Taddle Creek

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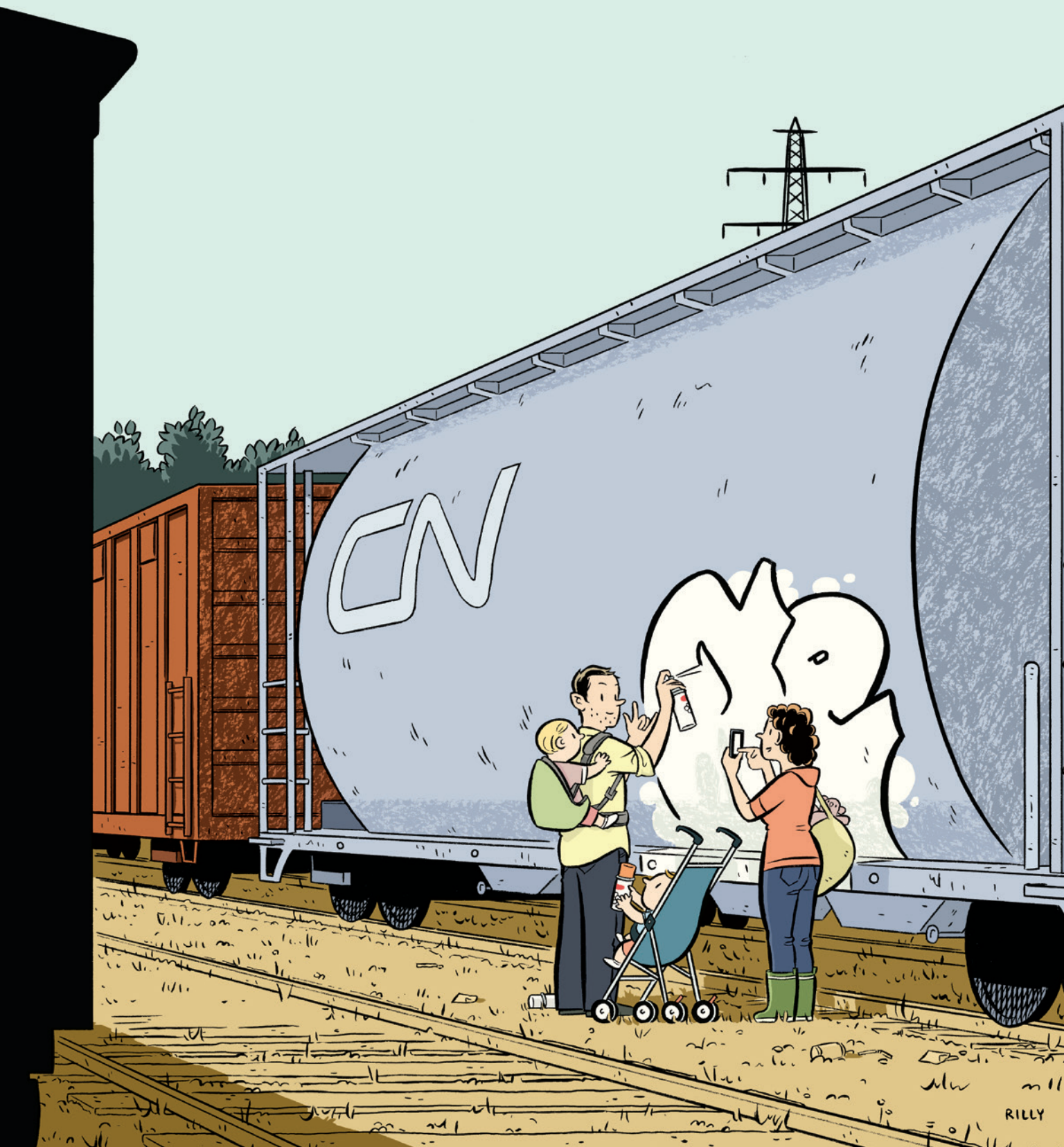
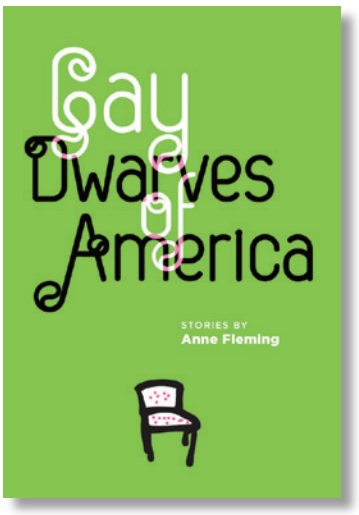


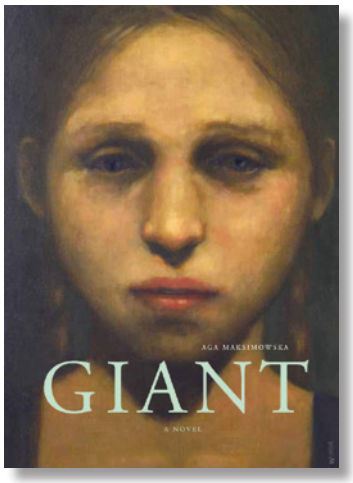
I believe
only in art
and failure.

— JANE RULE

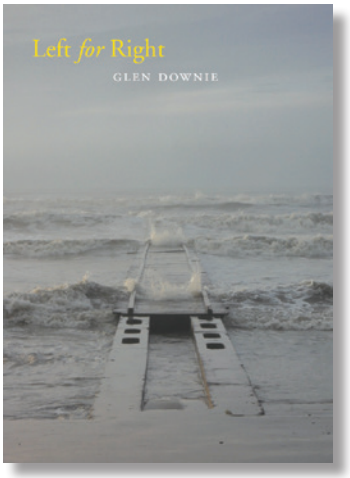
PEDLAR
PRESS



short fiction by Anne Fleming

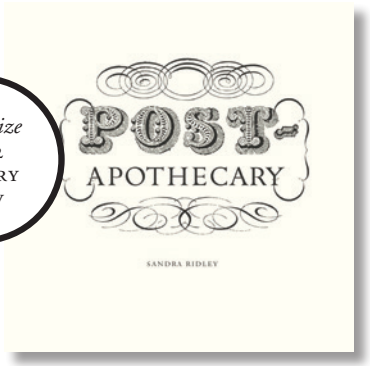


a debut novel by Aga Maksimowska



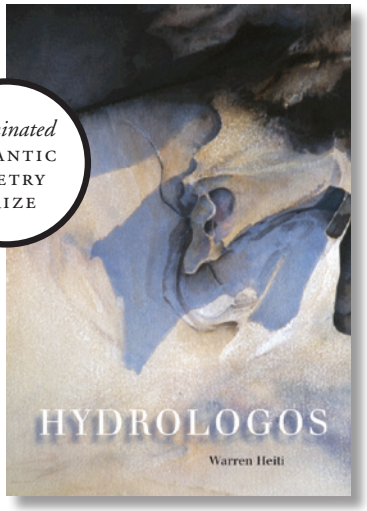
poems by Glen Downie

Top Prize
2012
POETRY
NOW



poems by Sandra Ridley

Nominated
ATLANTIC
POETRY
PRIZE



poems by Warren Heiti

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TADDLE CREEK

GEOGRAPHICALLY CHAUVINISTIC

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THE CONTRIBUTORS

Lindsay Zier-Vogel ("A Miracle Somehow," p. 9) lives in Roncesvalles. She is a writer, bookbinder, and arts educator, and the creator of the Love Lettering Project. She is working on a novel.

Thomas Blanchard (photograph, p. 10) is a photographer living in Rua Açores. His work in *Taddle Creek* has been nominated for a National Magazine Award.

Jason Guriel ("Somewhere in the Piano," p. 15) lives in the Casa Loma area. His next poetry collection will be published in 2014 by Véhicule. A book of prose, *The Pigheaded Soul: Essays on Poetry and Culture,* is forthcoming in 2013. His work has appeared recently in *Poetry, Parnassus, P.N. Review,* the *New Criterion, Maisonneuve,* and *Reader's Digest.*

Nina Bunjevac ("Socially Inept," p. 19) lives in East York. Her strips have been published in many European and North American publications, including *Mineshaft, Exile, Black, Giuda, Le Dernier Cri, Komikaze,* and *Broken Pencil.* She is also the co-editor of the recently published *Balkan Comics: Women on the Fringe* (Mark Batty).

Matthew Tierney ("Heads We Win, Tails You Lose," p. 30) lives in Danforth Village. His most recent book is *The Hayflick Limit* (Coach House, 2009), which was short-listed for the Trillium Book Award for Poetry. His third collection, *Probably Inevitable,* will be published this fall by Coach House.

Michael Redhill ("How I Got To Sleep," p. 33) lives in the Danforth area. He is a poet, playwright, and novelist.

Jacqueline Nelson ("Art on the Line," p. 36) lives in Yorkville. She is a business reporter with the *Globe and Mail's* Streetwise team, writing about market-moving news. Previously, she worked for *Canadian Business,* where she was a writer and fact checker (and sometimes even a model).

Carolyn Smart ("Barrel Fires," p. 45) lives in Sydenham, Ontario. Her fifth collection of poems, *Hooked,* was published in 2009 by Brick Books. She is the founder of the R.B.C. Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers, and teaches creative writing at Queen's University. Her work-in-progress is a series of poems about the Barrow Gang, entitled *Careen.*

Dave Lapp (*People Around Here,* p. 48) lives near the Church-Wellesley Village. *People Around Here,* a collection of his strips from *Taddle Creek* and the *Annex Gleaner* newspaper, was published recently by Conundrum.

Fiona Smyth (The Spots) lives in Dufferin Grove. Her graphic novel *The Never Weres* was published last year by Annick. Her illustrations will appear this summer in Cory Silverberg's picture book, *What Makes A Baby.*

Amy Stupavsky (the protégé) lives in Cabbagetown. She has worked for *Brick* and was the production editor for a recent issue of *Descant.*

Ethan Rilly (The Cover) lives in Montreal. He is an illustrator and cartoonist, and the creator of the Doug Wright Award-winning comic book *Pope Hats.*

TADDLE CREEK

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THE MAIL

Credit Card

I read with interest the second-most-recent issue of your "literary magazine." It seems to me a fine creation, containing excellent work and an admirable editorial tone. I was puzzled by one thing, however. On the masthead, the issue's guest editors are placed in a position that can only be described as inadequately prominent. It is my understanding–and I trust *Taddle Creek* will correct me if I'm mistaken–that the magazine's editor-in-chief, one Conan Tobias, has all but abdicated his perch, instead relying on the incredibly generous (and volunteer) labours of these above-mentioned guest editors. Given this fact (I feel comfortable asserting it as one), surely the editors in question, the estimable Alex Boyd and Jessica Westhead, deserve more explicit gratitude.

I write, of course, as a disinterested party–simply a reader who believes credit should be given where due, especially when, as in your next issue, said credit is due to the noted celebrity author Michael Christie.

I look forward to reading the magazine's response.

Jared Bland
Co–Guest Editor, Taddle Creek No. 28
Toronto

The editor-in-chief is still very much in charge, Jared, though the magazine is grateful to those guest editors who help out from time to time when Taddle Creek is between associates, as it has been for the past while now. That said, perhaps you're right and the size and positioning of credit on the magazine's masthead could better display the worth of those who volunteer their time to fill this important position. Taddle Creek has corrected this oversight in the very issue you now hold, as you can see on the facing page. Thanks for your suggestion, and your kind words about Michael Christie. He's a special guy.

Live Long and Prosper

I just received my first issue of your magazine–it's awesome! I love it, and read it from cover to cover . . . well, except for the picture pages, but those are worth a thousand words, at least.

Pax et bonum!

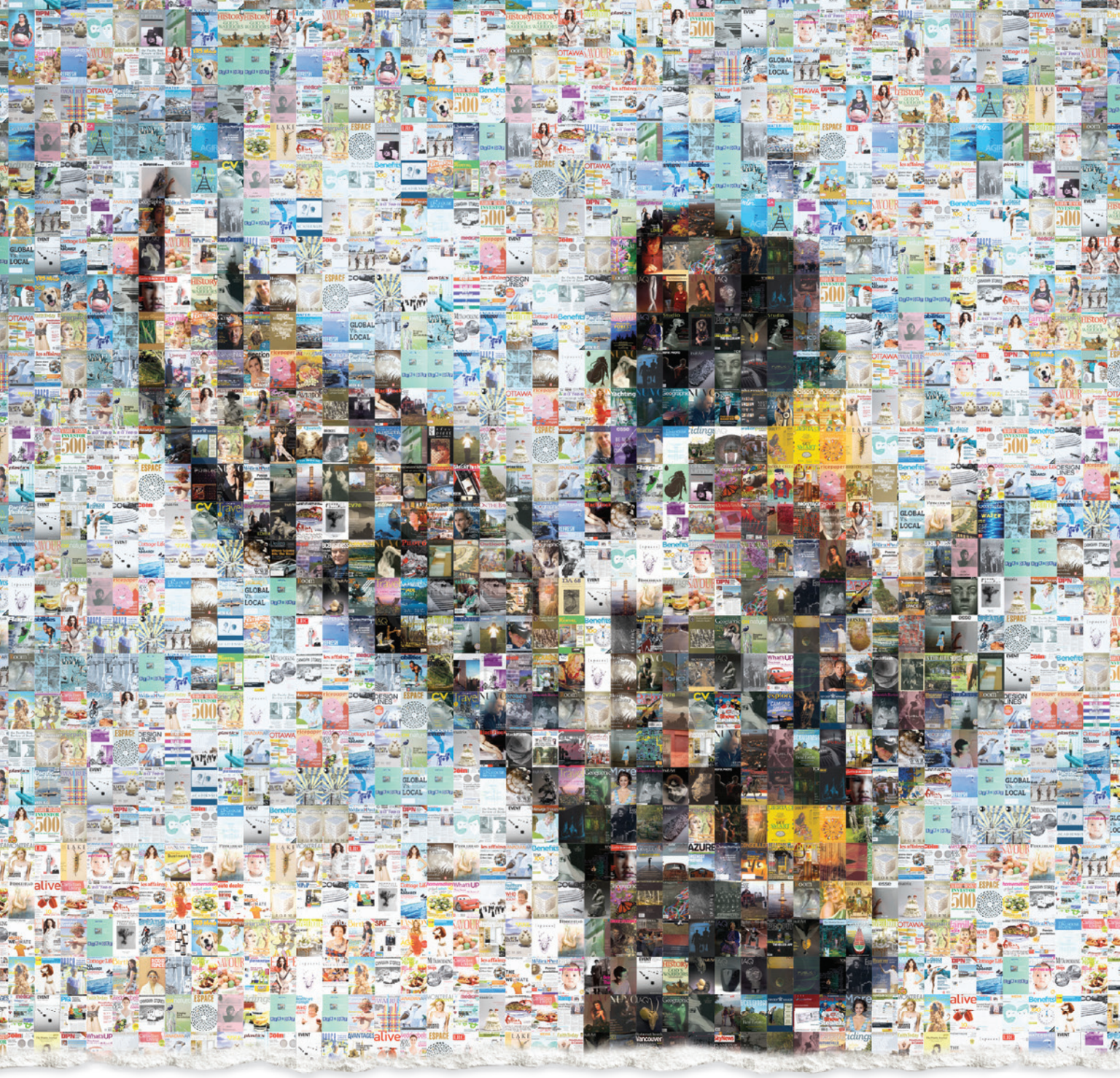
Father John Stopa
Renfrew, Ontario

Don't Fear the Dentist

I just read your story on Halloween kisses ("Molasses: The Ultimate Treat," Halloween Number, 2008). I was saddened to learn Allan does not make them any longer. McCormick's were my favourites–soft, easy to chew, you could easily eat more. Allan's were my second favourite–they mixed some soft ones in there. I hope I don't lose a filling over my favourite Halloween candy! I look for them every year.

Faith Cook
Windsor, Ontario

Letters should include the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number for confirmation purposes. The magazine reserves the right to mock any nasty or especially silly letters. Due to the volume of mail received, Taddle Creek should have no problem responding to all letters in a timely fashion.



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THE EPHEMERA

Grammar Is Not Dead

Taddle Creek recently had the pleasure of co-sponsoring, along with *Broken Pencil* and City Lights, an evening of readings organized around the concept of God. The audience members obviously were not the God-fearing type themselves, as everyone present opted to burn in hell rather than subscribe to either magazine. People are entitled to their beliefs, *Taddle Creek* supposes.

But some good came out of the event, as it reminded *Taddle Creek* of an editorial style topic that has arisen more than once throughout the magazine's history–the capitalization of "God" when used to make reference to a single supreme being. *Taddle Creek* has had a run-in or two over the years with authors who, because they believe God does not exist, feel he, therefore, should not have an upper-cased name like regular people. This argument gained a little momentum in 2007, when the late Christopher Hitchens published his *New York Times* bestseller, *God Is Not Great.* While Mr. Hitchens's book added much to the discussion that, to quote the publication's subtitle, "religion poisons everything," *Taddle Creek* feels it also did a disservice to the disbelievers.

Hitchens, like the above-mentioned authors, insisted that "God" be lower-cased throughout his book, even when referencing a single (albeit fictional) individual. (The title of Hitchens's book officially is spelled with a lower-case "G" at the beginning, which, frankly, makes *Taddle Creek* want to flood the earth to clean away the sacrilege of bad grammar–but that's a subject for another time.) This argument is juvenile and grasping, and in no way furthers the case being made. It is, in fact, completely unrelated to the task at hand. Just because Christians lazily gave their god the same name as the general term for omnipotent deities doesn't make their god any less valid than any other god in the eyes of good grammar.

Case in point: *Taddle Creek* does not believe Garfield exists. A thirty-three-year-old feline born to an unwed mother who hates to see Sunday end, loves a good dinner, and possibly can communicate with humans through some form of telepathy? Please. (If you do believe Garfield exists, humour *Taddle Creek* for just a moment.) Should the world's most widely syndicated cat's name be spelled "garfield" simply because he doesn't exist? Of course not. Because, though imaginary, many real-world rules still apply to most fiction, including the capitalization of people's names, even when those people are made up. There are many fictional characters in this issue of *Taddle Creek*. All of their names are capitalized. Open any novel–you'll see more of the same. So if someone's specific god is fictional, even if his name is God, would that name still not be capitalized? (*Taddle Creek* will capitulate that capitalizing "His" and "He" in reference to the Christian God is taking things a bit too far.) There are so many stronger, easier arguments for those who want to dispel myth. To resort to name-lower-casing makes those putting forth the argument seem ignorant, and detracts from their message.

Zeus, Jupiter, Thor, George Burns–pick a false god, any false god: their names are still capitalized.

–Taddle Creek

Some Housekeeping

Way back in its Christmas, 2007, issue, *Taddle Creek* made a plea for proper apostrophe use, and promised to send letters to those most guilty of abusing this friendly punctuator, printing any interesting responses in a future issue. Well, there have been none. Which isn't to say *Taddle Creek* has given up the fight. Follow *Taddle Creek* on Instagram (user name: "taddlecreek") as the magazine points out the folly of many an incorrectly punctuated sign. There are also photos of contributors, books, coffee, and the like.

In its previous issue, *Taddle Creek* promised *The Taddle Creek 45* would be coming your way soon. It has not and will not be, at least not yet. But it probably will be sometime, and will feature readings and the like. It should be worth the wait. Apologies to all those who were clamouring for it.

And just because there's no room left on the Miscellany page and lots of room left here: *Taddle Creek* would like to point out, for no reason other than that the magazine finds it amusing, that for the third time in four contributions, Stuart Ross once again mentions *Archie* comics this issue. It's true. See page six.

With this issue, *Taddle Creek* caps off a decade and a half of publication. The magazine sincerely hopes you will join it this fall, when it releases its budget-sucking, giant-size fifteenth anniversary issue, featuring many of *Taddle Creek's* regular contributors. There's certain to be at least one party of some kind, and probably some other events–both real and virtual–over the course of the year too, so stay tuned.

Skunk Problem at the Food Booth

BY STUART ROSS

Solly knocked his head on a low-hanging birch branch as he ran toward the crowd that had gathered at the food concession. He hit the ground hard, lay unconscious for three days, and when he woke, the Pioneer Village was deserted. Not a visitor or staff member in sight. His stomach churned and he felt nauseous. He wondered what had happened to his wife and to Sim. Had they really left without him? Or were they wandering the empty village right now, looking for him in the old church, the red schoolhouse, the office of the *Village Tribune,* the cheese factory, the town hall?

The Pioneer Village was situated in a rural stretch of gently rolling hills, several kilometres from a major highway. So there were no car sounds–no engines, horns, brakes, or collisions. Solly heard only the rustling of breeze-agitated trees. The mechanical buzzing of a cicada. The groan of his stomach demanding food or demanding to puke.

Three days had passed, but Solly didn't know three days had passed, only that it'd been a long time, because he'd never felt so hungry. He suddenly remembered the crowd, the commotion. They had been gathered around the food booth. There'd been some kind of hubbub there. He swivelled around and saw, beyond a cluster of pine trees, the small wooden structure. It said HAMBURGERS on it. It said HOT DOGS and POTATO CHIPS. COLD DRINKS. ICE CREAM.

Solly started walking along the dirt path that threaded through the village, connecting all the buildings from a century past, a century and a half. He passed a large flatbed wagon parked in the path. It was heaped with hay. Now he remembered: he'd sent Carla and Sim on a hayride so he could sneak off and have a smoke. He remembered waving to them as they sat on the back of the wagon, pulled by a pair of old grey horses. Solly wondered where they kept the horses when the Pioneer Village was closed. Maybe they didn't keep them onsite. Maybe some local farmer brought them in on loan for all the various events: for Pumpkinfest, Hay Daze, Shear & Cheer.

Solly felt a chill and became suddenly aware how soggy his clothes were. It was early morning. The grass, which he had been lying in, was glistening with dew. Dew sparkled on spiderwebs dangling from trees. He heard now the crow of a rooster. The hum of–what was the creek called? The hum of Carpenter Creek.

The food booth was still open. Not open for business, just unlocked. Solly saw a paper plate of wizened French fries, streaked with ketchup and crawling with flies. It sat on the serving counter, having never been picked up. He pushed through the small half-door that swung in toward the kitchen space. Deep fryer. Fridge. Cutting board. Shelves of buns. Solly grabbed a bag of hamburger buns off a shelf and ripped it open. He squirted some ketchup on a bun and took a few bites. His teeth and tongue needed convincing. He forced them into operation.

Outside, there were half a dozen picnic benches, one of which was strewn with empty pop cans. Some of the cans were standing, some lay on their sides, rocking incrementally in the near-breeze. Solly sat down at one of the tables and crossed his arms on the wooden surface. He closed his eyes gently and tried to piece it all together.

The Pioneer Village had been built, Solly remembered, in a place where there had not been a pioneer village. There was, however, a gristmill, a beautiful stone gristmill, and that was why the village was put here. All the buildings were moved in from around the province and set up to create a little village. By any standards, by the standards of any century, it was an unusual village. A village with one of everything.

Solly recalled that after the wagon carrying his wife and son had disappeared down the path, he had wandered off behind the Old McGregor House to light up a Lucky Seven. While he was drawing the smoke slowly into his lungs, he'd heard laughter from inside the two-storey structure. He took a few steps toward the window and peered in. A woman stood by the fireplace, and in the fireplace hung a large black pot. The woman stirred its contents with a long iron ladle, and he recognized her. The woman was Evie Hyman. She wore pioneer garb: a big blue dress, white apron, ruffled sleeves, a bonnet.

Back in high school, Solly had asked Evie Finkelstein, as she was called then, to go on a date with him. There was a stage adaptation of the *Archie* comics being presented at the East Side Secondary School, on the other side of town. Evie had smiled a real genuine smile. But she was already going to the play with Beanie Hyman. Maybe she and Solly could do something else sometime. Even though she'd been totally gracious, Solly felt a bit embarrassed, and soon they graduated, and Solly went to Montreal to attend university, and at some point, he heard that Evie and Beanie had gotten married, become Orthodox, and were cranking out kids at an unprecedented rate.

Now here she was, stirring up dandelion

MATTHEW DALEY


X

tea at the Pioneer Village and ladling it into little paper cups for the visitors to taste. Had she really traded in the name Finkelstein for Hyman? That's what Solly found hard to believe. It was a lose-lose proposition.

After a few moments, Evie had straightened up suddenly and turned toward the door, her back to Solly. She lay the ladle down on a wooden stool and ran from the Old McGregor House. Solly wondered if she ever had dreams of being Evie McGregor, but he didn't wonder long, as he became aware of a commotion in the distance.

That was when he'd started running too, and the last thing he remembered was all the running. Boys in suspenders running. Women in hoop skirts. Bearded men in straight black pants and elbow-patched jackets. Some of them carried farm implements. Some laughed, some shouted.

That was three days ago. Now Solly ground the last of the hamburger bun between his teeth and forced himself to swallow. He opened his eyes again and was surprised by how bright the sun was. He swung himself off the bench and walked back to the tiny kitchen. The cupboards were all open, food and supplies scattered on the wood floor. Why hadn't he noticed this before? And an axe—an axe had been slammed into the food-prep counter.

He grabbed another hamburger bun off one of the shelves and stuffed it into his pocket for later. He set out along the path that led toward the entrance to the Pioneer Village. Alerted by the noise of metallic clanging, Solly swung around to look at the blacksmith's workshop. Was someone in there making horseshoes or something? But then he saw a padlock swinging against the metal plate that housed the door handle. His heart slowed down again.

Passing the Old McGregor House, he glanced through the open front door. The large front room on the ground floor was empty. The black pot, presumably filled with cold dandelion tea, hung motionless in a cold fireplace. Soon Solly was stepping through the back doors of the General Store, which also served as the village's admission office.

The shelves were sparse and tidy. Jars of maple syrup. Small boxes of chocolates in the shape of maple leaves. A Pioneer Puzzle: 312 Interlocking Pieces That Paint a Rural Scene Worth Framing. Key rings with little horseshoes attached, and nameplates in moulded plastic made to look—just barely—like wood. A package of perforated cardboard sheets that, assembled, create An Authentic Steam Engine Just Like Our Great-Grandfathers Operated!

Solly's great-grandfathers had lived in Poland. One was a rag man and the other was a tailor. Solly had been named after the rag man, Simcha, his mother's grandfather. These guys had big grey beards and thick eyebrows and dark eyes and they wore black clothes. They spoke Polish and Yiddish. He imagined they ate dumplings and thin soups and chopped liver. Solly had no idea what his great-grandfathers did for fun, or even if there *was* such a thing as fun back then.

Solly passed by the admission counter, drawing his fingertips lightly along its surface. There was a large jar on it containing small bits of folded paper. Raffle tickets. He remembered buying a raffle ticket when he came in. The prize was a hideous quilt. He had hoped he wouldn't win.

He stepped out the front door of the General Store and gazed past a quartet of outhouses and a rudimentary gazebo. A grass field stretched far back to the country road that meandered about seven kilometres farther to the highway. The grass field was covered in cars, parked in long neat rows. All those cars. No people. Suddenly dizzy, Solly reached out to steady himself and found his hand grasping an easel with a chalkboard perched on it.

In ornamental red hand lettering, it said:

WELCOME TO THE PIONEER VILLAGE
ANNUAL STEAM ENGINE

The word below the second line had been hastily erased, presumably with the side of someone's hand. Solly tried to remember what the missing word was, or the missing words. "FESTIVAL"?

A Miracle Somehow

Drowning seems inevitable,
even with all of her swimming badges
sewn onto old suits,
and a lifeguard whistle around her neck.
It's not that she's afraid of water–
she's not.
And it's not that she can't swim–
she can.
She knows exactly how to keyhole her arm
underneath the water,
kicking from her hips,
toes pointed out behind her,
she knows how to curl her knees into her chest
in H.E.L.P.–
a clunky acronym for the tiny ball
you wrap yourself in if the boat tips
and the water is cold.
But even with the red-and-white singlet
over her bathing suit,
LIFEGUARD spelled in all-caps across her chest,
it seems impossible not to drown.

She can't imagine that something
wouldn't wrap itself around her legs
or her arms, pull her down,
hold her under,
until the water fills her lungs,
her voice disappearing in bubbles
that might never make it to the surface.

So every time she makes
it back to the dock,
her suit dripping and darkening
the sun-bleached wood,
towel wrapped first in a turban,
then around her waist and tucked into itself,
it's a small victory,
a miracle somehow.

–Lindsay Zier-Vogel

"EXHIBITION"? "DEMONSTRATION"? Or maybe something clever, like "BLOW-OUT." Didn't matter, though, because scrawled in white chalk beneath those two lines was:

SKUNK PROBLEM
AT THE
FOOD BOOTH

Solly licked his right index finger and reach toward the chalkboard. He carefully erased all the consonants from the third line in white chalk and stood back to read the whole sign again:

WELCOME TO THE PIONEER VILLAGE
ANNUAL STEAM ENGINE
SKUNK PROBLEM
AT THE
OO OO

Maybe later he'd get rid of *all* the consonants. He was thinking he probably had a lot of time to kill.

A shadow passed over Solly's eyes and he became aware of a faint flapping sound. Looking up, he saw a lone turkey vulture sailing across the cloudless sky. He watched it disappear into the distance like a single piece of punctuation in the corner of a sheet of blue paper.

His legs steady again, Solly started toward the parked cars. One licence plate, on a silver PT Cruiser, read: BEANIE 123. The grass, upon which he walked silently, looked perfectly groomed. The indentations the tires had made were invisible now. How many days does it take for that to happen? For the grass to regain its stature after it's crushed by a tire.

When he reached his car, Solly jammed a hand into his rear pocket. He pulled out the squished hamburger bun, transferred it to his other hand, and jammed the first hand back in. A tiny slip of paper. His raffle ticket for the quilt. He let it flutter to the ground. Now the pocket was empty. He felt the other pockets, patting against the black denim of his jeans, but they were empty too. Solly found a large rock in the grass and began hammering at the driver's window of his car. This set off the car horn, and its bassoon-like honk blared across the field of cars at three-second intervals. When he'd finally smashed a hole in the window, Solly reached in and unlocked the door, swung it open, and slid behind the steering wheel.

The hamburger bun was dry and chewy. Somewhere in the car there was probably a little ketchup package from a hamburger drive-through, but Solly couldn't be bothered to look. His life had changed.

Peering up through the windshield, he saw the turkey vulture winging back. It grew larger and larger. Did the turkey vulture know there'd been a whole thing with a skunk? Did it know what had become of Carla and Sim? And who would win the raffle?

There were plenty more buns on the shelves of the food booth. Eventually the car's battery would die and the horn would stop honking.

Solly would wait for his wife and son to show up, or for the results of the raffle to be announced. Whichever came first.

It was like living in another century.

His was the life of a pioneer. ⊳

Stuart Ross lives in Cobourg, Ontario. His most recent books are the novel Snowball, Dragonfly, Jew (ECW, 2011) and the poetry collection You Exist. Details Follow (Anvil, 2012).

Backstory

Everyday objects trigger inspiration for the author Lauren Kirshner.

Lauren Kirshner is the type of person you want to take record shopping, and ride bikes with around her west-end Toronto neighbourhood. Maybe it's because she's an old soul who imbues her writing with a honeyed, nostalgic quality. Her first novel, *Where We Have To Go* (M. & S., 2009), is the bildungsroman of a gawky girl, Lucy, set against a nineteen-nineties Toronto backdrop, and was a finalist for the 2010 Toronto Book Award. Kirshner was mentored by Margaret Atwood while completing her master's degree in creative writing, at the University of Toronto. Her writing has appeared in multiple Canadian publications, including *Elle Canada,* the *Globe and Mail,* and *This Magazine.* She is also the founder of Sister Writes, a writing workshop for marginalized women. Currently she is the Canada Council writer-in-residence for the County of Brant Public Library, in Paris, Ontario, and is at work on her second novel.

–Amy Stupavsky

"I love old stuff. Ever since I was a kid, I've been attracted to physical objects from a time that is unfamiliar to me. The history seems trapped inside, and it needs stories to get released. In elementary school, I remember my friends were all getting Skip Its, this toy you wrapped around your leg and sort of skipped over. Meanwhile, I was going with my mom to garage sales. I had become obsessed with old photos of people I'd never met. I remember this one photo of a guy from 1917, frowning at the camera with his hair all side-parted. I had the biggest crush on him. At the bottom of the photo it said the name of the photography studio and 'Hamilton.' I'd never been there, but suddenly I was imagining his life in Hamilton, his house, what he did. For me, objects have always been great triggers for stories.

"I was born in Toronto and a lot of my works are inspired by the city. It has no shortage of secrets and obvious treasures. One of my earliest memories is riding the subway when the seats were still mustard-coloured vinyl. When I was a teenager I started exploring Toronto on my own. One of my favourite places was Goodwill Buy the Pound at Jarvis and Adelaide. It's a condo now, but in the mid-nineties it was like that room in the fairy tale *Rumpelstiltskin,* where all the gold is spun–treasures galore! I'd come home with bagfuls of books. I like wandering around in Honest Ed's and dollar stores. A feeling of such richness comes over people because there is no such thing as no. I'm attracted to a place if there's the idea that interesting, important, or life-changing things have happened there. You don't get that feeling from a Starbucks, but you definitely do in the underwear section of Honest Ed's.

"Music was a huge influence. If I weren't a writer, I'd want to be an old-time country singer like Patsy Cline. I would be a revivalist of that sound. Growing up, I wanted to be a music journalist. Every inch of my room was covered in posters. In high school, in 1997, I wanted to be Patti Smith in 1977. I was in love with Joe Strummer, from the Clash. I interviewed him for *Now,* and the first thing I told him was that I had a picture of him in my locker in high school. I love early punk. It just captures a very hungry, urgent lust for life. There's a restlessness there that creates a very strong, creative, brave impulse. It cuts away everything that's not essential; it's direct. My challenge in writing is figuring out what I want to say and what's the most powerful, direct way to do that.

"I feel very grateful to have been mentored by Margaret Atwood. One of my favourite novels of all time is *The Edible Woman.* When I first met her, I was feeling very shy. I put on my best blouse and skirt, and waited at the corner of Bloor and St. George. We had coffee at Bar Mercurio, in the Annex. I didn't have any preconceived notions about what she would be like. She was extremely generous with her energy and insight, and gave me wonderful encouragement as I wrote my first novel. One of the most important lessons she taught me was the importance of knowing your characters from A to Z. She encouraged me to really think about their backstories. They might be a secondary character, but knowing them inside out still counts.

"*Where We Have To Go* is my world, but not my story. Lucy is quite different from me. She's not a crazy music fan. Lucy started out as a short story. She kept talking to me and I kept listening. She had an imaginative, searching, confused, funny voice. A twenty-five-page short story turned into sixty pages, and then I realized there was a lot more to it. Story is very important, and I access the story through the characters. I love the short stories of Grace Paley and Leonard Michaels for their fierce, unapologetic characters. Writing people is trying to figure out what their secrets are. Getting my characters to tell me their secrets is what makes writing a challenge and why I love doing it. I write long and deep, and then I pull back and edit. Subsequent drafts are really about figuring out the meat of the story. The greatest feeling is just being at my desk and enjoying it. Yeah, it's challenging. Yeah, it doesn't always come easily. But being at the heart of a story and being a channel for a story is really incredible."

THOMAS BLANCHARD

Professions

BY KEVIN CHONG

Julian had a nose that resembled a piece of sausage cooked until it burst. Because of this, and the barrel chest he inherited from a coal-mining grandfather, he intimidated those who didn't know him. He did not look like the person he actually was; he looked like the person who, in high school, *beat up* the person he actually was. It had taken him years–by then he was well into his adult life and finishing law school–to feel even slightly at ease in his bulky, uncoordinated body.

At law school, Julian met Anna. He first noticed her across a lecture hall, twirling her tangled, split-ended hair in conversation with another student, who blamed her own inability to take notes on her sister's ongoing addiction problems. The other students had learned to sidestep her. Watching Anna, he noticed she lacked any self-awareness about her own charms. In fact, her allure lay partially in that inattentiveness. Julian later learned that she chewed gum while drinking coffee. She wore sweaters inside out. She set teakettles on the stove then went on long walks. Even in that first glance, Julian knew Anna was too preoccupied with the concerns of others to look after herself.

Observing her over the term, Julian knew that Anna was quick to laugh and far from unapproachable. A friend of Julian's forced him to speak to her at a school Christmas function. That was all he needed: once Julian started talking, he couldn't stop. And in Anna's case, the bemusement she felt watching this chatty bratwurst-nosed man turned to curiosity. They went on study dates in the library and ate together. Julian would cook their meals, pick the movies they watched; he even once sewed a button back onto her favourite jacket. She, in exchange, could see his true self; the laconic intent behind the loquacious result. In their last year at school, after two years together, he proposed over a bowl of soup. She accepted before he could finish asking.

Shortly after their engagement was announced, his future in-laws invited them to their mountainside condo. This was his first extended stay with them. Anna's father was a theatre professor who specialized in the politicized satire of Bertolt Brecht and Dario Fo. Her mother, who was the beneficiary of a family fortune derived from installing plumbing fixtures during the Second World War, painted images of hungry African children over landscapes she would find at flea markets. Her brother played professional handball in Belgium, but his real passion was preserving dying indigenous languages through open-source language software. Everyone in the family was small and lithe and spoke using their delicate hands. And they were all expert skiers.

The first night, Julian and Anna arrived late. As they prepared for bed, Julian lied and said he'd brought work with him for the next day. His alibi wasn't hard to accept; he was at a firm that was notoriously hard on its articling students. The next morning he slept in and walked the short distance from the condo to the resort village. He skimmed a rack of paperbacks in a magazine shop and bought a Harlan Coben thriller. He read ten pages before losing interest. He soon found himself in the hotel bar drinking Irish whiskey and talking to the bartender. The buzz he nursed into the evening allowed him to endure dinner with Anna's family, who, with their faces lit from the mountain air, talked through the night about books and movies he'd neither read nor seen, the "ghastly, odious" Conservative government, and the necessity of the Oxford comma. Their noses–so perfect they seemed carved from fondant, taunting him–rose in laughter.

They seemed wary when the topic turned to Anna and Julian's future careers in law. Julian remembered a lawyer joke he'd heard at work.

"Have you heard this one?" he asked. "What happens when you give Viagra to a lawyer? He gets taller!"

Their noses dropped. Anna placed her hand on Julian; he wasn't sure whether it was to comfort him or signal him to stop. Finally, Anna's brother nodded at Julian's fish entree and made a remark about the depletion of stock in wild arctic char in Norway and Sweden.

Julian's resentment lingered and left him feeling tense the next morning.

"Are you going to work *again*?" Anna asked, watching him getting up from bed. "We're on a holiday."

"I'm only working because I can't ski," Julian said, cracking open his laptop. "I wouldn't keep up with you guys."

Anna sat up in bed and brought her knees to her chin.

"You need to start somewhere."

Julian put his laptop away and borrowed a pair of snow pants and gloves from Anna's father. He walked down to the resort rentals area, the crowded basement of the hotel, where he received a pair of skis and boots from across a counter. The poles were in a bin by the lockers. He signed up for a private lesson and was told to wait outside. With his skis bundled together, and wearing his clunky boots, he stepped up the grated steps that led from the rentals area. He sat on a park bench and in the screen of falling snow watched the skiers glide down the hill and swoop toward the chairlift.

His instructor's name was Molly, an Australian in her early twenties. Her

MATTHEW DALEY

skin was peeling and freckled. She wore a lip ring, the sides of her head were shaved, and peroxide-blond dreadlocks sat tied in a ponytail under her toque.

They approached the tow, where they stood in line with kids carrying snowboards and inner tubes. They latched onto the rope tow until halfway up the hill, when they let go and began their lesson. Molly taught with a laconic precision, pausing at appropriate moments and making the necessary encouragements and corrections with a gesture or a word. She asked Julian to arrange his skis in a pie-wedge shape. They practised turning, which Julian needed to complete three times before Molly was satisfied.

Then they took the chair lift up the mountain. He was surprised he hadn't injured himself yet. He chatted excitedly with Molly.

"I want you to know," Julian began telling her, "I've never skied before. I'm not athletic, not in the least. You might tell by looking at me. It's never been a dream of mine to ski, it hasn't even crossed my mind, not even once, that people would get a kick out of skidding down an icy mountain. That said, it's been a lot of fun. I feel it needed to be said, having been so grumpy this morning."

Molly's reaction was so slight that Julian wasn't sure she had heard him. There was silence, then she asked, "Are you a lawyer?"

Julian laughed, trying to conceal his embarrassment. "How did you know? I mean, I am, I am. What gave it away?"

She pursed her lips, refusing to display any satisfaction in guessing correctly.

"I have a knack for these things. I've taught quite a few lawyers."

Because Julian talked so much, people thought he worked with computers or did something else that deprived him of human contact. The idea he sounded like a lawyer scared him.

"I studied French and Italian in university," he started explaining to her. "I got good grades. I could have easily entered a master's program. I wanted to take the United Nations exam for translators, but my parents, you know how parents can be, made loud, angry speeches. They couldn't see a son of theirs as anything but a lawyer." He added, "I get why lawyers are seen as sleazy. Even I think so sometimes."

Molly settled her shoulders. It seemed liked she'd been put off by his bouquet of self-revelation. "People do worse things for money," she said quietly. "I count myself lucky with this job."

"You're very good at what you do," Julian told her. "I've had a lot of fun so far. Things could change, of course." He laughed. "I'm just kidding."

"Thank you, Julian."

"Anyway, you've made me feel comfortable."

There was another pause in the conversation that Julian was compelled, by habit, to fill.

"Like I said, skiing is such a bizarre activity. Risking broken legs, broken necks, your life–just to ski? Is it worth it?"

Past experience had made Julian aware of his physical limitations. Over one

Somewhere in the Piano

"The truth was that Dennis was in no better shape than his brother [Brian], but he still clung to the belief that there was a melody hidden somewhere in the piano that might save them." –Ben Edmonds, on the Beach Boys

If the angel is already
in the stone (to quote
one Michelangelo),
and therefore ready
to be chiselled free
at any time by any
old Michelangelo
who happens along,
then maybe the standards
and slighter songs
of the future (the Jeanies
with the light brown hair
as well as the genies
in a bottle) are stored
somewhere in the piano
and have been around
forever. Maybe the great
and the not-so-great
works of art (like flies
in amber or flint arrows
in permafrost) aren't made
so much as lost and later
found. Maybe the great
composer matters
no more than his writeoff
of a younger brother
or the nice enough but not
especially gifted nun,
or anyone in a habit
of praying near pianos
for something for the love
of God to happen.

–Jason Guriel

mid-teenage year, Julian had grown six inches and added sixty pounds. He suddenly towered over most of his friends. When what little co-ordination he had had vanished, physical activity not only lost its appeal, it became a hazard. Twice that year he broke his nose. The first time, playing flag football, it was the bare elbow of a friend he had been chasing down the field. The second time, the trunk door of his father's new Mercedes sprang open and blindsided him.

Molly glared at him, just for a moment.

"What brings you here?"

He couldn't resist telling her.

"Haven't you ever done something unpleasant just to please someone else?"

Her face shrunk in scrutiny, before resetting itself without an answer.

It was dry and cold that afternoon, and by nightfall the snow on the ground was hard and icy. Around dinner time, Julian, Anna, and her family drove down the hill from their condo to a nearby strip mall. There, in a former pasta bar decorated like a Tuscan farmhouse, they ate izakaya–Japanese pub–dishes. No one, it struck Julian, tipping back another pint, seemed bothered by the dissonance. After his third Sapporo, Anna put her hand on his elbow and told him, "You're too large to carry home."

As they finished their dessert–a crème brûlé made with frozen matcha ice cream–Julian and Anna's brother fell into a disagreement. Julian, who'd read Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia,* insisted that Patagonia was a part of Argentina. Anna's brother corrected him that it was in Chile.

"The region is part of both countries," Julian said, pulling out his iPhone.

"That is not true," Anna's brother said. "I know many Chileans."

The Wikipedia entry on Patagonia revealed it was part of both countries.

"We were both right," Julian said, handing the phone to his future brother-in-law.

Anna's brother waved the phone away from him.

"Do you have *any idea* how many transplanted rural Chinese have been exploited for your status object? Do you even *know about* the political conditions in the Congo?"

"Right. I heard about those suicides."

Anna's father raised an eyebrow.

"And you still bought that phone?"

"If you had a heart, you would be using one of these." Anna's brother produced a device from his own pocket. It was a nondescript grey smartphone with a touchscreen. "They're called FairSmarts. They're made in Denmark from recycled materials by an industrial design collective with the help of at-risk youth and sex workers leaving the trade who are paid a living wage."

The FairSmart had the approximate dimensions of an old VHS cassette tape.

"Isn't it heavy?"

Anna's mother, who had saucer-shaped eyes and wore amethyst earrings, spat out her latté.

"Convenience comes at a price, Julian," she told him. "Apple reports record quarterly profits, even as they let their suppliers ignore the working conditions. But when there's enough money involved they"–here she implied lawyers–"find loopholes."

The waiter arrived with the bill, which Julian had paid with a credit card. While calculating the tip, Julian recalled an article he'd read on sweatshops.

"Sweatshops," he said, fully aware of the potential unhappy consequences of

this argument, "are often the least worst alternative for poor people. That's what someone in the *Economist* suggested. I'm no expert here, but isn't it true how, throughout history, cheap labour has been necessary for countries to industrialize their economies?"

Anna's father, a jowly, olive-skinned man, would start each thought with a vacant pause, his lips forming words a moment before any sound came through them.

"Actually. Julian. That's only because people in Third World countries–"

"*Developing world* countries," Anna's mother corrected.

Anna's father closed his eyes and nodded in agreement.

"People there are too busy toiling away in sweatshops, those boys and girls making Gucci suits and Nike high-tops. They don't have the time to educate themselves. There's not enough social capital to create opposition. Which is how these multinationals prefer it."

Julian shook his head.

"Would you rather those people work in sweatshops, or as prostitutes or pickpockets?"

Anna's brother glared.

"We'd rather they be doctors or writers."

"You're ignoring reality."

"Reality? *Jesus.*" Anna's brother laughed contemptuously. "Why don't you use your imagination?"

Julian snorted. "Imagination couldn't help one sweatshop worker," he told him. "Reality is what I see with my own eyes."

"Well, you certainly picked the right profession." Anna's brother stood up and announced that he'd be waiting outside. "Thanks for dinner."

Anna's father took out his FairSmart and followed his son outside to answer a phone call from a graduate student. When her mother wandered to the washroom, Anna crossed her eyes at Julian. She preferred to start her arguments through agreement.

"O.K., so my brother can be a little self-satisfied. I admit that," she said. "But that's no excuse to bait him."

"I can't believe you're taking his side."

"You don't even *care* about sweatshops." When Anna was angry she could be insufferably whiney. A brat. She hated conflict, even if the alternative was half-baked apologies and false consensus. "Or capitalism."

"He had it coming."

Julian stepped outside first and held the door for Anna. From the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of the snowball that Anna's brother, the professional handball player, had hurled at his face. He had enough time to move his head, but the snowball winged the side of his face above the eye. He blinked, and for an instant, all he could see were spots of purple.

"Is that *reality* enough for you?" Anna's brother asked.

When Julian could finally recognize shapes and objects, the first image he could make out was Anna's father, struggling to keep a straight face.

Julian trudged cautiously down the hill–his shoes were not suited for the snow–into the village and the same hotel as yesterday. He looked over the scratch above his eye in the men's room and judged it to be harmless. He decided to get another drink. What else was there to do? From the hotel lobby he could hear the crowd inside the bar, their voices tired from exercise. The room was filled with candlelight and the liquid baritone voice of the piano player in one corner rang through the muted chatter. He stood at the crowded bar and waited. The bartender–with whom he had such a pleasant conversation the day before–only got around to him after fifteen minutes, and made no apologies.

The people in the lounge were older, many of them tourists wearing jackets or caps with the resort logo on them. He paid for his double Jameson and looked for a place to sit. When a group of German businesswomen left, he took their table. He decided to wait a couple of hours. By then, he'd be sober enough to find his way home, but drunk enough to pass out in bed. He was sitting at the table, fuming, when his ski instructor appeared at the lounge entrance. Molly was with another woman, a tall brunette wearing a baggy sweater and carrying a knapsack.

She looked around the crowded room and noticed Julian.

"Hey–you mind if we share the table?"

"Of course not," he said. He offered his hand. "I'm Julian."

Molly looked at him with a stiff, unfriendly face.

"I remember your name."

A waiter approached from the crowd, carrying two gimlets on a tray. He knew these two women and refused their money.

While Molly took a sip from her drink, the brunette offered her hand.

"My name's Sheila."

Her hair was dark and glossy and fell past her shoulders. She wore big hoop earrings.

Julian asked her whether she was a ski instructor, too.

"No," Molly answered for her. "Sheila works nights. We're waiting for the guy she works with to show up. I'm here to keep her company."

Sheila checked her watch.

"He's running late."

"He's always late," Molly said. She looked at Julian. "So why are you here by yourself?"

He shrugged.

She cocked an eyebrow at him, and Julian knew her dazzling skills of deduction were at work once again.

"Does it have anything to do with that scratch on your face?"

"No," he told them. "I just needed some alone time."

Sheila seemed alarmed. She was the smiling, ingratiating good cop to Molly's sullen bad cop.

"Should we leave?"

"That's all right." Julian tried to explain his situation without going into detail. "I'm not the type of person who needs company twenty-four hours day. Anna understands, call her crazy. I love her. She thinks I'm strange, but she lets me have my space. Besides, it's good for some mystery to remain in a relationship, don't you think?"

When Sheila leant toward him to speak, he smelled cinnamon chewing gum, spray tan, and baby powder.

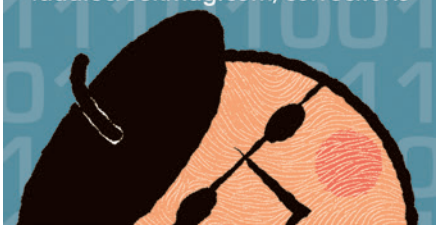
"I know what you mean," she said.

Molly looked at her with surprise.

"That reminds me of a movie we saw. It was about some guy who lives next to an analyst with a home office. One day he discovers an air vent that lets him eavesdrop on the shrink's sessions with a beautiful woman. She tells the analyst about her ideal mate. The analyst asks her what the perfect guy's like, and she says someone who's interested in Renaissance art, who drives a truck and owns a dog." She trailed off. "Et cetera."

For some reason, Sheila wouldn't look him in the face when she talked. This, Julian decided, was somehow beguiling.

"The point of the movie was, I guess, that all our secrets are rather boring, so it's important they stay secrets."



"The movie's protagonist," Molly explained, "arranges to meet the beautiful woman and sweeps her off her feet. The beautiful woman dumps him because he's so predictable. It wasn't a very good movie."

Sheila's iPhone rang.

"He says he can't make it," she said after she put away the phone. "Maybe I can work without him."

Molly shook her head. "It's just not safe, even if I come along."

Julian watched them with interest, waiting to be let into their conversation. They seemed oblivious to him.

"Well, I can't not go. I'll lose my job. Plus, we really need the money. It's not like they do anything. They just sit there."

"I won't let you get raped," Molly said. She stared at Sheila, then turned to Julian. She looked helpless. "I have my limits, too."

From the window of the two-room suite, Julian could see a fan-shaped area of the mountain, lit for night skiing. In the suite were a dozen men his age. They sat in front of a TV, plucking beer from the mini-bar and eating cheese doodles. Someone, the man in charge, offered him a beverage. In an effort to appear professional, he broadened his chest and shook his head brusquely.

The tension and anticipation seemed to overwhelm the men in the room. They moved a step away from Molly and Sheila. Many of them wore wedding rings and the type of casualwear that, Julian knew firsthand, had been selected for them on gruelling trips to the mall.

The men moved a coffee table and pushed a couch back. They put a chair at the centre of this space, set off from the others, for the man of the hour. He was broad-jawed with a thinning head of hair. He tried to laugh off his nervousness as he took his seat, but seemed too filled with shame even to acknowledge Sheila and Molly, who carried a tape deck and Polaroid camera. As Sheila went to the washroom to change, Molly spoke to them in the same blunt tone she used to teach skiing. She explained that she was here to take Polaroids and that only her camera was allowed. "There's absolutely no touching," she barked at them. "If anyone crosses the line, the show's over and there's no refund."

Molly led Julian, by his elbow, to the other room.

I hate her job–I hate it, I hate it," she told him.

He was to wait there unless he was called. The bed was still made and the television set played soft-core porn with the sound turned off. Sheila emerged from the washroom in a slutty librarian outfit. Although she was in high heels and a tight skirt, her hair was in a bun and she wore large owl-shaped glasses, a cardigan, and a string of pearls. In one hand, she held a leather-bound edition of *Bleak House;* in the other was a due-date stamp.

"Special request," Shelia said about the outfit. She met eyes with Julian for an instant. "Are you sure you don't want to watch?"

In that instant, he thought about the first time he'd seen saw Anna naked. He'd been with only two women before, both older waitresses he met while working at restaurants. They had compared notes about him and each of them directed him through their coupling like they were instructing a dog. With Anna, they had disrobed shortly after their first kiss; they both began taking their own clothes off as if on cue. He remembered babbling nervously, afraid of how his body–his bulging belly and cuppable breasts–might look with the fluorescent ceiling light of his room adding a greyish pallor to his untanned torso, but when she was completely naked he went silent. Sheila repeated her question. He shook his head.

"Usually," Molly said before closing the door, "Sheila uses a safe word. But since you're new we'll just scream your name if we need you, O.K.?"

Julian sat in a chair next to the door. The music started in the other room. He heard Sheila ask the men to make noise. Her request was followed by self-conscious laughter, then a few tepid catcalls, their hoots growing steadily with gusto. What would he do if he was called into the room? He'd step in there and deal with whomever was getting out of hand–would he merely ask him to leave? Or would he have to wrestle him to the ground? If the offender took a swing at him, would he have the presence of mind to punch back? He thought about this, and other things. And then, over all the noise, he waited for his call.

Kevin Chong lives in Vancouver. His latest books are the novel Beauty Plus Pity (Arsenal, 2011) and the memoir My Year of the Racehorse (Greystone, 2012).

SOCIALLY INEPT

BY NINA BUNJEVAC


PLEASE SAY YES! IT'S BEEN SO LONG...GREAT, I'LL SEE YOU TONIGHT!
CONSIDER YOURSELF CURED, MY DEAR...
ONE HOUR WITH THIS LOSER AND YOU'LL BE THANKING THE GODDESS YOU'RE NOT HER! IT WILL SNAP YOU RIGHT OUT OF YOUR DEPRESSION!
AFTER THE PERFORMANCE...
WHAT A POWERFUL PERFORMANCE! I JUST LOVED THE SYMBOLIC BIRTH AT THE END...
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!
SYMBOLIC BIRTH? SO, IF THE FOOT-LONG SUB SANDWICH SHE PULLED OUT OF HER VAGINA WAS SUPPOSED TO SYMBOLIZE BIRTH-WAS THE KETCHUP BOTTLE THAT FOLLOWED...
...SUPPOSED TO SYMBOLIZE THE AFTERBIRTH?
GEEZ, THAT WAS A DOWNER - NO WONDER I'VE GOT NO FRIENDS... QUICK, SAY SOMETHING FUNNY!
HEY! WANNA HEAR A GOOD JOKE?
SURE! LET'S HEAR IT!


WHY DID THE FEMALE JAZZ VOCALIST CROSS THE ROAD?
TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE?
DUNNO...
WHO CARES? THANK GOD SHE'S OFF THE STAGE!!!! HEHEHEHEHE!!
LISTEN,BUSTER!!! I HAPPEN TO BE A FEMALE JAZZ VOCALIST, AND I FIND THAT JOKE OFFENSIVE AND SEXIST!!!
I FEEL WORSE THAN BEFORE...
SIGH...
THAT NIGHT...
FUCK FRIENDS... WHO NEEDS THEM ANYWAY?
THE END

A Destination Apart

Unlike its Toronto counterpart, Montreal's art deco masterpiece still needs a saviour.

BY SARAH GILBERT

It was 1999, but when the elevator opened on the ninth floor of the Montreal Eaton's store, I was transported to the golden era of ocean liners and white gloves. I sailed down a corridor of marble lined with porthole-shaped display windows, past the elegant phone booths, to the tangerine dining room, with its soaring ceiling and alabaster lamps.

At the end of the millennium, during the final days of Eaton's, I savoured *poire belle Hélène*–pears and chocolate–in the restaurant known simply as the Ninth Floor, or le Neuvième. Here, in the architect Jacques Carlu's 1931 design of modern elegance, customers once experienced an atmosphere untouched by the Great Depression. For seven decades, Montrealers continued to escape the world outside by having lunch or coffee here amid pillars, murals, and fountains.

In 2000, Quebec's Ministry of Culture and Communications designated the Ninth Floor and its art deco interior a historic monument. But it was too late. Ivanhoé Cambridge, the property manager who bought the building following the collapse of Eaton's, had already gutted the restaurant's kitchen. Twelve years later, the beloved dining room remains closed to the public. Heritage Montreal has put it on its list of threatened sites. No one is allowed in.

I thought I'd see how close I could get.

In the atrium of the old Eaton's, now the Complexe Les Ailes mall, I boarded the glass elevator. There were three levels of stores and several more containing offices. No button for the ninth floor.

Le Neuvième had always been a destination apart, a little like Platform 9¾ for the Hogwarts Express. "You had to know it was there," says Sandra Cohen-Rose, the author of the book *Northern Deco* and the founder of the group Art Deco Montreal. "It was a magical place. The longer it's closed, the more it deteriorates. I don't know how bad it is now."

Cohen-Rose would like to see the Ninth Floor restored and in use, like Carlu's eponymous restaurant (once known as the Seventh Floor) in Toronto's one-time Eaton's store at College Park, but she also knows restoring it would cost millions.

From the glass elevator the shopping centre looked deserted. When I asked at the information desk about visiting the Ninth Floor, the clerk handed me the mall director's business card.

Outside, I examined the building. I noticed another entrance on University, pushed through a revolving door, and there, to the left, was a bank of old elevators. I stepped in and pressed nine.

The elevator opened onto a marble wall featuring an empty porthole-shaped display window. The satin-finished metal doors were locked. I tried them, no doubt captured by a security camera.

"What do you need?" asked a man by the elevator. I told him I was looking for the past, for the Ninth Floor of the old Eaton's, a restaurant reminiscent of a ship's ballroom, right behind those locked doors.

"I've often wondered what was back there," he said.

There was nothing open on the ninth floor except offices. Back in the lobby I asked the security guard if people ever came looking for the Ninth Floor. "Old people, sometimes," he said. "They want to go up to the restaurant."

I envisioned someone passing through Montreal for the first time in decades, hoping to make a special pilgrimage to le Neuvième.

"Did you ever go there?" I asked the guard. He was young, but might have been taken there as a child by his mom or grandmother, a ritual passed from one generation of Montrealers to the next.

"*Pas moi.* But I see it on my rounds."

I perked up. "You do rounds up there? Is it still beautiful?"

He shrugged. "You see it once, you don't need to see it again."

The one guy who got inside regularly didn't even care. I faked nonchalance. "I guess I couldn't go with you sometime?"

The guard shook his head. What kind of security would he be if he let me in?

I left two messages for Johanne Marcotte, a director with Ivanhoé Cambridge, asking if I could visit the Ninth Floor.

In the meantime, I looked for other ways to come close to the restaurant's spirit and the way it called to mind another time. Cohen-Rose told me I'd have to go to the *Queen Mary,* docked in Long Beach, California, to find anything like it. "It's terrible the things we've lost," she said.

I tried to think of where I could commune with a lost world over a cup of tea or coffee. If the Jardin du Ritz were still open, at the Ritz-Carlton, or the Tartan Room, at Ogilvy, or even Ben's delicatessen, I could have gone there. But downtown was now a uniform mass of Second Cup and Java U shops. In a narrow Starbucks, on University, up the street from the old Eaton's, loud music blared as every single customer stared blankly at a laptop or phone. There was no "there" there.

I remembered the seventh floor Bon Appetit Café, at the Bay, one level up from home furnishings. On a blustery grey lunch hour a few dozen people were sprinkled across the vast room. A red canoe perched on fake beams and paddles hung on the wood-panelled walls. It was not grand or luxurious, but at least it did feel like something from another decade. It conjured the Paddlewheel of my youth, at the Portage Avenue Bay, in Winnipeg.

Two elderly men took their trays to a table. "They have less choice here now," said one. "No chicken pot pie, no fish." They ate soup and crackers, and before shuffling out, one had a parfait glass of *le dessert du jour,* lemon pudding.

Up there, the commotion of the city, the snarled traffic from the student protest march, seemed far away. In the Bon Appetit, people were doing old-fashioned things like reading books and newspapers and eating cubed Jell-O.

COLIN ROSE

A still-operating Ninth Floor, circa 1987, more than a decade before its closing.

But even here, change is in the offing, as the Bay plans to renovate its seventh floor cafeteria to give it a more contemporary feel.

I finally reached the elusive Johanne Marcotte. "We're doing everything we can to preserve the Ninth Floor," she said, "and this includes not letting people in." Marcotte was so gracious she managed to sound friendly as she said this. She mentioned that she'd shown the space to potential tenants (something Ivanhoé Cambridge has been saying for years), but was not at liberty to say more. "I don't mean to rub it in, but it's always a pleasure for me to go there," she added.

At least someone was still enjoying le Neuvième.

The Ninth Floor restaurant was once a time machine anyone could visit for the price of a cup of coffee. I'm left with the memory of that *poire belle Hélène,* served by a stout waitress in a black dress with a crisp white apron. Poached pears and ice cream, embellished with frills of whipped cream and chocolate sauce. I've never seen it on a menu anywhere else.

Sarah Gilbert lives in Montreal. She contributes to a number of publications.

Totem Poll

Design is still a T.T.C. keystone.

BY CONAN TOBIAS

The Toronto Transit Commission's recent market testing of new signage for its subway entrances is a pleasant reminder of what the T.T.C. is capable of. Though it's easy to view the city's transit system as the mishmash of multigenerational utilitarian signs and handwritten notes it has become, interesting design has long been a T.T.C. hallmark, from the Bloor–Danforth line's touted system of colour-coded platforms to Paul Arthur's well-meaning but ill-fated wayfinding system, at St. George station.

The lone new sign is being tested at the northeast entrance to Osgoode, a spot chosen for the various generations of signs that mark the station's other three entrances around the intersection of Queen and University. The totem pays tribute to the subway entrance markers of the mid-twentieth century, constructed in the shape of the T.T.C.'s winged keystone crest. (Very few of the original signs remain; those that do are found mainly outside T.T.C. administration buildings and facilities.) Unfortunately, without the original signs' addition of the word "SUBWAY," in the crest's wings, the new signs, so far, have proven to be too much form over function.

"One of the things we learned was that [the sign] probably isn't clear enough to stand on its own so that people know it's the subway," Chris Upfold, the T.T.C.'s chief customer officer, said recently. "I think what we were trying to do is replicate some of the stuff the London Underground logo does. The difference is, obviously, the London Underground logo has the word 'UNDERGROUND' in it."

The T.T.C. plans to continue testing versions of the totems, though budget cuts and city council infighting likely will prevent a rollout of new signage anytime soon. But it's nice to see design hasn't fallen off the priority list completely.

CONAN TOBIAS; TOP RIGHT: CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES, SERIES 648, FILE 133, ID. 21


ZURICH


PARK PLAZA HOTEL
SUBWAY


SUBWAY
CH


SUBWAY
Osgoode

The Fog of Memory

Some of Digby Neck's villages are more adept at regaining their lost urbanity than others.

BY SHAWN MICALLEF

Canada is a country made up of curious bits of geography, like Digby Neck. Given its unusual name, Digby Neck should be more famous than it is. But the tiny Nova Scotia peninsula is located on the other side of the province from the picture-postcard-friendly Cape Breton, and it's beyond the pretty Annapolis Valley, where people take day trip drives from Halifax to see quaint towns and perfectly bucolic farms. So notoriety eludes the Neck.

The Neck is a rough, often scrubby, narrow spine of land–an extension of the North Mountain of the Annapolis Valley, along the Bay of Fundy as it gives way to the Atlantic Ocean. It's separated from the main rump of southwestern Nova Scotia by the equally long and narrow St. Mary's Bay. There's only one road running the length of the Neck, beginning in Digby, a town of about two thousand. Digby is where people on the Neck are referring to when they say they're "going into town." The nearly hour-long Neck drive ends in East Ferry, where cars are shuttled to Long Island for more driving, then another ferry ride to Brier Island, which may be as close to the end of the known world as I've ever been.

Along the way, the fast and bumpy highway rolls with the mountains, cutting close to the sea on a few occasions, but managing mostly to stick to the interior–quite a feat, considering how narrow the Neck is. To get to either coast there are dead-end roads leading to tiny fishing villages, like Gulliver's Cove, or practically unpopulated ones, like Griffin Cove. Even on the most brilliant sunny day the fog can roll in fast and thick, reducing visibility to almost nothing.

Halfway down the Neck are two villages, ten minutes apart: Centreville, spread along Trout Cove Road, rolling down to the Bay of Fundy, and Sandy Cove, a village spread across the Neck between two rather spectacular beaches that, like the entire coast here, are subject to massive tides. Though buffeted by the same economic forces, and even though they're so close to each other, they are very different places.

Centreville is where one half of my family is from. Grandma still lives in the house my great-grandfather built on the Loyalist plot of land given to our ancestors during the American Revolution. Unlike Grandma, her kids have moved on. As is the case with many who grew up here, they all moved away in the nineteen-sixties, up the valley, to Halifax or, in my mom's case, Windsor, Ontario. The brain and human drain on places like Centreville is a typical rural story.

To walk from the highway along Trout Cove Road to the bay is to embark on a real and imagined journey, with the ghosts of what once was all around. Centreville, and a lot of the Neck, is not the joyous fiddle-playing, foot-stomping land of kitchen parties most outsiders picture when they think of Nova Scotia. Unlike Cape Breton or the South Shore, this corner of the province was originally dominated by Baptist and United Church congregations that, while often playing central roles in the community, did not much approve of fun. Though they didn't exactly suffer the Protestant-heavy repression depicted in Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves,* there were reasons apart from economics for why Mom and her siblings left the Neck.

There's a sense of lost urbanity to Centreville. Though tiny, there were once three stores (all have since closed) located quite close to the road. The two churches were also across the road from one another, set just a metre or two back from the pavement. Concrete footings and front stairs are all that remain of an old one-room schoolhouse, and further down the road there once was an event hall. Along the way are a mix of solid old homes and cheaply built dwellings. Some are lived in year-round, others have seasonal residents, and some aren't lived in at all, victims of the shrinking village population.

Centreville's most urban spot was down at the shore, where three wharves once sheltered a sizeable fishing fleet, and the attendant fish houses on land were clustered tight and thick. But a fire some forty years ago left only a handful of those buildings standing, serving the half-dozen or so fishing vessels that still use Centreville regularly. This village, far away from the rust belt, had much in common with mid-western American and Canadian industrial towns that saw their economy largely evaporate. "The fish," as they say around these parts, "isn't what it used to be."

Down the road, in Sandy Cove, the story is different. Though also home to a fishing fleet, Sandy Cove has been more adept at replacing that shrinking economy with another: summer tourism. Always a place people from Halifax or New England came to visit, the village today is a mix of locals and out-of-towners, some of them artist types who lend Sandy Cove a smaller version of the theorist Richard Florida's creative-class economy. Many locals are engaged in taking care of properties for seasonal visitors, providing locals with money unrelated to the uncertain fishery.

One summer resident, Sarah MacLachlan, the president of House of Anansi Press, in Toronto, along with her partner, the journalist Noah Richler–both regular visitors to Sandy Cove for some time–recently bought a sprawling house known locally as "Paul Gidney's

house," because Paul Gidney used to live in it. Life-long Sandy Covers, Gidney's family owned the house for generations, before he sold it to MacLachlan, who has plans to turn it into an artist and writing retreat. It's not without precedent: the house at one point was a hotel, where my great-grandmother from Whale Cove, up the Neck, worked as a maid in her teens at the turn of the last century. MacLachlan recently found old guest books from the nineteen-thirties containing signatures of writers from New York and elsewhere. There's much potential here. The next Cape Breton.

Back in Centreville there is still much life, and even fun, but no immediate replacement of what was lost–either its economy or residents. The memories of people who once lived there, like my mom, and people who still do, like Grandma, are near-corporeal ghosts that live among the present inhabitants. The idea of the place when it was at zenith (maybe the nineteen-fifties, maybe 1900, maybe an amalgam of past dates) is as much a part of the landscape as what's there now. Every walk becomes a past-filled conversation about who lived where and what used to be.

It's not unlike the 1943 children's novel *Fog Magic,* by Julia L. Sauer, an America librarian and writer who also summered up the Neck, in Little River. In the novel, a young girl, Greta Addington, walks through a decaying fishing village based on the Neck's White's Cove. But when the fog rolls in, she's also able to wander the area back when it was a going concern and talk to the residents. The fog of memory can nearly be as strong in Centreville, as these stories from the past I've heard so many times are as much a part of the area I know as my present-day experiences are when I visit. The trick is to see if some of the Sandy Cove economic magic can spread to Centreville, and perhaps start to crowd out some of the old memories with new ones.

Shawn Micallef lives in Downtown Toronto. He is a senior editor and co-owner of Spacing magazine, and the author of Stroll: Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto (Coach House, 2010). He recently wrote the text for Patrick Cummins's new photo book, Full Frontal T.O. (Coach House, 2012).

PAT CAMERON

From top: the Centreville shore; a lighthouse on Briar Island, at the Neck's end point; one of Digby Neck's abandoned homes, near Tiddville.

The Edge of the World

BY SARA HEINONEN

Tabit and I were passing the high school we had just graduated from when we spotted her dad about to jump. Other men in sweats were jumping too. One by one, they sprang from the brick wall of the front entrance to the hard dirt below, a drop of six feet. I recognized what they were doing from a documentary I'd seen on parkour, which amounts to treating the city like a big gymnasium. Tabit's dad landed, then grabbed the wall and crab-walked back up. He hopped around while he waited his turn, his bright white teeth broadcasting unadulterated joy.

"Not again," Tabit said and bit at her fingernail. She was dressed in yet another monochromatic outfit. This time it was blue. "That's the second day of work he's missed this week."

Maybe Tabit's dad's behaviour had provoked her recent interest in drugs. There was also George, her boyfriend, with his brooding intensity and evasiveness and his flute ballads. They were always breaking up. I worried she might fall apart.

We continued along the sidewalk until we heard someone running to catch up.

"Hey! Hey, girls!"

Tabit's dad's workout pants hung off his hips. His face glistened.

"Did you see my jump?" His bulging eyes swam laps from me to Tabit. "It'll be on YouTube later."

"Maybe it'll go viral," Tabit said. "Maybe you'll get your very own show."

He nodded and grinned, like she was actually serious. Tabit's dad was an entertainment lawyer representing people in reality television. This sounded mildly impressive until you spoke three words with the guy. He'd blather on about nothing we could make sense of, as if that was the best he could do with the apparent maelstrom in his brain. He often listened in as Tabit and I discussed world events–bankrupt nations, leaking nuclear plants, earthquakes, floods, storms–and though he never contributed anything coherent, at least he looked concerned when we complained about the growing apathy in our privileged country while the rest of the world more or less writhed in agony. Recently he'd asked about the book I was reading on agnotology–the study of culturally induced ignorance–but I gave up my explanation when his crazily tapping feet suggested that he wanted to go jump off something.

"You gonna come watch us?" he asked.

"Sorry," I said and waved a DVD to distract from Tabit's cool silence. "We have something planned."

What the hell were we doing, Tabitha and me? Traipsing through the humid days between the end of high school and the kickoff to our official lives, the adult part. I'd been accepted to a university in another province to study sociology, though I was worried about leaving my mom–she'd lost her job and was spending all her time in a nest with an owl thanks to the wonder of Webcams. Tabit planned to study political science at an out-of-town university and I was trying to help her keep her shit together a few more weeks.

Tabit and I both had discouraging summer jobs that ignored our potential. I worked in an ice cream parlour, a sticky, lobotomizing place that brought out unsavoury qualities in the mostly middle-aged customers–indecision in the face of choice, greed for toppings, eager, grasping hands. Tabit worked a few shifts each week in a veterinary clinic. The best part, she said, was petting the fur of sleeping animals when no one was looking. George busked in the financial district. He'd been making more money than any of us, maybe even more than our underemployed parents. As George described it, business people flowed out the mirrored towers at noon to gather around him. He played his flute, then sang about the importance of thinking independently and staying hopeful about the future. The business people chomped on hot dogs and listened, hanging off his every lyric. Some even swayed. Encumbered by food and drink, they clapped with their forearms, like seals. Before returning to the towers they dropped ketchup-speckled bills into his open case. Tens and twenties. The odd fifty. George had noticed, however, that not all the business people were going back inside: some simply wandered away. His daily earnings had begun to dwindle.

"It's such a betrayal," he told me. "I'm sharing my innermost thoughts through music and yet each day another dork stops paying attention."

When Tabit and I weren't working we moved between our houses and the library, where we borrowed books and films to keep our minds sharp. Today I'd checked out *Gorillas Speak!,* a film about teaching sign language to a young gorilla named Betty.

Tabit and I sat in her basement sipping Scotch and eating crackers and brie and exchanging shocked glances. In the documentary, Betty's captor, a large-eyed scientist with a stoner's moronic smile, babbled to the camera about the gorilla's extensive sign-language vocabulary. Holed up in a drab trailer, Betty was alternately praised for her human-like efforts and scolded for her gorilla-like inclinations. The deal-breaking scene, the one that made us spit crumbs onto the carpet, came when

MATTHEW DALEY

the scientist gave Betty lipstick, only to admonish her when she smeared it across her forehead. Being a gorilla, Betty stared into the mirror she'd been given as if thinking, "Something is wrong with this picture." I kept hoping Betty would hurl the scientist against the kitchenette and make a break for the distant trees. But, of course, the trailer was locked.

Tabit turned the DVD off.

"I was *already* feeling hollow today," she said. "That didn't help."

"I can't believe that shit was Criterion," I said.

I rattled the ice in my glass, questioning the wisdom of another drink.

Tabit got up. From a vase of plastic flowers she pulled out a little bag of pills. She was small, but her neck was thick and her face the kind of pretty that draws stares. Today she looked tired. She'd been up journaling the night before. Through stream-of-consciousness writing she was trying to get at her core emotions. This was fine by me, but I wished she'd ditch the drugs–though she had been saying insightful things lately. For example, she said the reason our parents could no longer function was they recognized the futility of applying themselves to a diminished world. Faced with the crush of innumerable problems, they had lost heart and given up.

Tabit plucked a blue pill from the bag and swallowed it dry.

"You're at blue now?" I should have guessed from her outfit.

"I've *earned* blue, Shauna," she said.

The pills came in a series of colours based on karate belts–white, yellow, orange, blue, green, brown, and, ultimately, black–each colour progressively more intense and more demanding. With the application of careful focus and heaps of positive energy, reaching the black level promised self-realization, however temporary. To her credit, Tabit was not a mess, not yet at least, and I hoped that university–its intellectual and social stimulation–would put an end to the pill-popping. If the drugs didn't stop her going in the first place.

She selected a song on the iPod dock and baroque string music swelled through the room, an allegro piece so uptight it was cool in the inexplicable way coolness works. She danced, which for Tabit was simply shaking her fists with her feet planted on the carpet. Her exquisite face conveyed both bewilderment and hope, like the magical expression worn by someone searching for a book in the library.

After a brief crescendo the music stopped.

"Fuck," she said, "I need to get outside."

"Let's go to the park," I said, remembering the soothing qualities of nature.

George leaned against the porch railing, trilling away on his flute. He wasn't quite pulling off the quasi-bohemian look he had going: faded jeans and a loose cotton shirt, his frizzy brown hair almost to his shoulders. His chunky build and rosy complexion suggested a recent home-cooked meal, even though nobody's family bothered any more. Most nights we faced pasty food microwaved in plastic containers.

"New tune," he whispered, his blue eyes as shiny and sparkling as the flute.

Tabit bounded past him and down the steps as though let off a leash.

"Not here, not here!" she said. "Follow me on the path to enlightenment!"

"She's at blue now," I explained.

He grinned, as if I was bragging when what I meant was, "Help me take care of her." Hot sunlight sliced through the trees. We moved through the soupy beams and back into the shade as we sped to catch up with Tabit.

Surrounded by quiet streets and houses, the park was really just a couple of trees stranded on a big rectangle of weeds that looked more or less like grass. We sat down near where the play equipment used to be before it fell apart. The neighbourhood's evening routine was underway. Food delivery cars pulled up, kids walked stir-crazy pets and teens wandered in throbbing clusters along the sidewalks while the white-hot sky turned the pink of raw meat and the humid air clasped the back of my neck. George played his flute until shouting erupted at

Heads We Win, Tails You Lose

My butt all bone against curb, I'm anxious for
the golf cart's cushion, clubs tipped over on the lawn
like a giant squid autopsy in progress. By and large
cephalopods are smart enough to stay wet.
First rule of survival: pick your battleground.
Most protomammals went inland, others did a
one-eighty, dunked back under, lost their hard-
won legs jogging by in lavender hot pants. . . .
That's immaterial to the issue at hand:
whales, only hours to save them, harpooning
banned in 1986, superseded on the sly. Surprise,
surprise, Japan and Norway, two countries
I've either visited or would like to again.
Terra firma has its pluses. Minuses include
the petrified huddle in wine cellars at Pompeii
that Picasso took a pass on as tableau; the thought
of the skeleton cupping her toddler's skull
could scoop out your heart if you let it.
Bunkers, a.k.a. sand traps, are a cinch
to hit, they crackle in midday like tinfoil.
Iceland's overrun with health nuts despite
the literacy rate, my twosome buddy swears

that on islands the rehydrating's faddish.
A Jeremiah with his irons, more obtuse than acute,
he mans a vehicle with a sizable trunk.
Water can be a hazard too, as when Vesuvius lit up
like a question mark and the pyroclastic wave
vaporized H_2O molecules in every body
turned glyph. Lilac for the girl's pants, I amend
my original assessment. So many things can go wrong
when you swim recreationally in the ocean,
that's why I haven't. Take the U.S.S. *Indianapolis,*
Robert Shaw by all accounts ad libbing
"Farewell and adieu, you ladies of Spain"–
that was sharks, but the same medium, amplifying
military sonar, forcing our cetacean cousins
to choose sides, some ramming astray
onto shores of particulate glass. Obsidian's black
obscures the violets crucial for its form,
in temperatures of hundreds of degrees.
Always late for tee-off, he cradles dirty looks
when denied the right to play through,
my fingers crossed for a cooler, uneventful round.
Stencilled on a dinghy, GREENPEACE shatters spray,
beads the lens, Handycam with jerky frame
separating whaler from prize. I mean *violence,*
the roar loosened when we score a hole in one.

–Matthew Tierney

the centre of the park where two paths crossed. A skinny man in a suit stood swearing at nobody. When he was done, he slammed his briefcase into a garbage can and stormed off.

"Nice suit," George said.

"It's the economy," said Tabit, voice trembling. George reached over and stroked her hair. "Everyone's either ditching or dejected," she continued. "Everyone wants to be productive but they've lost not only the will but the means. And, anyway, why be productive? How is it of value, existentially, to contribute to an economy that's morally and financially bankrupt? I mean, fuck."

"What if it's a bomb?" I suggested, because I kept looking for signs of unrest, of apathy sprouting into frustration, then violence. The garbage can remained inert. In the distance the angry guy got smaller and smaller until he looked like a twig.

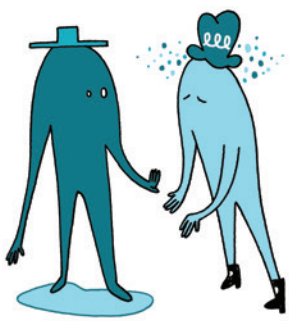
"I've never worn a suit," George said. He lived with his mother and sisters. His dad lived in another city, remarried and estranged from family number one. So it wasn't like there was a suit around to borrow.

"Imagine this," I said. "You're wearing a suit while all the business people listen to you on their lunch break. You're singing about breaking free of the rigid corporate mentality, as per usual, but now you're in a suit just like them. Like them in appearance but, no, you're entirely different. If they see that they can *be* like you and still *look* like themselves, maybe then they'll hang in there."

George nodded.

"I like it. I like what you're saying."

"He'll lose his otherness," Tabit said, her voice wavering. "I don't want to see you in a suit, George." Her eyes shimmered.



But the idea crackled in my mind. Watching George transformed. Seeing him rise above everyone and do something important we wouldn't even be able to fathom. Maybe I was selling myself short in the process. That was possible. But then, he had money now and therefore choices and not all of us were so fortunate.

It was dusk. I got up and offered my hand to Tabit, who was wilting as the pills wore off. She let me pull her to her feet while George blinked up at us.

"What's next?" he asked.

"Something grown-up," I said.

I led them through my front door but Tabit went only as far as the living room, where my mom had left damp laundry draped all over the upholstery. Mom would be in bed with her laptop watching the owl's nest in a northern forest while socializing on-line with her friends, even though they all lived nearby. She had made noises about looking for a job, but my guess was she did nothing. She spent a lot of time staring at the back of the owl's head, waiting for it to swivel and offer her its unblinking eyes. Tabit plopped onto the couch, remote already in her hand. The noise and bright colours of a shoe commercial invaded the room like a bad smell.

George followed me upstairs to the spare bedroom where my mother had put all Dad's clothing and CDs and sports equipment. After a decade's absence, it was unlikely he'd be showing up to use it. Either he was a tragic figure who died far away, alone and unable to contact us, or a cold-hearted genius who saw things were on the skids and cut his losses. George stopped outside the room while I opened the closet and slipped a dark grey suit off its hanger.

"Try it on," I said.

"Whose is it?"

He didn't know much about me or my family.

"If it fits, it's yours."

George put the jacket on. It fit, although he couldn't button it across his wide chest. I held out the pants. He unzipped his jeans, looking straight at me with a mixture of pride and humour and nerves. I just kept my eyes on his while he dropped his jeans and put the pants on. They were too long so I knelt down in front of him and folded up the hems. While I was down there he cupped his hand very lightly to my hair. I stayed still a few seconds, thinking about what he was thinking. His hand like a bookmark for a moment like this we might return

to in the future. When I stood up we both acted as if nothing had happened. He took the stuff from his jeans and put it in the jacket pocket.

"Now what?" he asked.

"It's your first time in a suit," I said. "Make it count."

I had no idea what I wanted him to do except to be serious and open to the infinite possibilities. When a look of concentration transformed his face, I was grateful.

On our way out we passed Tabit. She was asleep and we paused to look down at her.

"Someone should paint that face," George said. "I mean, for a painting."

On the television a group of wrinkled blond women took turns interrupting one another. They sat on mauve chairs and their gesturing hands flashed jewellery and vibrant fingernails. I couldn't pick up on the topic but one of them said, "Our power as humans, girls, is in our ability to decide."

"I can't believe it," I said to George. "She's quoting Buckminster Fuller."

Then she added: "But how can we do that when no one is pointing us in the right direction?"

Which was so sad it was funny. George snorted as he picked up his flute and led the way outside.

George and I sat on the front steps under the darkness of the trees. I like watching the night sky and when I can't see it, I get restless. Recently I'd seen a documentary on Buckminster Fuller. He said some fascinating things about the universe. The one that blew my mind was that some stars we see are actually dead. It takes many lifetimes for light to travel the vast distances to reach our eyes and during that time quite a few of them kick the bucket. Like ghosts or imposters, they shine along with all the still-alive stars and we can't tell them apart just looking at them.

"I like the way this feels," George said, pulling me from my thoughts.

"You mean nighttime in summer?"

He chuckled and pulled on the sleeve of his jacket. "The *suit,* Shauna."

George blew a few throaty notes on his flute. Though I find his music interesting–his songs meander, never with any discernible melody or chorus–I wasn't in the mood to be left essentially alone while he communed with his art. He played a

How I Got To Sleep

Made acceptance speeches, repelled
the Nazi scourge, had sex with lesbians,
convinced parents to keep the dog (age six),
visualized tomatoes ripening, saw her
for the first time again, present at Dieppe,
shouted, "Help is coming, hold on!" plea-
bargained, filibustered, sneered
at Kitty Hawk. Lay on my back and
was an oyster at Leucate Plage, signed
that kid's cast, watched the car
hit someone else's child in Berga,
opened the envelope, gave
the eulogy (whole room wept), remembered
the lost perogy recipe that called
for cottage cheese. Turned over again–
smear of the red-numbered clock–
designed book covers, got in under a left
and put Chuck Liddell down, caught
bullfrogs in the muck at the edge
of Pine Lake, brought back the smell of
blueberry buns from the Open Window Bakery,
drove the narrowing roads north, held
in my hand the tight head
of a milkweed pod and peeled it back
and back into whiteness
until there was nothing.

–Michael Redhill

while, then lowered the flute and sang: "Do you remember your life at work? / Life with work? / Oh, life, it is work. / Do you remember the money earned? / That you dropped at my feet? / Dollar bills at my feet." And here his voice rose high and sharper–his signature sound–"Oh, sweet money for my tunes!"

I was ruminating on the change in George's lyrics–less philosophical than I remembered–when the vibration of a truck lumbering up the street throbbed through the steps and upstaged his song. The truck groaned to a stop in front of my house. Strapped to the side were ladders while on top its flashing light made the overhead leaves jump from orange to darkness and back again. Three workers emerged. They wore hard hats and fluorescent yellow vests with reflective Xs. One of the guys gripped a flashlight and a clipboard that he read from aloud. The two others started lifting sheets of plywood we hadn't even noticed were spread around on the road. They slid sheet after sheet off to the side.

"I wonder what they're up to," George said, standing.

"It's just nice to see adults working," I said.

One of them took a ladder from the truck and slid it into what we now realized was a big hole in the road. He stepped down and disappeared below the surface.

"Down, down, down," George said, jingling coins in his pockets. "That sucker is going *down*."

I figured he'd pick up his flute and segue into song. Instead he slowly exhaled. I noticed then how silent the street was for a summer evening. There was no one on the sidewalk, no one driving by. I pictured everybody in the neighbourhood glued to their televisions, watching the women on the plush chairs. Maybe we'd got it wrong. Maybe they had been saying something important and we were missing it.

The guy handling the pylons set the last one on the asphalt and stepped onto the ladder. We watched his hard hat descend out of view.

"They must be fixing it up," George said with a hint of satisfaction.

"How do you fix a hole by going *into* it?" I asked. I didn't expect George to have an answer. The question just needed asking.

The one with the clipboard clomped around on the pavement. He stopped and shone the flashlight down the hole, then started writing. He climbed back up into the driver's seat and stayed put. Several minutes later there was still no sign of the others.

George straightened the suit jacket, flicked something off the lapel, and walked over. I followed. Near the curb was a gaping pit bigger than the area of two cars. The ladder stuck up out of it. We couldn't see the bottom.

"A sinkhole," George declared.

"But sinkholes occur because of an underground disturbance," I said. "Usually after a storm or some kind of utilities construction. Nothing has happened here."

"Maybe our focus should be on solutions," he snapped, "and not speculation."

I looked at him. "What the hell's eating *you*?"

Just then a helmet broke through the darkness. We moved back as one of the guys climbed up and out, followed by his colleague. Ignoring us, they pulled up the ladder and hooked it onto the side of the truck, but they didn't put the plywood back over the hole. The engine started up.

"Excuse me!" George called, arm thrust out and pointing. His grey, suit-jacketed back was as rigid and imposing as a slab of granite. "You're just leaving this here?"

"Do we look like Road Repair?" one of them said. "We look like we have *asphalt* ready to go?"

"Clearly this is a hazard," George said. "A serious one."

"Who the hell are *you*?"

The man's sneer seemed like a slight not so much against George as against the suit.

"I'll be contacting someone about this," George continued. "I have friends downtown who'll be interested to know about holes in the road big enough to swallow an *entire goddamn community*!"

His voice had risen to a shout.

"We don't have to listen to this shit," the guy said to his co-worker.

Shaking their heads, they hopped up into the truck and drove off.

George strode right over to the edge of the hole and looked down.

"Someone has to get to the bottom of this!" he yelled into it.

The hole did nothing to his voice. No amplification, no echo. I was disappointed for him. Like all of us, George just wanted to feel significant.

He came back onto the grass.

"George!" Tabit padded across the lawn toward us. "George in a suit!"

She caressed his back.

"He's going to wear it when he busks," I said.

Tabit clutched his shoulder and started laughing. She didn't stop. She laughed so hard she snorted but she still didn't let go of him.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

George wasn't laughing. He removed Tabit's hand like it was debris.

"That isn't how he makes his money," Tabit said.

"Hey, Tabit," George said. "What the fuck?"

"What's going on?" I asked.

George rubbed his forehead, then shrugged.

"I've stopped going downtown. I don't busk any more. I deal."

Deal? As in little coloured pills? I was speechless, reeling from the sucker punch of his complicity in Tabit's Little Problem. Meanwhile, Tabit had noticed the hole and stepped toward it. Luckily, George saw her as well and we lunged in unison, just managing to grab her arms–thin arms still warm from sleeping.

"It's O.K.!" she shouted, trying to wriggle free. "I'm solid. I'm not transcending any more."

The weight of holding her up and George's admission were pissing me off. My arms ached. We were in a kind of struggling huddle, the three of us were as close as we had ever been or would ever be again. But George's gaze skimmed the top of our heads, like he was thinking about things unrelated to us and this strange stew of a night, as if he was looking at something far in the future that wasn't great, maybe, but big and challenging, something he was going to take on.

Tabit broke free and got right up to the edge. George stayed beside me, hands in his pockets, watching her.

"Stop her, George!"

"Tabit–," he said, and as he took his hands from his pockets a plastic bag fell to the ground. Dozens of black pills spilled onto the grass and asphalt.

Tabit crouched beside the hole and stared down in. Both her proximity to the edge and the revolting black pills,

like the blind eyes of a hundred dolls, brought a ribbon of bile up into my throat. Despising both George and Tabit, I twisted away and hunched over the grass, though all I produced were a few pathetic dry heaves.

From the front door my mom's carefree voice sailed out, "Hey, you guys! Want some dinner?"

For a moment I thought she was offering to cook. Then I saw the phone in her hand.

"We're in the middle of something," George shouted at her. "Go back inside."

Instead she came right out in white socks that would get filthy.

"The middle of what?" she asked, gamely.

George dropped his head back and grimaced up at the dark trees. "No, no, no. Not the middle, the *edge*. We have a situation here. Please, just go inside."

"*You* look very grown up!" Mom said to him. George straightened up. He did look older in the suit. I could picture him at thirty, forty, fifty years old all at the same time. I wasn't sure I liked what I saw.

"We're not children any longer," George said with strained patience. "Far from it. We've got a firm grasp of the current state of affairs out here."

She had nothing to say to that.

When she'd gone in we turned back toward the hole but Tabit wasn't there. Then we spotted her halfway up the street walking home. George stopped staring after her and started pacing.

"I can't fucking believe you!" I said. "Are you that much of a creep all of a sudden?"

He sure looked like one, squeezed into that jacket, pant cuffs unravelled and dragging on the pavement.

"How could you put Tabit in jeopardy like this when she's worked so hard to get into university? It's her one chance to get away! She's lucky her dad's still working and can actually help pay. She has this one chance to make a future for herself and maybe improve the world a little, and you're busy trying to screw her up! Seriously, George, what the fuck is wrong with you?"

"Maybe, Shauna," he said, "you should be asking what the fuck's wrong with Tabit."

He looked at me. In the gloom of the street lamp his eyes were gaping black pits.

"They're only sugar," he continued. "I have real shit but I wouldn't give her that and she knows it. It's all just 'make-believe.'"

"Wow. Like I'm going to believe that."

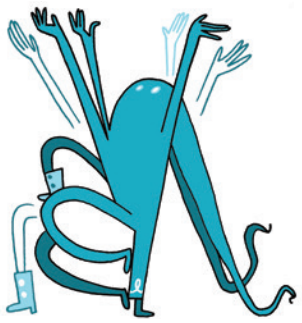
"Don't then. But it's true." He looked at the ground. "Those were the last of the black ones. She'll be disappointed. She was pretty hyped to earn them."

Then it made sense. This was one last game for the two of them to play together, a perverse coda to end their adolescence. I warmed to the idea of harmless sugar pills. In fact, I was delighted to think she'd never placed herself in any danger. There was, however, Tabit's brilliant rant about political reform and democracy in the Middle East when she was at orange level. How was she coming up with that stuff?

"Then she's amazing," I finally said. "Some of the things she's been talking about have really amazed me."

"Yes, and she'll be even more amazing in the future," he said.

And before I could say anything else, maybe about how I, too, might be amazing despite some of the odds stacked against me, George held up two fingers, either the sign for peace or V for victory. At any rate, he left. He walked away down the street, in the suit, leaving his flute on the porch.



It was just me and the hole. I yanked at the plywood and dragged it across, then sat on the curb, thinking it felt good to be certain no one would fall in. I sat there a long time. I'm not sure why I felt responsible but I did. Just like I did about Tabit, who was my best friend. George was probably right about her: she was a bit of a nut but also amazing. She'd go to school, she'd be O.K. She'd been O.K. all along, really, though she'd been keeping things from me. But I'd been keeping something from her too, if only to keep her on track. I wasn't leaving in September. I hadn't gotten the scholarship, and putting myself into major debt in another province while Mom imploded back home just didn't seem like a good plan.

The neighbourhood houses gradually went dark while the streetlights kept glowing and humming. The air smelled like leaves and humidity and overwrought flowers, and if there's a smell to people sleeping obliviously in their homes, it smelled like that too. When a raccoon walked by and hissed at me, I moved up to the porch where I could still keep my eye on the plywood. A while later Mom came out. She'd made me a sandwich.

"Is this O.K.?" she asked. It was mostly yellow lettuce on stale bread, but the effort was encouraging.

"It's fine, Mom. It's going to be just fine."

I was hungry but also exhausted. I ate half the sandwich and had to close my eyes for a second.

I must have dozed off, because when I looked up Mom was gone. The plywood appeared to be in the same position, but I couldn't be sure from way up on the porch. Part of the hole may have been exposed. What I hoped was that Mom was safe in bed with the owl's nest. Now that it was dark, the owl would be preparing to head out for a night of hunting. I hoped that before leaving, the owl would swivel her head and stare into the Webcam with those eyes like black moons on yellow skies. And then the owl would turn away to face the world because she has things to do out in it. She flies up through the darkness, wings pumping, cool night air streaming over her feathers. She leaves the dark edge of the forest, flying first over the snaking line of the river, then coasting over a field of silent silver grass, powerful wings stretched wide to the horizon. She decides to do something new. There's still time before the business of hunting. She tips one wing up and pivots, keeps pivoting like this until she is coasting upside down, belly to the endless sky above, eyes scanning the stars, greeting them like old friends who are there, always there, though tonight and every night must be experienced alone.

Sara Heinonen lives in Danforth Village. Her short stories have appeared in Grain, Event, the Fiddlehead, This Magazine, the New Quarterly, and the Dalhousie Review. She blogs about writing and reading fiction.

Art on the Line

Giving a last hurrah to a fading piece of street furniture.

INSTALLATIONS BY THE TEL-TALK COLLECTIVE

When Paola Poletto first started spreading the word about Tel-Talk–an art project she co-created aimed at turning humble Toronto phone booths into street art–she was surprised by the reactions she received. "Are there any of those left?" friends asked of the increasingly antiquated conduit of verbal communication, their eyes looking right through the enclosures' transparent panels.

But pay phones haven't given up their place in the city just yet, and watching artists give them another chance to coax a conversation out of passersby is part of what Poletto loves about Tel-Talk. "I was quite interested in the idea of street furniture and its place in the city, and how it changes over time," she says. "It's a blurry space in that it's public and private at the same time, both physically and in its essence."

Tel-Talk's accessible installations began to appear in various locations across the city last fall, with the final one appearing in June. Some pieces are more noticeable than others, like Julie Voyce's *Flower Arrangements,* where small vases of handmade blooms were left perched atop the telephones. Others are less subtle, like Sheila Butler's depiction of the iconic transformation of Clark Kent into Superman. "I heard one woman say, 'It's about time Superman got to our street corner!'" Poletto says.

To further explore form and function, medium and message, the project also features the writing of ten authors and poets. Their work–focusing on change and the passing of time, and emphasizing space and privacy–appears in brief on a Tel-Talk blog, and many of their pieces also are included in a recently published eponymous companion book alongside images of the installations.

The Tel-Talk curators, which also include Liis Toliao and Yvonne Koscielak, are acutely aware that their project likely will cause nostalgic tinglings among both artists and art fans–sparking memories of a pay phone that once placed an urgent call, gave shelter from the rain, or offered a sense of privacy for a special moment. They also know many will experience these memories while their pockets beep and buzz with mobile phones–the very devices to blame for the phone booth's slow waltz toward obsolescence.

Much like the pay phone itself, the future of Tel-Talk is uncertain. Poletto sees the potential for other artists to build on the foundation she and her collaborators have laid. "This just seems like the sort of thing that could have legs of its own, whether the art is sanctioned by Tel-Talk or not," says Poletto. "But either way, we've felt satisfied that Tel-Talk has started a few conversations."

–Jacqueline Nelson

Top: Clark Kent and Superman, by Sheila Butler, was removed/stolen after a single day in February. Below: Anthea Foyer and Rob King's We Need To Talk encouraged pay phone patrons to communicate between two booths, located on Bay and Shuter streets this March.

TOP: JESSE BOLES. BOTTOM: NATALIE CASTELLINO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Hive, by Hitoko Okada.

PAOLA POLETTO

Lady Cleaner, by Paola Poletto.

NATALIE CASTELLINO

Gallery, by Hayley Isaacs and Hal Ho.


Bell
Morr

Infidelity

BY STACEY MAY FOWLES

Ronnie knew the moment she saw Charlie that she would follow him somewhere. It didn't really matter where, she just knew it would happen sooner or later–that one day she would desert everything important and chase him down. And that somehow it would be worth it. That there would be some sort of sacrifice made somewhere down the line.

Ronnie wasn't the kind of girl who had ever felt that way about anyone. In fact, Ronnie was the kind of girl who rarely felt anything. Since she was young, Ronnie had always been able to numb herself to external influence.

She was wearing a short black strapless dress and open-toed shoes, despite the fact that it was the middle of December. Her legs were bare, and every time the front door of the two-storey Annex house swung open to let another reveller in she would shiver slightly. Ronnie almost never dressed this way; generally she wore blue jeans, beat-up brown boots, T-shirts, and cardigans. But Aaron had asked her to dress up. She had styled her short brown hair, where normally she would have simply let it dry after her shower. She had put on perfume, from an old bottle she found in the back of the medicine cabinet, behind a row of prescription medication and condom and tampon boxes, a bottle that was a gift from Aaron two Christmases ago.

The party, a university affair filled with scholars and students and assholes, twinkled with tinsel and blinking white lights. Everyone carried the slightest hint of discomfort, straining to have conversations with people they couldn't conceal their contempt for. They were drinking heavily to ease into the situation, and as the night wore on discomfort evolved into inappropriateness, Ronnie felt the burning glare of lechery on the hem of her dress and the curve of her cleavage.

Standing alone, away from the mistletoe that hung from a doorway and was trapping and tormenting many of the female guests, Ronnie tipped back a third glass of red wine, and regretted agreeing to come.

Three glasses of wine meant she was drunk.

She had come for Aaron, who had needed her help carrying the many platters of food he'd arranged for the party. It was money, and they needed money now more than ever. Aaron was firmly set in "plan for the future" mode and was taking every extra catering job that came his way, even if it meant Ronnie had to assist.

"You'll have a great time, Ronnie, I promise. These are smart people. Like, smart, famous people."

Ronnie wondered if there was such a thing as "smart, famous people." The glossy pages of the magazines at the hair salon where she worked suggested otherwise.

When her glass was empty again and she decided to go for a fourth, she saw him across the room. Through the maze of tweed coats, pencil skirts, and loud Christmas cheer, she spotted him slowly chewing a canapé and staring blankly into the bottom of his whisky tumbler. He was a robust, rosy, bearded man with a slightly timid and mostly awkward look on his face. He looked decidedly lost, as if he might get swept away by the bumping shoulders of stodgy academics and earnest doe-eyed students. Despite his confused expression, all eyes were on him. Everyone in the room seemed to be whispering about him with a sense of awe, glad to be in his company yet afraid to approach him.

He was scanning the titles on a bookshelf, while an angular and severe-looking blond with a blunt bang haircut and red-rimmed glasses was talking at him, unconcerned whether he was paying attention. He looked up from the last drops of his whisky mournfully, as if it was the last whisky available in the world, and caught Ronnie in a stare. It should have been awkward, should have made her blush, turn on her heel, and clip off to the kitchen, but he seemed to derive so much pleasure from the eye contact that his mouth spread into a wide, welcoming grin immediately, and hers did the same.

The look on his face, a slight eye roll referencing the blond–in that moment she knew that he would have the capacity to make her do stupid things.

She put her wine glass down on a coffee table carelessly, without a coaster (a habit Aaron had warned her against), and uncharacteristically walked toward him. Ronnie wasn't generally shy, but in situations where she had to be on her best behaviour because Aaron's job demanded it, she occasionally kept her generally animated personality in check. But for some reason this man and his canapé seemed a safe bet. When he saw her approaching, he excused himself from the angular blond with a raised hand, gesturing in Ronnie's direction in a way that suggested they had met before.

For some reason he thought to put his left hand in his pocket so Ronnie wouldn't see his wedding ring.

"Harmless," he thought.

He had a few brief moments to lament the mustard stain on the left breast pocket of his beige long-sleeved shirt, a shirt his wife had picked out for him before he'd left the house that morning.

"It's so good to see you again," he said at full volume.

MATTHEW DALEY

"Don't worry, I don't think she can hear you any more," Ronnie said in a half whisper, looking over his shoulder at the blond. "She looks really fascinating."

"That's Sarah. She's a wench. And sort of my boss. I told her you were an old friend," he said.

"Well, maybe I will be," she replied.

"Charlie," he said.

"Ronnie," she said.

"Ronnie?"

"Veronica."

"Pretty."

Pretty.

They shook hands lightly. Then, reaching into his pocket with his right hand, he offered her half of his oatmeal cookie.

"Why do you have an oatmeal cookie at a cocktail party?" she asked.

"I brought it with me. You can get all sorts of things from the fish at these things. Botulism. Ebola. Scabies," he said. "And who calls them cocktail parties any more? What, were you born in the twenties?"

"Were you?"

"Ouch. Are you mocking me?"

"It's not hard. You brought an oatmeal cookie to a party in your pants pocket."

"And you can have half."

He carefully unwrapped the cookie and split it in two, handing her the bigger half. When he bit into it and realized it was actually oatmeal with chocolate chips, he playfully told her he wouldn't have offered it to her if he'd known.

"A waste of good chocolate," he called it. She smiled and snatched the remainder of his half from his hand and shoved it, along with her half, into her mouth with both hands.

"Naw you haf nuffin," she said with her mouth full.

Cookie crumbs tumbled from her lips and onto the front of the dress Aaron had made her wear. Charlie looked at her mouth, full of half-chewed cookie, and wanted to kiss it. He reached out to brush the cookie crumbs from the front of her dress but quickly stopped himself.

Things they would find out later:

He was more than ten years older than her.

She was an Aries and he was a Leo.

She knew what that meant and he didn't.

She cut hair for a living and looked through the newspapers for her horoscope every day.

He wrote poetry and she did not.

"So what brings you to this party then, Ronnie?"

"I know the caterer. You know, the one who prepared the scabies fish you're so afraid of."

"You know, the one I share a bed with," she thought.

Three and then four more drinks in, with Aaron in the adjacent room, she suddenly longed for the thickness of Charlie's flesh, the width of his chest to curl into, the breadth of his arms around her to warm skin in strapless dresses and open-toed shoes. Admittedly this was not an uncommon occurrence for Ronnie, as alcohol always made her want to fall into strangers.

"We should drink shots," she said.

"I'm close to fifty, Ronnie. I don't drink shots."

"Yawn."

"It's called being a 'grown-up.'"

"Again. Yawn. How close to fifty?"

"Close enough."

"Don't worry, old man. We'll just do girl shots."

"Girl shots?"

Barrel Fires

The flames reflected in the faces we drove past:
they saw two good lookers on a holiday.
We rode up to Bay City, along the lakes, all over Chicago.
Why the hell not? We're young.

Got a pass to see the World's Fair,
girls wrapped up in ice cubes, midgets,
General Balbo & his twenty-four seaplanes
all the way from Rome. Fan dances. Sky ride.

We ate while sitting on a beach most all the time.
Motor courts, long & dreamless sleeps.
We didn't listen to the news
or much outside.

We laughed like hell, I sang some,
Bonnie rhymed.
I grieve that my old ma & pa have never felt as free.

–Carolyn Smart

Ronnie flagged down one of the party's servers, a petite blond whose buttery flesh was awkwardly but sensually spilling out of an ill-fitting waistcoat, and exuberantly requested two B-52s. The girl, clearly out of her element, stared at her blankly.

"I don't think we–"

"Peach schnapps? Can you do that?" Ronnie suggested.

Without reply, the server nodded and scurried off to the kitchen.

"Peach schnapps? What are we? Teenage girls at Bible camp?" Charlie asked.

"O-M-G, Charlie. L-O-L."

"By the way, nobody orders shots at a cocktail party."

"Oh, Charlie. No one ever calls it a *cocktail party.*"

"Touché."

The shots arrived and they drank, toasting "Bible camp" and "a time when they called them 'cocktail parties,'" while the other partygoers eyed them strangely, still expressing their strange awe over a man Ronnie knew nothing about. Ronnie was swaying now, the liquor impeding her balance, her volume increasing. Also warmed and buoyed from the inside, Charlie suddenly told Ronnie that her hair was nice. "Pretty," he said.

"There's that word again," she said.

"Well it is. Pretty. It's shiny. Very Vivien Leigh. Natalie Wood. Elizabeth Taylor."

"All dead."

"They don't make them like that any more."

"Young Elizabeth Taylor, I hope you mean."

"Bloated wheelchair Elizabeth Taylor."

"Hey. Also, don't be awful."

"Don't be silly. *A Place in the Sun* Elizabeth Taylor."

"Does that make you Montgomery Clift?"

"God, I hope so."

Ronnie could take a doctor's worrying questions much better than she could take compliments. She blushed, looked at her shoes, and then back at Charlie. In doing so she noticed a chocolate chip cookie crumb still lingered in the corner of his mouth. She reached out to wipe it away and then, like him, stopped herself, her hand hovering between them.

"Cookie," she said by way of explanation, motioning toward the corner of her mouth.

"I'm sorry, did you just call me 'Cookie'?"

Charlie smiled and wiped the crumb away himself.

The angular blond returned suddenly, obviously curious about Charlie's young companion.

"Charlie, there's lots of people you need to be meeting tonight," the woman said, momentarily ignoring Ronnie's presence.

"Yes, you've mentioned that a number of times, Sarah."

"You're not just here for the drinks, you know," she snapped back.

"Well, they don't even have B-52s."

Sarah ignored him and turned her attention on Ronnie.

"Who's your friend? A student of yours?" she asked.

"This is Elizabeth. She's an actress. But don't bother talking to her. She doesn't speak any English," Charlie said without pause.

Ronnie tried to stifle her drunken laughter while the blond stared angrily at them both, quite aware she was being lied to.

"Oh, I meant to ask you–how's your wife, Charlie?" Sarah said viciously. His grin quickly faded. Veronica's discomfort was obvious as she turned away from them slightly, now wishing she had bothered to refill her wineglass.

"Tamara's doing very well. Thank you for asking."

"Oh, and your son? Noah? How is his treatment going? Elizabeth, did Charlie tell you he has a very sick child at home? He's such a devoted husband and father–oh, I'm sorry, how rude of me. You can't understand a word I'm saying, can you?"

Sarah was being cruel now, clearly intent on ruining Charlie's good-natured flirtation.

"Noah's not 'very sick,' Sarah. He has autism," Charlie spat, suddenly too offended to be embarrassed.

"Well, I do know it's been quite the struggle for the two of you. You and *your wife.*"

"That's enough."

"You've had enough. I suggest you excuse yourself."

"I should get a refill," Veronica offered, trying to defuse things meekly.

"Yes. Maybe you should," Sarah agreed.

"No. Ronnie, you stay. Sarah? If you could excuse us?"

"Please remember you are here on

behalf of the department."

Sarah exhaled noisily and then made a dramatic exit, throwing Ronnie a mocking, loud, and slowly sounded out "Sooo niiice tooo meet you" before scurrying off.

Ronnie gazed toward the kitchen, visibly uncomfortable.

"Maybe I should get that refill."

"I think she told me I should go, and as much as I'm loath to admit it–too much whisky I'm afraid," he said, again gazing deep into his tumbler.

"No such thing," she said, raising her shot glass.

"I'm embarrassing you."

"I think I may be embarrassing myself. And the caterer."

"Please don't be put off by her. I told you she was a wench."

Ronnie smiled.

"Maybe it's for the best if the fish gives everyone botulism."

"Ronnie, would you like to run away with me?"

"Where are we going?"

"I don't really care. Away from all of these godawful people."

"All these godawful people you're supposed to be meeting tonight?"

Ronnie looked around the room and, after deciding no one was looking at them, stepped forward, lightly pressing her body against Charlie while slipping her empty shot glass into the same pocket the Saran-wrapped cookie came out of. She let her hand linger briefly inside the pocket before pulling away. He panicked slightly, but then eased into it, letting his clumsy fingertips graze the hem of her dress, and then the outside of her bare thigh. Then the inside of her bare thigh.

"I'd like to see you again. Please," she whispered in the brevity of their closeness.

"Yes."

When she stepped back they both noticed the blond staring.

"I should go find that caterer I'm embarrassing."

"We should run away."

"I should go find the caterer."

"O.K., then I suppose I should go find my wife. At home. It was nice to meet you, Ronnie."

And she was gone.

Stacey May Fowles lives in Dovercourt Village. She is the author of two novels, Be Good (Tightrope, 2007) and Fear of Fighting (Invisible, 2008). She is also the circulation director of the Walrus.

THE MISCELLANY

The Production Notes

Congratulations to Grace O'Connell–and not just on being one of this issue's guest editors. Her short story "The Many Faces of Montgomery Clift," from *Taddle Creek's* summer, 2011, issue, was chosen for inclusion in the upcoming *Journey Prize Stories 24*–an honour *Taddle Creek* likes to refer to as "making the Journey Prize long-list," because it's one small step toward Journey Prize short-list and Journey Prize prize. Winners will be announced this fall. In the meantime, Grace's same story has also been nominated for a National Magazine Award, in the very fitting category of Fiction. Grace has some stiff competition for this one–namely herself, for a story featured in the *Walrus.* National Magazine Award winners will likely have been announced by the time you read this, so be happy or consolatory for Grace, depending on the outcome. (Does man still fight wars in late 2012, future reader?)

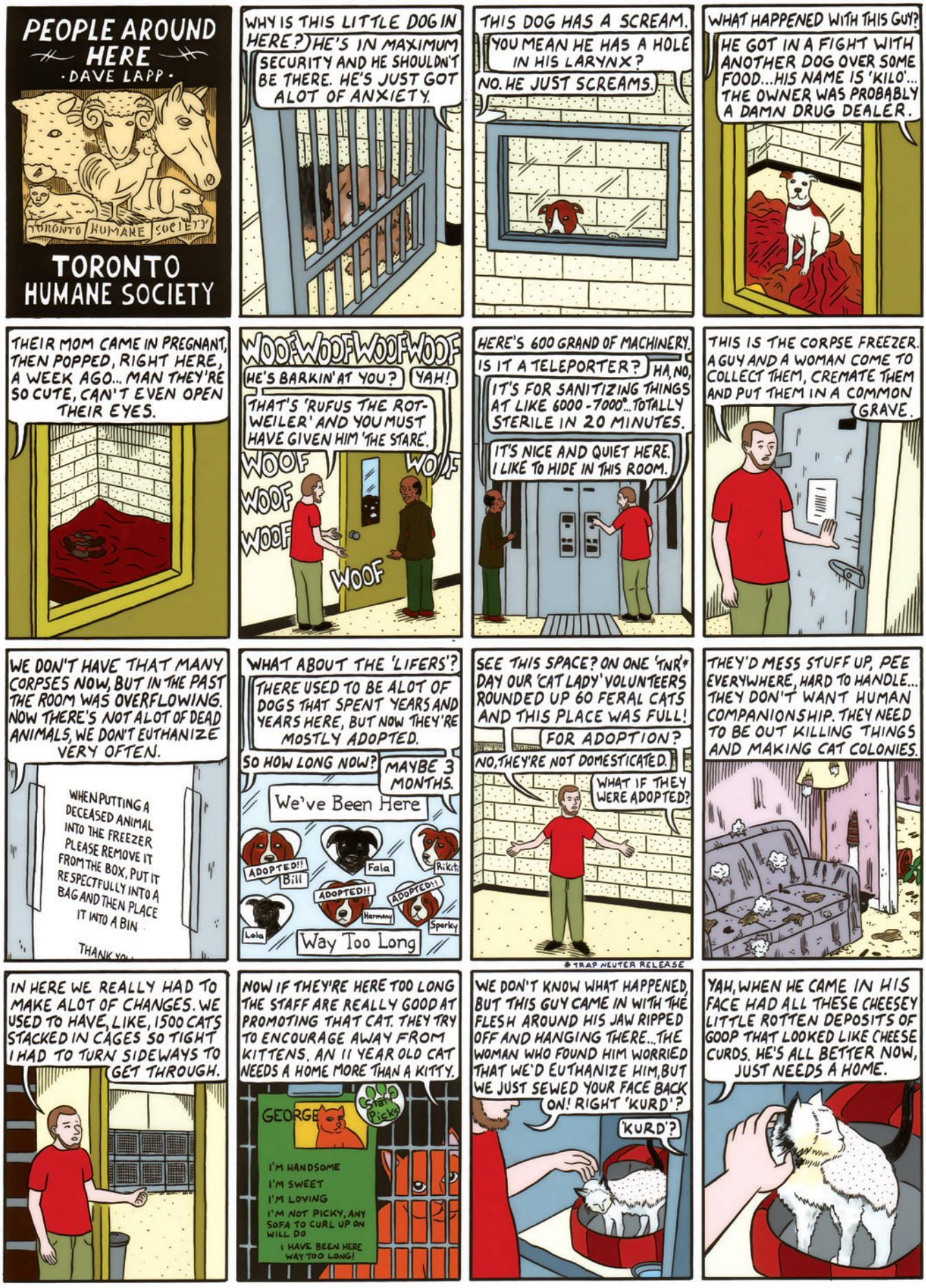
The Books

Hopefully the rest of the world has as high a Grace O'Connell tolerance as *Taddle Creek* does, because aside from her above-mentioned award nominations, her long-awaited Random House New Face of Fiction debut novel, *Magnified World* ($22.95) is now available. Also: Julie Wilson turns her on-line literary voyeurism into a collection of micro-fiction in *Seen Reading* (Freehand, $21.95). Featured way back in *Taddle Creek's* Christmas, 2009, issue, Michael Cho's drawings of hidden Toronto finally see the light in *Back Alleys and Urban Landscapes* (Drawn & Quarterly, $19.95). Shawn Micallef contributes the text portion to Patrick Cummins's photographic look at the city's changing streetscape in *Full Frontal T.O.* (Coach House, $24.95). Two of Joey Comeau's novellas get the collected treatment in *The Complete Lockpick Pornography* (ECW, $14.95). Contrary to what *Taddle Creek* is told, it's a big fan of Lynn Crosbie's work and is glad to see her back after such a long absence with *Life Is About Losing Everything* (Anansi, $24.95). Alex Boyd releases his second collection of poetry with *The Least Important Man* (Biblioasis, $17.95). Stuart Ross gets really surreal in his latest poetry collection, *You Exist. Details Follow* (Anvil, $16). Kevin Chong explores one facet of his would-be-perfect life in *My Year of the Racehorse* (Greystone, $22.95). George Murray gives you poems, poems, poems in *Whiteout* (ECW, $18.95). And Tamara Faith Berger makes her anticipated return to smut with *Maidenhead* (Coach House, $18.95). But most exciting for *Taddle Creek* this time around is the publication of Dave Lapp's *People Around Here* (Conundrum, $17). The book not only features Dave's full-page installments of the strip of the same name from *Taddle Creek,* but also the monthly strip versions that long graced the pages of the *Annex Gleaner*–all painstakingly reformatted to perfection. As with all books that collect a large number of pieces from *Taddle Creek,* the magazine will probably buy two. But don't feel you have to.

The Corrections

A number of errors appeared in the *People Around Here* strip "Sad Music," by Dave Lapp, in the Christmas, 2011, issue. The Jack O'Halloran Singers were credited with singing "Little Drummer Boy." Jack Halloran was in fact the leader of that particular group, not the actor who played Non in *Superman* and *Superman II.* Henryk Górecki's noted symphony was listed as No. 8. It is No. 3. Patti Schmidt, the former host of CBC Radio's *Brave New Waves,* was name-checked as "Patty." And while *Taddle Creek* is at it, Tchaikovsky's String Quartet in D Major could have been better qualified with a "No. 1," some more "rum"s and "pum"s could have been used between the "puh"s in the lyrics to "Little Drummer Boy," both Górecki's and Pärt's names should have included accents, and another "Just in you" should have appeared before the final "Just believe in you" in the lyrics to "Valentine Heart." Finally, "pizzicato" was misspelled. Dave's strip came in very late and in a fit of unusualness, *Taddle Creek* did not fact-check it. The magazine takes full blame. Thanks to the *Taddle Creek* reader and frequent mistake finder Tim Davin for pointing out the Górecki mistake. For his efforts, Tim will receive yet another extension to his subscription. *Taddle Creek* regrets the errors.

The biography of the contributor Tim Davin, in the Christmas, 2011, issue, stated that his wife does not listen to the radio. Upon reading this, Tim's better half reached out to inform *Taddle Creek* that her husband's statement was simply not true. *Taddle Creek* took Tim at his word. Obviously that was a mistake. The magazine will be docking him one year off the many free subscriptions he has racked up pointing out errors in its pages. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.


PEOPLE AROUND HERE
· DAVE LAPP ·
TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY
TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY
WHY IS THIS LITTLE DOG IN HERE?
HE'S IN MAXIMUM SECURITY AND HE SHOULDN'T BE THERE. HE'S JUST GOT ALOT OF ANXIETY.
THIS DOG HAS A SCREAM.
YOU MEAN HE HAS A HOLE IN HIS LARYNX?
NO. HE JUST SCREAMS.
WHAT HAPPENED WITH THIS GUY?
HE GOT IN A FIGHT WITH ANOTHER DOG OVER SOME FOOD...HIS NAME IS 'KILO'... THE OWNER WAS PROBABLY A DAMN DRUG DEALER.
THEIR MOM CAME IN PREGNANT, THEN POPPED, RIGHT HERE, A WEEK AGO... MAN THEY'RE SO CUTE, CAN'T EVEN OPEN THEIR EYES.
WOOFWOOFWOOFWOOF
HE'S BARKIN' AT YOU?
YAH!
THAT'S 'RUFUS THE ROT-WEILER' AND YOU MUST HAVE GIVEN HIM 'THE STARE'.
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
HERE'S 600 GRAND OF MACHINERY.
IS IT A TELEPORTER?
HA, NO, IT'S FOR SANITIZING THINGS AT LIKE 6000-7000°...TOTALLY STERILE IN 20 MINUTES.
IT'S NICE AND QUIET HERE. I LIKE TO HIDE IN THIS ROOM.
THIS IS THE CORPSE FREEZER. A GUY AND A WOMAN COME TO COLLECT THEM, CREMATE THEM AND PUT THEM IN A COMMON GRAVE.
WE DON'T HAVE THAT MANY CORPSES NOW, BUT IN THE PAST THE ROOM WAS OVERFLOWING. NOW THERE'S NOT ALOT OF DEAD ANIMALS, WE DON'T EUTHANIZE VERY OFTEN.
WHEN PUTTING A DECEASED ANIMAL INTO THE FREEZER PLEASE REMOVE IT FROM THE BOX, PUT IT RESPECTFULLY INTO A BAG AND THEN PLACE IT INTO A BIN
THANK YOU
WHAT ABOUT THE 'LIFERS'?
THERE USED TO BE ALOT OF DOGS THAT SPENT YEARS AND YEARS HERE, BUT NOW THEY'RE MOSTLY ADOPTED.
SO HOW LONG NOW?
MAYBE 3 MONTHS.
We've Been Here
ADOPTED!!
Bill
Fala
Rikki
ADOPTED!!
Harmony
ADOPTED!!
Sparky
Lola
Way Too Long
SEE THIS SPACE? ON ONE 'TNR'* DAY OUR 'CAT LADY' VOLUNTEERS ROUNDED UP 60 FERAL CATS AND THIS PLACE WAS FULL!
FOR ADOPTION?
NO, THEY'RE NOT DOMESTICATED.
WHAT IF THEY WERE ADOPTED?
*TRAP NEUTER RELEASE
THEY'D MESS STUFF UP, PEE EVERYWHERE, HARD TO HANDLE... THEY DON'T WANT HUMAN COMPANIONSHIP. THEY NEED TO BE OUT KILLING THINGS AND MAKING CAT COLONIES.
IN HERE WE REALLY HAD TO MAKE ALOT OF CHANGES. WE USED TO HAVE, LIKE, 1500 CATS STACKED IN CAGES SO TIGHT I HAD TO TURN SIDEWAYS TO GET THROUGH.
NOW IF THEY'RE HERE TOO LONG THE STAFF ARE REALLY GOOD AT PROMOTING THAT CAT. THEY TRY TO ENCOURAGE AWAY FROM KITTENS. AN 11 YEAR OLD CAT NEEDS A HOME MORE THAN A KITTY.
GEORGE
Staff Picks
I'M HANDSOME
I'M SWEET
I'M LOVING
I'M NOT PICKY, ANY SOFA TO CURL UP ON WILL DO
I HAVE BEEN HERE WAY TOO LONG!
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, BUT THIS GUY CAME IN WITH THE FLESH AROUND HIS JAW RIPPED OFF AND HANGING THERE...THE WOMAN WHO FOUND HIM WORRIED THAT WE'D EUTHANIZE HIM, BUT WE JUST SEWED YOUR FACE BACK ON! RIGHT 'KURD'?
'KURD'?
YAH, WHEN HE CAME IN HIS FACE HAD ALL THESE CHEESEY LITTLE ROTTEN DEPOSITS OF GOOP THAT LOOKED LIKE CHEESE CURDS. HE'S ALL BETTER NOW, JUST NEEDS A HOME.

“this...

**doesn’t try to be hip,
it just is.
It never ceases
to make me think,
question things
and get angry”**

—Sarah Polley

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DO ONE THING REALLY, REALLY WELL.