

# Harbour

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# Smashy Smashy

Jon O'Mercy

Katie doesn't say anything when she gets in the car, not even a thank you for hauling my ass over to the edge of the goddamn city in Friday rush-hour traffic to pick her up, but I give her an out 'cause she's broken-hearted.

Or like, re-broken-hearted, cause Tim's cheated on her before. *Did the heart break in the same spots?* I wonder as Katie climbs in the car, fishnets snagging against the window roller, eliciting a little cry from her. *Did the pain feel the same?*

Shit, I'm probably a little too stoned to be driving. Katie was sobbing when she called me, so I'd jumped in the car straight after sharing a joint with my housemate. I put my shades on to hide my bloodshot eyes until I realized, halfway there, that it's cloudy out, so if anything the sunglasses were just highlighting my stonedness.

"Where do you wanna go?"

"I don't know," Katie says, her voice thick with tears. She puts her legs up on the dashboard. Her cut-offs and fishnets are even more ripped than usual, and she leaves some mud on the dashboard, but my car's a dump, so what do I care? "Let's just drive, okay?"

"Okay," I say. I pull away from the curb. I already know where the night will take us: to the land of smashed windows. This isn't our first rodeo.

And like, I don't get why she can be so smart about some things yes so dumb about other things, like Tim for example, or just men in general. I've tried to play her Bikini Kill and L7 or even Alanis Morissette and Tori Amos or Patti Smith but Katie likes to get drunk and listen to Metallica and Machine Head and a bunch of other long-haired dudes, likes to go to concerts in her band shirts and eyeliner and stand in a line with the others and windmill her hair, a display I witnessed once when she dragged me to a concert two years ago. I didn't bring any earplugs that night and I left to go smoke a joint and listen to the new *Godspeed You! Black Emperor* CD on repeat.

Maybe if I'd been in there she wouldn't have met Tim, but she did, came out into the parking lot with him. I watched them in my rear view mirror, thinking that if she ditched me after making her drive her here I was gonna rage.

She didn't ditch me that night, just shared a cigarette out the front with him and then wrote her name and number on the back of a flier. I watched her through the rear-view mirror as she walked out of the parking lot to me. I remember

thinking, *Here we fucking go*, cause Katie's the kind of woman who reads feminist theory and then falls head over heels in love with any dude who shows interest in her (and, okay, at least has decent politics, I can say that much for her). But she twists herself in knots trying to bend to her boyfriends' wills.

Like trying to get a player to settled into monogamy, for example, which is the pickle she's been in for the past two years with Tim. The first year was a montage of her telling me how great he was, and me meeting with him thinking he was just, like, *fine*, like maybe if I didn't read a lot or wasn't probably radicalized myself but otherwise he'd just say, like, vaguely Kurt Cobain-esque things and like, yeah, he was doing well compared to a lot of other fucks in the metal crowd, but why we were holding *them* as the standard was beyond me.

Because the thing was, too, that *Katie* read all the time as well, so there wasn't any excuse for her waxing fucking lyrical about his intelligence, you know what I mean? He must've just exuded some particularly virile man-pheromone, a pheromone I'm genetically immune to.

Eminem starts on the radio and both of our hands reach out at the same time. She wins and searches through the static until the first few bars of *Somebody That I Used to Know* comes on. I expect her to change it, but she leaves it on. I raise my eyebrows. Girl must really devastated if she's leaving him on. Don't get me wrong — Elliot Smith can write a tune — but he's surely not up to Katie's throat-screamy standards.

And then she starts to cry.

"Oh, hey," I say, reaching over to pat one leg, somehow hooking a finger in her fishnets and having to extricate myself. "It'll be okay."

I try think of something to say and come up empty.

I wish — not for the first time — that it hadn't been only me and her from the friendship circle who didn't go to college. There'd been four of us ever since middle school. Jess, who's studying political science and started a chapter of Food not Bombs for her college, and Tiff, who goes by Heather now, which none of us really give her shit for because "Tiffany" had never suited her, it brought to mind some valley-girl in a convertible and platform sandals and not the long-haired often bare-footed eco-anarchist she is, one who actually keeps a cut-up newspaper article picture

of Julia Butterfly Hill in her vegan-leather wallet. A Tiffany had definitely never cried for six straight hours after seeing a rabid raccoon, but Heather sure had.

And then there's us. Katie, a metal head who I've personally seen crush a can of beer on her head, organizes and takes part in every demo and riot, has been arrested dozens of times, works in a record store close to my work.

And me, who gets edgy around loud noises and prefers to spend my weekends at reading events, or handing out zines with my collective, or smoking a joint and walking my roommate's Labrador through Golden Gate park, looking at the birds and wondering if I should've gone with Heather to study forestry instead of staying back, one year that quickly is turning into more. And it wasn't like I was unhappy with my choice, but still, once Jess referred to us as her high-school friends when we were at a book-launch and I'd caught Katie's eyes, high-school friends, like either that's where our lives stopped, or our friendship stopped, but it hasn't been quite the same with them since.

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I turn the blinkers on by reflex to start heading into the Haight-Ashbury. I've worked in a little arthouse theater since I was sixteen, part-time between school and then full-time straight after, needing some money to support my sick mom. When I'd first started it showed a lot of films movies that played movies in black and white, usually with subtitles and with subtexts I couldn't always understand. Now it screened a lot of documentaries, usually ones where the directors themselves would do a Q and A after the show, answering questions about the sex workers in a mining town no-one had ever heard of in rural Idaho, or the lesbian poets in Lagos, or the anarchists who opened up a crab museum in Margate and were radicalizing children while teaching them about crustaceans.

They radicalized me, too. Not the museum owners — although I am much more appreciative of crabs now — but all of it, the screenings and the social shit I'd inevitably go to even though part of my job was to clean up before closing for the night. "Just do it after," Maggie would say, the owner of the place. "Or tomorrow, who cares, kid, this is more important."

When I got older I started sleeping with some of the documentarians or audience members, too. Not a lot. Enough to get me kicked out of home when my dad caught me necking a hot older woman who'd driven me home. I was too young for her, she said, but she'd still pulled me in for a kiss. My old man had unfortunately been out bringing the trash cans in, and that was the end of that, no living at home for your truly, though it hadn't really been a home since my mom died. I crashed on my boss' couch until she helped me move in to an apartment in the Tenderloin, a little walk-up studio

against a takeout place that smelled like grease and was my pride and joy.

"You still want to get dumplings?" I ask Katie. It's been threatening rain all day, off and on, but now it was beginning in earnest. Katie's just staring out of the window morosely as the people on the sidewalk pop umbrellas or jump under awnings.

"Yeah," she says. "But I want to go to the place on Broadway. They have that broccoli and tofu thing."

"Dude, their dumplings are *hella* dry. How do you even make a dry dumpling? We should go to the one on Kearny."

We're on the right track, here. We've had this conversation before, always the same argument, and I'm glad, it means she's still got a little spunk in her.

We bicker about it until I relent and agree to go to the restaurant she likes. I can out bicker her every day but her black-ringed eyes — like, more than usual — get to me.

"Fine. Gimme a smoke, would you?"

Katie does, lights it for me and everything before she passes it over, another one of our little rituals. The familiarity of it makes smile a little, and then I sigh when I hear her snuffle again.

"Okay, out with it," I say.

"Out with what?"

"With Tim. What happened?"

She dissolves into tears again. It takes her nearly my whole cigarette before she can get it out.

"He loves this one."

I sigh. "I'm sorry, Katie." I wonder if I should shit-talk him to get her spirits up but find that I can't. And the thing was, I don't dislike Tim. At least he isn't cold and distant, like her previous ex had been, or a know-it all like the one before that, who'd read obscure anarchist theory only, it seemed to me, so that he could corner people at events and ask what they thought of Max Stirner's creative nothing.

Tim is sweet, though. He calls and goes to marches and feminist readings with her. He'd driven us to Seattle in his beat-up station wagon, him, me and Katie, and two other local anarchists stuffed in the back. We listened to mix tapes and he smashed windows like the rest of us, scooped up a teenager after she had an asthma attack from the miasma of pepper spray in the air from the pigs. He's just a dude in his early twenties who's caught some fame from his band and likes women — genuinely likes them, too, I think. He loves Katie. I just think they have different definitions of what that means.

"You're not gonna say I told you so?" she says sharply, cutting through my smoggy thoughts.

She isn't normally the type to take out her frustrations on other people. The fact is, I *had* said that to her last time she told me about his most recent round of indiscretions (he seemed to collect them up on a three-monthly basis). We'd

been in a bar and I wasn't the softest when I drank, a reason I stuck to weed and E. I was well aware that I needed softening rather than hardening.

I cringe a little at the memory. "No, I'm not," I say. I tried to think of what to say. I hadn't been in love yet. Or only not reciprocal love yet, only moments: watching a woman hurl a bottle at a cop in the riots, the time a landlord sent over a butch dyke to fix our kitchen sink, my crush on my English teacher in high school, and Ramona. Love of people coming together to talk about the destruction of the harmful, love for building something new, love for people's potential. But love like this? Call me Alicia Silverstone, because I was fucking clueless.

"What are you going to do?" I try to make my voice a bit softer than usual.

"What can I do? He left *me*." She blows her nose wetly on the sleeve of her hoodie and I try to keep my face fixed in empathy rather than disgust. "I'm so fucking *mad*. That's what I don't know what to do with."

"Are we gonna... you know." I mime throwing a rock. "Smashy smashy?"

"I don't know. Do you think it really helps?"

I look at her, the shock on my face only partly for show. "Of course it helps! Fuck that guy! You're not gonna go soft on me now, are you?"

Katie sighs, then wipes her tears. "Yeah, you're right. Fuck him."

"That's the spirit," I say, patting her knee. I'd only had vague plans later to maybe go to the lesbian bar and see if my crush was there, a forty-year old woman with some hot-shot director girlfriend who was always shooting me such filthy looks that I thought maybe I had a chance. "You want to stay at my place tonight?"

"Yeah," she said.

---

We stop at my place to drop off the car. We go in so Katie to piss and for me to roll a joint. I'm running low.

The rain's stopped, for now at least, when we get out. We start walking there and when we pass the payphone I pause, consider, and turn back. I call my dealer while Katie stands leaning against the booth, lighting a cigarette.

"Didn't you just buy an ounce?"

I look at her, remembering suddenly that she'd been there the last time, too. Had it even been the same phone booth? I felt that rush of *déjà vu*, remembered the part in *The Matrix* where it was a sign of a glitch in the system.

My first instinct is to lie to her, and I catch myself coming up with something, *I shared it with my roomie, I made some into brownies for a party, I gave some away*. None of which are true, my anarchist principles apparently not stronger than an addict's selfishness.

Instead, I shrug. "Yeah. I'm running low."

"That's like, kinda a lot."

"Yeah." Ironically, I'm a bit too stoned to think of a way to lighten the mood. I hold my arms up in an exaggerated shrug. "Fucking *Bush*, man."

She smirks at me. "Might wanna take it easy. We've got four more years of Bush."

I give her a fake salute.

---

The restaurant is packed by the time we get there. We're squeezed into a little table near the entrance to the toilets. Katie brings a half-bottle of Fernet with her that she's probably going to finish herself. I order the dumplings anyway and am pleasantly surprised when they're tastier than normal, maybe a new kind of tofu, or the fact that I have dry mouth and doused them in sauce and chase them with the ginger beer they sell here in a vain attempt to sober up the loud drunk fucks who come in.

Five of them were sitting in a round table in the middle of the crowded room. It's a busy night, so everyone's raised their voices to be heard, but these fuckers are *yelling* about their jobs, the women they're dating and their stats, some guy's new SUV. I can't tell if they're classic yuppies or the survivors of the Dot Com bust or some combination of the two but they're stressing me out. I shoot them a frown, hoping to catch one of their eyes so I can kindly motion for them to shut the fuck up, and one of them looks at me and I get a jolt. He looks like one of the Columbine shooters. I'd studied his face — trying hard not to remember his stupid name cause he just wanted to be famous, what a *loser* — but this guy looks the same, which was just: plain, white, slightly awkward-looking.

"What?"

*Shit!* The mass-shooting look alike is talking to me. Too late, I realize I've been staring at him over Katie's shoulder. Weed makes me feel like there's a protective barrier between me and the rest of the world, that awful news stories can't affect me so much. The fact of being born into a decade that promised revolution and coming of age in one that demanded commodification at all costs wasn't soul-destroying at my tender age. The, like psychic pain that grows with the addition of each Starbucks in my city.

I clear my throat. "Can you lower your voices? You're disturbing everyone."

The dweeb with his back to me turns around and looks me up and down. His indigence turns to confusion and I close my eyes briefly. My shaved head and flat chest confuses men. I inspire homophobia and a kind of lust that is more about correction than it is desire, like after one act of rape I'd give them my dykehood so they could mount it on their wall like a trophy.

"Did you hear what this cunt said?" Says one of them, bravely.

Christ. This is gonna be a whole thing. We've already pointedly got the bill from the hassled looking waiter. I rummage in my jacket for my wallet and slap a few bills on the little plate. "Come on," I say to Katie, who's already bristling up like an animal ready to protect its territory. "Let's just get out of here, I'm not in the mood."

Katie looks at me and scowls, then seems to think of something that makes her expression soften. "Okay," she says sweetly.

I get ready to run. I'm half expecting her to throw the last of her precious Fernet in their faces, except she's finished the bottle. We get out without incident and stand under the awning. She's scanning up and down the street.

"What?" I say.

She hushes me and then seems to find what she's looking for. She takes my hand and drags me to some expensive looking Range Rover with a matte-finish paint job.

"That's gotta be their car, right?"

"Huh," I say, a grin spreading over my face. "Probably. But even if it isn't..."

Kate grins, her red predator's teeth visible even in the streetlight. She takes out her keys.

---

We walk to the spot of our crime. I would have been a bit more hesitant about smashing these windows, given Katie's drunkenness — she's weaving a bit — but we've done it before.

Have we done it every time Tim cheated? I couldn't remember, but probably.

The rain is a good cover, too. We pull our hoods up and cover our faces with umbrellas. He hadn't installed security cameras after the last time. I know, because I had to walk past the fucking place everyday.

It was easy to find the bricks. Construction works dotted the streets. San Francisco had got a rush from revamping, re-modelling, repricing. We pick up the bricks with our gloved hands (Katie had been obsessed with DNA since the OJ trial) and, once the Muni bus has gone past, we throw them through the new Starbucks' windows. *Is the anti-globe movement still ascending, or are we facing a peak or a decline?*

---

We ran a different circuit to my place this time, go get a beer in a bar. After we've cooled off a bit we go back to my apartment and I give Katie a glass of water and light a joint.

"That felt *really* good," she says. I notice that there was no trace of guilt or regret in her voice now. Whatever reticence she'd felt in the car must've just been the side ef-

fect of the sorrow she'd been feeling, rather than any anti-smashing sensibilities. "Do you think they'll ever get suspicious?"

I shook my head. "How could they?"

Everyone in my neighborhood hated it. Before it'd been taken over it'd been this little family owned cafe that made coffee strong enough to soothe a hangover and spicy vegan burritos that made me right again. It didn't hurt, either, that one of the owner's daughters was a thick older woman called Fernanda who'd tease me a little, skillfully only bordering on flirtation. I'd take one night stands there the morning after (if they could hold a conversation) and be the same kind of friendly, only teasing me whenever I'd come in alone, *How are there any women left for you, girl? You haven't gone though all of the city yet?*

Now it was a fucking Starbucks, dude. The charming inside interior all ripped out, the same old shitty fucking music playing for the yuppies who were gonna rip this city from us.

And if you're wondering if I did it because there was a little part of me who imagined meeting Ramona after she'd somehow found out about my activities, then yeah, I admit it. I thought about her complementing me for revenging her, scenarios that'd end up with me running my hands through her long hair while I kissed her.

But mostly I just *really* hate Starbucks.

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We sit in my room on the floor afterwards and debrief and after I'm ready for bed but Katie starts crying again.

"I'm still mad."

"At Tim?"

"No. Yeah. But at myself. I keep doing this to myself."

"You see the best in people," I say. "You think people can change. That's not *wrong*, necessarily. It's just misguided if you only spend it on men. You're idealistic, you have hope. Someone's got to."

Katie sniffs. "That might be the nicest thing anyone's ever said to me."

I'm half-pleased, half-sad. I want to say *Girl, you're killing yourself over a bunch of men who can't see you?* But I'll save it for another time, I'll tell her when she's less raw. I just shrug and smile at her instead. "It's true."

I lean over and squeeze her hand. I feel like I've finally said the right thing, and like, maybe that's okay. I think maybe love can be showing up even if you maybe say the wrong thing, and wishing and wanting the best for each other, to trust each other with our deepest secrets and our crimes.

Katie wipes her eyes and then shakes herself out. "We can't just smash windows whenever I get dumped, that's so *sad*, man. We gotta make it a regular thing."

"Hell yeah," I say.



# Away From Sanity Island

C. Bain

On his cruise ship. On his private jet. Lolita express.  
We go in graves with tinted windshields mirroring the timelapsed sky  
Outside crows flying but no it's just their hollow bones whipping the air its all going back  
Backwards i see the ends of his amputated hands every day i go out so every day  
With the crumpling paper cup with the narrowing limb towards the terminus had a long time to atrophy  
Where it happens exactly  
is punishment a nation  
Dark outside just once to understand it as a rhythm you'd have to live forever and who wants that  
i can't even take a weekend i can't even take these teenagers melting into eachother throat first on the train it  
looks so sexy i feel my skin curdle a blanket of lint and callous what happens from sleeping outside to  
stand for someone else's nub of sinuous interrupted nerve  
fine no i don't admit it, or guilt or decomposition

We expel the beauty through our pores a kind of projectile vomiting  
servicing everyone but us  
pus squirting on the mirror—good one  
Inferno opening under your house slippers the hot belch of air pushing you through the roof

There are no more seasons, not for anyone, no more cities, no more men to push back my hair in order to really  
look at me  
The sucking hole of lava that yawns underneath, subbasement, train system, thousands of miles of earth that's  
cold and normal but it's down there  
Sucking the feathers off these screaming crows, spitting them back naked into the air  
A season that's just fog and lasts forever

# momentum

Yv

momentum in clarity  
gas made out of tears  
raw punch full of blood  
whispers  
in fear  
minutes of terror  
lives in despair  
fortress of torture  
crossings in hell

shoes taken at borders  
flesh turned into stone  
dead bodies still floating  
the news are all old  
same evil is feasting  
on life and on death  
on land that is stolen  
it stares

# Every Day

AuriBlackCat Collective

Every day I wake up  
My eyes on the phone  
Hoping that you are still here

Every day we lose siblings and friends  
One day I know it will be one of you  
By the hand of others or even your own

Every day we live and love  
Like it was our last  
We rebell against our slow deaths

Every day against patriarchy  
Against colonialism and death  
Not forgetting the constant attacks

Every day the noose around our necks gets tighter  
The power we have not nearly enough  
Our existence a crime

Every day we lose people we know  
People we loved or hated  
But who were a part of us

Every day the same thoughts  
The same doubts and fears  
And the knowledge that someday it will be one of you

Every day I go to bed  
Expecting to never talk with you again  
That their hate will catch up with you

Every day I love you  
And miss those they took away  
Never forgetting, never forgiving

# Markt der Träume

Juan Tramontina

In der 24h-Oase schien die Zeit stillzustehen. Es war, als ob die Nacht zu Ende ging, der Tag sich jedoch nicht traute loszulegen. Dann — ganz gemächlich und ohne ein besonderes Maß an Aufmerksamkeit erregen zu wollen — läutete ein leises Klingeln an den zwei Kassen die neue Stunde ein. Es war vier Uhr morgens.

Nur wenige Personen hielten sich zu diesem Zeitpunkt im Laden auf: eine Angestellte und ein paar Kund\*innen. Nicht, dass jemand auf diese Details geachtet hätte. Schon gar nicht Margret Sennewald, die an einer der Kassen saß. Seit 22 Jahren saß sie an dieser Kasse. Das heißt, die Kasse hatte einige Male gewechselt, nur die Person, die sie bediente, nicht. Was waren ihre eigentlichen Pläne gewesen? Irgendwas mit Holz — mehr fiel ihr nicht ein. Unwillkürlich musste sie wieder zur Seite schauen.

Bereits seit Schichtbeginn hatte Margret Schwierigkeiten gehabt, den Blick von der Eistruhe neben ihrem Band zu nehmen. Der Grund waren nicht die verschiedenfarbigen Eissorten. Diese konnten sie nicht locken. Dennoch fühlte sie diesen Drang hinzuschauen. Was genau sie dort zu entdecken erhoffte? Sie wusste es selbst nicht. Aber der Gedanke ließ sie nicht los, dass dort etwas verborgen lag.

Ein Kontrollblick verriet ihr, dass in den schmalen Gängen, die zu den beiden Kassen führten, niemand zu sehen war. Margret stand auf, faltete ihre Brille und verstaute sie in ihrem Arbeitskittel. Dann machte sie einen Schritt auf die Truhe zu und schob den isolierten Schiebedeckel zur Seite.

Ohne darüber nachzudenken, nahm sie eine Eispackung heraus und legte sie zur Seite, dann eine weitere und noch eine. Immer tiefer stieß sie in die Eingeweide des summenden Monsters vor. Auf dem Kassenband stapelten sich mit der Zeit verschiedenste, langsam auftauende Produkte. Manche waren so alt, dass sie die Marken kaum wieder erkannte. Nach einer Weile überzog eine hauchdünne kristalline Schicht ihre Finger. *Moment mal!* Margret zog die Hände ruckartig zurück. Vor ihrem geistigen Auge verwandelten sich die Packungen in der Kühltruhe und nahmen andere Formen an: ein Herz, ein Kamm, ein Buch. Sie fragte sich, was sie da vor sich hatte: Waren das etwa keine einfachen Produkte im gekühlten Raum?

Dann blinzelte sie und fand sich an ihrer Kasse sitzend, das Kassenband leer, die Eistruhe wie üblich leise summend.

Selena stand vor den automatischen Türen des Supermarkts. Auf Zehenspitzen balancierte sie am Ende der rot-blauen Fliese, von der sie wusste, dass der Sensor sie gerade so nicht erkannte. Schließlich beugte sie sich leicht vor. Die Türen öffneten sich mit einem sanften Zischen, und Selena trat ein.

Drinne war es noch stiller als draußen, fast zu still, abgesehen vom leisen Summen der Kühlschränke. Stille war auch, was sie suchte. *Selena, ohne Anstrengung schaffst du keinen Numerus Clausus! Selena, warum bist du am Zocken, hast du keine Hausaufgaben?!* Sie schüttelte kurz den Kopf aus und blinzelte in Richtung Kassenbereich. Margret saß dort, die Augen geschlossen, den Kopf im Nacken, die Arme schlaff an den Seiten herabhängend. Also alles wie immer.

Vor fünf Tagen, oder Nächten, war Selena erstmals in den Supermarkt gekommen. Sie hatte sich gleich angeregt mit der einzigen Kassiererin unterhalten. Auf unerfindlichen Gründen hatte sich das Verhältnis nach wenigen Tagen abgekühlt. Jetzt sah sie Margret nur noch so.

Selena lief weiter und erreichte bald ihre kleine Nische zwischen der Gemüseabteilung und den leeren Brotregalen. Das war sogar für die Bäckerei zu früh. Um diese Uhrzeit verirrte sich niemand hierher. Sie zog ihre Wollhandschuhe aus und setzte sich drauf. Dann legte sie ihren Kopf auf die angewinkelten Knie, so dass ihre dunkle lockige Haarmähne ihre Schienbeine bedeckte.

*Selena, schlafen kannst du in der Mittagspause! Selena, bist du überhaupt da?!* Selena rannte durch die Flure, vorbei an den Konserven, und riss mit ihrem Ellenbogen Backpulvertütchen aus dem Regal. Ohne abzubremsen schaute sie sich um, konnte den Mann hinter sich aber nicht sehen. Sie drehte den Kopf zurück und sah den Aufsteller auf sich zukommen. Selena rammte ihn um, stolperte über die aufeinander gestapelten Schachteln mit kleinen Matchbox-Autos und landete inmitten...

Sie hob den Kopf und sah eine grau gekleidete Gestalt in verdächtig gebückter Haltung an sich vorbeischieben. Der Typ hatte sie in ihrer Nische offenbar übersehen. Selena seufzte. Warum verfiel sie immer wieder in solche Szenarien? In jedem Fall hatte sie große Lust, diese Markenaltäre einfach umzustoßen.

Was machte sie hier? *Vielleicht bin ich hier, weil ich sonst nirgendwo sein kann*, beantwortete sie ihre eigene Frage. Immerhin konnte sie hier — und zu dieser Uhrzeit — in ihrer Nische sitzen und niemand fragte sie, wohin sie ging.

Keine Kontrolle. Keine Fragen. Wollte sie sich mit Konsum ablenken? Wohl eher nicht, ihr war der falsche Charakter konsumbedingter Träume durchaus bewusst.

Nach einer Weile stand Selena auf und streunte durch die schmalen Gänge mit den hohen Regalen. War das wirklich alles? War das überhaupt der Grund, warum sie hier war? Seit fast einer Woche schlich sie sich nachts aus dem Haus und steuerte diesen Markt an. Sie spürte, wie es Tag um Tag schwieriger wurde, sich ihren Eltern zu offenbaren. Was wussten die schon von ihrem Leben, ihren Sorgen?

Schon gar keine Ahnung hatten sie davon, dass Selena seit sieben Tagen nicht mehr an der Schule gewesen war. Seit sieben Tagen nahm sie den Bus, der sie zur Schule bringen sollte, stieg jedoch an der nächsten Haltestelle aus und hielt sich auch sonst vom Schulgebäude fern.

Kurz blieb sie vor dem Müsliregal stehen. Das Schulleben war keineswegs so rosig, wie es am heimischen Frühstückstisch gemalt wurde. Vor acht Tagen hatte sie während des Unterrichts auf der Toilette gegessen und war unfreiwillig Zeugin geworden, wie ein Mädchen aus der Unterstufe heulend hereinkam.

Das Mädchen war gerade im Matheunterricht gewesen, natürlich bei Herrn Jensen. Der war auch ihr Mathelehrer und darüber hinaus Rektor der Schule. Das Mädchen hatte nicht nur ihre Hausaufgaben nicht gemacht, nicht machen können, sondern hatte auch — und das schien das schlimmste Vergehen zu sein — eingestehen müssen, dass ihre Eltern nicht das nötige Geld für den anstehenden Schulausflug aufbringen konnten. Und nicht nur hatte Herr Jensen sie dabei nach allen Regeln der Kunst vor der versammelten Klasse vorgeführt, sondern ihr am Ende auch gesagt, dass arme Leute ohnehin nicht auf Schulausflüge gehen sollten. Das Mädchen heulte ununterbrochen. Selena kochte innerlich vor Wut. Sie hatte diese Art der Schulkommunikation früher auch am eigenen Leib erfahren.

Am nächsten Morgen entschied sie sich zu handeln, Dinge nicht einfach nur zu erleiden. Oder, wie in diesem Fall, anderen Menschen nicht beim Leiden zuzuschauen. Sie besorgte sich in einem Supermarkt Grillanzünder, lief möglichst unauffällig am SUV von Herrn Jensen vorbei und tat ihr Werk. Das war das letzte Mal, dass Selena an der Schule gewesen war. Sie wusste nicht, was mit dem Auto passiert war, aber sie hatte Angst, dort vorbeizuschauen.

An der Kasse saß Margret noch immer in der gleichen Haltung da. Selena näherte sich dem Band und musste plötzlich überlegen, was sie tun sollte. Sie war sich sicher, dass sie nie mit leeren Händen aus dem Markt ging. Unklar ihr jedoch, was sie mitnahm. Waren es nicht Diebstähle gewesen? Sie ging vor und zurück. Sie spürte, wie ihre Energie sie verließ, statt frischem Schwung fühlte sie träge Müdigkeit.

Mit hängenden Schultern ging sie an der Kasse vorbei und verließ den Markt.

Das kalte Neonlicht der ein Meter hohen Lettern über dem Eingangsbereich spiegelte sich in den Pfützen vor dem Supermarkt. Der feuchte Asphalt glänzte inmitten der Dunkelheit rot und blau. Julius Brenner blickte auf den Eingang, dann auf seine Armbanduhr: 4:13 Uhr. Es war an der Zeit hineinzugehen.

Die Automatiktüren machten allerdings keine Anstalten aufzugehen. Als Julius verärgert aufstampfte, taten sie ihm dann doch den Gefallen. Er fuhr sich mit der Hand durch die strähnigen Haare, zog seinen Trenchcoat enger zusammen und trat ein. Sich stets nach links und rechts umschauend, schritt er durch die Gemüseabteilung und weiter in Richtung der Kühlabteilung.

Er hatte ein Ziel, und er hatte vor, es zu erreichen. Es durfte nichts schiefgehen. Verstohlen blickte sich Julius um. Niemand war zu sehen. Das fand er verdächtig und schaute sich lieber noch einmal um. Ein wenig blendete ihn das besonders kalte weiße Licht. Warum mussten die die Gänge mit derart aufdringlichen Lampen ausgeleuchtet werden? Es war, als ob sie ihm sagen wollten: Wir wissen, was du vorhast und wir haben dich im Blick. Es waren vermutlich dieselben Leuchten, die in seinem Büro angebracht waren. Und dort mit einem ähnlichen Ziel, vermutete er jedenfalls. Nein, Korrektur, wusste er.

Doch ihn konnten sie nicht austricksen. Nein, weder hier noch in der Redaktion. Nahm seine Chefin wirklich an, dass er das Ganze nicht durchschaute? Dass er nicht wusste, was los war? Nachrichten wurden massiv unterdrückt. Erst vor ein paar Tagen hatte er im Polizeiticker von einem angekorkelten Reifen an einem Auto gelesen. Und wenn das mal keine heiße Spur zu einem versuchten terroristischen Anschlag gewesen war... Aber seine Chefin hatte davon nichts wissen wollen. Immer wenn es um organisierte Banden ging, kuschelte die Chefredakteurin. Steckten sie etwa bei all diesen Fällen unter einer Decke?

Julius lief ein kalter Schauer über den Rücken. War etwas mit den Regalen los? Der Gang wirkte enger als noch zuvor. Er schaute zunächst die untersten Fächer an, doch als sein Blick nach oben wanderte, begann das Blut in seinen Adern zu pumpen. Die hochauftürmenden Regale rechts und links von ihm krümmten sich in Zeitlupe zu ihm herunter. Julius wollte schreien, doch mehr als ein heißeres Krächzen brachte er nicht heraus. Dann konnten sich die Schachteln und Päckchen nicht länger in ihren Fächern halten und begannen, ihn unter sich zu begraben. Julius hielt sich die Arme schützend über den Kopf. Selbst die grellweißen Leuchten waren nur noch wenige Zentimeter über ihn. Dann fingen sie an zu flackern. Kurz war alles im Stakkato mal ganz hell, dann ganz dunkel. Und dann leuchteten die Lampen wieder ganz normal.

Julius richtete sich langsam auf. War alles wieder beim Alten? Oder betrog ihn sogar sein eigenes Gefühl? Er ging weiter. Er durfte sich nicht aufhalten lassen. Zuversicht durchströmte ihn, als er den Kassensbereich erblickte. Dort lauerte sie, die unterdrückte Geschichte, mit der er groß rauskommen würde.

Den leeren Einkaufskorb neben sich abgestellt, begutachtete Julius das Süßwarenregal und tat so, als würde er das Kleingedruckte auf verschiedenen Gummibärchenpackungen studieren. Von diesem Standort aus hatte er einen guten Blick auf die Kassiererin — M. SENNEWALD, wie er bei früheren Besuchen des Marktes anhand ihres Namensschildes erkannt hatte — sowie auf die Personen, die dort vorbeikommen würden.

Aktuell war niemand da, aber das würde sich sicher noch ändern. Besonders diese eine Kassiererin hatte Julius im Verdacht. Seine sich anbahnende, Pulitzer-verdächtige Story drehte sich immerhin um ein unglaublich dreistes Komplott zwischen Kassiererinnen und Dieben zulasten des eigenen Unternehmens. Er brauchte nur noch einen handfesten Beweis.

Dann hieß es warten. Beinahe hätte er angefangen, an einem Fingernagel zu kauen, besann sich jedoch eines Besseren und schaute ins Regal neben sich. Eine Tüte mit extra sauren Gummi-Dinos stand auffällig heraus. Hatte etwa jemand dieses Tütchen extra für ihn da platziert? Er beschloss, die Packung nicht anzufassen. Wer wusste schon, wie weit die zu gehen bereit waren?!

Dass schließlich eine Jugendliche vor der Kasse auftauchte, riss ihn aus seinen Gedanken. Julius unterdrückte den enormen Drang, kurz die Fäuste in die Höhe zu recken. Er konnte nicht glauben, wie sehr sie in das von ihm entwickelte Profil passte: jung, verschlagen, dunkel gekleidet, unter 1,80 Meter.

Und dann ging's auch schon los. Die Jugendliche mit den schwarzen Locken näherte sich dem Aufsteller mit den Schockriegeln, und was tat M. SENNEWALD? Die hatte ihren Stuhl um 180 Grad gedreht und sortierte das alkoholische Sortiment hinter der Kasse. Die Jugendliche ging auf die andere Seite, doch auch dieses Mal drehte sich die Kassiererin weg.

Was war das denn für eine Tanzperformance?! Die beiden Frauen bewegten sich immer mehr in einem ganz eigenen Rhythmus, praktisch synchron, mit schwungvollem Einsatz der Arme und Beine. Hörte er im Hintergrund etwa einen Walzer?!

Julius blinzelte. Er konnte nicht genau erkennen, was die Jugendliche da tat, zweifelte aber keine Sekunde lang daran, dass sie die Gunst der Stunde nutzte und sich die Taschen vollstopfte.

Er durfte keine Zeit verlieren. Julius griff zu seinem Handy und führte im Flüsterton das Gespräch, das er schon tagelang einstudiert hatte. Alles lief genauso, wie er es vorausge-

sehen hatte. In wenigen Minuten würde eine Polizeistreife vor dem Markt auftauchen.

Die Diebin machte bereits Anstalten, den Laden zu verlassen. Also musste er hinterher. Auf Höhe der Kassen spürte er, wie ihm ein Schauer über den Rücken lief. Seine Knie gaben nach. Julius musste sich setzen. Zwar hatte er sein Handy in der Hand, er wusste aber nicht mehr genau, wieso. Hinter einem Schleier hörte er die Kassiererin ihn etwas fragen. Erst nach einer Weile kam er wieder auf die Beine und lief zügig an der Kasse vorbei.

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Kathrin Richter rappelte sich auf, die junge Frau, die vor ihr stand, half ihr zaghaft dabei. Vor dem Eingang des Marktes war der Boden doch sehr glatt. Überraschenderweise hatte sie das schon ganz vergessen — trotz 20-jähriger Betriebszugehörigkeit. Sie stellte sich vollständig auf und spürte beim Auftreten ein Zwicken im linken Knöchel. Als sie wegzurutschen drohte, griff die Jugendliche beherzter zu.

„Kannst du mich bitte hineinbegleiten?“, fragte Kathrin. Die Jugendliche nickte, da fuhr ein Polizeiwagen vor. Eine Polizistin und ihr Kollege sprangen heraus. Zielgerichtet liefen sie auf die beiden Frauen zu. Die Jugendliche zog ihre Hand zurück und wich langsam in Richtung Wand zurück.

In dem Moment war ein eindringliches Piepen aus dem Geschäft zu hören und ein Mann im Trenchcoat stürmte durch die Automatiktür. „Das ist die Diebstahlsicherung“, rief Kathrin den Polizist\*innen zu und stellte sich vor die junge Frau. Die Uniformierten wandten sich ab und nahmen den wild gestikulierenden Mann zur Seite.

Kathrin spürte, wie der Schmerz erneut in den Knöchel schoss, und streckte den Arm aus. Die Jugendliche war zur Stelle und stellte sich kurz vor. Humpelnd betraten sie den Markt. „Lass uns zu den Kassen gehen“, sagte Kathrin.

Dort angekommen sahen sie, dass sich Margret an der Ausgangstür bereits im Gespräch mit dem Polizisten befand.

„Sie müssen wissen...“, sagte Margret und ihr Blick fiel auf Kathrin, „dass ich hier ganz allein im Markt bin, ich kann nicht einfach rausrennen.“ Margret machte Kathrin ein Zeichen und begleitete den Polizisten nach draußen.

„Ach, Sie haben mit Margret hier gearbeitet?“, fragte Selena.

„Du kannst mich gerne duzen“, antwortete Kathrin. „Und ja, vor zehn Tagen wurde ich entlassen. Einsparungen, hieß es.“

„Dann kaufst du trotzdem noch hier ein?“, fragte Selena ungläubig.

„Ja, ist ein beschissenes Gefühl. Heute muss ich allerdings was Dringendes mit Margret bereden.“

Sie unterhielten sich noch ein paar Minuten über die miesen Arbeitsbedingungen und wie sehr Kathrin die Kündigung trotzdem mitgenommen hatte. Dann hörten sie, wie sich der

Polizeiwagen entfernte. Kurz darauf kehrte Margret an ihre Kasse zurück. „Bei dem Typen haben sie in den Taschen lauter Zeug ohne Einkaufszettel entdeckt“, erklärte Margret den beiden. „Der wollte den Bullen die Story auftischen, dass die Sachen von allein in seine Taschen gefallen seien.“

„Du meine Güte!“

„Apropos Diebstähle“, sagte Margret an Selena gerichtet. „Du hast doch auch jedes Mal was Kleines mitgehen lassen?“

Selena zögerte, doch Margret flüsterte verschwörerisch: „Ich verrät nichts.“

„Äh, denke schon.“

„Aber heute nicht...“

„Nein“, antwortete Selena zögerlich. „Komisch, warum waren die Cops dann hier? Du hast die nicht gerufen?“

„Ach, was!“, entgegnete Margret. „Dem Markt tut das nicht wirklich weh.“ Kathrin räusperte sich. „Und du schienst einen wichtigen Grund zu haben“, ergänzte Margret.

Selena blickte Margret erstaunt an. „Hatte ich das? Ich kann mich nicht erinnern.“

„Das ist mein Stichwort, ich wollte dir nämlich was erzählen“, meinte Kathrin plötzlich. „Ich habe vor ein paar Tagen alte Tagebücher von mir gefunden.“

„Du schreibst Tagebuch?“ Margret runzelte die Stirn.

„Seit 20 Jahren nicht mehr. Ich habe jedenfalls drin rumgeblättert und gemerkt, dass ich völlig vergessen hatte, dass ich einst von einer Friseurlehre träumte.“

„Das höre ich zum ersten Mal“, sagte Margret. Kathrin nickte nur.

Die beiden Kassiererinnen versuchten, sich gegenseitig auf die Sprünge zu helfen, was sie ursprünglich alles machen wollten, doch das war leichter gesagt als getan. Währenddessen schaute Selena unschlüssig von einer Frau zur anderen. Schließlich wandte sich Kathrin an Selena: „Was ist denn dein Traum?“

Selena schaute sie groß an. „Mein Traum? Kein Ahnung...“

Mit einem Augenzwinkern sagte Margret: „Deine Karriere als Diebin scheint auf eine gewisse rebellische Ader hinzuweisen, aber ist das alles?“

„Ich weiß es nicht.“

„Denk nach“, sagte Kathrin. „Irgendwas treibt dich doch hierher.“

„Ich möchte mich gern verstecken...“ Selena schaute zu Boden.

„Nein“, sagte Margret bestimmt.

„Ich... ich möchte gerne für Dinge einstehen — ohne Furcht oder Wankelmüt“, antwortete Selena schließlich und spürte, dass ein Knoten geplatzt war.

„Das scheint es eher zu sein“, meinte Kathrin, „es gibt weiß Gott genügend Bullshit, mit dem es aufzuräumen gilt. Nicht zuletzt in diesem Markt.“

„Wo du das sagst...“, sagte Margret. „Ich habe das Gefühl, hier festzusitzen, dass der Markt uns jede Perspektive raubt, uns unsere Träume entreißt.“

„Das ist doch nicht nur ein Gefühl“, sagte Kathrin. „Seit ich entlassen wurde, erkenne ich viel deutlicher, was ich eigentlich machen will, die ganze Zeit machen wollte.“

„... irgendwas mit Holz, was würde ich nicht machen, um auch wieder zu sehen, ein Gefühl dafür zu haben, was ich machen wollte!“, seufzte Margret.

„Du musst raus hier, wir müssen alle raus hier. Aber nicht einfach so.“ Kathrin schaute sich um.

„Ich habe ein komisches Gefühl mit dem vielen gekühlten Kram hier“, warf Margret ein — in Gedanken an die Eistruhe.

„Dann lass uns doch einfach den verdammten Strom abdrehen“, sagte Kathrin. „Das ist nicht so schwer. Verdient haben die’s allemal. Vermutlich sollte ich das machen, immerhin arbeite ich nicht mehr hier.“

„Das ist sehr großzügig von dir, aber selbstverständlich ist das meine Aufgabe“, meinte Margret.

„Ihr braucht das nicht weiter debattieren“, warf Selena ein. „Ich mache es. Ich bin noch nicht volljährig — und ich habe Lust drauf.“

Zunächst lehnten die beiden Kassiererinnen diese Idee rundweg ab. Dass eine Jugendliche ihren Kopf für sie riskierte, kam für sie nicht in Frage. Sie stimmten letztlich nur zu, weil Selena darauf bestand, ihren Traum Stück für Stück umzusetzen. Und da sie versprach, an die Schule zurückzukehren, sollte alles glatt laufen.

Die beiden zeigten der jungen Frau den Elektroverteiler und gaben ihr das nötige Werkzeug. Den Rest erledigte Selena allein und machte sich dann aus dem Staub.

Das Licht war aus, die Kühltruhen verstummt. Ein Weilchen saßen die Frauen im Dunkeln. Als Kathrin einen Anflug von Heiterkeit bei sich bemerkte, machte sie die Taschenlampe an ihrem Smartphone an und erkannte, dass auch Margret grinste.

„Umschulung? Weiterbildung?“, fragte diese.

„Warum nicht?“, antwortete Kathrin. „Vielleicht gibt’s ja was, das wir tatsächlich gemeinsam machen können...“

Die beiden Frauen begaben sich zusammen zum Notausgang. Zurück blickten sie nicht mehr.

Im Kassenbereich knisterte die Luft. Die Digitalanzeige an der Kasse ging flackernd an. Es war gerade 5 Uhr geworden.

# breathe

Yv

a moment of  
intimidation  
sparked the field  
of silence  
in my head  
the siren  
broke the  
instinct  
to hide  
i've hidden enough  
before mirrors  
bleeding in vanity  
before time  
given to choices  
never made  
before stairs  
melting into  
landslides  
i heard you  
again and again  
it's a voice  
refracting in pieces  
abstract force  
that turns into concrete

and pull me  
in places i've never been  
mental or not  
the blocked entrances to the city  
the trashcans on fire  
entire squares  
squatted by people  
living in camps  
fascists throwing  
stones of fear  
hit me in the chest  
and i scream  
i scream  
for the efforts lost in despair  
for the tears covered in blood  
i know you scream too  
but the night  
was full of little  
sparkly eyes  
crossing the sea  
to come  
to a place  
where they could breath  
until the dawn



# Sie fragen mich, wie es mir geht.

Lena

**E**r fragt mich, ob ich auch eine Gute-Nacht-Umarmung möchte. Erzählt mir von den zwei Beziehungen, die er führt, zeitgleich, poly, und dass er schon so viel mit so vielen hatte, aber noch nicht so, prahlt, fragt mich, ob ich in einer Beziehung bin.

Nach meiner ersten Nacht im Himmelreich, also die nach meiner ersten Nacht im Wolfshof, gehe ich zu Rosi. Dort bist du angedockt, sagt meine offizielle Host, zwei aus dem Wolfshof sind auch da, dann gehen sie, und noch jemand, ich beobachte ein Streitgespräch zwischen ihr und ihm, er will zum Lagerfeuer im Wolfshof, aber es kollidiert zeitlich mit dem geplanten WG-Gespräch hier, sie geht rauf, er nach draußen. Ich sitze weiter im Wohnzimmer, weiß nicht, ob ich gehen oder bleiben soll, gehe rauf, melde mich ab, gehe, zurück ins Himmelreich, kuschle mit dem Hund.

Ich erzähle meinem anderen Host davon, also bei der Person, wo ich wohne, also einquartiert bin, also im Himmelreich, mein Host lädt meine Host ein, also die andere, sie reden von Beziehungen und Gewaltfantasien beim Sex, fragen, ob es mir gut geht, mit dem Thema. Ich frage, ob ich gehen soll, in mein Zimmer, also ins Zimmer ihres Lovers, also meiner Kontaktperson zum Netzwerk, also den mit den Gewaltfantasien, nein, meine Präsenz sei angenehm, also sitze ich da, schweigend, würde lieber mit dem Hund kuscheln.

Am nächsten Tag will mir meine Host eine Tour geben, wie versprochen, wie terminiert, penibel, doch das Kind verbrennt sich am Ofen, Gunnar führt dich herum, sagt sie. Es regnet, die Erde ist matschig, ich frage, ob man in den Dachsbau schauen darf, Gunnar meint, sie mögen es nicht so gern, ständig Besuchis da, Gunnar sagt, manchmal sieht Gunnar jemanden erst zum ersten Mal, obwohl die Person bereits hier wohne, hier im Netzwerk, also irgendwo in einem der angedockten Gebäude hier, also irgendwo, vielleicht auch woanders, es gibt nämlich jetzt auch eine Familie eine Ortschaft weiter. Beim Heringhaus angekommen, frage ich gar nicht erst, also stehen wir bloß davor, Gunnar und ich, der Regen über uns, analysieren die Unförmigkeit des Grundrisses.

Auf dem Plenum in der Alten Schule lerne ich schließlich den Hering aus dem Haus kennen, also den Vater des Kindes. Zwischen drei und acht Herzen per Nachrichtenmessenger wären immer gekommen, wenn er um Hilfe im Haushalt gebeten hätte, wenn es ihm zu viel wurde mit dem Kind, und

dem anderen Kind, denn es gibt noch eines, aber keine Sau wäre vorbeigekommen, um zu helfen. Am Ende des Plenums kommt eine fremde Person plötzlich auf mich zu, sagt wir kennen uns, hätten geschrieben, meine Kontaktperson, also die zweite, nach der anderen, fragt, wie es mir geht, hier, sagt, wir können gerne reden, später, doch wir reden nie.

Danach gibt es Pizza vom Italiener um die Ecke, das Geld wird in einem Topf gesammelt, nicht einmal die Hälfte von dem, was ausgegeben worden sei, wir dürfen oben in der WG über dem Versammlungsraum essen. Hi, ich wohne hier, sagt jemand ironisch, ihr hättet mal Bescheid geben können, dass ihr schon da seid, sagt dieser Jemand. Ich setze mich irgendwo dazu, die eine kenne ich, die andere nicht, sie fragt, wie das Treffen war, ich erzähle gut, sie beginnt zu heulen, ich weiß nicht, wie ich reagieren soll, kenne nicht mal den Namen, frage, ob die beiden lieber unter sich sein wollen, sage das wäre okay, sie sagt ja, vielleicht, also gehe ich. Verlasse die Feier, gehe, zurück ins Himmelreich und kuschle mit dem Hund.

# Respectfully, no thanks

Elfriede

I am beyond the point in my life  
Where I am trying to save  
An emotionally unavailable  
Avoidant man

The story of the misunderstood, sensitive softboi  
The story of the emotionally unavailable man  
With fear of intimacy  
And commitment issues  
Who will eventually reveal their lovable golden core  
As old as time  
So old  
My ears bleed from it  
It's a fairy tale  
Cause all they ever reveal themselves to be  
Is self-absorbed assholes

You say women never gave you a chance  
To open up and be yourself  
While all that time  
you apparently expected them  
to commit to your terms

But  
two people  
means two terms,  
and a women's terms are no less of importance than yours.

Maybe they waited patiently  
Went in  
Round and round again  
For negotiation  
And drove against walls

And eventually decided,  
they had seen enough  
You had shown them your terms  
And respectfully,  
They declined

If you don't want to get to know me  
If you are not interested in meaningful conversation  
If you are looking for a good time,  
laughter, kisses and good fucks  
Then please  
Let's just call it like that  
And let's have some uncomplicated sex  
Without all the other awkwardness

But also  
without you reaping all the care work  
All so eagerly  
Without reciprocating

Yet, if in general  
I am just too much  
A burden  
Demanding  
Intense

You're repulsed by me  
Being an actual subject  
A person  
With a character  
With needs, emotions and boundaries

Then  
Better buy yourself  
A pocket pussy  
And talk to chatGPT  
I heard its programmed for empathy and not giving strong counters

I have seen and tried and waited and  
I, respectfully, decline.

# Theological Problems

C. Bain

Sin and sin and sin and sin god fat genial pale  
white bearded stroking his dad belly  
stroking his torpid crotch god doesn't even want  
to fuck us anymore when for a long time we had a good thing going  
you know swans nymphs youths golden rain  
in a word illusions, we could be deceived  
into someone taking their pleasure but not anymore  
soft corona of light around god who has given up  
and we think we did it, with our special nighttime  
underwear, the digital lock on the bunker  
with a combo only we know, won't share with god,  
we can't imagine living in a world without an enemy  
god's face again glossy and radiant on the newscast  
when he hasn't thought of us for several seconds  
of god-time, meaning i don't know, millenia or gigaseconds  
since he's infinite it's hard to track it back into our timescale,  
he saw the incubators full of rotting babies and he saw  
the claim that the image of said incubators were AI, had no referent  
and he said that's it, they're gonna do their thing, i don't want  
to fuck them anymore at all, elon sent his sperm  
to another influencer, god said, i'll let them play this out.

# Erster Mai

Lea Jane Aphrodite

Der Wind weht über alle Grenzen  
macht vor keinen Ländern halt,  
Reißt die Fahnen von den Masten  
und trägt sie hoch über die Welt.

Flaggen flattern an den Ort  
wo diese nichts bedeuten,  
wo es keine Länder gibt  
und die Freiheitsglocken läuten.

# Le Fortezze dell'Alba Review

Andrea

*This review was originally published in Italin on Novilunio.*

Most books follow a rather standard editorial path: they're written by an author, who then contacts an editor in order to improve the text and a publisher to print it and market it. It's a long process, which usually takes from a handful of months to some years in rare cases.

This is not what happened to *Le Fortezze dell'Alba* by Daniela Piegai, whose first draft was born in the 80s, a particularly harrowing time in Italy. Then it sat in her drawer for more than forty years, "since publishers, unfortunately, are also economic entities, and they have to deal with an audience that can be encouraged to read different things, but this comes at a cost that almost no one is willing or able to bear," as the author herself has told us. In other words, the times weren't right back then. We don't know if the draft was turned down or if Piegai was persuaded not to publish it because "no one would read it," but in either case the reason is clear: the political and anarchist stance the book takes is hard to ignore (and, consequently, to sell to a liberal audience).

These logics are still at play today, and it is not by chance that this publication happened under a digital publisher whose business operations revolve around churning as many books as possible at cheap price to flood the Italian-language market. For these same reasons, an English translation will likely not be available for a long time, given the unfavourable costs and returns of taking this title to an international audience.

We will try to keep spoilers at a minimum, but at the same time we want to give you the chance to experience this story beyond the language barrier that currently isolates it. Let's dive in.

## A Political Adventure

The book opens with the romantic dreams of a ragtag gang; five teenagers (Gengis, Evelina, Mino, Gigio and Napoleone), who desperately try to run away from a dystopian present marred by an oppressive capitalism and the climate crisis (remember: this was written forty years ago!). They find hope in the only place left: an improvised, unorganized and at times naive revolution that ends up ripping them apart

and taking everything from them. Their failure coincides with the sudden arrival of the Mix on Earth, alien aberrations that embody the dreams of those who interact with them.

[SPOILER] If Gigio, Napoleone and Evelina's fates become hazy and fractured, years later Gengis meets Mino again on the planet Karel, in which they both enlisted as frontier troops in the desperate attempt to give themselves a purpose beyond their hopeful and hopeless revolution. As troops, their task is simple: hunt the Mix down and prevent them from advancing further. Together, Gengis and Mino stumble into one of their outposts and they disregard orders, venturing into exploration on their own. They meet one of the Mix, who charms Gengis and drives him insane. Eventually the army chooses to raze Karel to the ground, and Gengis is forced to return to the Milano he ran away from and face his past.

*Le Fortezze dell'Alba* stands out from the current science fiction landscape because it's not ashamed of its political character: from page one it's blunt and direct with its themes, unafraid to point fingers against the real malaises of our current economic and social order. While most of the current scifi has abandoned its original task of critiquing modern society, Piegai never shies away from this: danger is here, in our cities, in the heart of Milano and nowhere else. The "ever-raining planet" Karel with its military hierarchy and unspeakable secrets isn't but an allegory of our world: indeed, the titular "fortresses of dawn" are not the military outposts or the Mix hideouts, but Milano's shimmering skyscrapers.

This political approach is declined on a uniquely individual dimension: there are no factions or ideologies, nations or fronts; it's Gengis against his own inner demons. The young revolutionary forever chases a lost past, the dreams of an irredeemable youth, willing to send himself to the ends of the known galaxy to find a simulacrum of the fight that had defined his whole self in his teenage years.

[SPOILER] When Karel is destroyed, Gengis' return to Milano is harrowing: the places of his teenage years and an unlikely visit to Evelina leave him empty and unsatisfied despite reaching the goals he thought he had. He then leaves for another military mission, once again chasing the same eternal fight that has at the same time kept him bound to and ripped him from reality. "His fight is never devoid of purpose," Piegai commented. "He tries his hardest to stick

with his principles, despite the mistakes and pitfalls that the circumstances always lead him into.”

## Chasing Utopias

If the political message reaches the reader loud and clear, the book's purely idealistic subtext is subtler (although not less impactful). Between the lines of *Le Fortezze dell'Alba* there's a constant tension towards the liberation of humanity as a whole, and building a better world in which our species can finally leave our instincts of dominating others behind, to embrace an ideal of collective empathy and harmony.

Pure and evanescent, like mirages, the Mix represent this desire: their underground hideout on Karel is the image, at the same time close and unreachable, of the ideal world dreamt by Gengis and his gang. The same desire is summoned, albeit only temporarily, by the young Evelina, in the wonderful scene where she dances for his friends by the flickering light of a campfire, like a witch that takes off her mundane clothes to reconnect with nature and deliver an ephemeral image to whom would never be able to perceive it otherwise.

It's with this fairy-like lure that *Le Fortezze dell'Alba* charms the readers, leading them through a barrage of shattered dreams and bitter hopes with a delicate, musical style, but always rooted in real fears and inner conflicts.

“As kids, we feel very clearly the injustice that surrounds us, but we don't have the tools to discuss it rationally yet, and everything remains confined to the sphere of feelings,” said Piegai when we asked her to tell us more about the themes of revolution. “Then analysis comes, but solutions are still lacking. That is the phase I tried to capture, tapping into my experiences with students' movements and clashes with the police, and then again with unions and parties with little success. Like Gengis, none of my solutions have worked, so I keep wandering. Sadly, I don't have many advice, since injustices are the same across eras, but solutions change all the time.”

This is not only a scifi novel but a harrowing journey through the hardships of growing up, from the revolutionary rage of the teenage years to the tired resignation of adulthood. But it's also a love story, the excruciating, unrequited kind, both between Gengis and Evelina and with his dreams of a better world from which he needs not run away.

# No Ghosts

Lea Jane Aphrodite

No ghosts possess us  
like the hauntings of these years  
where you start to believe  
the reflection in the window  
is a mirror and you  
let the world pass through.

A citizen of the world has no home  
to return to,  
and the flashing blues from the overpass  
belie the emergency.  
The tension rushing in.  
Expeditions sent to excavate the ruins  
of a past that never begot  
a future.

The view teeters  
on a thin edge  
dancing damasc swirls  
of time folded over and over  
onto themselves  
ground and sharpened  
with surgical precision.  
Remember: early pancake breakfasts,  
late night fights  
that left me sobbing,  
summer vacations of peaceful  
beach days slipping like sand  
into nights where I could not  
be sure if I want  
what I want.

My pack rests against the chair that is not mine.  
Black pack, hat, bandana, keys peeking from  
where they hang at the side. Resting in no place that  
can be home.  
It makes one consider what they really need.  
How much accrues in a material culture.  
You never think it'll be you.  
Outside of the romantic fantasy.  
Hitting the road, running away.  
It's changed by the intent.  
And yet so many of us end up  
sitting in places we can't call ours,  
dealing with emotions that are other's.  
I ran with my memory bound in black leather note-  
books,  
if a mind can't be relied on.  
The overpass is quiet.  
The night belongs to me.  
I put it gently in my pack  
and shoulder it.



# pull back reveal

Lu Lucas

dismissals are met with ambivalence  
are met with doors closed are met with daughters  
are met with enclosures are met with fees and fines you'll never be able to pay  
call out to your mothers call out to them they cannot hear you but they are not dead  
all your friends end up addicts in recovery like you an addict in recovery  
blue curtains pull back to reveal again apolitical slop again there is no longer the option  
to tell yourself you're doing enough in between dry heaves and claps  
luminous they are not waiting lying lifeless for you to gift wet breath  
fragile changes come by firm decisions come by dissenting action  
come by wanting more than your mouth alone can chew or produce

# Gespräch mit Matthias

Lena

Was unterscheidet eine Gemeinschaft von einer WG,  
frage ich dich.  
Dass man sich für die Menschen interessiert,  
sagst du.

Ich komme an  
sie unterhalten sich, diskutieren, streiten gar  
nehmen mich nur halb wahr  
fragen mich, ob ich Fleisch esse  
bieten mir Reheintopf an.  
Am nächsten Tag

sie erklären mir meine Aufgaben  
Gartentour  
was ich machen kann  
Nägel aus Holzbrettern ziehen.  
Ich kuschle mit dem Hund

er wird gerufen  
sie ziehen sich zurück  
nach oben.  
Einmal

steht die Tür einen Spalt offen  
ich gucke rein  
auch unten, eine Tür  
von der ich glaubte, sie führe nach draußen  
doch nein  
dahinter, ein Gang, weitere Türen  
eine Küche, eine ganze, kleine Wohnung, entpuppt.  
Es ist Plenum

Eve hat gekocht. Wir essen. Die Kinder schreien.  
Es ist Plenum.  
Es geht um monatliche Gemeinschaftstage  
um Müllabgaben, auslaufende Waschmaschinen  
und um Phoebe. Es geht um Phoebe. Phoebe soll ausziehen.  
Und es geht um Anke. Anke redet zu viel  
aber Anke ist die Mutter.  
Du bist so ruhig, erschließen sie mich an meinem zweiten Tag

am Abend, sie erklärt mir  
die ausgemistete Entenkacke muss auf den vergrabenen Wildschweinekopf, ich frage warum  
sie sagt  
damit die Würmer ihn zersetzen  
ich frage warum  
als Geschenk für Mey  
ich frage warum  
sie sagt, du löcherst alle, gibst nichts von dir preis.  
Ich putze, wische den Boden, es wird gekocht

nicht die Zeit zum Bodenwischen.  
Du bist sensibel, sagt sie  
urteilt sie  
kritisiert sie  
sie schreit mich an, hör endlich auf zu putzen, begreifst du nicht, dass du aufhören sollst.

Ich erzähle, berichte dir, lästere, echauffiere mich, ringe um Worte, finde nicht die Richtigen.

Was brauchst du,  
fragst du mich.

# Dreams from the Beds of Deportation Facilities

Lea Jane Aphrodite

We'll all make it out one day.  
We'll make it out and we'll dance ecstatic  
On the sharp points of their border fences  
Balancing acts just so on all these lines.  
We'll dance on the perimeter until their courthouses  
Turn to ash and all medical records scatter  
Into the air like migratory birds.  
No one flew over  
the cuckoo's nest.  
And they'll stand there looking on  
In lab coats  
And powdered wigs. Ridiculous airs of theater.  
Whereas we never played a role. We simply played  
And never stopped moving.

# In Defiance of Nonexistence

Juniper C. Rhodes

Rylin sat in the eating room, his favorite early meal half-finished in front of him. The yellow tofu scramble, now dry and congealed, provided minor obstacles as he used his fork to carefully pilot the remaining slices of his mushroom steak through their mounds leaving speckled streaks of Mars Hot sauce in their wake. He took another bite of the toast. The underside had gone soggy while the top had gone stale.

He'd been one of the first to show for the early meal, and now he was one of the last stragglers, left alone with his tablet in one hand, open to the same page as when he'd sat down. He'd read and reread the few paragraphs, sometimes even making it to the next page before realizing the words had left no mark and then thumbing back. But then again, their content hardly mattered. *Transcribed Oral Histories of Saturnian Shuttle Crews* was just another historical treatise pulled from the Sol Archives describing a system he'd never known and likely would never see, one everyone living on Druga Nadzieja had been completely cut off from.

The nature of their isolation from the rest of humanity, a thought he revisited time and time again, was enough to stagger and pull him from his ruminations. He didn't want to labor today and was presently procrastinating, delaying the start of his duties after another night of restless sleep. But, if he was going to shirk, then he might as well start now instead of sitting here doing nothing and wanting to hope that he might scrape together some motivation to attend to the needful.

He switched off his tablet, still on the page he'd first opened it to, and made for the galley to wash his dishes.

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He lay with his head in Seong-tae's lap in one of the two groves in Miasto Drugiej Nadziei's main habitation dome. Seong-tae read as he leaned against against a tree and idly ran his fingers through Rylin's short stubbly hair, and Rylin did nothing but watch an automaton slowly zigzag up and down the outer surface of the dome, clearing the red dust so that the red landscape and red sky could be seen a little less hazily.

They'd grown up together, birthed only a few constellia apart nearly eleven years ago, and in the time from childhood through their adolescence and into their becoming adults, their comfort with one another had grown such that they

could sit in silence and enjoy each other's company. Rylin had gone to Seong-tae's lab in hopes he had little to do and asked him to join for some morning lounging.

But he was as restless here as he was in the night, and much as he tried to relax and watch the slowly moving automaton, he couldn't find a comfortable way to lay. He shifted again, and Seong-tae tapped his chest, signaling that he should sit up.

"I'd like to get back to the lab."

"So soon?"

"It's been nearly two hours."

Rylin thought about it, about how far along the automaton had made it on the dome as they'd lay there. "I guess it has."

"And you're quite clean. Seems you haven't started your day yet either."

He could have lied, could have said that there were no repairs to be done and no orders in the queue. He could have said that the automata had been assigned to the minor tasks and that there was nothing for him to do.

"I'm not going to labor today."

"Again? How much are you even doing?"

Rylin pushed his fingers into the grass, felt the dirt rub against his skin and up under his fingernails. "Enough. I'm still above the minimums that that Maintenance Labor Group defined."

Seong-tae raised his eyebrows. "Is that all you aspire to? To merely... surpass the minimum?"

Maybe not. Maybe he'd just grown tired of things as they'd been.

"You weren't always like this," he said to Seong-tae trying to force a sense of betrayal into the words.

"Of course I was. It is *you* who was not always like *this*," he said gesturing at Rylin.

The words stung, not just the accusation that Rylin was becoming antisocial — he had fallen away from the collective life of the colony, fallen away from his duties, fallen into the Sol Archives and the fantasy world they represented — but that maybe he was changing and Seong-tea was not, or maybe that they were diverging from one another.

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As he floated on his back with his ears below the surface of the water, the world was nearly silent. Occasional voices of

others recreating that might have interrupted his thoughts were muted. One current, the desire to simply *not*, was suspended immobile in his mind just as he was suspended in the waters of the pond. The slight grinding sound of a poor-quality pump with grit caught in it felt like it was coming from within his head. Ironically, this was his fault. He'd installed the pump for a fountain at the top of the knoll next to the pond to create a small winding brook that flowed back into its waters, and also, he hadn't kept it clean, not even programmed an automaton to do so. He could swim to the edge and find the concealed panel and turn it off, but the sound wasn't quite so annoying as to pull him to act, to break what little sense of relaxation he was currently holding fast to.

And so he drifted, teetering on the cusp of a peaceful calm but never quite reaching it.

Something grasped his hand, startling him. He flailed and brought himself up to a vertical position and opened his eyes to see Nujaliaq beside him, treading low so that her lips were just barely above the water, her long gray hair pulled up into a messy bun and held up with a clip.

"Oopsie. I didn't mean to scare you," she said, giggling. "I waited for too long, and you didn't look like you were coming out."

"Sorry." Rylin winced internally. She was here to summon him for the labor he was avoiding, and by apologizing he'd just admitted guilt. "You want to talk?"

Nujaliaq nodded as she sank lower and buzzed her lips making small bubbles in the water.

"Here or in the meadow?"

"Rather the meadow."

Rylin nodded back and started to swim back to where he'd left his clothes with Nujaliaq following. He got out and saw her coveralls folded and placed next to her boots that sat next to his towel and pile of clothes and sandals. He picked up the towel to dry himself, and then, thought better and handed it to her. She, after all, had had to get in the water to come after him. Nujaliaq accepted it and dried off her naked body and then handed it back to him so he could dab off too.

She said nothing, and the two of them said with their skin exposed to Cuezaltzin and the artificial lights on the dome that shone in wavelengths that mimicked those of Sol. The silenced dragged on, her stare goading him into starting the conversation. What, precisely, did she want of him?

"If this is about my labors, I'm above the minimums. You know that," he started.

"Of course I do."

"And nothing isn't getting done."

"I know."

"So then, what is it?"

Nujaliaq rubbed the soles of her feet.

"Do you trust me as your mentor?"

"I thought that was obvious."

"Then why do you speak as if my being here is hostile?"

Rylin opened his mouth, then closed it. A bead of water ran down his chest.

Feelings churned within him, opposing desires. There was what he felt, what he felt he should feel, and the acceptable answers. Nujaliaq was a little too astute for him to easily lie, and surely she'd been gossiping with others such that collectively they had a picture of Rylin that might even be more complete than his own. He'd had similar conversations with her before — and with others too.

"I resent the constant imposition into my life. Not you in particular, nor anyone single other, but more so... the collective intrusion into all that I do and am."

His heart pounded. This was more direct than he'd intended, more than he'd said before.

"We provide so much for each, rely so much on each other. Are these moments really such intrusions, or they reminders of our interconnectedness? You are, after all, a living record of your trade, just as I am. As we are together."

"I know, but I didn't ask for this. To be here, and there's nowhere else I could go."

"You could join the isolates at one of the research outposts or in making the round-trips to mine ice aboard *Twilight No Longer*."

"That'd be worse, and you know it."

"For you, it might."

Nujaliaq stood up and started to pull on her coveralls. As she often did, as many of the First Arrivals were wont to do, she was about to lay what she thought to be great wisdom on him and leave him to grapple with it, likely not even addressing directly what she'd come here for. "Is this not then the best one could ask for given our circumstances?" She zipped the coveralls halfway and tied the arms together to make a belt, then turned and walked away, boots in hand.

Rylin wanted to call after her, wanted to tell her she was wrong, rude for interrupting him and then leaving him here. He tried to lay back and rest again, but her presence had changed the tone of the pond. Flustered, he donned his frock and hastily tied its sash around his waist, gathered his things, then walked off.

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Rylin adjusted his goggles to get a better seal to keep the dust that blew on the wind from irritating his eyes. Where his breather sat on his face, he could feel how the particulate mixed with his sweat — despite the afternoon chill — and created a thin paste that scratched at his skin.

There was nowhere to hide in *Miasto Drugiej Nadziei* besides his sleeping room, but to retreat there would have made him feel too trapped, too confined. Nujaliaq had found him in the pond, and even if the greenhouses were large, they were uncomfortably warm and humid. Someone would find him

there, regardless, somehow. And so he'd walked here to this cairn, because it was a destination instead of the endless and unchanging expanse to the west or the rising and daunting mountains to the east.

The cairn was made of darker red rocks — almost black — collected by a memorial convoy from volcanic plains and used to create a monument to the life and death of Lynx of Many Felicities. It had been erected on at the spot where, at just eight years of age and on the cusp of adulthood, she'd come to watch the sunfall and then let her breather run empty until she'd passed out, never waking up.

So the story went, anyway. There was a log of the last time the airlock had been opened which in all likelihood had been done by her. She certainly had died here with an empty breather and a note left on her desk, one that had later been laser etched into a placard that was held in place by the carefully stacked stones. Rylin wiped the dust from the metal plate, feeling the coldness of the metal against his skin as he did.

He already knew what it said, but he wanted to read the words anyway. Its opening line, a simple one, spoke to him.

On Maroon, every day is the same.

Maroon, one of the names given to *Druga Nadzieja*. Maroon, for the color of the rocks and the sky and the dust. Maroon, a playful acknowledgement how they as the subaltern had freed themselves and escaped from servitude. Maroon, because they were marooned here, unable to return to Sol and unable to move on to some other system with plausibly habitable exoplanets, not even technically but because there was only one interstellar craft, and only a minority ever wanted to do anything other than stay here.

Rylin had read enough of the Sol Archives and spoken enough with the First Arrivals to know that unbearable burden of eking out an existence in Sol, but even so, many of the stories — both fictional and historic — were ripe with *opportunity* and *possibility*. Even if one couldn't afford the treatments to drop into the gravity wells of Earth or Mars, there was so much available. It was possible to hop between the dozens of stations throughout the Belt or Jovian or Saturnian systems, each of which was a hundred times as large as the total population of the Cuezaltzin system. One could catch rides to the far reaches of the system, hop between bustling freighters hauling ice and ore. There were nooks and crannies into which one could disappear and become anonymous, hidden from any and all prying eyes yet never without ample company.

At only eleven, Rylin felt that he had seen everything that Maroon could offer. Maybe there was a whole planet, a whole system that was largely undiscovered, untrodden by Solarian feet or wheels, unseen by Solarian eyes or sensors. Yet every

other dusty and frigid slice of the world called to him as little as the one he currently stood on.

He checked the remaining time on his breather. Forty-seven minutes. He'd been here longer than he intended, and the sunfall was too far away, even if he adjusted to the flow to the barest trickle that would leave him hazy.

But then again, he could. He could stretch his time out, watch that sunfall, and then fade into the night.

A chill ran up his spine, and he shook his arms and body to cast it off, then turned to return to the habitation dome.

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At dinner, he'd asked to spend the night with Miezi in hopes that their warmth and weight would help lull him to sleep, and at first it had, but now he lay restless in their bed, the day's worries and those of tomorrow keeping him awake. He tried to lay still, not wanting to shift and have Miezi release him and roll away. Minutes turned into what he thought were hours, and he inched his arm out from the blankets and fumbled for the button that would illuminate the clock on the wall. It read 29:19, not quite midnight.

He closed his eyes again, and tried to still himself. Time crept by, and unsure if he'd slept or not, he checked the time again: 03:33.

*Make a wish*, he thought. But what would he wish for? Something subtle, a shift from the old Belter culture of absolute survival in the dangerous and inhospitable that pushed the colonists into the perpetual pursuit of redundancy and collective preparation for all possible disasters into something... something that had all the trappings of *togetherness* but without anyone having much of a say in matters. There wasn't *choice*. He was more than labor and knowledge he provided, more than a link in the chains that held their society together.

Rylin's mind had strayed into that which upset once again. Sleep wouldn't come, not yet, and maybe a walk before a second sleep would help him clear his mind.

He slid out from under Miezi's arm and pulled his frock on, and slipped out into the corridor. Dim lights came on, and he walked to the end of the dormitory's hallway and pulled his sandals from the cubby where he'd stashed them, then stepped barefoot into the night.

Small lamps close to the ground lit up the path he walked providing just enough light to prevent him from tripping. He meandered through *Miasto Drugiej Nadziei* and watched other wraiths light up the ground as they did the same. A hammock slung between the fences around two oxygen storage tanks swung slowly as its enshrouded occupant rocked themselves as they read. A trio murmured under blankets in the grass. Above him, the sky blazed with a million million stars.

Rylin found himself in front of his dormitory, then found himself inside his room. He wasn't tired, and not knowing what to do, he sat at his desk and powered on his tablet. A notification popped up telling him that in seven and a half hours, there would be a meeting for assigning the next batch of tasks to the sole surviving fabricator.

He could already see the arguments, the same ones there always were erupting with the different factions threatening to block work until they got their way.

*"No, we should use the fabricator to first create a second colony ship so people could go somewhere else."*

*"People already can. Just take the Twilight. We could mine here, just it'd be slower."*

*"But then everyone else would be stuck here, every other generation forever."*

*"Then leave with us or—"*

*"Hey, are you forgetting that we need more habitats for the growing population?"*

*"Oh, here we go again. Your desire to raise children over our desire to live our own lives."*

*"We couldn't have our children back in Sol, and now you want to enforce that here too."*

*"There's space! And resources! We don't have to—"*

*"I don't want to be cramped here, and I don't want a second habitat next door either. I want — others want — a second settlement."*

*"And now your right to live under a dome somewhere else on Druga Nadzieja is trumping our right to live in another system! Go live in a shack outpost or underground like our elders did!"*

And so on, and so on, the few rabble rousers always and resolutely shut down. So much space, and yet this single machine tied them all together, the unity that seemingly existed being exposed for what it really was each time its usage was brought to discussion. Just thinking about it left him preemptively frustrated and drained.

A thought was breaching the surface of his mind, one he could still pull away from, but instead, he let it take full form.

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Rylin stood in the control room of the vehicle bay, the duffel bag he'd taken from a supply closet filled with a few personal items and several days worth of foodstuffs collected from one of the repositories. Both of the 12-person long-hauler caravans were parked side by side, each of their eight wheels taller than he was. Beside them, in two rows, were the six rovers. Their paint, neon green and reflective to stand out again at the red terrain, was harsh on his eyes. On the screen in front of him, overview diagnostics for the first row showed that that *Alif*, *Bā'*, and *Tā'* had all been recently serviced and were ready for assignment.

Rylin, like most on the surface, had been trained in their basic use, just in case. This "just in case" also meant they

were unlocked and that the only thing stopping anyone from running off with one — other than that there was nowhere to go — was the threat of being spaced for inducing risk to the collective well-being. Only one resident had been spaced — Maroon'd? — in Rylin's lifetime, and he couldn't image that would be the response for what he was about to do. All the same, he didn't really care.

He tapped the button to start the evacuation cycle for the bay door. Yellow lights in the bay began to flash, warning anyone who might be there that they had one minute to don a breather or reach an airlock. Rylin stepped into one, and when it cycled stepped into the bay. No one was here, and even if someone from the Transportation Labor Group had immediately seen the notification, they wouldn't be able to stop him, but still, he hurried over to the *Bā'*. He uncoupled the diagnostic and power cables, then the air and water hoses and sealed the back panel. He opened the rear door and tossed his bag in, hoisted himself in, then closed it behind him. He climbed to the pilot's position, then strapped himself in. Outside, the lights stopped flashing and shone solid red. He released the rover's safety, then sent a command to open the bay door. The lights flashed red, and the door slowly swung up until it locked in place and the lights turned green.

Rylin hesitated. He could still turn back, he hadn't really transgressed yet.

But no, he eased the rover forward, and when he crossed the markers outside the bay, he sent the command to close the bay door. Then, he mashed his foot down on the accelerator, and the rover lurched forward.

*"Wooo yeah!!!"*

His excitement surprised him, joy breaking through his nervousness with such ferocity that he started to sob, his breath ragged through his laughter and tears.

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Even as he'd driven out of the bay, Rylin hadn't had a plan for where he was going, first driving north on nothing but instinct. The prospect of more flat plains both ahead and to his west had led him to the High Traversal path through the Boosaylē Mountains, a route that after a day's journey would take him to the edge of the Acala Fossa, the two kilometer deep canyon that looked like the planet had been pulled in opposite directions until it split open. At the first of many passes, he stopped and got out to look at Miasto Drugiej Nadziei only to find that it had already disappeared beyond a bend. The solitude he was moving toward — two days, if not longer — would be the most he'd ever spent alone, and now that the symbolic last goodbye to his home had been taken from him, it hit him harder. The joy of striking out on his own, and the terrible longing for a community that seemed it would never develop.



If the plains he'd just left were desolate, they at least felt empty invitingly so. Here, the Boosaylēs felt desolate by way of hostility. Even with the hydraulics on the port side extended, and even as he followed the most tame path, the rover felt like it might tumble down the mountainside at at moment and be pounded and shredded by the sharp rocks below. The jagged razor peaks and ridgelines cut off his views and looked as if they might topple down upon him. The perception of danger was *exciting*, not because it was new — he'd driven this route before — but because he was alone and had to face it himself. He tried to work up the narrative of an exciting and dangerous journey, not out of worry, but out of the need to conjure a sense of adventure, to make this into more than a slow and leisurely drive.

Rylin crossed another pass and began the descent down the western face following the sporadic guidance pylons that were painted the same green as the *Bā'* and showed the most stable route down. After driving for so long, he felt like one with the machine, but this flow state was harshly interrupted when, as he rounded a curve, a warning from the lidar array illuminated a portion of the windshield and a klaxon sounded. He steered uphill and hit the brakes causing the rear of the rover to start to swing around as the wheels lost traction, the rear ones catching in the depression the drive-assist system had just warned him about. This wrenched the front of the *Bā'* around, dislodging the rear wheels and pulling the whole rover down a steeper part of the slope so that it was sliding almost perpendicular to its original direction of travel.

Rylin looked out the window and saw that it was a long slide to the bottom, but there were chutes that might tip the rover over or swallow it entirely. He struggled with the controls sometimes arresting the slide just a little only to lose control again. Adrenaline dumped into blood, made his breathing heavy even if piloting the rover took little physical exertion. For the first time in his life, death — real and immanent — bore down on him. Yesterday's flirtations with the endless sleep, and the lingering call of oblivion that had plagued him felt utterly alien. He didn't know what there was to live for, but with diamond-clear certainty, he knew he did not want to die. The feeling, like one he sometimes had when looking up at the night sky, was of the incomprehensible vastness of the universe, not just its size, but the possibilities it represented. If every day is the same on Ma-roon, there was still more to see, to feel, to know than the abject simplicity and elimination of choice that lay beyond the veil of death. The possibilities of the universe felt not far, but right within his grasp, even if invisible and unknowable.

In an act of faith, in an attempt to regain some calm, Rylin lifted one hand from the wheel and ran it along the side of the center console. Deep patterned grooves were cut into the metal, ones so pronounced that they could be felt through a thick rubber glove. They were were the final words

of the final transmission of the *Syzygy Beyond* before a rail-gun round pieced its reactor and vaporized the stolen vessel as it began to flee Sol, one that the colonists of Cuezaltzin etched into every craft to honor those lost.

We do this in defiance of nonexistence.

The nonexistence of indentured labor, of forced sterilization, of the constant threat suffocation through rationed oxygen, of annihilation when poorly maintained equipment exploded. The nonexistence of having gone along with the great flows of history, carried along by the wills of others. The living death of a humanity stripped, of the individual reduced to a replaceable cog in a society-wide machine.

He had to survive this mishap, to carry on that legacy going back since the dawn of life, of defining against all odds what it meant to be free. Those in Cuezaltzin were freer here than most humans had ever been, perhaps, yet it wasn't enough. There was more to be had, more expansive opportunities to uncover and spread to all. As the rover slid, his mind bifurcated leaving one part laser focused on surviving the moment and another on thriving when he returned. Who might he be, this shock of facing his own mortality having birthed him anew?

He might die one day, but not today. Not until he'd more fully lived.

# You Can Have It For Free

C. Bain

it was locating the anus in the image that allowed me to understand  
 the wavy lines within the repeated ovals petaling the mandala  
 as a rendering of a vulva. The apartment was meant  
 to feel luxus but felt instead cold, appropriative, a treatment  
 space. in seattle. Occurs to me because i have been trying to think  
 of instances when someone's desire for me was clear. i could not reciprocate  
 in that instance, the ignition of mirror neurons  
 i mistake for my own desire failing to cascade. a lot of it  
 is in fact mechanical. olfactory. the dildo strapped to my body  
 was enormous. she had menstrual onset while riding me  
 onto the slick silky goldenrod blanket. we had to tell the yoga teacher  
 whose spare room it was. hey we ruined your bed. i missed that one.  
 she took testo for a while after we dated but then stopped. meaning i am  
 contagious. but most people turn back before the point  
 where i notice something's changed which is too late. to let it make you  
 ugly, most people don't let it get to that point. wake up every day inside  
 something rebuilding itself into a symbol of power. while also  
 experiencing a sharp wounded shame over the deployment  
 of that power. plus all the terrible ways your body begins  
 to smell. which she didn't mind. her blood slapping between  
 our thighs. it was by ceasing to be beautiful that i realized  
 what beauty was worth. instead of only knowing that it was annoying.  
 how i came to know that everything i'd had before i had because  
 of beauty. all currency is worth only what you can get for it. trashcan  
 full of flaming dollars, pillages in the supermarket, future but also  
 past, present. of course beauty becomes it's opposite too, a debt  
 a crime. of course we also die for it. the lives we have chosen  
 to believe are worth zero, kept in a carton, in a concrete cell  
 burning themselves out. what your life's worth is the job  
 you've given the cop aiming at your back as you run away.  
 is beauty always complicity with power? always asking power  
 to protect it

## Bios

**A**ndrea is a failed theoretical physicist trying to teach and write speculative fiction, jumping between Neolithic and Italian solarpunk. Started in the vineyards of Monferato and ended up among Finnish pines. He's a founding member of Novilunio Edizioni and undaunted mastodonian ([sociale.network/@clockwoork](https://sociale.network/@clockwoork)). Born too late to be a No Global and too early for utopia, but just in time to try to make a difference.

**A**uriBlackCat Collective (fae/faer) are a plural system trying to survive a cistem somewhere on the land claimed by the state of Germany. Fae can be found at [auriblackcat@treehouse.systems](mailto:auriblackcat@treehouse.systems).

**C.** Bain is a gender liminal writer and performance artist whose work is about the body as a site of violence. His poetry books are *Debridement* and *Sex Augury*. His plays have been shown at the Kraine, the Tank, Dixon Place, and the LGBT center in NYC. In 2022, he programmed a semi-monthly series of performance art salons in Los Angeles. He makes books with Ugly Duckling Presse, Falschrum Books, and by himself. His current project is a series of real lectures by a fake professor about the end of the world. More at [tiresiasprojekt.com](https://tiresiasprojekt.com).

**E**lfriede (she/her) lives in Berlin and defies to cis-dudes who mistake anarchist liberation as an excuse for their egocentrism. She defies to serve as a projection space for their misogynistic beliefs and replaying their twisted relationship wounds with them. Please get therapy y'all and work on your solidarity with the feminist transformation of society.

**J**on O'Mercy (they/them) is a anarchist writer living in Berlin. When they're not writing stories, they're often found petting dogs and watching birds. Other times they organise things like prison letter writing evenings.

**J**uan Tramontina (er/ihm) wuchs auf verschiedenen Kontinenten auf und landete schließlich wieder in Deutschland. Frühe Schreibexperimente zerschellten zunächst am hereinbrechenden Leben. Heute verdingt er sich als Übersetzer. Und nebenher schreibt er auch. Er ist manchmal auf Mastodon unter [literatur.social/@JuanTramontina](https://literatur.social/@JuanTramontina) zu finden.

**J**uniper C. Rhodes (they/them) is an anarchist living somewhere on the European continent. They are ensnared by the melancholy of the world, and sometimes they try to cope with it using words.

**L**ea Jane Aphrodite (she/it) is a transgender anarchist poet from Germany, thinking and writing about the connection of any and all things in the underground time substrate. When she isn't busking with poetry on the streets, she spends her time roping people into discussions on how to make better lives in contact with each other and the world possible.

**L**ena studierte Soziologie und lebt und wirkt in einem anarchistischen Projekthaus nahe Leipzig. Interessiert sich für und kritisiert insbesondere die Themen Gender und Macht (getrennt wie zusammen) und schreibt gern Texte und Gedichte über Beziehungen und Traumata. Seit Frühling Teil der anarchistisch-libertären Zeitschrift *espero*.

**L**u Lucas is a poet living and working with their friends in Berlin.

**Y**v is born and raised in the cracks of the Balkan diaspora between Greece and Bulgaria after the fall of the iron curtain. They found their place under the warmth of the anarchist thought and praxis across different cities in Europe, currently dwelling in the concrete jungle of Berlin.

## Call for Submissions

For those who are already motivated, our Spring 2026 issue will be accepting submissions from **March 1<sup>st</sup> until the 31<sup>st</sup>** in both English and German. Like this issue, we will be accepting prose, poetry, art, and literary and artistic reviews of fiction, non-fiction, and other media such as films or artworks. Full details about the nature of the submissions and the guidelines can be found on our website. We hope to hear from you.

<https://en.scrappycapydistro.info/submissions>  
<https://de.scrappycapydistro.info/beiträge>

*a harbour is a place  
from which to venture out*



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