates for two decades until rediscovered. More recently, there were artists who refused to work with us on ethical grounds until we reinstated a proper pay scale and working conditions. I noticed that Georgie had begun drilling a mysterious hole in the exhibition furniture storage area which he spoke of as an 'emancipatory gesture.' I let this rest there between us, because I didn't really want to know. Sometimes the preparators had worked on their own projects, and earlier this year one of them had built a small, beautifully crafted rowboat in the loading bay. After the boat was discovered, Stacey had invited me to be the staff representative and I searched to find common ground with management, the usual task of the mediator in usual times. These were not usual times.

On the worst days, I floated up, away and outside of my body. I travelled lightning fast; wherever I thought to go next, I was suddenly there. I started to think of these travels as a form of research. I must, as a result, be very careful with what I thought and how. These out-of-body visits brought

me strange new information: for example, this day, a few thousand miles away, I saw Larry Gargoyle, the private art dealer, lounging in an Eames chair in London.

I also travelled back in time, and saw how throughout the war, the British had used Tube stations to shelter themselves from bombing. Their depth ranged from street level to over 58 meters below, and it felt safe down there even though the German bombs could burrow down in the mud and almost find them. I saw how Goodge Street had been a base for General Eisenhower while the British Museum stored the Elgin Marbles, and one hundred and seventy-three souls lost their lives at Bethnal Tube during a terrorized rush prompted by the test of air raid sirens and anti-aircraft missiles. Digging out new rail lines after the war had involved a certain level of ingenuity, to avoid disturbing the ancient city. In the famous Thames mud, Roman treasures lay buried. Bonepits from the Black Plague were unearthed, their eternal viruses unleashed by the air, their legend tamed as St. George's dragon. In these instances, it might take me some time to sort out the meaning of the information to my new role as mediator.

I discovered that the children of war had dreamed too, as I hovered above the backs of their heads resting on cool tile,

listening to their thoughts. The earth rumbled above and far away. When the children rose up into the sunshine the next morning, any number of magic transformations may have happened, segments of the city cleared away as though making way for their own trainsets, a giant hand sculpting the city anew. These furrows later became new man-made lakes, but this was decades afterwards. For now and after, they would have to content themselves with the gift of their own lives, and the gradual restoration of pathways through the rubble.

I waited on the night of March 8, 1941, along with the impatient dancers, grumbling about the stage-hogging bandleader. I waited with them as they fussed over their costumes in the wings in the Café de Paris, twenty feet below ground, while somewhere in the city, Florence Desmond was singing *Please don't be mean/ Better men than you have been/ In the deepest shelter in town.* I learned about accidental strategy in bad times: the delay had saved the dancers from the blast. When looters followed the sound of the sirens, everyone thought they were all on the same side, using champagne to clean the wounds, and table cloths for tourniquets. The nude bodies of the glamourous dead were still and beautiful as dolls. Who would have thought to destroy their perfect fingers, full of rings?

We all knew, or we thought we remembered, that it was because of the bombs, the dying, the trauma, that the British had implemented medical programs, university, finally, for the bright children of working class families, free eyeglasses, new parks and lakes where the bombsites had been. Apologies for all the death. It had seemed after that bleak time that tenderness might come of this.

Now, in this time, down below me at Larry Gargoyle's office on the street, the mute overclean industrial façade of grey-painted brick stared out with opaque windows. Like the baby bird eyeing a bulldozer in P.D. Eastman children's tale, *Are You My Mother?*, a viewer stood looking up at the building. A guard, recognizing the tastefulness of the black rain jacket and sensational shoes, opened up with a smile. Not so easy for the man asking for change behind her. The door closed quickly, the cool air from inside the commercial gallery puffing him gently in the face.

I floated higher, and cracks in the earth across the world appeared as the viewer looked at data-artwork of the paths charting migrant boats that were turned away resulting in tragedy. The viewer, incidentally attractive, was noticed by Jackie, the Assistant Curator who looked like a different kind of baby, a vicious one stuck in Lacan's mirror stage:

short hair, stumpy arms and legs, a full round bottom that she waggled in the face of women she saw as competition, and two little round, blue eyes that popped like trick buttons in a magic show, ones that might eject streamers when she tried to hate people out of the room. Hers was a celebratory kind of narcissism designed specifically for our times: She's effective! She's a yoga master! Even feminists love her!

I watched as Jackie engaged the baby-bird viewer in an ambivalent set of cultivation exercises, one infant to another (also known as nurturing a relationship with a potential buyer), which included special invitations to openings, superb croissants sourced by Jackie's own supplier and a one-on-one studio visit with the artist.

Over the next days and weeks, cracks in the earth's crust caused by Georgie's drilling, initially small and hairline, deepened and spread slowly around the world, making news because of how they exhumed undetonated bombs and grenades with their pins still rusted inside, from London to Berlin to Hanoi to Tripoli. The cracks resembled a vast neo-expressionistic landscape that could be seen clearly from space via a web-streamed NASA feed. Unlike everyone else, I knew they were from Georgie's drilling. At first these cracks seemed to be tender geological drawings, outlining

valleys and riverbeds, emoted from the earth itself and unsettling the deep caverns between undersea mountains. The sea undulated and finally on the last day, giant waves formed. I was there in Larry's office when he called his friend the museum Director, and commiserated with him.

Back at my museum, I floated down, down to my body sitting mildly in a cream-coloured sweater set in my shared curatorial open office. I tried to leave without attracting attention, sneaking down through the emergency stairwells to the basement, and knocked on the door to the tech area. They let me in begrudgingly.

"What have you done, Georgie?" I implored.

I guess they let me see because they were a little frightened.

It turned out that Georgie had managed to create a person-sized pneumonic tube, which had, one-by-one, sucked out the entire contents of the vault since the last show-change. He had started the drilling quietly the way drugs might be smuggled across a border by footfall. If the Director was going to refuse to negotiate, he would have to raise the stakes. But as they watched, each of the prizes of the collection had folded like a bending quantum micro-universe, curled, and rolled into the tube which had been intended to equally distribute

the holdings to all the prep staff (and incidentally, take the union staff home to their apartments in the middle of the day for napping and mealtimes).

Instead, it had spirited the artworks away to an unknown location. They had looked in their homes to no avail—it seemed the art had eluded them, had self-sorted according to some other rule of gravity. The entire collection was nowhere to be found. Nonetheless, Georgie was negotiating their ransom even while he frantically attempted to find them, in an effort to convince the Director to finally pay the staff their pension dividends.

The Director considered his options carefully, since most of the works had a troubled provenance, but he could hardly call this theft deaccessioning. Back upstairs, I waited in his office while he called Larry Gargoyle for advice.

"Don't worry about it," Larry said on the speakerphone conference call. "Haven't you been watching the news?"

The cracks were spreading, reported on all of the Three Comma Club's television networks as merely dust on the lens of a satellite, but we knew it was the beginning of the end. As the earth shifted around the cracks that Georgie had made in his attempt to secure his future, the seas were displaced,

triggering an atmospheric shift. The rains came suddenly on the roof of the art museum.

Days later, as the flood waters rose, the museum Director began to not answer his phone, and eventually stopped coming to work at all. A Board Member came looking for him. Unable to locate him, or Stacey, she came down the hall to the curatorial department, where I was trying to finish coordinating what would be the museum's final publication, though they didn't know it yet. The BM found me in my assistant's office and smiled. Her teeth were surprising: where enamel should be was a titanium grill. She flashed it like a rapper, and I noted it hastily, the way you might see the front end of a Mercedes at the last moment on the crosswalk, the one you were entitled to enter since the flashing guard lights were on.

The BM was oblivious to the staff concerns; the Director had ensured there was no internal promotion of their projects and no bond of communication, no interlocutor. Even now, I might get into trouble for talking directly to her.

Instead, I made the mistake of trying to keep it friendly when I saw her with a few forms: "How is the fundraising drive going?"

"Why, I don't have any idea, Kate!" [smile] "What are the fundraising numbers?"

I hadn't seen her for months. Was this the new style—is the titanium grill real, or does she take it out at night and pop it in a fizzing jar like dentures? Miracles of style, the jurisprudence of taste. Rule-breaker!

"So you're still recruiting," I continued doggedly. "It seems to be going well?" I turned to my assistant: I'll speak to you later, and cut it short because the BM was enjoying this.

Later, the BM drifted down the hallway like a minesweeper on one more pass, seeking the missing museum Director. She maneuvered the shiny grill into my office. "I've been on holiday," she lamented. "So difficult to catch up."

I imagined her with her husband lying poolside. She would like me to ask about it, I can tell. The blue pool floats in a constellation around my head like a thought bubble. It aligns itself with fundraising figures, the sober modest rooms that wait for me at home, the rivulets I notice have been forming on the museum's walls. I see a Mexican migrant labourer, leaning over the BM, with a damp cloth, a sparkling water. Lemon, signora?

"It's double time," I manage.

"Hardly worth it." [The titanium again.] Her tanned face turning away.

I find Georgie in the museum Director's empty office, his face white. Around him, unexecuted pension documents float, blurry and suspended in the air like rain in an old photograph. I snatch them up quickly, stomping them onto the carpet. I see that Georgie is dreaming too, a stinging, snake-bite dream, while the corners of each page [that had lit up when the sun caught the BM's titanium at just the right angle as she left] threw flames upwards on the jurisdictional sheets. Georgie takes my hand and we gaze at each other: "You're alright, Kate. You're a fine girl. Go home now." He turns and finds his way down the stairs to the vaults where he is leading a tour of the now empty racks and useless hygrothermograph equipment. I look out the window. I am sure that from space, you can see the storm gaining momentum.

In a bunker deep under the main atrium, I am told that Georgie ended his final tour at midnight in the arms of Punk Maxine while Jackie surprised a viewer in the lonely gallery with a trick question about loving, no, really loving, art, and Larry waited for one of the collectors, bonafide members of

the Three Comma Club, to buy a few pieces for carriage into the afterlife like the ancient Egyptians had done.

There was the ocean. Yes, let's take the ocean. The light catching the tips of waves as though the whole moving, seething thing were pure joy, not the animus that could take a life, but an enticing pleasure, a beauty, a comfort that reminds one—unless of course you are roiling in it, the distant underwater tinkling of smooth stones as you turn and turn—that through millennia there had been happiness. It had been inscribed on cave walls in the form of animals or fires, to demonstrate plenty, or company, a gathering. It had been in the surefootedness of a creature from before the ice age, who had walked across the sun-lit mud, paused and listened, who knew sunlight from shadows—a skill given to most of the earth's landborn residents.

The interior of the board room where we gathered that evening to discuss the emergency plan smelled slightly of bleach. There was perfume somewhere—where was it? Oh it was Elizabeth, the Board Treasurer, in the corner frowning and bowing her head like a bull about to charge. What had Elizabeth been thinking when she put that perfume on this morning? Had it reminded her of a field beside her grandmother's house, where she had been free to roam in her

childhood? Or perhaps a date with her husband, just before the proposal. Or maybe it was the scent of a nesting purse her mother had owned, the one she gave her just before she died, each changepurse inside the other in diminishing scale. What had beauty meant to Elizabeth, before she had stepped into the room today?

But of course this would not do. Imagining the BM as a humane early creature disarmed me. I had been imagining her, my vision, aligned with God, up there in the stars or the heavens looking down at the seashore seeing the white ruffle of waves crashing from space, musing at the small things that these people tossed across the board room table at each other like pebbles. Inconsequential things in the long line of earth time—what was it the TV historian had said—if time is as wide as a person standing with both arms outstretched, humanity is the nail on the end of a thumb. But this philosophical, equivocal view is not helping. Those that survive near-death experiences are especially susceptible to millennial time, I had discovered. It made them victims of the penitents of the everyday world. The everyday world where they were all trapped in amber, waiting to be discovered by the future.

In the evening as the water rose, after we had abandoned the museum altogether using emergency crews to escape to higher ground, I lay in bed listening to the hum of talk radio by moonlight like my grandmother had fifty years ago. The show was interrupted sometimes by the broadcast of a horse race, the announcer chasing equine shadows with his calls as they rounded the bend with their long, beautiful legs.

Top 10 Wealthiest People in the World and Their Fortunes

#1	Jeff Bezos	$ 112 B	54	Amazon	United States
#2	Bill Gates	$ 90 B	62	Microsoft	United States
#3	Warren Buffett	$ 84 B	87	Berkshire Hathaway	United States
#4	Bernard Arnault	$ 72 B	69	LVMH	France
#5	Mark Zuckerberg	$ 71 B	33	Facebook	United States
#6	Amancio Ortega	$ 70 B	81	Zara	Spain
#7	Carlos Slim Helu	$ 67.1 B	78	telecom	Mexico
#8	Charles Koch	$ 60 B	82	Koch Industries	United States
#9	David Koch	$ 60 B	77	Koch Industries	United States
#10	Larry Ellison	$ 58.5 B	73	software	United States

As at 2018, this triple comma club list includes ages, fortunes, business and country of residence.

Source: https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/list/#version:static

3

Relationship Manager

London

Salary: £34,129 per annum (£17,064 pro rata based on working 17.5 hours/2.5 days per week) plus excellent benefits

Contract: Permanent job share, working 2.5 days/17.5 hours per week

The role will involve managing client relationships with literature organisations in London, data analysis and report writing, and performance monitoring (with approximately half of the Literature national portfolio organisations being based in London, you would be expected to manage a full load of clients). As a Relationship Manager, you will also be expected to engage with a broad range of non-literature specific issues, including children and young people, diversity and equality, touring and sustainability, and to be a confident communicator with a range of constituencies.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and experience of contemporary literature and

London's literary scene. This role includes a cross-cutting responsibility for digital and creative media, so candidates should be able to demonstrate a strong knowledge of current developments in relation to digital publishing and storytelling. Additionally, the post calls for detailed knowledge of the independent literary publishing sector and will involve working closely with several funded publishers and offering specialist advice to colleagues on book and magazine publishing.

You would contribute to the development and delivery of Arts Council's strategy for the arts, working with Literature colleagues nationally, including providing vital support to organisations and writers in the context of a difficult financial climate. Additionally, you would support the assessment of applications to our Project Grants programme.

Ref No. FU37-1

Close date: Midnight on Tuesday 10 September 2019.

Interviews to be held on Thursday 26 September 2019.

4

Multiples

It's a dead day in BOOM auction house in central London. Outside its moderately humming walls, quiet Sunday streets open out in a grey yawn. Tall glass doors face the street corner at a 45-degree angle. They are ready for anything. The auction house purrs square footage, hundreds of thousands of pound sterling in sprawling market authority. It's the first assertion. Flanking the doors, two interns play hostess in silky patterned dresses, stewardesses for sky-high aspiration in uniforms of borrowed Givenchy. Their little finger tips totter trays of delicate saucers, peddling yoghurt smoothies and tiny pancakes, prompting hunger in miniature. I slide between the interns, hipbone to hipbone, in a quaint Marina-Abramovic-and-Ulay squeeze. The walls rise up twenty and in some places, thirty feet, cube upon white cube, stacked and bunched—it's a mission church for Art! Spaces flanking the main corridor could arguably be workshops and conference rooms of an evangelical operation where aspirants sit reading numbered passages of art theory the way they might read the Old Testament, where children can be found not learning about brushwork, smocked

and ready at small worktables, but about investment and appreciation.

I used to test-drive luxury cars on weekends when I had no money for movies. The salesmen, relieved by the junket of a wild goose chase, were happy to take a tear, winding around back roads with the top down. We'd talk about how a car hugged the road, their wedding rings flashing on fat fingers. Sometimes I pulled over authoritatively to prop the hood up, bending over the engine to get a good look, the familiar theatre of being poor and pretty. Afterwards, no one tried to sit me down in one of his sales areas to have the talk about buying.

Now, on my right is a candy-pink Fontana painting from the Concetto Spaziale series, shimmering out from the wall in mirage-like fashion. It's looking like a frosted eyeshadow dune from a Karla Black installation since the auction house has chosen to use a crisp blue-tinged, barn-doored lighting system that perfectly and evenly illuminates the entire square. Its surface glows like a light box and even the tiny hostile cuts and tears look like promises. It's transformed into a Tiffany's jewel, not because of Fontana's grimy pictorial experimentation but in spite of it—its blue-chip preordainedness closing in even as the artist began to imagine it.

No room for microbes or doubt on this uneven surface.

The spaces breathe cool, air-conditioned aerosol upon my skin as I move from vista to site to vista. This coolness, an act of care for the artworks keeping them at just the right temperature and humidity, is something our bodies endure. The art works breathe too, like resistant and captured animals. A figural sculpture by Rebecca Warren stands both regal and lumpen, slumping and holding court, its glazed white-clay surface bravely shimmering, while the undulated spatial puzzles of Michael Armitage's landscapes and figures of brown, gold, green, orange, turquoise and pink move in and out of apprehension, riffling through art history and daring me to see more, to know more. I breathe with them and they comfort me.

A plump and dewy Oligarch follows me from painting to sculpture to installation, flicking his hair over his forehead. I can feel him insinuating his soft skin on me as I enter the main hall of brunch-munching voyeurs, lips smacking after maple syrup and organic blueberries and raspberries. He trails me while I check the doors to other rooms to see whether those shadows are other people or artworks, calculating whether it's an escape route or if he might corner me there. Stilettoed girl-interns stand behind a tall table,

serving coffee and champagne, their eyebrows arched in speedy flourishes above extroverted, uninterested eyes, their smiles as well-lit as the pink Fontana—but from the inside, from laser eye surgery and teeth whitening, from Christie's MFA programs and insider knowledge. One of them pours me a coffee while she tells her friend how during a Guggenheim internship in Venice, she received a gift of floral patterned silk underpants from Thomas Krens. They like this story. It makes them feel part of the scene—that she perhaps slayed Krens a little that day, when she accepted them but not him. There's happiness in that.

The Oligarch is not such a status prize. He knows little about connoisseurship, has bad teeth and bad manners and a bad grey or brown suit flapping around his short legs and hanging too low down past his hips, too boxy on his shoulder. He is slapping his lips together over a matching sausage on a toothpick, eyeing me; so rich is he, so rich he insistently volleys his greasily corpulent wanting into my breathing space.

I bought a Magna Carta last week, he says. Everyone thinks it's a fake but who are we to know where that writing ended or began?

We walk by rows of editioned works never meant to be editioned. Like these shiny duplicates, we walk side-by-side like friends.

I pay a factory of student artists at home. We make antiques, he smiles.

We glide together by tchotchkes of Carl Andre and Donald Judd, rinds and cast-offs of fully formed works purposeless as book-ends, now in a glossy edition of five.

I walk over to the girls and ask for pancakes. I hunch over the little white bar gulping them down one after the other but he doesn't leave me. He watches and talks, as I eat one after another. In the corner, a woman with a baby perches on a radiator, unfolds her blue blouse at one pale corner and starts to feed her infant.

The Oligarch imagines out loud what I might endure busting under him on a leather couch somewhere, his sweat sliding over me, flopping around under him like we are in a hazy June bedroom in humid Venice, the sound of the gondoliers and Peggy Guggenheim's guests flickering out over the canal walls in the distance. He is somebody who wants to do something to somebody.

I understand this erotic abjection. Maybe I could even consider him, like I did the portulent Ear Nose and Throat specialist, dapper in a cream-coloured suit in New York when I went alone to a jazz bar, who told me about his wife, his beautiful apartment a few blocks away, how he was so rich, what fun we could have, while I tried to watch a very good jazz quartet at the very good jazz bar. Like he couldn't believe I was there for the music. Like by sitting in front of him at that table I was a provocation.

I put my finger down my throat and vomit tiny blueberries and minute flecks of masticated dough on the Oligarch's waistcoat. The Auction House Director and his staff, dressed nattily in navy linen, quickly approach the breast-feeding woman and me in an elegant swarm.

The Oligarch looks pleased. The vomit is an intimacy between us, as will be my punishment for this lapse in grace. One of the linen-suited appraisers takes my wrists and holds them without force behind my back, deftly chaining the mother and I.

The Auction House Director gathers us together, giving us an ultimatum for poor judgement: You are fortunate, he says, that we have a wax casting booth in the back room for

such occasions. One of our prime services is the fabrication of neo-realist editions on demand as a fundraiser for emerging collectors.

You are lucky, repeats the Auction House Director to me under his breath, that someone knows your name.

It turns out the brand strategy work I have been undertaking will save me after all; the streams of Guardian articles, the unpaid writing for academic journals, the reviews of academic texts which took hours and hours to read, to summarize, all of it finally paying off.

It's pure self-appreciation—you have Renaissance bodies, the Auction House Director says to the two of us. It's a small penalty, your donation.

You look like the Etruscan princesses with their long backs, he tells us. You have Egyptian profiles, like Nefertiti! You could die right now and be remembered like Cleopatra. You have that kind of power!

I think we are instead a painting washed in blue light that was meant to be viewed by daylight in a room full of risk and poverty. They want to make us into an edition of ten and then we can leave.

Behind the staircase is a small door, but that's not one he takes us down. That door is where the empty crates are stored, and old catalogues. It's for sheddings and cast-offs, which we are not. We are the kernels, the gems. Up, up, to the top of the stairs, we march, the Auction House Director and his staff behind us. A double door opens to an operating theatre, where the casts are made. It seems most of the bidders are, in fact, here. I had not noticed the rooms slowly emptying below. The air is warm with the presence of the young collectors, the heat emanating off their overdressed bodies in waves as they fan themselves with their auction paddles, waiting above the casting pools like they might wait at the edges of runways or night clubs. Some have taken off their shoes and their manicured nails nestle like red claws in the edges of the plush carpet below their seats.

Waiting there for us is a Givenchy girl, who was caught eating the food in the event kitchen as well; she has been doing this for several months, it turns out, augmenting her own sparse lunches. They stand us blinking under a raking light, while the plaster is poured behind us. Once ready, we are placed one-by-one onto slings like swaddling cloths and lowered, steaming, from pulleys into the warm bath of it, the soft liquid pushing up into every orifice, fold and crevice, a gentle assault. In art school, we had learned to rub down

the lines where each side of the cast met and squeezed out the excess.

The baby, held by an intern at the edge of the room, begins to cry and squirm and his mother is alarmed.

Please, she says, sinking slowly into plaster.

My eyes find the Oligarch at the top of the rows of chairs on staggered bleachers, just below the lights. I realize how wrong I had it. This is, in fact, his game. Not flesh but the smoothness of the multiple, the artifice of the stand in—the opposite to his own softness is his sole desire.

The Givenchy girl thrashes in the soup, like the slaves of Vedius Pollio but our process is not subtractive. We are not to be eaten alive by lamprey. Of course all this movement blurs her lines and they start over again, removing her and wiping her down, then calming her breathing until she is perfectly still.

5

Weepers II/Guard

There is a lot of staring. He will learn later that it is the disinterested stare of aesthetics, of Kant. In parity, he stares into a middle distance at nothing. The viewers stare at walls and then suddenly he falls asleep. His head jerks and wakes him each time it nods forward. It is fifteen minutes until closing.

Everyone gets paid here. The conservators and technicians are taking care of things. Light levels have been checked, plumb lines used, gloves, carry cases, crates, humidity controls, sprinkler systems. There may be chips in the backs of some frames. It's in his handbook but he is still learning it all. The viewers want to know about bathrooms. They want to touch things. They want the guard to leave them alone.

He is far from home but he badly needs a homemade meal, a bed that doesn't cost this much, and relief from the cheating conceptual art documents that swirl around on the walls and document him accusingly. This Conceptual Art from the 1960s once predicted him and his dilemma. Now, as an archive neutered by its collectability, its market values, it abandons him.

Tonight he will make sure he doesn't eat anything purple. He is off grapes, aubergine, popsicles, beetroot, and Ribena. This list grows as he washes and presses his shirts. It is £8 for 5 shirts pressed and ironed, and £7.50 for one hour of work. Which hour pays for his shirts? His mother would have wept to know that he was okay. She would have wept to know that he was lonely. If his mother were still alive, she would weep in happiness and sadness both for his safety and his poverty. She would weep to learn that his boat survived manta rays and tiger sharks, that he had jumped down onto the sand at the shoreline and run from it in a herd up the beach. She would weep to find that his suffering had also been captured on camera. Is he a document now, an archive?

When a man in a crumpled yellow jacket stands next to him, he jerks awake again. He is aware they complement each other. He is standing so close that the guard can smell his soap and the sourness of old sweat in a milk-heavy diet, the air shifting warmly around him as he breathes. The guard feels a certain intimacy with this man without looking at him.

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It is morning now and the guard is fresh. The day has only just started but he will make it today, until the very end, without

reminders. When he sleeps, he dreams of lines. They form a drawing of his own legs, feet beneath toes which bend over the rungs of the chair, but in cheap black shoes. When he dozes at work, his colleague wakes him up daily with a clipboard jab under his ribs. He gets off the chair, shaking his limbs and feet. He stands, circles the chair, sits again. His manager ticks boxes while watching him sleep. He is not as friendly as his joke and smile would lead one to believe. He is ticking boxes that will make him lose this job.

The guard wears a vivacious and untailored purple dress shirt. It puffs around his scrawny waist, accentuating his leanness. The overlarge shirt does not fit. It makes a grown man like himself, who has travelled great distances, leaving friends and family in search of a better life, look instead like a tall boy, lanky legs dangling off the high stool. The guard is reminded of the man who sat at the helm of the boat, surveying the crowd in fake lifejackets and sodden print dresses. Like him, the guard is panoptically situated to survey and to monitor.

Yes, there is staring. The staring is for pictures. He is not visible, despite the bright shirt, navy pants, and dark silhouette against the walls of the white cube. He is quiet as a butler. This agony of sleep and wakefulness unsettles him.

He is staring, but not the way they stared at the horizon, looking for shore.

A colleague approaches and circles him. The colleague is dressed in the same purple dress shirt, but with a navy jacket and pertinent clipboard. He wears a managerial name badge. He pokes him officiously, shame-smiling him when he jumps. The guard is embarrassed; very, very embarrassed. He is new on the job and trying very hard to fit in, to understand the work of the artists that surround him. He has come here to be visible, to be part of things.

There is the bubble in which he and the clipboard man move, sliding around and past the viewers, separated by the membrane of their jobs. The viewers do not wish to be disturbed by either the antagonism or camaraderie of the security staff, though the latter might relieve them. The wages are punitive; this is well known.

Across the ocean in another country, some guards at other public museums have taken to low humming or singing. Initially, the viewers there look for the source among the installations and the films, or in the VR headsets. They are startled by the intimacy of the hummers and the singers. They are disarmed by the beautiful noise, and then later,

by these guards and their assertion. The humming buzzes in their chests in a way that feels like movement, like art, and the viewers smile at the sensation. The guards ignore them and continue their dignified sonics. We provide the registers for your enlightenment, their singing says. We are the animateurs.

Where the guard in purple dozes, the tall white walls are meant to make the viewers and the guards feel equally minimized, but for different reasons. The guard shifts on his seat and rises. He smooths and pats the stool, removing imaginary dust. He tries to shake his arms as imperceptibly as possible, so as to not intrude on the peripheral view of the visitors.

At first, it is the shock of the sound against the days, weeks, and months of silence that startles him when a streaker runs through the gallery, yelling: “CLOSING TIME! Get OUT, GET OUT!! It’s closing TIME!!” Then he stops, solemnly, his penis still swinging, to announce: “Timo Seagull, 2016.”

He has no body hair. This streaker is chrome-edged and shiny. He is impenetrable. He is the perfect chime for closing time. The manchild-guard has never seen a man behave this way. He is embarrassed and angry. This was not for sale,

his forced prurience. The manager comes forward, swishing his clipboard as though to shoo the man away. The guard sprints to assist the manager to show the man the door, to protect the viewers who suddenly begin to smile and clap. Some viewers laugh and others crouch down and sit, their backs to the walls, waiting for something. A fleet of young trainee-intern-artists, employed by the streaker/performance artist at minimum wage, flow through the open doors on either end, into the exhibition space. They crouch down earnestly and tell the viewers—one-on-one and in small groups—their own life stories and the first time they had visited an art gallery or understood art. With radiant disinterested eyes and smooth contrived faces, they ask the viewers about *their* first experience of a museum.

They do not ask the guard anything because he is the institution, like its walls and reception area, its curators and vitrines, its janitors and its art-rental staff, its servers and stairs, its floors, cloak room attendants, and curved brass railings, its stone edifice, laminate label texts, and generous portico.

The guard and the manager are caught in the documentation that is later shown on an overhead projector when the performance artist gives a talk about his intervention.

He talks about censorship to an alarmed liberal gathering. His audience offers to write letters to the museum to demand the guards receive more training. They offer to give their own master classes so these men can be educated about contemporary art.

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After his shift, the guard undresses quickly, folds his shirt and pants, and places his badge neatly beside them. He takes a silver lighter from the lost and found, lights the clothes, and places them smouldering into a metal garbage can in the toilets. This is a cleansing gesture, not a violent one. He has been soiled in these clothes. He will have to pay for them. He is thinking how he will have to explain all of this, or, decide not to return when the smoke alarm is triggered and begins to howl.

6

The Glacier and the Suffragette

A woman, let's call her Emily, comes forward on a racetrack to pin ribbons on a horse. Afterwards, they said: she didn't understand the speed of the race.

Anmer was the name of the King's horse, lagging badly, third from last. Emily ducked under the rails and ran out, reaching for the horse's bridle as one irrepressible creature to another. On her body was found two flags, return train fare, a holiday booked with her sister—not a suicide as they thought. In photographs, it seems only the horse and Emily are tumbling, two dark shapes against the grassy racetrack. Her figure, which has split horse from rider, flies with an upraised arm. A daring 'She' removed King George's horse and jockey from the race at Epsom Downs that day in 1913 like a royal beheading. The horse lunged to its feet alone, cantering riderless to the finish as though he too were at the funeral of a dead regent, draped with the day's grief. Bold girl, your love of animals maybe only rising from picture books and poems—the grace and speed of horses were an abstraction. You had suffragette flags to pin: a ribbon of violet, white and yellow to his bridle.

You see how it is, how people die? Not once but many times, each retelling of the tale as it swerves and veers in codes. Horse-breaking words.

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The door opening, on the day of any given trip away—sometimes to a mountain glacier, in which we would later discover him in a photograph: different, this version, smiling in a red sweater, his closely-shaved bald head and trim figure, looking like anyone's good-hearted father—was the cause for dread.

The constellation of the household, the little planets that circled around the calm star of my mother would tremble as though each were hit with its own asteroid, shivering, vibrations barely perceptible.

The day of his homecoming might turn as we waited from a bright blue morning into something grey-lighted. Even a sunny day could have a cool pallor. You might have to come inside and put on close-toed shoes on a summer day, a lap blanket on your shoulders, the way you would around a campfire—the two halves of your body like the light and dark sides of the moon.

So on this day, our galaxy (a family of four, the cat curled also on the sofa and the dog in his pen outside, the horses quietly munching the hay at their feet in their stables) was already in a wondering state, half tracking my father with the vision of our inside-eyes, as he made his way from the motel after packing his vinyl case, swishing his mouth-wash around the gold teeth and spitting into the drain, as he crunched along the snowy pathway in the early morning darkness, the desk at the reception area lit up, the taxi waiting like a puffing animal, its exhaust-breath filling up the air as it idled, then hummed along and dropped him at the small airstrip, as he looked outside at the dark lines of the mountains, as he climbed the single set of metal stairs, the snow falling off his steel-toed boots, as he swerved above the clouds to look down like a god at the excavation site where he had worked that week, as he leaned back in his chair and smelled the stewardess before he saw her, handing him a coffee, as his attention began to turn back to us, with some kind of possessive affection, as the wheels squeaked down on our runway and the long bus brought him home to us and the door opened—we were with him, talking to him with our nightvoices, our dream voices, where angels could come and hear us, where some unknown God, his own face turned three-quarters away to show us his listening ear,

might hear us, as we asked that he might this day return to us in jovial goodness, lasting longer this time, that it might not ever again turn back on itself and betray our opening hearts, as he sat on our corduroy couch and pulled the gifts out from his bag and smiled. That we might feel that smile could stay and stay.

So it was on that same homecoming day, when another man opened the door and walked through at the hour we were expecting him. And this man was smiling, underneath his head of shiny black hair, a fun-filled horror, white teeth shining alongside the hair and whiskers, a stranger shocking us with his familiarity as he burst through the door without knocking.

The stranger's eyes lit on me and he made one quick lunge, grabbed me around the ribcage, lifting me high in the air and rubbing me against the whiskers so I thought I might die of one more terrifying man.

And then, with lank black curtain falling over his eyes, he reached back and threw the hair like a bat-winged scalp at my brother, who was too frightened to catch it in time as the cat ran scampering: Real Indian hair, my father said.

What I knew about Indian people was from Lorraine, who was tall and gentle and silent from never being spoken to in our Grade Two classroom. Lorraine, in clothes that to my mind looked like Swiss style stitching from my books on Heidi: little beaded flowers her mother had carefully embroidered into caramel-suede leather and who seemed wholly separate from the spectacle we were brought to: of dancing on a special day of the year when we as a class were taken to see Chief Dan George at a civic ceremony.

Lorraine had a way of sitting and standing among us as though she were not there. She had the bewitching power of taking herself away, to the private space we as children also knew and longed for, from some time before the dust of our bodies had been formed and we had had to learn square dancing and prayers.

And into this dust my father had drawn himself, with one fat finger. My father was the master of our spirits that were circling slowly around his galaxy, waiting to be pulled in.

Lorraine and I both floated in this way, above our classmates, from time to time, regarding their earnest bent heads along the rows of desks. We slid up one side of the room and then down the other, seeing the careful parts their mothers had made into their scalps, combing into braids or curls on either

side of their neat crowns, revealed by our birds'-eye view, birds who hover above shattered branches or forest fires.

This was how he bounced me on his lap, and my brother threw the wig quickly back at him, my brother jumping like a marionette with a dreadful wooden smile, how our jangled constellations bounced and settled, our arms outstretched to him anyways, his little hostages.

7

RUArt is looking for Gallery Interns!

RUArt Gallery is currently interviewing candidates for internship positions at our gallery in an exciting Downtown Location, and for assistance with projects off-site, including a pop-up space located in the heart of Downtown.

Applicants should have an interest in art, art history, curating, or arts management. The gallery provides an excellent opportunity for those who wish to develop skills necessary for navigating the art world. Interns will gain hands-on experience working with gallery owners and artists by assisting with day-to-day operations of the art gallery. Duties include greeting and registering clients, handling and presenting art, working with partner organizations, as well as working with the gallery on public relations and marketing activities including social media. This is an unpaid internship.

The ideal candidate should be enrolled in or have recently graduated from an area college or university art program; however, this is not a requirement. Qualified applicants may submit resumé and cover letter to the attention of the Director.

About RUArt:

RUArt, a contemporary fine art gallery located near Downtown, represents a diverse group of emerging, mid-career, and established contemporary artists—many with ties to the Centre. The gallery, founded in 2010, collaborates with key state organizations, and maintains an exhibition program within the West Village and other satellite venues. RUArt has been named Observer's Best Art Gallery and was presented with the 25th Annual Award for small business by the Downtown Council for the Arts. The gallery's art fair program has included the Prestige Art Fair, Downtown Contemporary, and Art Downtown. More info: http://www.ruart.com

Job Type: Part-time

Salary: $0.00 /year

Close date: Midnight on Wednesday 11 March 2020.

Interviews to be held on Thursday 26 March 2020.

8

Archivist

In the morning, I discovered the timed coffee maker had not been turned on. I made quick work of grinding, measuring and scooping beans. Other magic had also not happened in the night. I had woken up as myself. When the art historian arrived for her appointment in the archives, she looked at me as though I had been burning candles in Rare Books. Which I had, but only as an inner incantation: No more arse-faced art specialists!

The woman arrived and took her glasses off and placed them on the uncatalogued books on my reception desk: coal diamonds embedded in each black corner of the frame. She asked: Is that coffee I smell? I rushed by her to close the kitchen door and hooked the corner of her glasses as I slipped by, sending them skittering along the stack of Louise Bourgeois notebooks, ruffling their pages like playing cards.

The woman made a hissing noise like throwing water on a hot frying pan, which got louder when I apologized.

I knew these, and other non-syllabic arrows of disdain. Not here, I stammered. Of course [arseface] I meant ... we have a little kitchen. It's quite far from the manuscripts.

The woman turned, horse-clopped to the dark corner, and bent stiffly to retrieve her glasses, which had hit the windows of the library.

My voice quavered when I said assertively: This library is not ... um ... open to the public ... a courtesy—and then forgot the phrase, the pat phrase, I had been told to say to rude clients.

I know the curator, the art historian snapped. She put her glasses on and stared. In my mind flashed a picture of a cartoon puppy that had featured in my childhood story books. A dumb little puppy face with innocent flapping ears, like my own lank hair, hanging on either side of my head. But that morning, it hadn't look lank at all—in fact I had taken pains to dress in form-fitting elegant black, the right shade of red lipstick, the uncanny uniform of curation—in fact, a curated uniform. Now I saw a puppy dressed in a black German-designed suit.

The art historian said: Louise Bourgeois shouldn't be in the psychoanalysis section.

It's just for cross-reference, I coughed, then sneezed as I often did after coughing, flecks of the quickly consumed shortbread from those moments ago in the kitchen,

scattering, light oil stains blooming later on nearby pages. Sorry sorry—the hot pain of it all slopping around in my loosening bowel as though all of me had given in and was just waiting for the end, no more rat-scrabbling to keep up in this muddled mind once thought so bright (obviously, misleading, but perhaps I had been once, before when I was younger, or before that, before the children had come and I could think straight, or before the thin unbending face of my father, or before that—or was there a before that? A before when I had been myself, one shining moment when I had been all strung together, each bead of me like a set of pearls, one cell bound together and another and another, their smooth synapses firing like little electrical steam engines, saying: Yes. It is enough. There is no part of you that you are missing).

9

Ghost Writer

The word is "downsizing." It's what middle-aged people do when they reach mid-career and can't be bothered to prove themselves or learn anything new, yet don't want to give up on the seniority gained by years of striving, stress, drinking and anxiety. I tell myself that I have simply distilled the best of myself, added a shot of relaxation and came up with a new career. I'd been known for my fantastic exhibition titles as a curator: *Blind Alley: Life Inside a Painting,* and *AGOG: not taking it anymore in the 21st century*. The best was, *She Knows Where to Put It,* an entire show devoted to post-feminism and the porn industry.

It's spritz-o-clock, as my least favourite museum director used to once say, a mirthless smile on his greasy face. This would be at a late-night party after a gallery opening, where equally mirthless partying was going on. Everyone knew that sleeping with the wrong person, admitting an ongoing grudge against a board member, or revealing a dropped email correspondence at these places could cost you your career. It was rare to be involved in industry-work in which you were expected to conduct business well while drunk or high. Exclusivity (which meant to exclude people) was a gem

of the business, imported and held fast in the little jewelled clasp called curatorial expertise—not quite connoisseurship, which could take place in fusty interiors with no one interesting close-by. Connoisseurship had the bad taste to be earnest and more importantly, imperialistic. I would rather fashion myself after Dominique Vivant Denon, the pornographer museum collector, but this never seemed to take. Do I have to sleep with you to get a show? one young artist once said to me. I felt the remaining vestiges of ripeness drain away. *Have* to? I said.

I had decided to use all of the skills of the curator in this new career: ability to predict the future, a way with words that was distinct, an attention to detail (font was everything), and, most importantly, the ability to conduct business remotely, to not have to worry about the longitudinal effects of my predictions—didn't they say if you got it 30% correct in predicting new talent for a museum collection, you were doing well?

I liked the tiny clear red capital letters of the cookie messages: YOU WILL FIND LOVE IN THIRTY DAYS. SOMEONE IS NOT HAPPY WITH YOUR SUCCESS. BE CAREFUL WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE. Their presentation in the crisp little ear-whorl vanilla pocket, consumable,

delectable and modest. I inserted these phrases into a little ticker-tape, and fantasized that one day I would replace the numbers of the National Debt Clock near Times Square with a list of people who owed me favours. I used their ages to produce the lucky numbers on the Canton Lucky Cookie Firm inserts. Sometimes I slipped in hard-earned truths: HE LOVES YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE POWERFUL. BEWARE THE SYCOPHANT. But the company did not enjoy these so much. Once, out for dim sum with a promising actor who seemed to want to fuck me, they served my company's cookies on the little fake-jade plate with the bill.

YOUR LIFE WILL END IN DISGRACE, he read triumphantly. What a downer! He smiled at me. Who writes these things anyways?

Before, I had lived in Sumatra, off the north coast of Pangei, where every seventy-six days there emerged an island in the form of a cross which quickly covered with vegetation and was apparently never inhabited. Its revivability was a rejoinder to all the eco-alarmists worried about the melting polar icecaps. It was a trick to prepare my little island, but I had been devoted to curatorial magic. Magic was something that had once kept me getting up in the morning.

In the early years, I had been an outstanding art student, even though feminism made me irritable. My friends had felt me to be liberal-minded up until that point, but I surprised them by a curmudgeonly approach to radical liberal identity politics. I felt like I had to draw a line. And if that line was in the form of a cross, I was fine with that.

The new pope had inspired me with his anti-capitalist message. I was a resentful art student. This art calling was a call to poverty, something I resisted by studying—each for a few years—accounting pipe-fitting, pie-making, chef school, court reporting and mechanical engineering before becoming a curator. I complained on the bus to school, to my family, to my ex and to my professors, that I was meant for a life of poverty, now that I had given over to this calling. A curse, I said. I was 32.

But on the second day of the seventh month of the last year of my bachelor's degree, I had had a vision. At first, the imagery was not clear—I saw a shimmering pink crucifix that, as it drew closer, was covered in peony roses. I formulated a curatorial project that would be a spiritual response to poverty that only the church of art could provide.

It was not a real island, of course. It lived in the blue digital light of Online Art World, a new Second Life forum that

had attracted a fan-base of mostly aged arts administrators. I became foundational in its development.

Sensing opportunity, I designed an avatar in the form of a Sphinx and became a minister in cyberspace, my curated church a digital California-modern kit house. Under the light of cyberspace, I led discussions on the failings of modernity to a flock. But the visions continued and finally, I locked the door to the workshop in the back of my garage and began drawing, like Noah drew the ark. I mocked up a few sketchy lines, thinking of the sparse six lines submitted by the architect of the Sydney Opera House.

I sent my design to the public art commissioners, former urban planning curators, on my digital Sumatran island, and was surprised by my success. The head planner's avatar was a starfish who had a strange habit of constantly tumbling as he spoke, as though battling the currents of a tidal shoreline. It was difficult to understand where to look when he addressed me. He and his team provided a budget, a team of consultants, engineers and, on their orders, landscape architects and gardeners. In the digital also-life, we constructed a new shadow island on a platform controlled by a bicycle which I had placed in a narrow valley, connected by a thirty-foot bicycle chain which was so modest as to be overlooked.

I pedalled in order to raise and lower it at just the precise time, when the sun would bring to life this kitchen garden. Someone, another ex-curator, who appeared as an avatar in the shape of an upside-down horseshoe, had accidentally thrown in seeds of pink peonies, and these grew between the fence and the unkempt garden. Before Canton Lucky Cookie, I had carried on like this for many years, the bicycle chain gradually rusting in my island's Sumatran rain.

Now, I survive on the curatorial, without the practice. My fortunes are found poetry for others, an enigmatic new chapter of curatorial service. The word is slippery and I find it everywhere: on soup tins, chip bags and lipstick, at dog shows and children's parties and in consignment stores—a new decision making for key-influencers and the indecisive.

10

Weepers III/ Soldier

This is the river of my father's birth city. The pollution in the Thames emanates its own elevated readings onto the nearby environmental sensors. This river does not flow through the city to take away all its cares and garbage. It has, instead, turned deadly, a brown snake that winds its way through the noisy centre. There are pleasure boats: tour boats, barges, and houseboats. But gone are the steamers that pulled sugar up the river from the colonies where so many lost their freedoms so that Jane Austen's world could come to life. Her land of cartographers, the starting point of their journeys to America, now emits a rising chemical haze, invisible to the eye. The river's mist permeates the skin, the flesh, and invites a twist in the dividing cells, permanently changing the endless mitochondrial journey of the people who dwell near it.

Dad made use of old bottle caps, straps, straws—the very things that lay at the bottom of this river—making magic out of junk. He was the one who wore cardboard in the bottoms of worn-out shoes, scratchy woollen short trousers without underpants, ducked bombs, and quickly fixed shelters in the mayhem of the Blitz before another onslaught. He loved

people but turned red when it was his turn to tell a story—a person who almost never spoke intimately about his own or someone else's thoughts unless invited to comment. He could bring home something you needed without ever letting on he noticed you wanting it.

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We became Weepers, my mother and I. Once, I had reflexively reached out and brushed a drip from the end of her nose, when we both were much younger—and we had laughed, equally astonished. Now, I now brushed tears from her face. I knew its recesses and hollows, where the tears pooled. It made me wonder when each hollow had become so deep.

The doctors had warned us about the open-heart surgery. The general anaesthetic and the trauma of the operation could sometimes strangely alter the brain's chemistry. It usually wasn't permanent. When we walked into the hospital room he was sitting up stiffly, looking soldierly despite the blue hospital gown and twisted bed sheets. His figure was outlined against the fully lit windows and my eyes could not adjust at first. I saw the rolling wave of his curly hair, its familiar triangular cut-out. From that darkness came an unfamiliar voice.

"Where have you been? Tea. Now!" He growled at my mother. She started, looked at me with wide eyes. "Well, go on then!"

To her own surprise, she scurried out of the room where ordinarily she'd have barked back, "Who died and made you King of England?"

My eyes adjusted and he focussed his blue gaze on me: "And you. It's like you're on a mission."

The way he said it, it was not a good thing.

"Working, working, working. How many degrees do you need, then?"

I had wanted him to ask me about myself for forty years and here it was, with a snarl, his grizzled waves of hair trembling the way they always had when he was speaking, a combination of asthma and its medications that made his limbs tremor. It was important, the conferences, the travel, the growing expertise, the books piled like planks in my living room. Weren't they pleased with the academic life I had carefully built, since the war had prevented them from finishing school? Though their hoped-for pride wasn't the only reason for my academic journey, no.

My mother rushed back in with a cup of tea. “Put it there!” He gestured toward the trolley beside him. He demanded honey then told her to leave.

Was this permanent? He wasn’t exactly a different person. Instead, he was one that we had wondered about all along: who was in there, underneath a humility born of the shame of poverty and the shock of war? He had never been violent, but quiet and gentle, the first one to offer help to anyone who needed some electrical work, an extra set of hands, a shed built, a garden tended in a neighbour’s absence.

The most self-sufficient person I have ever met, our neighbour D’Arcy told us proudly, the way that people who witness goodness hold it up like a slogan to be admired, proof of a better way. D’Arcy worked with pottery and dabbled in hydroponics. Dad helped him string hoses through his homemade greenhouse and solve the engineering puzzles of his ceramic kiln. And we needed him to stay the same.

Now in the hospital room, my father pounded his fist on the tray table so that it skidded away from him, and smashed into the radiator with a noise that brought the nurse running.

“Stop!” The nurse shouted. Because he was getting out of bed now on spindly legs.

We had wanted all of our lives to know what he was thinking, and now he was going to tell us. Released from the hospital, he railed all the way home in the car. He dug up his garden in waves, leaving the plants to die in the sun at the roadside, waiting for the city truck. He replaced the yard with grey stone pavers, put a picnic table in the middle of it, and trailed an orange electric wire out, plunking a small black-and-white TV on the end. He watched hockey and porn for hours and drank beer. He kept his back to the house. When I came to visit, I knew to creep silently up the sidewalk to avoid him. His wide red suspenders, the sweet smell of his soap and his hair, and the comfort of his flannel shirts turned into dull-coloured flashes of movement out of the corner of my eye—a quick new body animated by rage.

Hydrangea. Dahlia. Marigold. My mother wrote the names of her favourite flowers in a book she kept in the side table, each name blotting out this hostile new presence in their home. Dad prowled the garden at night, cutting weeds with a power tool by the light of a welder’s helmet. I lay in bed the nights I stayed over and listened to the ratty buzz of the weed-trimmer’s fishing line stripping the front yard. I got up and watched him through the curtains, his head and hands trembling with rage as he swung the machine back

and forth. He stopped, looked up toward the house and I shrank back slowly.

He climbed up the stairs and the door opened. Bambi, the neighbour's dog, was cowering in his hands and he threw the dog in the bed with me. The dog and I stared at each other in the dark. I whispered to her to stop her whining.

Later, I heard his feet on the stairs and the door opened: "What's that dog doing in here?"

"Dad," I say.

He lunged at the dog, grabbed it yelping by the collar, and once downstairs, threw it out the back door. I was surprised at how quickly love turns to something else.

Late one evening, Dad shot a gun we never knew he had at one of the neighbours. At first, the police laughed. It was a small town and they had never seen him with a gun so they thought he was being funny. It looked like a rake or a hoe from a distance. We were all shocked, the officers included, when they threw his frail body to the ground and handcuffed him. On the evening news, my mother could be seen screaming from the front door in her nightgown, flying across the driveway, the police looking on. They did not answer her when she demanded they call an ambulance.

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At night a strange ritual began. The bears, their furry, lumpen backs outlined in moonlight, began moving down the mountainside, hewing this way and that through the trees, toward our garden. They were part of an underground railroad of creatures he had told us about, that passed through his yard on those happy gardening days long before. The bears were migrating as the suburbs encroached slowly on their habitat. He had described to my mother their mournful and startled looks, which he had witnessed as he stood silent, watching from the patio.

Outside we saw them one night in a semi-circle, their round haunches leaning against the grass or the cement. My father, released from jail, his head still bandaged from the altercation with the police, sat among them, his teeth longer and smoother as he snarled amongst them. The bears looked at him reasonably, even fondly. One patted him on the back of his hand, and then my father put his head down and began to weep, the vitriol draining away.

"We've been waiting for this moment, Bill. We knew you were the one, from the first time we saw you in the garden."

Another nodded pensively: “But the porn has got to go. And we miss the blackberries. What could have been so bad that you had to take the blackberries?”

“We’re tired of this migration,” said another. “We just want the roads to stop. The working, working, working. Too much labour, not enough rest. We have nowhere to sleep.”

One night several weeks later, I saw him walking up the back of the yard, the bears in front in a long silent parade. Flashes of his red flannel between the trees, and then he was gone.

In the springtime, my mother used to take her camera out and capture the garden at just the right moment—in the afternoon for sweet peas, the strong light showing their translucence, the fine veins that nourished the blossom. He had grown these flowers for her. Morning for roses, of course, with dew in the coiled bud. Sometimes she waited until late morning when the bud had loosened in the warmth of the sun. The early evening sun was good for tall and wispy flowers that could be backlit. My mother had taken several of these photographs before the flowers were felled by his ragged night-time chores. Her habit was to carefully select a few, pin them to her easel, and set to work.

The morning sun found her lately in her dressing gown, her fingers needling the edges of the photographs. Lobelia. Geranium. Crocus. In the last days, my father had taken to sleeping in, his new nocturnalism exhausting him. Previously, the morning had been his favourite time of day. It had been when he had the most energy. My mother might have found him in the greenhouse where he would be checking on the tomatoes, the insistent smell of their leaves steaming to the top of the stapled plastic or salvaged heritage windows, repurposed for its walls. Sometimes he would lean on the hoe, catching his breath and using the moment to survey the garden. He would come in for coffee and tell her how the blackberry bushes were taking over the neighbour’s fence and needed to be cut further back next fall. Or that the hummingbirds had reappeared. Sometimes it was a funny story, like the time when a black bear had wandered across the back deck without seeing him. It shook the blueberry bushes as it passed, stood sniffing the air for a moment, its back turned to him, and then walked on. Other days, he might have tended to the bees. He began to sell his own honey at the farmers’ market, but it was never a business for him. When the bees swarmed the neighbour’s fence, he was fine with ending his experiment and letting them go

to a better home—one with more lavender and honeysuckle to drift across in lazy waves, searching for nectar.

He wasn't exactly a tinkerer, because it was the fine mechanisms that enthralled him. He could be found in the park, testing the features of the old water pump. Then he might come home and tell you exactly how he reckoned it worked, which valves and levers must be present to draw the water to the surface with the right speed and pressure. This was the way he woke from the surgery, his eye on the pistons and dials that registered the blood flow pumping. For my father, their needles, dials, and numbers became a means for divining the truth—a confirmation of his own methodical and empirical methods. He had been a soldier in Palestine in 1948. He described the young snipers levelling their rifles at the British peacekeeping forces, the teenage Israeli girls behind the triggers.

"Did you ever kill anyone?" I finally summoned the courage to ask.

His reply: "You can always shoot above their heads."

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Outside the back door, after his disappearance, the January air was heavy with sea mist. There was his shed, the hand-painted rust red with white detail, a miniature barn where all the gardening tools were arranged, almost every one of them repaired by hand with rope, duct tape, and crafty engineering. I didn't see him, but I felt him standing there—both freed and full of sadness. It was not until the last minute when I stepped through him, stepped through the particulate of him, like a shimmering otherworldly ocean air and that, instantly, I felt it all—the bewilderment of the goodbye, the final moments, and the shock of one life ending in all its plainness, the limits of our fight for his survival, the habit of our bonds. I don't know why he was outside the house, in the silence of the clothesline and cedars, the distant sound of rigging against the sides of sailboats in the harbour. In the darkness, I felt his familiar presence: his calm and silent insight, the singular way he sensed the world without uttering a word. My own breath stopped. The unexpected matter-of-factness of the film ending. The soldier who after pausing, reaches down, picks up his gear, and walks on.

I ran back in the house not knowing if the sensations were true, yet full of missing. I wanted to stay out in the darkness

with him for as long as he needed. We had been waiting, my mother and I, without admitting it to each other, for some kind of sign. Instead, I grabbed the wood from the woodpile and ran.

My mother sat in the soft chair next to his empty one, her mouth slack with grief and staring. There were different kinds of weeping: a whimpering on the phone; a sob that punctuated a perfectly ordinary sentence. I paid attention to this new language. I had only ever seen her cry on rare occasions. This was involuntary, different, a sound she barely heard even though she was making it.

She took a step and she wept. She put her dress on the hanger and she wept. She made the stew and she wept. She wrapped a present for her nephew's baby and wept. It was not constant but came in waves as sure as the sea. They swept in and out in steady rhythm throughout the days and weeks and months. We stopped kneeling to hold and comfort her, but continued with our tasks. Things had to be done, and we took her, weeping, along with us on that other tide, a surf full of sand, driftwood, and the tips of kelp that were the daily arrangements of life: the waking, the walking, the eating, the sleeping. The way the car was parked in the driveway, the mail collection, the gathering of ducks at the shore

waiting for seeds to be tossed. The selection of a verse. The new white shirt. The grass that grew across the garden after one full season.

I stopped reading. I couldn't concentrate on more than one line at a time. In a way, his question had stumped me. It had been before the weird, weltering cruelties set in, a little precipice before the descent, before we lost him altogether. My colleagues stopped calling the house and after a while a letter came when the union no longer could defend my absence. My father was gone, I told them.

"Gone?"

The bears were his friends, and in the end, his only ones, was all I could say. Besides, I am working in the garden now, I told them. Splitting planks of books into landscaping, bonsai, and origami. The department chair came to see me, but took one look at this new project and saw that it was no use.

When the sun lit the living room at day's end, my mother took out a smock, set up her easel, and began to paint. She painted flowers from memory. And then a figure: my father, a glowing fading absence against the garden. She painted the same painting many times, sometimes leaving

him out in favour of roses. Sometimes she just painted him alone—his quietness restored by pooling washes, layers of magenta or indigo gently intersecting to become a bruising purple and from behind this, his familiar figure. His face was at times mournful but mostly just himself, his baggy jeans held up by suspenders, bathed in sunlight at the end of a summer's evening.

Since we never found his body, we assumed. We sometimes heard a roar on the hill that sounded strangely like him, when he watched the news toward the end. At night, in the room next to my mother's, I dreamt of bears in rows.

Nothing that I do can make the bears tell me about my father's whereabouts. They swill blackberry juice and smile with purple stained teeth. When I wake I lie there for a while and try to remember everything they told me about my father—about how he had been when he was a boy. During the war, he had taken refuge in the country along with the other children who had been evacuated from London. A doctor in the village manor house had given him a copy of *Gulliver's Travels*. The doctor had seen the weeping homesick boy as he sat staring out at a pond. The distant fog mingled with smoke as the Blitz unfolded, hammering the neighbourhood where his family slept, underground and far away.

11

Dead Peasant

On the day that three hundred people fell from the sky, my boss wore a sailor suit. White canvas pants, navy-and-white striped shirt, a white blazer. White leather shoes. All crisp and new. The pinstriped sock revealed the suit for the marzipan dazzle it was—not a real sailor's uniform—not any working man's threads, but something my four year old son might have worn to a wedding or a fancy Sunday school picnic. Something that would have made him look like a small English school child, a very very good boy.

The Ukrainian newscaster's voice that morning had been translated in ticker tape along the bottom of the television screen, pastoral fields in digitized lines of vegetation flowing under the wind of helicopter wings.

The boss's complexion was a greasy mottled pink grey, the colour of canned meat. His glaring—his blue eyes like cloudy marbles—was intended for someone. For me. I sat at the small table in front of his desk where he gathered staff for 'one-on-one meetings,' favoured for their lack of witnesses. I looked from the creased canvas pants to the blue marbles. I thought of the people who fell from the sky.

Just that morning, they had been eating scrambled eggs out of miniature trays. Drinking orange juice from plastic cups. Wondering how to dispose of them afterwards. Shoving them into the seat pocket reserved for magazines, where the emergency landing instructions are kept.

Children thought there were big birds in the sky when they looked out of the classroom windows. It had been an overcast day and the bodies had appeared like ravens except their course did not change. From the air, looking down through plush clouds, it would have been easy to expect a soft landing, a kind reception.

The children in the sky were writing in books too. "The food was good." Or "The food was delishous". The penmanship shaky, not following the lines. These pages were also among the things that fell to earth along with plastic cups that littered the Ukrainian fields. The rain of guerrilla gunshot from pro-Russian rebels had exploded the plane and spread its contents over twenty kilometres.

For those that had remained conscious, or those still strapped to their airplane seats, it must have seemed like a slow-motion falling dream, languid terror in a crystalline blue sky above the cloud cover. At 33,000 feet it would seem to be backtracking, to fall to earth only to be raised to heaven.

At tea the same evening Levin said to his brother—'I fancy the fine weather will last,' said he. 'To-morrow I shall start mowing.'

'I'm so fond of that form of field labour,' said Sergey Ivanovitch.

'I'm awfully fond of it. I sometimes mow myself with the peasants, and to-morrow I want to try mowing the whole day.'

Sergey Ivanovitch lifted his head, and looked with interest at his brother.

'How do you mean? Just like one of the peasants, all day long?'

'Yes, it's very pleasant,' said Levin.

'It's splendid as exercise, only you'll hardly be able to stand it,' said Sergey Ivanovitch, without a shade of irony.

'I've tried it. It's hard work at first, but you get into it. I dare say I shall manage to keep it up....'

'Really! what an idea! But tell me, how do the peasants look at it? I suppose they laugh in their sleeves at their master's being such a queer fish?'

'No, I don't think so; but it's so delightful, and at the same time such hard work, that one has no time to think about it.'

'But how will you do about dining with them? To send you a bottle of Lafitte and roast turkey out there would be a little awkward.'

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Last year, at the Basel Miami Art Fair, the boss had introduced me to a magazine editor: a wizening old man in a red suit, his jacket and pants matching, an uber-stylish equivalent of the sailor suit. Something in my memory erroneously has the editor jumping around animatedly, a gyrating red X. The Red X had curled his arm around me, smiling slyly at the boss: This is your chief curator?

I had already begun hearing things. At first it had been my name, called in lilting repetition: *Alice Rose! Alice Rose! Alice Rose!* A rush of children's voices. But in Basel it was easy to mistake the sibilance for confidences shared by

the collectors, husband and wife teams in matching tracksuits, discussing bids and valuations in American stage whisper. There were money and careers rolling around the art fair. People were buying and selling and buying. There were things of beauty, things of gravitas, things for market demand. In one small stall, a long-legged girl in polka-dot tights and braids dangled a crossed leg, her expression as remote as her blouse was vivid. Other young women in adjacent stalls, men and boys too, sat in tight jumpers, their expressions registering tedium in a long hallway of millionaire deals. The boss had been pleased when someone from a magazine took his picture later, featuring him as one of the fashionistas for the event—no black bar signifying shame across those marbles. Artists' names fell in long expensive rows, seeds dribbling into a tilled field: Julian Schnabel Damien Hirst Georgia O'Keefe Francis Bacon Jean Michel Basquiat Roy Lichtenstein. The serious girls and boys would not countenance too much friendliness at these desks.

Putin's guns were expensive too. So much so that they were borrowed, not bought, a guided missile that travelled ten kilometres above the earth, an import that was impossible to return and with so much tariff.

From the uplands he could get a view of the shaded cut part of the meadow below, with its greyish ridges of cut grass, and the black heaps of coats, taken off by the mowers at the place from which they had started cutting.

Gradually, as he rode towards the meadow, the peasants came into sight, some in coats, some in their shirts, mowing, one behind another in a long string, swinging their scythes differently. He counted forty-two of them.

They were mowing slowly over the uneven, low-lying parts of the meadow, where there had been an old dam. Levin recognised some of his own men. Here was old Yermil in a very long white smock, bending forward to swing his scythe; there was a young fellow, Vaska, who had been a coachman of Levin's, taking every row with a wide sweep. Here, too, was Tit, Levin's preceptor in the art of mowing, a thin little peasant. He was in front of all, and cut his wide row without bending as though playing with the scythe.

Levin got off his mare, and fastening her up by the roadside went to meet Tit, who took a second scythe out of a bush and gave it him.

'It's ready, sir; it's like a razor, cuts of itself,' said Tit, taking off his cap with a smile and giving him the scythe.

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We are having a staff retreat in the basement conference room in a boutique hotel repurposed from a former modernist office building. The wildly patterned carpet disguises wine stains from shot-gun weddings. It fights hard with the brutalist concrete façade and the black coffee we are drinking. The boss tells us we are building a strategic temple: programs are one column, he explains, publications, and then, exhibitions. He is holding his hands up on either side, his fingers trembling.

The CFO says, What about—

Can I just finish here? One of the hands outstretched to indicate a column flattens into a stop sign. Someone else speaking hurts his ears.

In the Syrian ruin of Palmyra, there were rows of Roman columns. They formed a backdrop, the headless body of its

former museum director, an antiquities specialist, hanging from a traffic light in the city square. The boss's response to my sharing of this news story was to crack a joke about being run up a flagpole himself. These forms of rubble—including the boss's talk, fragments of rubber tire in the Ukraine, blood stains on these ancient stones—were turning antiquity into a meme in the new Fordist factory of my mind.

I've hired a Communications Consultant, the boss was explaining. She created brand strategies for Google and Uzbekistan.

We are nodding, sign language for people who hear but cannot speak.

The Communications Consultant arrives with a cheery attitude and Annie Lennox hair, a spikey jazzed-up version without the politic. She is a former Olympic athlete, carrying quite a few more pounds than she did at the Games. She uses terms like Thought Leader and Key Influencer without irony. Lately, the boss has too.

The boss sits behind her as she delivers a Powerpoint presentation with the new strategic plan. He is curled forward slightly as if his digestive juices are absorbing him. He wears a sly smile as she delivers the news, half bouncer/half-Cheryl Sandberg. After a while I notice that a counter-narrative was

unfolding in surtitles, via curly, smoky sky-writing above her head and delivered by a tiny bi-plane.

If she cried, even the teardrops were to be preserved. There were water shortages scrambling the DNA of all of her plans, wrote the little plane.

I had read about how people discovered their own schizophrenia by hearing radio transmissions coming from radiators or a set of curlers. Their hallucinations bore components of normalcy but they were badly designed or paired. It was a feature that had stayed with me about these stories, a familiar possibility that had long been resident in the back of my mind, about how a mind is lost.

I looked around the room as the Communications Consultant continued. The office manager was sleeping. Everyone else was staring at the screen or the former Olympian.

Well? she said.

We were slow to respond. I looked down at my empty coffee cup.

Really, nothing? She turned and looked back at the boss, and they shared a smile. Then more sternly, to us: You don't look happy!

Each new desire was a prison, the tiny plane continued. *Cloaked in the anxiety of dreaming, of the prolonged capitalist dreaming: her own and nothing to do with her.*

The plane wandered off, a straight speechless line flowing behind momentarily, until it reached the Executive Assistant, her hair starched like Mary Tyler Moore's into exaggerated aspirational loops which didn't move, as a rule, even when she turned her head: *What could be left for her to inhabit?* was written above her head, which appeared like a darkened silhouette backlit by the vending machines.

The janitor, who sometimes acted as a security guard, had not been invited to the meeting since he was a subcontractor. He entered briefly to empty the trashcans. As he emptied them, their tin mouths began to flap. Perhaps failure could be seen as a kind of liberation. The four trashcans sang a cappella: *Sexual failure!* one began. *Creative failure!* the second joined in. *Failures of feeling! Of excessive sentimentality! Of the relinquishment of trauma!* all four now in unison.

To relinquish was to offer it, too, to the public sphere. It was the janitor who reached the highest note. *How could he claim any thought or feeling for his own?* He sang, in falsetto.

The Communications Consultant called a break, but we were not to leave the room. We sat at long trestle tables in the basement waiting for sandwiches to be delivered, small pink and brown iced cakes and coffee. The caterer arrived twenty minutes late, so we had to eat quickly, the white bread greyish-green under the artificial glow. It seemed like a luncheon—we were all together—but the dim light made us murmur quietly to each other as if we were in church.

Tit made room, and Levin started behind him. The grass was short close to the road, and Levin, who had not done any mowing for a long while, and was disconcerted by the eyes fastened upon him, cut badly for the first moment, though he swung his scythe vigorously. Behind him he heard voices—

'It's not set right; handle's too high; see how he has to stoop to it,' said one.

'Press more on the heel,' said another.

'Never mind, he'll get on all right,' the old man resumed.

'He's made a start.... You swing it too wide, you'll tire yourself out.... The master, sure, does his best

for himself! But see the grass missed out! For such work us fellows would catch it!'

The grass became softer, and Levin, listening without answering, followed Tit, trying to do the best he could.

They moved a hundred paces. Tit kept moving on, without stopping, not showing the slightest weariness, but Levin was already beginning to be afraid he would not be able to keep it up: he was so tired.

The lights buzzed and dimmed a little when the boss and CEO came back from the break. There was a little hiss as they returned and the Consultant wiped down the white board.

What do you think her contract cost us, the CFO said, without moving her lips, as if she were a ventriloquist. Guess.

Twenty thousand? I ventured.

Higher. With the travel budget to fly in from New York five times, she answered.

The bi-plane travelled around the room like a hummingbird, circling other heads, leaving strings of words puffing there

and then dissipating. I still didn't say anything. I hadn't been sleeping well for several weeks.

Above the senior technician, who had taken a vacation during the last show change: *Motivation was gone. Motivation too, seems to lead to instrumentalization. To lie in bed then is a protest, an act of individuation, of defiance.*

The CFO, now leaning forward over the coffee urn is wrapped by the plane's cursive message like a Christmas tree: *There were small spaces of freedom, things she has been able to hide away from the prying gaze of public performance. The memory of her sweet boy in her arms, the precious heaviness of that small warm bundle, the delight of his smile, of his surprising, continuing love for her. How could the world offer her this one delight?*

Off to the side, the collections manager swung his leg as the little plane stuttered, stalled, dipped and resumed: *This is the beginning of the eco-emergency, the excavation of every intimacy, every love. How could one feel anything, one's own flesh, let alone the threat it might be enduring if even the shimmering of life forms were colonized. How could these landscapes of mind, ocean, love, land, be freed when even the feeling of freedom has been trademarked?*

I excused myself, but in the washroom I heard a slight buzzing, a little shadow and then the sound of propellers: *How long could one be expected to wait?*

I quickly splashed my face with cold water. I wanted to concentrate on the RASCI plans, research proposals, grant applications, anything but this.

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> *So they mowed the first row. And this long row seemed particularly hard work to Levin; but when the end was reached, and Tit, shouldering his scythe, began with deliberate stride returning on the tracks left by his heels in the cut grass, and Levin walked back in the same way over the space he had cut, in spite of the sweat that ran in streams over his face and fell in drops down his nose, and drenched his back as though he had been soaked in water, he felt very happy. What delighted him particularly was that now he knew he would be able to hold out.*

The newest art fair to join the circuit is ArtBlitz. The fair designer is known for her skill with white, temporary shelters, glamping out in faux-elegance at London's Regents Park, or the unlit caves of a previous arsenal or hockey rink.

These skills have been turned to transforming an old dog food factory in the Czech Republic, its massive interior now housing faintly Eastern bloc acres of stalls and dealers. The boss has put me on special assignment at the art fair. Soviet lights buzz in the cavernous rafters, calling *Alice Rose! Alice Rose! Alice Rose!* I haven't heard the calling since the staff retreat and I refuse to look up now. It turned out that Lindsay Lohan collects horse paintings, and she is itching to give someone some money to give her a show. The boss thinks we might get a big donation out of it.

It was after I read Anna Karenina, Lindsay explains to me at a pop-up café pod in the canteen area at ArtBlitz. Vronsky's horse. He loved her more than he loved Anna. That's what I came away thinking.

Lindsay is surprisingly earnest and smart, candid in the seasoned way famous people are when talking with strangers and journalists. She loves Rosa Bonheur and mindfulness meditation. She blinks rapidly, kohl-lined upper lids and just a hint of make-up. She reminds me of the smarter kids at school, the way they would speak to each other rapidly, and then turn and change gears, enunciating slowly to those who could not keep up.

I am flattered she is speaking at regular speed to me. What are you envisioning, Lindsay? I ask. Every work in the collection? How many pieces are there?

I've been collecting for the past ten years, she says. We'll keep out the tchotchkes; those are only for me. But if you're interested, I have a collection of Venetian glass horses and chariots.

Stick with the paintings, I say. How many are we left with?

Nearby a band has started playing 1970s sit-com theme music. They are occupying a stall exhibiting an installation of Andy Kaufman memorabilia. Andy Kaufman's brother is there too, a friendly American, telling charming stories about his late brother, as is an old friend of Andy's who also looks like she could have been his agent. She scans the visitors to the stall hawkishly, looking for angles. A few visitors lean on the cases, looking at Andy's old 45s and scratchy, violent drawings.

A bottleneck forms in the art fair as everyone gathers when the band gets louder. It's a statuesque crowd, as sleek as Kaufman was frizzy. They lean on one hip, kitten purses under their arms. I've seen some of them earlier at the fair, their faces fine as dolls and unsmiling. Now their smiles

show how old they are; some that look middle-aged bored are actually girls and boys in their young twenties. The older collectors look like someone's nice dad, except that their former-model girlfriends, playing down their beauty in overalls, cast sidelong glances nervously at the young beauties when the collectors smile warmly at them. The group listens in a fine balance of ironic and genuine rapture.

The music is actually cheering me up. I can see it is cheering Lindsay up too.

She takes out her iPhone to show me the collection. The theme song to *Welcome Back, Kotter* is playing as she swipes through one graceful mare, one rearing stallion bearing royalty, one country scene with ponies grazing. I start making John-Travolta-inspired, smart-aleck come-backs: They served you a side order of nothin,' I say, when she tells me about the museums that refused her.

There's three hundred paintings, Lindsay shouts over the tuba.

Which of the horses looks like Tolstoy? I ask.

What?

I mean a dead-ringer, I say. Not just around the eyes.

I wish she were smart enough not to collect horse paintings. I try thinking of a theme, something to avoid the shame. The boss calls it the My Little Pony show at program meetings. Out of the corner of my eye, I see the boss walk by with the Red X, in royal blue this fair, and a pitifully skinny woman with the alarming hand gestures of a crack addict. She's a collector too, but she likes to make her own shows. She started her own gallery last year, the Museum of My Art (Ma-Ma). The art critics sound like sad dolls when they talk about it at panel discussions.

They stand in front of a waterfall installation of purple and pink tinsel; there are sounds of dolphin sonar and a woman moaning emanating from within.

Far too earnest, says the now Blue X.

Can we not look a little towards post-structuralism? the boss sighs. He has what some people call "a good eye." Does everyone have to trade in Deleuze for Cixous? he asks.

On the TV monitors at the bar later, grainy frames are still showing the rubble in the Ukrainian fields even though it is many months later; each time we see it, pieces of fuselage have broken into smaller parts, absorbed like corpses into the mud, while the ticker tape now translates Putin's deni-

als. When the refrigerated train cars show up, Putin's face appears, flashing simultaneously onto all of the monitors in the bar like a pop-star. A stream of one-hundred-and-ninety-three black cars arrive at the Schiphol airport to pick up the bodies of the dead on one screen, while the convoy of white, canvas covered Kam-Az trucks flood over the border from Russia to Ukraine on another, offering Putin's form of humanitarian aid.

His pleasure was only disturbed by his row not being well cut. 'I will swing less with my arm and more with my whole body,' he thought, comparing Tit's row, which looked as if it had been cut with a line, with his own unevenly and irregularly lying grass.

The first row, as Levin noticed, Tit had mown specially quickly, probably wishing to put his master to the test, and the row happened to be a long one. The next rows were easier, but still Levin had to strain every nerve not to drop behind the peasants.

The trombone player begins a slow perambulating dance. He has a low belly that dips over the elastic waistband of his uniform. The rest of the band watches bemused, an eye on

him as they play. The trombonist circles wider and wider, and slowly the long-legged girls back up, the growing crowd pressing back to make room. There are shouts of laughter as elegant people begin scrambling to get out of the way.

I lean forward, looking at a neck and muzzle horse portrait done in a French Impressionist style, except for the bright, flat acrylic pigments. Where light might have emanated for the old masters, it is instead a jarring semiotic screen full of chemical misunderstanding.

At a briefing before the fair, I had questioned the boss about the reasonableness of the assignment. The credibility of the museum is at risk, I told him. As a matter of fact, can I give you some feedback?

Be very careful, Alice, he said, shaking a finger at me and glowering. I'm the CEO.

I paused.

So, no feedback then?

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Someone snaps a picture and I am blinded. Lindsay turns to look. I hear someone else say *Fuck off!* but I can't tell if it's her or the guy sitting next to her who spilled his wine on his

white Ralph Lauren pants. It surprised him too. The tuba player has lurched forward towards us, and the crowd presses into the two-person pod we are sitting in, sealing Lindsay and me off from the world. I hear a brittle, cracking sound. The pod breaks into silicone daggers, the roof flattening under the mob, and then a flash of pain. The last thing I see is Lindsay's kind, surprised face, her mouth open. I think: They've got her all wrong. No one really wants to know the truth about Lindsay. We're going to make this exhibition a redemption.

I am not sure what happened next. But the museum paid itself one hundred thousand dollars with the dead peasant policy they had taken out on me, along with three of the other staff that were there that day. It was much higher than the usual payout because I was young, and because I was female, both mitigating factors when calculating the insurance proceeds. Oh, and I was dead.

He thought of nothing, wished for nothing, but not to be left behind the peasants, and to do his work as well as possible. He heard nothing but the swish of the scythes, and saw before him Tit's upright figure mowing away, the crescent-shaped curve of the cut grass, the grass and flower heads slowly and rhyth-

mically falling before the blade of his scythe, and ahead of him the end of the row, where would come the rest.

Suddenly, in the midst of his toil, without understanding what it was or whence it came, he felt a pleasant sensation of chill on his hot, moist shoulders. He glanced at the sky in the interval for whetting the scythes. A heavy, lowering storm-cloud had blown up, and big raindrops were falling. Some of the peasants went to their coats and put them on; others—just like Levin himself—merely shrugged their shoulders, enjoying the pleasant coolness of it.

From the afterlife, I see through a small porthole window that my mother is darning socks. The ridges of raised veins in her hands are placed in shadow by the winter light. Her wrists are supple without any swelling or illness for her age. Like all children of wartime, my mother knows how to use what is around her: to make a new skirt out of an uncle's old suit, patchwork quilts from Saturday-night dresses, each square summoning memory like a perfume—the pea coat that Nan wore to Edith's wedding, the trousers Poppy went to church in and how he stood on the porch of the pub til

the very last minute, when the bells were rung. To the great grandchildren, the quilt was also a flat semiotic landscape, like Lindsay's bad paintings, a series of interrupted phrases, patterns, textures. Like history, the faces of the wearers of the castoff clothes were lost in blurry photographs. There was no tightening of the throat as one remembered what was lost. The patchwork was a tale of grief to her, and a spectacle only later, on Instagram, shared by the great-grandniece, Jade, who received 133 likes from friends, three of whom lived in Lebanon and one in Nairobi—she had met them at an international student residence during an exchange last summer. Jade bought her own quilt from Primark on the high street, where the colours were more pleasing. Hers was free from uneven hand-stitching and gaudiness, free from quilted family history.

My mother is accustomed to the clicking of darning needles against the radio play and morning news, the talk show, taking her far beyond her own reflection in the living room window to the vast unregulated space in her imagination. No speculator or land surveyor has yet charted this territory though they are trying. Her silence and her lack of documentation keeps it so. Her imaginings have not popped up into search engines or occupied web browsers. My mother's mind is innocently hostile to these incursions.

Another row, and yet another row, followed—long rows and short rows, with good grass and with poor grass. Levin lost all sense of time, and could not have told whether it was late or early now. A change began to come over his work, which gave him immense satisfaction. In the midst of his toil there were moments during which he forgot what he was doing, and it came all easy to him, and at those same moments his row was almost as smooth and well cut as Tit's. But so soon as he recollected what he was doing, and began trying to do better, he was at once conscious of all the difficulty of his task, and the row was badly mown.

She rises, put the needles to one side, and checks the roast. I had refused to learn domestic tasks. These were offered: When you have a husband, you will need to know how to cook. But this had insulted me. I look over her shoulder longingly as she simmers the bouillon, wondering if this might have been the key to happiness. Some things are eternal regrets.

My father is almost home, so she changes her blouse upstairs, washes her face, applies a little lipstick in the most unos-

tentatious and economical way to welcome him: only on the bottom lip, then she presses the two together, the lower one always darker as a result and the top one fuller, enlarged by the pressure. She knows she is a vista, something he in his twin-mind has also privately imagined throughout his day: her face as she greets him, the quietness and warmth of their kitchen.

There is little commentary, likes or sharing, because my parents don't know about flat images. A text sent from a great-grandchild is met with amusement but it does not warrant a reply: they read these pop-tart missives once before putting the phone away. Their silence has become a kind of game to the great-grandchildren and they have taken to texting many times a day, without answer. It's a joke they share with each other at family reunions. I hear her when she asks my father what a dead peasant policy is, how it is possible the museum could receive any benefit from my death. Wasn't it enough that she was on the job when she died? my mother asks him. What more do they want from her? My father says nothing, wraps her in his arms.

Crush is a funny word: to fall suddenly in love or to be flattened to death. How all of us were caught—the Marketing Assistant, the Education Curator, the boss's personal assistant

along with two band members, Lindsay and me—beneath a faulty structure never meant to bear the weight of anything at all. The vibrations of the mob had set off the loosened bolts in the old Soviet building, which the fair designer had covered with gauze because their protruding at odd angles seemed so ugly. It seemed the building had been stripped, like the Roman Forum, of some structural iron girding that could be traded in the years before the wall came down.

When my mother dies, I will be waiting for her at the end of the bed, an analogue ghost. A day she predicted would come, that she would never, shivering, talk about: a memory of floating out of her body far above us, the day I was born by breach birth, when she learned that there was in fact an afterlife. My ghost has the potential to be captured by science as a quantum occurrence or an anomaly. For now, I am enjoying being beyond reach. I appear as an orb of light in the staff photograph, just above the CEO's shoulder like a Christmas light. I play jokes on them this way. It's a tease, a triumph, my escape.

EPILOGUE

'Lunch, sir,' said the old man.

'Is it really time? That's right; lunch, then.' Levin gave his scythe to Tit, and together with the peasants, who were crossing the long stretch of mown grass, slightly sprinkled with rain, to get their bread from the heap of coats, he went towards his house. Only then he suddenly awoke to the fact that he had been wrong about the weather and the rain was drenching his hay.

'The hay will be spoiled,' he said.

'Not a bit of it, sir; mow in the rain, and you'll rake in fine weather!' said the old man.

My first day on the new job in the Big Box store of the Afterlife, the fluorescent lights erased the shadows and I had trouble seeing. It took a while for me to adjust so they assigned me the job of a greeter, the underdressed host of an elaborate, capitalist party. But I liked that uniform. I just had to find a way to keep it clean, since you can't ask too much more from couch-surfing hosts. I am working up enough

savings for a room in a shared house, but until then, I find a bed where I can, and I sprinkle the armpits of my blouse with talcum powder. By the end of the second week, someone raises the issue of cleanliness. I had to sleep rough the night before but no matter; it is worse to tell them this, not better. I am just given the one warning.

12

Letter from Free Port, Mars Station (after the Art World)

I want you to know one thing: that when we left you for Mars, you still could not be denied. We try to fabricate on dry, red sand the beauty of you. As we are working on your replica, we remember the amethyst in your stone hills and the glass-like calm of your divided lakes. We are numb and distracted with our betrayal, like those who, if pressed, make bad apologies: Mistakes. Were. Made.

With the bravado of the amateur, we are labouring to approximate you. Outside, looking through the fish-eye window in my star-ship bed at night, the cool grace of you is still visible, a blue slip of ocean and cloud. I miss you terribly.

There was once a time that I had canoed on a black lake, my paddle poised and dripping. The memory of each water drop registers on the surface in concentric circles. There were fish below (another miracle) clad in shiny green and mottled brown, their gills extracting oxygen, floating algae sliding by the metal skim of our prow. The inky trees at dusk, the small sounds of water birds, were a fibrous mythology of connective tissue. Their underlying physics were a relational choreography of which we knew so little.

I did not want to go with the collector on this journey. I felt the treason of his progress. The paintings under the wan radioactivity of Martian light have slowly drained of colour. We have been abandoned here on the mothership, accidentally quarantined with the treasures we placed in the extra-duty zone. We have lost count of years. You, beloved, could never be reborn in our technology, the metric calibration of our dreams and thoughts stifling you—you refusing to be reborn, so soon after dying.

We loved you. It is only the beloved that agree to be destroyed. We turned against the intimacy of your features: shells, silken mammals, driftwood, liquid fires, lambswool, rust, the roar of wind in trees. It was this knowledge we turned on you: once we figured the particulate that you were made of. We thought we could recombine you like a flip-book story.

We tried to graft you to Mars and you refused. You were heartbroken and silent and we left you quickly behind—the arrogance of the lover, sensing the limitation of the once-beloved, looks for other seductions. Red sand planet, you are austere and we deserve you. You are the lover that does not love us back, that leaves us small and needy and unrequited.

Is it too late for you, my turquoise planet, to forgive? There was a day on the beach before the virus hit, all your pebbles

large to small, rolling wildly in the surf against one another, nestling in the webbed catchment of skin between my toes. This was how close you wanted us to be: when I lay down, salty from swimming, when I discovered a June bug, irrational with features, elegant black brushstrokes of limbs and bristle and iridescent shell. When I pressed down on the kelp-strewn sand, the tightening as the sun dried the sea on my skin that day, my body on yours, breathing you in, the merging of our atoms: carbon, oxygen, hydrogen.

COLOPHON

Image credit, page 3:

Emily Carr (1871–1945)
From the sketchbook for “Pause,” 1903

56 pages of drawings and 23 pages of hand written text and notations, in graphite and ink on paper

20.7 x 16.5 cm

Gift of Dr. Jack Parnell
McMichael Canadian Art Collection

1973.8

Lisa Robertson quote on page 4 from *Nilling: Prose Essays on Noise, Pornography, the Codex, Melancholy, Lucretius, Folds, Cities and Related Aporias* (Toronto: Book*hug, 2014) 73.

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