

# TADDLE CREEK

No. 45  
\$6.95



LOST DOG  
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ICE SOLD HERE



SOLD HERE!

EGG CREAMS  
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VIOLATORS WILL  
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ATM

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	MON	TUE
MONDAY	8:00	11:00
TUESDAY	8:00	11:00
WEDNESDAY	8:00	11:00
THURSDAY	8:00	11:00
FRIDAY	8:00	11:00
SATURDAY	8:00	11:00
SUNDAY	11:00	8:00





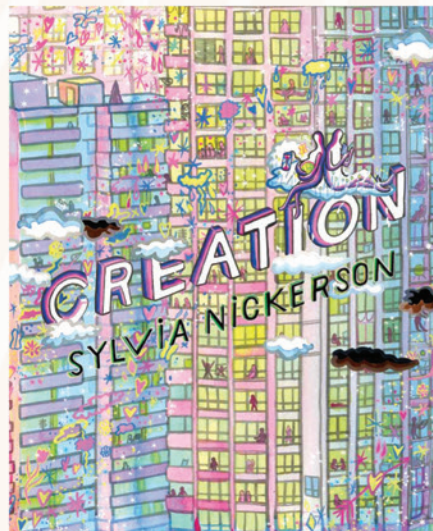


# THE DOUG WRIGHT AWARDS CONGRATULATES THIS YEAR'S WINNERS!



The Doug Wright Award  
for best book

**BEZIMENA**  
Nina Bunjevac  
(Fantagraphics Books)



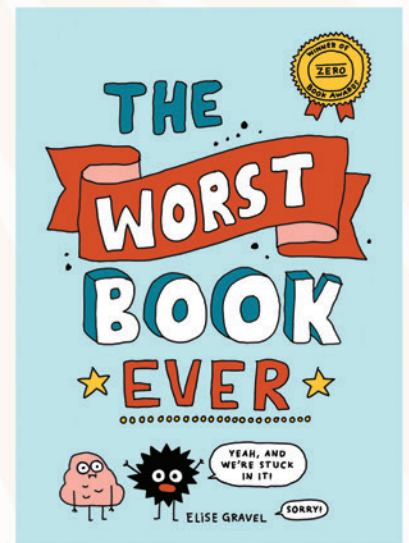
The Nipper:  
The Doug Wright Award  
for emerging talent

**SYLVIA  
NICKERSON**  
for Creation  
(Drawn & Quarterly)



The Pigskin Peters:  
The Doug Wright Award  
for best small- or  
micro-press book

**GLEEM**  
Freddy Carrasco  
(Peow Studios)



The Egghead:  
The Doug Wright Award  
for best kids' books

**THE WORST  
BOOK EVER**  
Elise Gravel  
(Drawn & Quarterly)

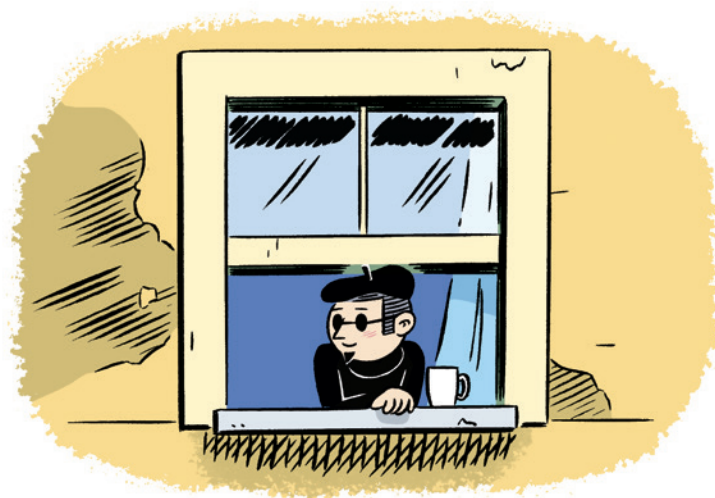
## THANKS TO THIS YEAR'S SPONSORS:

*The Beguiling*

*brokenpencil*







# TADDLE CREEK

THE CONTENTS  
NO. 45 • SUMMER, 2020

## THE FICTION

“Gymnastics Is Fun” 4 Sharon Miki Chan

## THE COMIX

“AquaVan Winkle Returns!” 7 R. Sikoryak

## THE KITCH

Jiggling Off into the Sunset 8 Brian Francis  
*The mysterious versatility of Jell-O.*

## THE FEATURE

Lack of Pinterest 10 Photos by Thomas Blanchard  
*Life’s a picnic for Lindsay Zier-Vogel.*

## THE COMIX

“The Systems” 14 Dmitry Bondarenko

## THE PROFILE

Big As All Outdoors 22 Conan Tobias  
*Winston Bronnum’s wild career.*

## THE STITCH

Narrative Framework 28 Julie Cameron Gray  
*Knitting’s soothing mathematics.*

## THE GALLERY

The Most Toys 30 Photos by Thomas Blanchard  
*Mysterion needs a bigger tub.*

## THE FICTION

“Tim” 32 Andrew Daley

## THE POEMS

“Dawson” 6 Emily Pohl-Weary  
“No Puny Masterpiece” 34 Chris Chambers

## PEOPLE AROUND HERE

“What If He Sees Me?” 36 Dave Lapp

THE CONTRIBUTORS 2

THE EPHEMERA 3

## THE COVER

“Summer Treat” Nathan Campagnaro



# THE CONTRIBUTORS



CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP LEFT:  
Emily Pohl-Weary,  
Dmitry Bondarenko,  
Sharon Miki Chan,  
Nathan Campagnaro,  
R. Sikoryak.



## EMILY POHL-WEARY

"Dawson," p. 6

Emily's poem was written during a residency at the Berton House, in Dawson City, following some major life changes. "For the first week I was there, I felt intensely lonely, far from my Toronto people, in an unfamiliar region of the country. But the town has a generous way of welcoming outsiders. Soon I was able to appreciate the midnight sun, the northern landscape, and even go dancing for the first time in years." Now living in Vancouver, Emily is finishing up a young adult novel she started writing while in Dawson.

## R. SIKORYAK

"AquaVan Winkle Returns!," p. 7

Historical adaptation has been a hallmark of R.'s work for years. His comic is a combined homage to the 1819 short story by Washington Irving, the aquatic superhero created in 1941 by Mort Weisinger and Paul Norris, and the Hostess snack cake ads of the seventies and eighties. In his new book, *Constitution Illustrated*, "I wanted to comment on the current political situation but without drawing the president," he says. "It seemed like a natural idea to illustrate the entire U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and all the amendments." Each page is drawn in the style of a different American comic. "I hoped to reflect the variety of America and allow each image to interpret a portion of the text in its own way."

## NATHAN CAMPAGNARO

The Cover

When Nathan was brainstorming ideas for this issue's cover, he tried to put idea before execution. "It's the summer issue, so I reflected back on fond summer memories," he says. "After a couple of days, I came to the realization that my summer activities were almost always bookended with a trip to the convenience store. And I think that imagery rings true for all people, no matter what your age or race. Sure, we visit convenience stores all year round, but in summer, that's when you treat yourself—that ice cream bar, that cold drink of something bubbly."

## DMITRY BONDARENKO

"The Systems," p. 14

Drawing has been Dmitry's primary tool of expression and communication since immigrating to Canada as a child, helping him make sense of his surroundings. "Ever since, I've been fascinated by the intersection of fine and popular art forms, searching for the weird outliers that fuse both sides of the spectrum," he says. *The Systems* is his first attempt at combining writing and drawing, resulting in "an unwieldy and ever-growing series of comics that I'm crafting into my first book-length graphic narrative. It's loosely centred on the lives of a group of friends, not unlike the people I've known, particularly musicians, artists, and other 'creative weirdos' observed fumbling for meaning around, in, and under Toronto."

## SHARON MIKI CHAN

"Gymnastics Is Fun," p. 4

Sharon spent a portion of her youth as an admittedly mediocre gymnast. "Thinking about it now, as an adult," she says, "gymnastics is such a wild concept. It's something that you can only really do well when you're young and still flexible, before you have a chance to understand that you should be afraid of falling. A gym is a literal warehouse of fun—it's a place where people are super concerned with safety and padding, but where they're also constantly taking big risks and doing things that could be pretty dangerous if you don't stick the landing."



## WHO'S CORRECTING TADDLE CREEK NOW?

LATE LAST YEAR, TADDLE CREEK, in quick succession, received possibly the two greatest letters ever to grace its e-mailbox. Both were from Kieran Dunn, of Guelph, Ontario, who wrote: "I have just finished reading 'Starseed,' by Peter Darbyshire, in the summer issue of *Taddle Creek* (No. 43). I was perplexed by the following passage: 'The interior of that starship was indescribable by the likes of me. Perhaps Gernsback and his fellow science fictioners could manage it, but it is beyond me.' While I appreciate the homage in this 'celebration of the ... pulp magazine,' I have to wonder when this story is meant to take place. The Battle of the Somme, the concluding event in the story, was fought in 1916. *Amazing Stories*, Hugo Gernsback's first foray into what we now call science fiction, was not founded until 1926. It seems unlikely that the narrator, Archimedes Death, would be writing later than 1926 and, thus, unlikely he would refer to Hugo Gernsback as a 'science fictioneer.' I would be interested to hear your take on this." A mere two hours and thirty-five minutes later, Kieran posted a follow-up: "My apologies—I have found a story written by Gernsback that would easily explain the reference: 'Baron Münchhausen's New Scientific Adventures,' published in *The Electrical Experimenter*, March, 1916." *Taddle Creek* did, for good measure, run all of this past the author, to which Mr. Darbyshire replied, "Clearly, the history of Alphaman cannot be trusted. The hidden truths are everywhere. And you think I have actually taken to the stars. Fools." *Taddle Creek* is sure someone regrets something in this case, but it is not sure who or what.

PROVING THAT IT'S NEVER too late to be correct, *Taddle Creek* offers two corrections to Alfred Holden's profile of the composer Percy Faith, "The Streamlined Man," originally published in *Taddle Creek* No. 4. In the story, the author states, "Midway through the show, while directing the orchestra from the piano, playing his million-seller hit 'Theme from *A Summer Place*'—written by veteran Hollywood composer Max Steiner and arranged by Faith for the 1959 movie—Faith turns to the camera and shrugs." Although Faith's version of this song is the aforementioned million-selling hit, Hugo Winterhalter's version of Steiner's song is the one that actually appears in the film. Alfred admits to having made an assumption—the fact checker's greatest enemy—and both he and the magazine regret the error.

In that same profile, the author states, "When Faith died of cancer in Los Angeles on February 9, 1976 (too many of his Columbia album covers showed him smoking while in the studio), the *Toronto Star*'s Dennis Braithwaite would write, 'an exploiter rather than a creator, Percy Faith can't be said to have advanced the popular music of his time.'" Although Alfred does not implicitly state Faith died of lung cancer, it was implied. The reader and Faith aficionado Bill Halvorsen wrote in to let *Taddle Creek* know this was not the case. What type of cancer Faith died from remains a mystery, but readers should not make the same assumption the magazine did. *Taddle Creek* regrets the vagueness and the cigarettes.



SPEAKING OF STORIES WITH LONGEVITY, Alfred Holden's history of Toronto's Dupont Street, "Dupont at Zenith," from *Taddle Creek* No. 2, remains the most-viewed story on the magazine's Web site, nearly twenty-two years after its publication. In it, Alfred pays tribute to this industrial strip, whose businesses were so vital to both city and country: "Dupont Street in Toronto at the close of the twentieth century is an open graveyard of such industries, most of which collapsed without so much as a pauper's funeral. Their skeletons lie exposed. They are the parking lots, warehouse loft condos, and retail joints of the post-industrial age." With Dupont now becoming yet another once-affordable area of Toronto soon to be priced out of reach for many, *Taddle Creek* feels some unease to see itself quoted in the pages of a promotional pamphlet for the Bianca, a luxury condo rising on the former site of the Mono Lino Typesetting building: "In a 1998 essay about Dupont Street, in *Taddle Creek Magazine*, Toronto *Star* journalist Alfred Holden examines the influence the area had, with a factory like Hamilton Gear providing gears for the St. Lawrence Waterway, the moving roof of the Toronto SkyDome (now Rogers Centre) and cockpit of Canada's Avro Arrow airplane." *Taddle Creek* regrets being part of the problem.

FINALLY, TADDLE CREEK recently took a stroll along the Toronto waterfront and did a double take upon spying two Expo 67 benches just west of the Palais Royale. These benches, part of Canada's contribution to the 1967 world's fair, have played a recurring role in the historical writings of Alfred Holden (him again?), most recently in the memoir "A Man and His World," from *Taddle Creek* No. 40. How long the benches have sat in this location the magazine doesn't know, nor does it know if they are the same benches that once could be found in Queen's Park and went missing some years ago. In any case, it was an exciting discovery, to say the least. The *Taddle Creek* home page currently features a link to Alfred's *Annex Gleaner* column about the benches, originally published in 1997. ☺



# GYMNASTICS IS FUN

BY SHARON MIKI CHAN

“Listen up,” I say. “Here are the rules.”

I’m standing in front of the gym door, with my hands hovering above my hips, my legs spread wide in an authoritative straddle position. I know it’s authoritative, because I’ve practiced the best way to stand to make people listen many times. It’s harder than it looks. Stand with your feet too close together and your centre of gravity is all off. You might as well be a wacky inflatable tube man flipping horrifically in the wind at a used-car lot, and no one respects a person made of vinyl, full of air—certainly not preschool-aged children and their parents. And especially not teens. Stand with your legs too far apart when you’re as flexible as I am and you’re liable to slip and fall into a middle split, which, while impressive, is awkward to get out of gracefully and similarly diminishes your respect factor. Not that I’m dealing with kids or their parents right now. But the principles still apply, so I’m standing like this.

“The rules of the gym are: One person at a time on the trampoline, no flips, no fighting, and don’t jump on each other in the foam pit,” I say as I furtively unlock the door and wave my friends into the building.

I add an unusual caveat to my standard spiel: “And, I swear to God, if anyone spills whisky or pees on anything, I will kill you. Like, I will actually murder you.”

Sean raises his eyebrows and smiles at me crookedly. Sean is so handsome that I often find myself fantasizing about sprinkling salt on him to see if he’ll shrivel a bit, like a slug. Not to hurt him. Just to bring him down to an attainable level. People shouldn’t be allowed to be so attractive. So symmetrical. So powerfully handsome. Luckily for my libido, Sean lifts his hand in what I think is supposed to be a jaunty salute but, in his boozy state, comes out more as an effeminate, slapdash *heil*. It’s literally the most unattractive thing he’s ever done, but I immediately forgive him.

“Yes, *teacher!*” Greg slurs, loudly. He exhales a disgustingly aromatic cocktail of Budweiser vapours and flecks of teriyaki chicken wings into my face as he grins widely. He tilts his freakishly tall frame to paw at my skirt, jokingly. I slap him away, jokingly.

“I’ll *try*,” Claudia deadpans, shrugging, following the boys.

I hadn’t really wanted to sneak into the gym after the bar, but I hadn’t wanted to go home either. The four of us in the biology study group—which we’d affectionately though unoriginally nicknamed the Sit-By-the-Door Buddies when we assembled by proximity at the beginning of the year—had spent the evening responsibly commemorating writing the final exams of our undergrad careers with three-dollar double highballs. Nothing says academia like discount highballs.

Normally, and in job interviews, I characterize myself as quite responsible. Wholesome, even. But with the façade of studying together fast evaporating, this was the night I could really feel my time with Sean slipping away. Would we still meet up when we didn’t need each other for flash-card purposes? The realness of the situation got realer with each vodka water lime that sloshed past my lips, splattering my carefully selected flattering-but-not-trying-too-hard crop top.

Here’s how it happened:

“It’s almost last call! What now?” Greg said. His

booming voice, usually obnoxiously loud, was perfectly attuned to the climate of the loud club.

“Go . . . home?” Claudia said, scrolling through her phone.

“Boo!” Greg said.

“We could go to my place and chill,” I said.

“Don’t you live with your parents?” Sean asked.

“We could be quiet?” I said. “Or go to your place?”

“Naw. My parents live at my place,” Sean said.

“Fuck, my parents live at my place too!” Greg said.

“Why don’t we . . . go to . . . that gym you work at?” Claudia said.

“Yeah! Jules, you’re, like, *constantly* talking about your gymnastics! Show us!” Greg said.

“I don’t know. It’s sort of risky. We couldn’t turn on the lights or anything,” I said. “I’m worried about getting caught.”

“Then . . . why do you always talk about how you have the keys?” Sean said. He was right, as always. I had been bragging all year about how I’d been given keys to the gym.

In my defence though, I like to bring up the fact that I’m a gymnast and gym coach as often as possible. Especially around guys. Especially around guys I like, which means especially around Sean. Part of it is that I’m genuinely proud of what I do—I grew up idolizing my coaches, so being one of them now was an accomplishment. But I also just think that it makes me more interesting. And by interesting, I mean sexy.

“I could get in trouble,” I said.

“But, Jules,” Greg said, “don’t you want to show us some of your tricks?”

“Yeah, show us your gym-nas-tics,” Sean said.

He lifted his pony-like lashes and looked into my eyes. I was convinced.

We clambered into a cab. It was exhilarating to be headed to a second location with Sean. I feigned rifling through my purse so I’d have an excuse to be the last one in, so I could crush my body in beside him. I rolled the window down and left my seatbelt unbuckled as we sped over the bridge. I felt a familiar lurch in my belly—the same nervy rumble I feel when I’m swinging toward a dismount.

“Woo,” Sean yells, running into the darkness of the empty gym.

“Woo!” Greg echoes, though a little louder, his towering, lumbering frame surprisingly keeping pace with Sean’s lanky, lean one.

It’s a bit disturbing how most men never seem to outgrow that little-boy instinct to blindly plunge their bodies into the air—Greg and Sean were both old enough to rent a car or be tried as adults, but present them with open space, and they might as well join my kinder-kids class.

“Careful!” I yell, a deep-rooted thread of the safety-conscious coach in me sneaking past my desire to appear cool and nonchalant.

The gym is in a huge cement-floored warehouse, and my voice bellows, reverberating my distinctly uncool concern.

Claudia and I hang back by the gym’s entrance, taking a moment to let our eyes adjust to the hazy, dim blue light that streams in through the skylights. Particles of the soft white chalk the kids clap on their







hands during the day has been coaxed from the floor by the boys' blitz and hang in the moonlit air like tiny, dusty snowflakes. I drunkenly trace a speck of chalk with my eyes as it floats up in the air, disturbed by our presence, then dances away. I feel calmer and a bit more powerful in my natural habitat.

"So . . .," Claudia drawls, twirling at a strand of her long, lavender hair, pausing to take a thirsty gulp from a glittery flask. "You . . . work . . ."

"Here. Yes, I work here," I say, curtly.

Conversations with Claudia are never the right pace for me. I always feel compelled to help her along, jumping in with words to coach her to the end of her sentences.

"You come in . . ."

"Weeknights and weekend afternoons. I've been coaching since I was sixteen. It's great. It pays great, and I love the kids," I rush to say.

Claudia nods, thrusting her flask toward me. I take a delicate swig, making a point not to spill a drop, and pass it back. Claudia stuffs the flask into the right cup of her lacy black bra, which she treats like a cleavage-enhancing chest purse. I can see the outlines of her phone, lip gloss, and keys bulging out from the foam-filled cups. Claudia is a lot like her bra: mostly empty but with enough handy filler to keep people interested. I will not miss Claudia when we inevitably drift from text-every-day friends to like-major-life-events-on-Facebook acquaintances, but I'm still grateful to have her around now. Another girl to round out our little foursome. Someone to distract Greg tonight so I can have Sean to myself. Maybe I'll even tell him how I feel.

"So . . .," Claudia says, thrusting out a toned arm and pointing at Sean's shadowy figure, currently wrestling with Greg on the sprung floor. "You, like . . . *like* like . . . Sean?"

Horried, I snatch her hand and pull it back.

"Shut up!" I hiss, blushing rose in the darkness.

I don't want Sean to find out about our true love because of some drunk girl's ramblings.

"So, you're not . . . you know . . . into him?" she asks.

"No! Shhh!" I rasp. "Can we just not right now? Come on. I'll push you on the rope swing."

I grab Claudia's hand like I would one of my students and lead her into the abyss.

"O.K., Julie, can you tell me, in detail please, about the stages of cellular respiration?" Sean asked me one afternoon in the late fall, as we trudged around the snow-dusted quad before our class.

"Erm, no. But I can do the splits," I said sweetly. "Both sides," I said, kicking my leg high, suggestively. "Does that count for anything?"

Sean laughed.

"It counts for plenty, but it won't help you with this quiz. And it won't help me, either. I was hoping you actually could tell me."

Giggling and gazing sideways at Sean, I took a step and felt my heel glide out from under me on the icy cement. As I tumbled toward the ground, I did the automatic thing I always did—the absolute worst thing you can do—when I knew I wasn't going to stick a landing. I closed my eyes and prepared for the worst.

"Whoa, watch out."

I felt a hand grab my wrist and pull me up. When I opened my eyes, Sean was smiling down at me.

"For someone who talks a lot about balance, that was pretty close," he laughed.

"I balance on *beams*. There's no ice in gymnastics," I said, gruffly.



Gymnastics is a very solitary sport—no one had ever caught me before falling.

Sean laughed and smiled, turning his attention back to studying.

I fell in love with him.

“Now what tomfoolery do we have we here?” Greg’s molasses-thick voice calls out. I’m half-heartedly pushing Claudia around on a wobble board, trying to catch Sean’s eye, to impress him with my display of brute strength. You know: girlfriend-material stuff.

I squint across the floor at Greg, who’s hovering near the mirrored wall the kids use to watch their form while they practice their floor routines. A sudden roaring blast of familiar notes answers my question: He’s found Svetlana’s cassette deck.

The gym’s elderly, absurdly strict Russian (and total Luddite) head coach had brought the mammoth double-deck cassette player boombox with her when she came to Canada in the nineties, and she insists on using it as the only audio device in the gym.

Honestly, I’m surprised Greg knows how to use it. If our study group is any indication of intelligence, Greg isn’t always the sharpest.

*Ba, da, do, dum.*

The last tape in the deck that day must have been one of my students’ routines, because the music that blares loudly from the speakers is a familiar thumping tango.

*DAAAA, ba, do, dum.*

“Turn it down! Someone will hear us!” I hiss, jogging over to Greg, careful to avoid the random weights and ropes that transform the floor into an ankle-spraining obstacle course in the darkness.

“Please! We’re in an industrial park, and it’s, like, 3 A.M. On a Saturday! You already refuse to turn on the lights, which is kind of crazy—”

“Someone could drive by and see us!” I say, shriller than I want to be.

“Julie! Just chill,” Greg says, smiling lazily, turning up the volume.

*Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa. Do, do, do.*

Flustered, I’m about to lecture Greg further when I feel hands snatching at my waist from behind. Instinctually, I suck in my stomach and look in the mirror. Even in the low light, Sean’s mega-watt smile beams.

“Let’s dance,” he says, spinning me expertly. “We’ve never danced together, have we?”

He leans me back for a dramatic dip, which I wriggle out of and scramble to my feet.

I’m caught off guard—it’s too much at once. I’m great at memorizing routines, but I’m a terrible impromptu dancer. I like to be prepared for a performance.

*Dum dum, do, do, da.*

“Come on,” Sean laughs as he tries to twirl me, “loosen up, Julie.”

I bristle and pull away. I can’t stand being told to relax. I’m a gymnast—precision is in my blood.

“Jules,” Sean smiles at me. He reaches out his hand, but I’m too embarrassed to look him in the eye. Involuntary tears of frustration pool in my eyes, threatening to ruin my carefully applied eyeliner and contour.

“I just think it’s too loud,” I say, turning quickly and stomping over to the cassette player. My footsteps thud forcefully against the sprung tumbling floor.

Then everything and everyone is silent.

Isn’t it funny how some things can totally transform in the dark?

Take the gym, for example. In the daytime, it’s a

## DAWSON

Here, I am restless under sunsets that endure  
all night. Skin smeared orange, pink, yellow, and blue

Thought I’d be alone up north  
instead, there’s too much sky  
black spruce, sticky poplar, trembling aspen, white birch  
gold flakes, grey ashes, purple flowers, pink rock, fireweed

The city had become  
a fork in the eye  
a boot to the neck  
a parrot squawking

Here, I linger thirsty  
at the confluence between a muddy river and a clear one  
sucking in a thick stream of wildfire smoke  
watching the glaciers release silt

Perpetual sun has taught me  
to draw the blinds, swim in clouds, dance again, be kind

—EMILY POHL-WEARY

fluorescent-lit cornucopia of primary-coloured safety and low-risk thrills: everything is spring-loaded, padded, surrounded by foam. I’m completely comfortable in the gym when the lights are on. In this darkness though, even the most innocuous things feel menacing. The wooden uneven bars I’ve spent so many hours swinging on pop out unexpectedly, threatening to choke or decapitate me. The glittery hula hoops I use to teach smiling children how to do cartwheels on are now glinting lassos, snaking their sparkling P.V.C. exteriors around my delicate ankles, ready to yank and snap. The giant coiled springs that lay around haphazardly here and there are convenient for when you need to switch up the hardness of a beat board for a vault. In the dark though, the springs turn the floor into a minefield.

After my outburst, I’m embarrassed. I spend a few minutes in the bathroom fixing my makeup, then go out and busy myself with cleaning, briskly tidying hazardous blocks and pieces of equipment. I am a human metal detector on a darkened beach, hunting for things that could trip Sean up.

I find a small, glittery flask near the balance beams. “I told her no whisky,” I think, shaking my head. Then, I find a tube of nude lip gloss on a beat board. Then, an iPhone on a landing mat. Then, them.

Wedge between a triangle block and a mattress-esque crash mat, it’s Sean and Claudia. It’s a particularly dark corner of the gym, but by the flashes of movement and squishy, nauseatingly moist smacking sounds, I know what they’re doing.

Sean, the light of my life, is nothing more than another horny, grasping, desperate man in the dark. There’s no stopping my makeup from melting now.

“Come on, Jules, let’s see what you’ve got!” Greg drunkenly calls for me from the back of the foam pit.

I stumble away from the horror and over to Greg in a daze. He’s sprawled out, dark hair greasy and tussled, gloomily lit under a skylight. He looks relaxed though, as if he’s soaking in a hot tub and not slowly sinking into a crater in the floor filled with disintegrating blocks of questionably yellow foam.

“Not now, Greg,” I pout. The alcohol that had made my heart feel so bubbly and effervescent earlier in the evening now anchored me to the ground, queasy.

“Can’t you do, like, a flip or something?” Greg says.

I sigh. *Of course* I can do a flip. Claudia may have Sean’s magnificent hand up her skirt, but I can most certainly do a flip. I grab the threadbare hair elastic from my wrist and twist my long hair into a neat topknot. It’s business time.

“Watch this!” I shout, loudly.

I turn and step backward a few paces down the tumble track—a sprung, bouncy strip that leads to the foam pit and Greg.

I take a breath and raise my arms, then I’m off. It’s a few quick steps, then a thrust. Power hurdle. Round off, back handspring, back handspring. My body flies on autopilot and a comforting Zen washes over me.

I raise my knees to flip into the pit, but my heel catches on something. Suddenly, I’m falling. Failing. My crisp precision melts into flailing. I am a wacky inflatable tube man flipping horrifically in the wind.

I land awkwardly in the pit beside Greg, mortified. He claps enthusiastically.

“Holy shit, did you do that on purpose? Amazing!”

I lay frozen, limbs askew, in the pile of foam. I can still hear Sean and Claudia rustling between the mats on the other side of the gym.

“Julie, that was so cool,” Greg whispers, uncharacteristically softly. “You are really good at this stuff.” It’s the first time I’ve ever heard him be so quiet. I look up at his face. I’m not sure if it’s the tequila, the vodka, the whisky, or the fact that my heart has just been broken, but Greg’s features look grotesquely blown out: huge eyes, giant nose, monstrous brows.

He reaches his big, clown-like hand for me and paws at my skirt again. I breathe in the musky scent of the million children’s feet that have walked through this pit. Greg rolls on top of me, his long, heavy frame pushing me further into the pit, so far that blocks of foam fall over my face, blacking out the last specks of light from the ceiling.

“You were right, Jules. Gymnastics is *fun*,” he whispers.

I close my eyes and prepare. ☺



# AQUAVAN WINKLE RETURNS!

**WHEN DAME MERA UNLEASHES HER TEMPER, IT'S TIME TO RAMBLE!**

AQUAVAN WINKLE!  
YOU'RE ALWAYS READY TO ATTEND ANYONE'S BUSINESS BUT YOUR OWN!  
YOU NEVER DO YOUR FAMILY DUTY!

**AQUAVAN RIDES HIS PET TO THE CATFISH MOUNTAINS, WHERE HE HEARS A VOICE CALLING...**

AQUAVAN WINKLE...!

HELLO, MY FINNY FELLOW!  
I'LL ASSIST YOU WITH YOUR **STOUT KEG!**

**JOINING THE STRANGE SPRITE, AQUAVAN COMES UPON A COMPANY PLAYING NINEPINS!**

HOW ODD! THESE FOLKS AMUSE THEMSELVES WHILE WEARING SUCH GRAVE FACES!

**THE KEG'S CONTENTS ARE EMPTIED INTO LARGE FLAGONS.**

TASTY! IT HAS THE FLAVOR OF EXCELLENT HOLLANDS. I'M NATURALLY A THIRSTY SOUL, SO I'LL HAVE ANOTHER...  
MMMM... SO SLEEPY...

**SOMETIME LATER...**

HAVE I SLEPT ALL NIGHT?  
OH! THAT FLAGON!  
WHAT EXCUSE SHALL I MAKE TO DAME MERA?

**AS AQUAVAN HURRIES HOME...**

ALAS, I'M A NATIVE OF THIS PLACE, BUT EVERYTHING'S CHANGED! DOES NOBODY HERE KNOW AQUAVAN WINKLE?

WHY, IT IS YOU, AQUAVAN! IT'S TWENTY YEARS SINCE YOU LEFT! YOU'VE MISSED THE REVOLUTION!

AND DAME MERA DIED OF A BROKEN BLOOD VESSEL!

THERE'S A DROP OF COMFORT, AT LEAST!

WERE YOU IN THE CATFISH MOUNTAINS? THEY'RE HAUNTED BY HUDSON AND HIS CREW!

I'D LOVE A QUIETING DRAFT FROM HIS FLAGON!

YOU BEGIN TO DOZE OFF WITH EVERY QUAFF OF HUDSON'S FLAGONS!



*An appetizer? A side dish? A dessert?  
All of the above. That's the beautiful,  
mysterious versatility of Jell-O.*

## JIGGLING OFF INTO THE SUNSET

BY BRIAN FRANCIS

PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS BLANCHARD

### Sunset Salad

#### Ingredients

2 3-ounce packages lemon or orange Jell-O  
1 7-ounce package gelatin  
1 teaspoon salt  
3 cups boiling water  
1 19-ounce can of crushed pineapple or pineapple tidbits  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
2 cups coarsely grated carrots  
 $\frac{2}{3}$  cup coarsely chopped pecans (optional)

#### Directions

1. Dissolve Jell-O, gelatin, and salt in boiling water. Add undrained pineapple and lemon juice.
2. Chill in a bowl until very thick. Fold in carrots and pecans.
3. Pour into individual moulds or one 7-cup mould. Chill until very firm (overnight, to be safe).
4. Garnish with additional pineapple, if desired.

This recipe makes enough for a 7-cup mold. If you want a smaller amount, halve the recipe to make six side salads, or about 3 cups.

A list of inventions that have revolutionized our modern world would need to mention cars, penicillin, and Instagram filters. But it would also have to include Jell-O. Take a moment to consider Jell-O's jiggly powers. It can take any physical substance, be it Mandarin orange segments, canned fruit cocktail, or a Lee Press-On Nail (by accident—it happens), and suspend it in time. Literally. Jell-O defies gravity. It's the original space food.

That said, Jell-O has earned a bad rap since it first wobbled its way into kitchens in 1897. That's because people in the nineteen-fifties, sixties, and seventies were smoking bad weed and thought it was a good idea to combine Jell-O with all kinds of wrong things. Like vegetables. Or olives. Or meat. What kind of deranged individual thinks combining orange Jell-O with canned tomatoes is even remotely tasty, let alone edible?

But had I been too quick to judge the generations of Jell-O past? I consulted my copy of *Joys of Jell-O*, published in 1963, by General Foods. This book contains all kinds of messed-up recipes, including Ring-Around-the-Tuna, Ham Mousse, and Chicken Salad Surprise. (Surprise! It's made with lemon Jell-O!) But not every recipe looked like a train wreck, and I had to admit there was something poetic about the moulded Jell-O salads. The photo for Sunset Salad was certainly eye-catching. And the ingredients—pineapple, carrots, and pecans—seemed . . . not awful.

Before you begin, *Joys of Jell-O* recommends a few key tips to ensure a successful Jell-O salad. If you're using a mould, add a package of unflavoured gelatin

to the Jell-O powder to ensure your salad holds its shape. Otherwise, you might end up with a Leaning Tower of Pisa Salad. Also, to get your salad to slide out successfully, spritz the inside of your mould with cooking spray. And give your salad plenty of time to set. When you're ready to release your masterpiece, use water to moisten both the exposed bottom surface of the Jell-O and a chilled plate. This will make it easier to reposition the salad, if needed. Run a sharp knife around the edge to loosen it from the mould. Then submerge the mould in warm water for about ten seconds. Cover the opening with your chilled plate and flip the mould over. If it doesn't release, try submerging it in warm water for another ten seconds. Mine took a few tries. If it doesn't come out, don't panic. Breathe deeply and relax. You will give birth. Let nature—and gravity—work their magic.

So how does Sunset Salad taste? Well, not as bad as you might think. True, there are a lot of textures going on, whether it's the crunch of the carrots and nuts or the squish of the Jell-O and juicy bites of pineapple. But overall, the flavours work pretty well together. It's like a carrot cake. Without the cake. Or the cream cheese frosting (which, let's be honest, is the only reason anyone eats carrot cake).

As for how you should serve it, the choice is yours. Serve Sunset Salad as an appetizer, a side salad, or even a dessert. That's the beautiful versatility of Jell-O. It can't be categorized. Jell-O is a chameleon, a mystery, a shape-shifter. And that, my friends, is the true joy of Jell-O. ☺







*A good picnic is about more than  
creating the perfect charcuterie board,  
explains Lindsay Zier-Vogel.*

## LACK OF PINTEREST

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS BLANCHARD

Lindsay Zier-Vogel takes her analogue activities seriously. For years, the writer and soon-to-be children's author—her books *Letters to Amelia* and *Dear Street* are both upcoming—has crafted and anonymously distributed handwritten notes of admiration to her hometown of Toronto (and encouraged others to do the same) through the Love Lettering Project. She's also one of the voices behind Swimming Holes We Have Known, a blog aimed at spreading a love for aquatics.

Zier-Vogel's other obsession is something she shares on a more intimate level: the art of picnicking. "I can't think of a time when I wasn't picnicking," Zier-Vogel told *Taddle Creek* recently. "When I was a kid, with my family, we took whatever salami sandwich we had and ate it outside."

After an ill-fated move to Vancouver, in 2007, Zier-Vogel returned to Toronto and found herself living near several friends for the first time in her adult life. "I didn't live in residence during university. I'd never had that everyone-lives-in-the-same-place sort of feeling before, and then suddenly I did," she said. "So, I would lead the charge on these picnics. I would bake and get everyone to bring their beverages of choice, and we would go to Trinity Bellwoods Park. And I realized how much fun it was to be able to have a meal with a whole bunch of people without having to do a million dishes afterward or to not have enough space for everyone. I remember one time we picnicked for ten hours." Winter was not a deterrent to Zier-Vogel's newfound hobby. "I was like, You can't picnic in the winter, until one morning I was like, Wait, what if you *could* picnic in the winter. And that was when I realized, Oh, I think that I love this a lot. A lot more than just a thing I do once a year. This is how I want to spend time with people that I love."

Plenty of people enjoy a picnic, but not everyone has the knowhow to host a really great one. So *Taddle Creek* asked the photographer Thomas Blanchard to tag along on a food-centric outing with Zier-Vogel and two of her friends, the author Teri Vlassopoulos and the dance artist Kate Holden, to see how it's done. Zier-Vogel also offered to share some expert picnic tips with the magazine's readers.

**TIP 1:** "My favourite thing to bring to a picnic is Mason jars. Here's the first tip: You put ice in one Mason jar and then, if you're bringing some sort of alcoholic beverage, you put that in another Mason jar, and then you bring a third Mason jar with lemonade. And bring however many Mason jars you need to drink out of. Always bring extras. That way, you have ice, and instead of drinking lukewarm whatever, you're drinking fancy cold drinks. It's genius."

**TIP 2:** "My other favourite thing is to make fruit crumbles or cakes in little Mason jars, because, again, you just put the lid on and you don't worry about things spilling or anything going astray."

**TIP 3:** "I think it's nice to invite someone you don't see often, especially in an outdoor context. People are always so delighted to be invited to a picnic. 'I don't think I can make it.' I've never received that response."

**TIP 4:** "I feel like people get really freaked out about making some Pinterest-level charcuterie board. It looks lovely, but I don't think it's necessary. [Magazine photo shoots excepted. —Editor] You can just open your fridge, open your pantry, and grab a bunch of stuff. It will still taste better, and it will still be lovely."

**TIP 5:** "I usually plan one thing, whether it's a special cocktail or a special dessert. I usually do one baked thing, and then the rest is a bit of a fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants situation."











**PLANNING THE PERFECT PICNIC:** Transporting a chocolate cherry cake with cream cheese icing (top) isn't easy, but your guests will appreciate the effort. A mess-free dessert that's easy to carry is peach crumble baked in a Mason jar (middle). Lidded jars are also perfect for holding drinks and ice, like this raspberry lemonade (above). Opposite: Teri Vlassopoulos and Kate Holden share the literal fruits of Lindsay Zier-Vogel's labour—and some afternoon conversation—in the park.

**TIP 6:** "Soft cheeses on a hot day—not advisable."

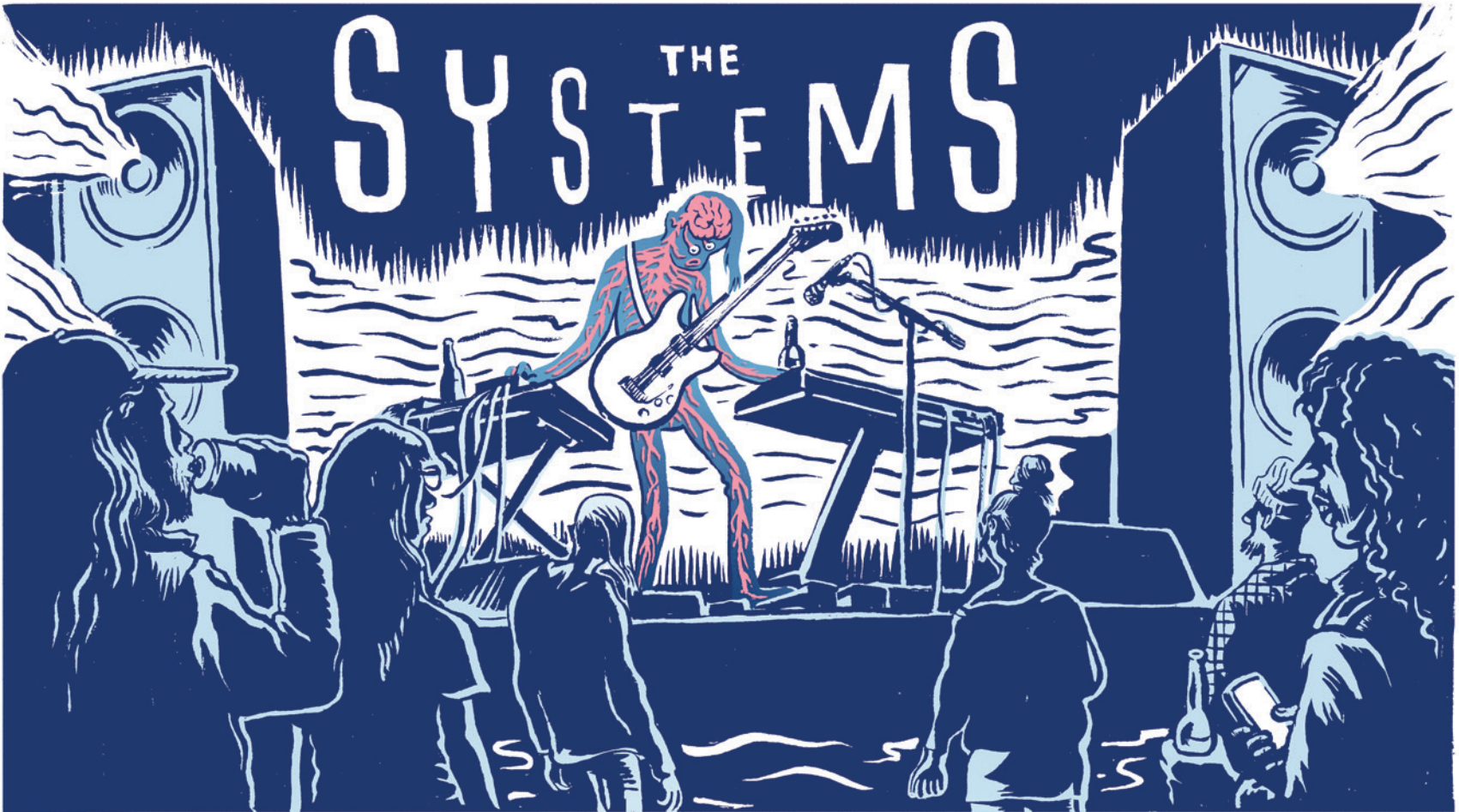
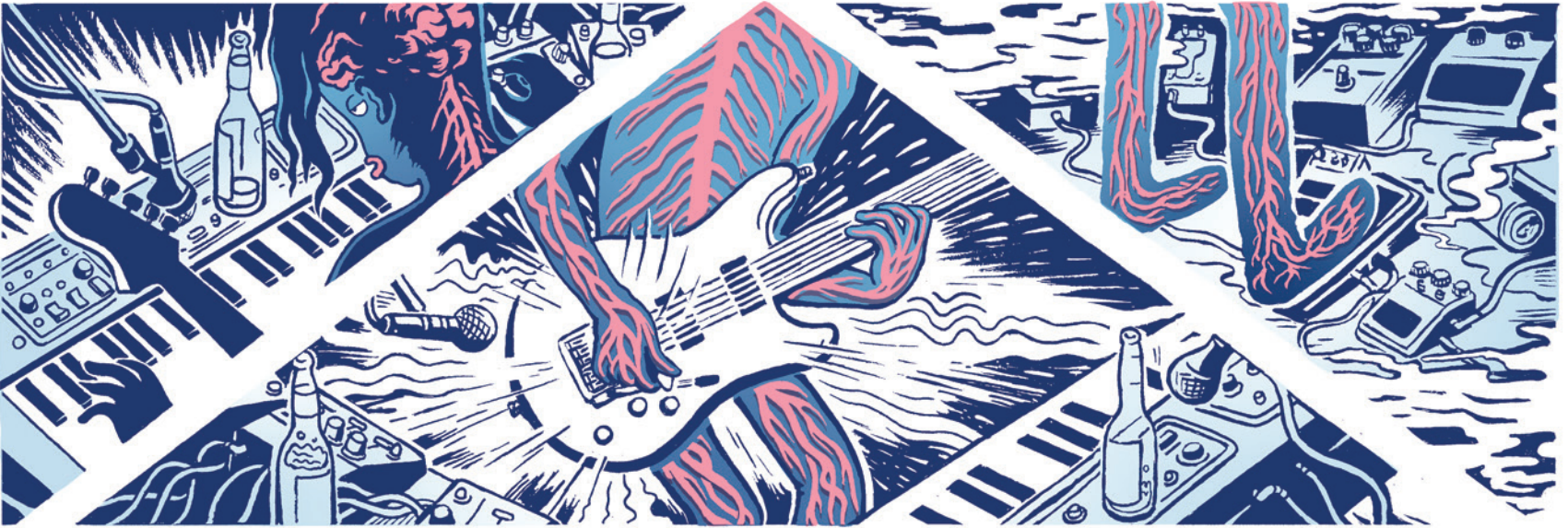
**TIP 7:** "I have designed the perfect picnic blanket. It has a canvas fabric on top—gingham, because it's the most photogenic of the picnic blankets—and then, underneath, I used that plastic you line your cutlery drawers with. I sewed that to the bottom, because even if you're sitting on the grass, moisture soaks through the blanket. This blanket is key to a winter picnic, because then you can just put it on the snow and not get wet."

**TIP 8:** "The other key to a winter picnic is to dress more warmly than you would otherwise, because you're just going to be sitting around. Also: food you can eat with mittens on. Like, empanadas are great. Things you don't need dexterity for. And a hot beverage. No ice!" ☺

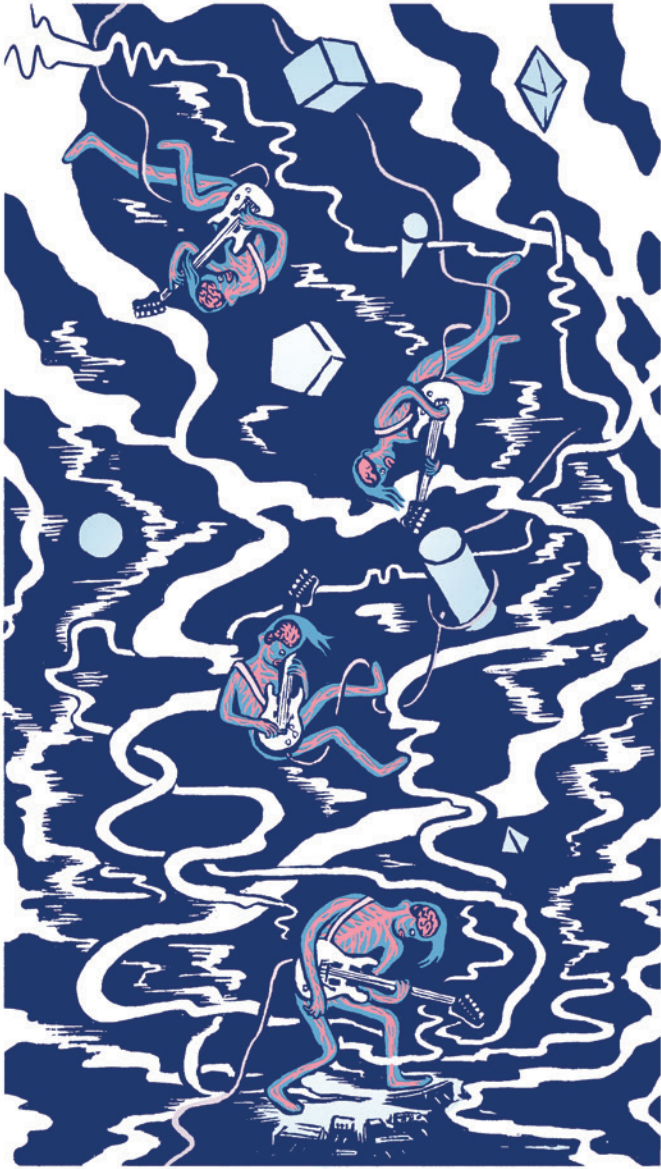










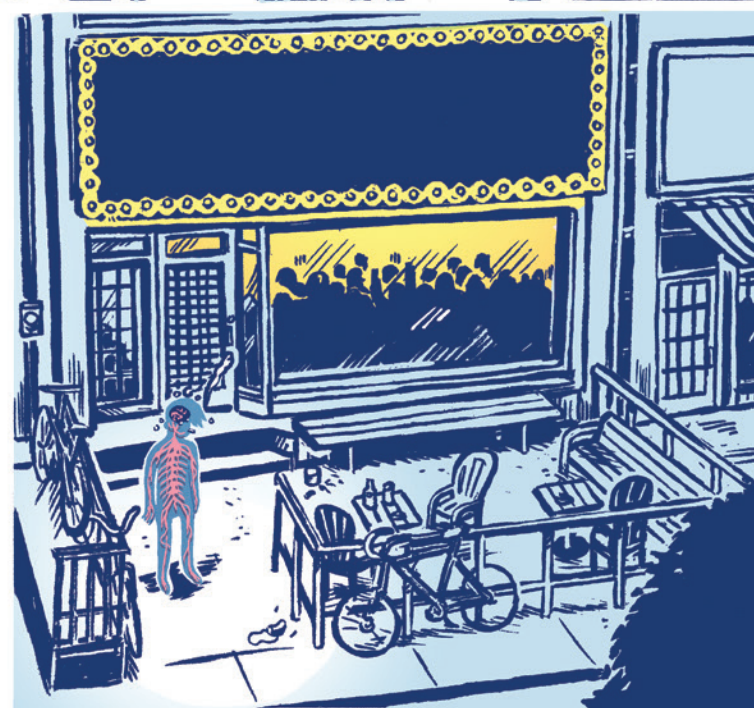








SHIT, BRIAN. REMEMBER WHEN WE STARTED THIS? WE WERE THE SYSTEMS MAN, AND WE WERE FUCKING GREAT TOGETHER!



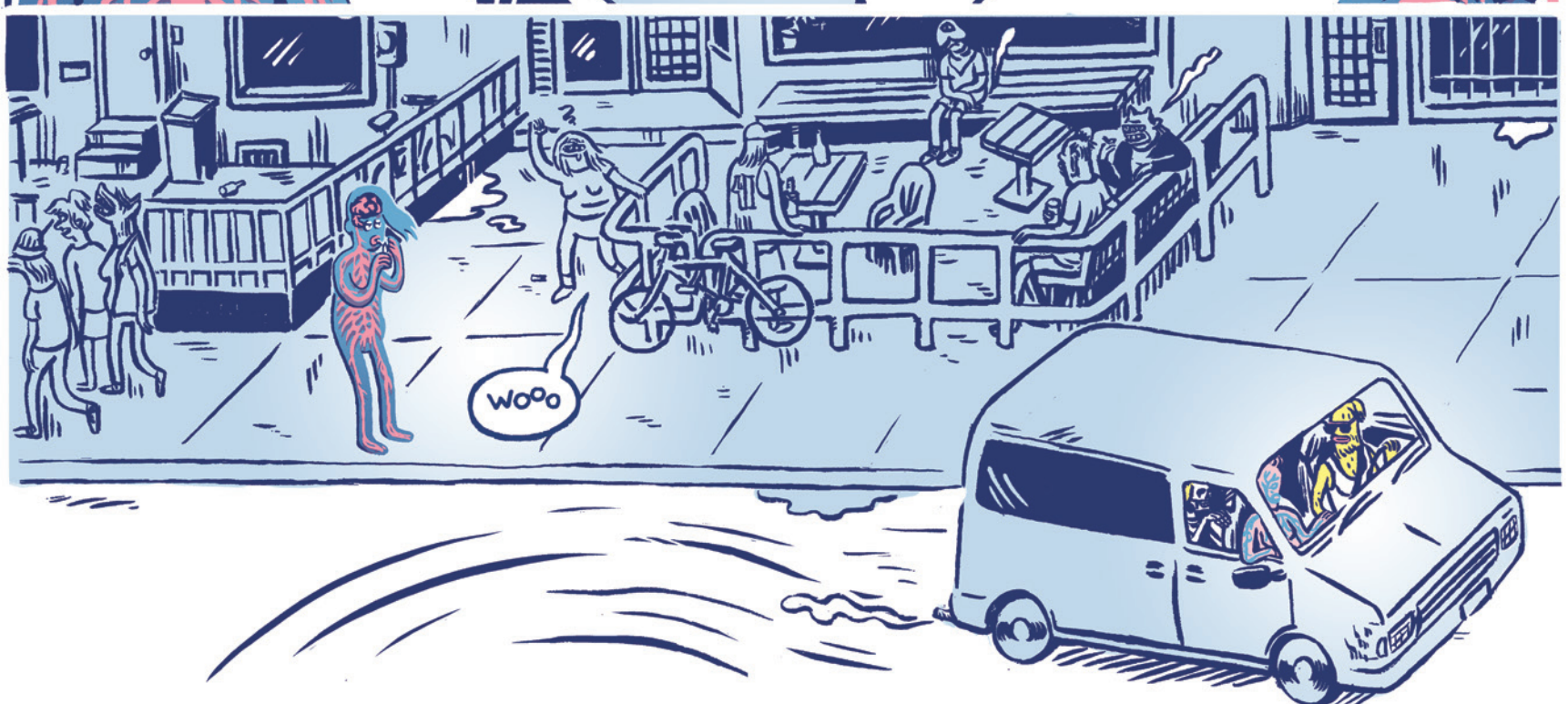




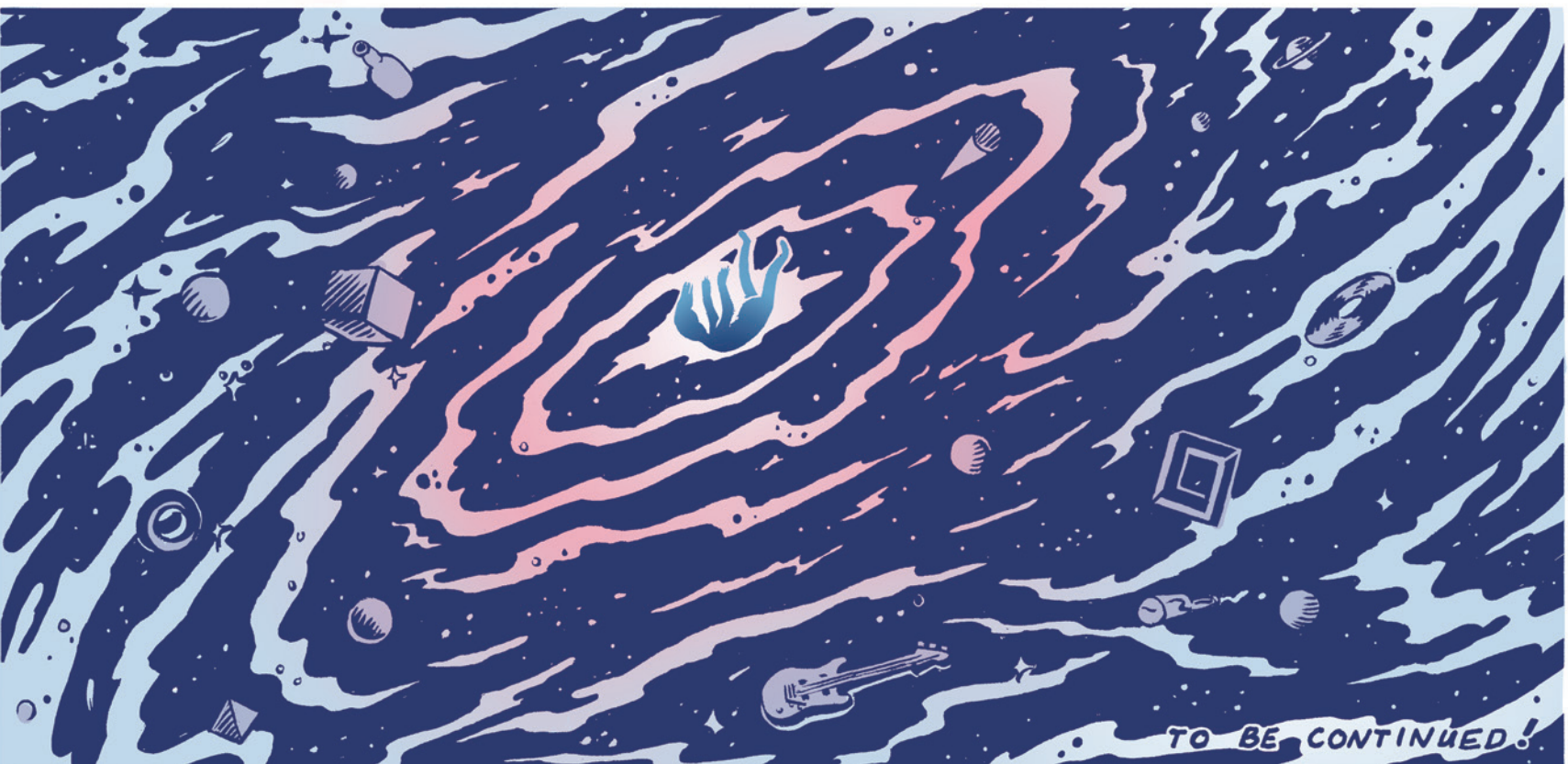
















*Winston Bronnum turned  
his love of New Brunswick  
wildlife into a sizable career.*

## BIG AS ALL OUTDOORS

BY CONAN TOBIAS

Last spring, a Facebook friend of mine posted a photograph of a white plastic shopping bag adorned, in green, with a smiling anthropomorphic potato and the words: “Fresh Vegetables from ‘THE POTATO MAN.’”

I quickly did a Google search that confirmed my hope: Harvey’s, the Maugerville, New Brunswick, vegetable stand listed on the bag, was indeed home to a four-limbed, top-hatted giant smiling potato.

I spent my first eighteen years living an hour from Maugerville, but somehow, until that moment, I’d been completely unaware of this Eighth Wonder of the World. So, last July, I flew to Saint John, got in a car, and drove the hundred and twenty kilometres to Maugerville, a small community on the east bank of the Saint John River, just outside of Fredericton.

Maugerville (pronounced “Majorville”) is located in Maugerville Parish, in the county of Sunbury. On a map, Maugerville Parish, home to fewer than two thousand people, looks like a narrow, rectangular lot that juts eastward on about a forty-five-degree angle from the river. The portion of Maugerville most non-residents see is its approximately twenty-kilometre-long southern border, on Route 105, which runs along the river’s east bank and features a handful of homes, a few farms prone to flooding, and Harvey’s Big Potato, a long wooden structure with a cement floor, a high peaked roof, and horizontal slat siding.

Whether you pass through Maugerville from the east or from the west, you’ll be greeted by the Harvey’s mascot, known only as Big Potato Man—a twenty-foot-tall spud with spindly stick-like arms, somewhat thicker legs, a black top hat, and the same smiling face on either side of his “body.”

I arrived less than an hour before closing and met the proprietor, Daniel Boudreau. For the past few seasons, Boudreau has leased the stand and its adjoining farm from Buzz Harvey, the grandson of the orig-

inal owner. “Last year was our first year growing,” Boudreau said. “Potatoes, corn, peas. We’re trying to see if we can make it pay.” I asked him about Big Potato Man. “Probably twenty, thirty, people a day come by to take a picture of him. Most of them buy something. Even in springtime, when we weren’t even open, there’d be twenty, thirty cars a day.”

Buzz Harvey retired in 2015, at the age of sixty-two, but still lives on the farm next door. Boudreau offered to invite Harvey to join us and telephoned him. A few minutes later, Harvey pulled up in his truck, dressed in hiking boots, beige shorts, and a plaid button-up shirt, with a ball cap over his white close-cropped hair. “The original farm here was about fifty acres,” Harvey told me. “We added another hundred and fifty over the years, and I sold some off. Now it’s about seventy-five acres. My grandfather bought the land in 1921. I think it was up for tax sale. It was a farm when he bought it. I don’t think they were growing much. He started the roadside market in 1952.”

By the late sixties, Harvey’s father was running the farm and decided business might be improved by the addition of a roadside attraction. “We were going to put two corn cobs there,” Harvey said. “We were known for our corn. And Dad said, ‘Well, the background of the business for years and years has been the potatoes—the Green Mountain potato. So he said, ‘Let’s make a potato man.’ We hired someone to design and build it. My dad was a flying instructor, and he’d taught the artist to fly. His name was Winston Bronnum.”

Winston Bronnum was a well-respected, somewhat renowned artist, particularly in his home province. He had a practical attitude toward the intersection of art and commerce. Bronnum once referred to his career as “more a commercial venture than an art venture,” and said, “I get a lot of pleasure out of it but I like to eat well while I’m doing it.”

**ONE POTATO:** Maugerville’s Big Potato Man has been charming locals and tourists for more than half a century (opposite). Above: Winston Bronnum, circa 1960.

BRONNUM: PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF NEW BRUNSWICK (P225-111); BIG POTATO MAN: T. CLIFFORD HODGSON







Bronnum was born in 1929 and grew up in New Denmark, a rural community in New Brunswick's Victoria County, south of Drummond and about twenty minutes east of the Maine border. New Denmark is known as both the country's oldest and largest Danish settlement, and its main industry is potato farming. Bronnum frequently got into trouble as a child for carving horses into the pine desktops at his school. Most accounts of his life say he dropped out during the Second World War to help work the family farm, though a few say he was thrown out for his artistic destruction of property. As a young man, he moved to Ontario to work in construction. Bronnum had a natural engineering ability and soon he was supervising rigging on hydro dams and bridges. He continued honing his carving abilities and, in the nineteen-fifties, returned to New Brunswick and opened a studio, first in Grand Falls, then in Fredericton. His sculpted animals, usually local woodland species, of which he was fond, became popular with hunters and tourists. Bronnum's reputation quickly grew, both as an artist and an eccentric personality. A local paper once described the familiar site of Bronnum's "maroon-colored station wagon with a horse's head carved out of wood as a hood ornament, a pair of hands holding chisel and mallet sculpted against a maple leaf and the name Bronnum inscribed on either side."

Bronnum's commissions and selling ability grew with his reputation. For Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, he carved a coat of arms to hang in the Historic Beaverbrook House. His work was displayed in New York's Waldorf Hotel and Rockefeller Center. In 1953, Bronnum spent sixteen days carving a memorial plaque of the royal coat of arms, to commemorate Queen Elizabeth's coronation. He then sold replicas, created by pouring plaster of Paris into a rubber mould, which the *Moncton Daily Times* said Bronnum felt "would make suitable memorials in public buildings." He began incorporating his engineering skills into his art and developed a technique of modelling Portland cement reinforced with steel to create sculptures that withstood the ravages of nature. Bronnum regularly created floats for the Moncton Santa Claus Parade: One year, he built a nursery-rhyme-themed twelve-foot-high old shoe made from eleven hundred feet of fibreglass, six hundred pounds of steel rods, and thirty gallons of paint; another year, his float consisted of a twenty-four-foot-long rooftop crowned with Santa's sleigh and eight animated reindeer. And until the redevelopment of Saint John's Haymarket Square, in the nineteen-seventies, a life-sized horse carved by Bronnum sat for many years on the roof of the city's Gladstone tavern. When the horse was offered at auction, years later, the auctioneer marvelled, "Why, look at his nostrils and feel the conformation of his hips. You know Bronnum really studied animals."

Bronnum's most substantial wildlife tribute was not a single sculpture but a garden full of them. In the nineteen-fifties, he began work on Animaland, a nineteen-acre amusement park, near Sussex, along what was then the Trans-Canada Highway. Blow Hard, a white, skeletal-looking racehorse, welcomed visitors at the entryway and acted as the attraction's mascot. The park



**UNNATURAL HABITAT:** Animaland's play area featured rugged, climable statues for kids (above). Opposite: Blow Hard, the park's racehorse mascot, still greets visitors today.







eventually featured dozens of additional life-sized sculptures—Bronnum added to Animaland for years—including bears, a giraffe, a lobster, and an octopus. It also included a playland, with animal statues children could climb, a gift shop, and an aquarium, featuring real-life sharks. Animaland shuttered shortly after Bronnum's death, in 1991. It sat derelict for years but recently started attracting an increased number of curious trespassers, some old enough to be drawn in by nostalgia, others young enough to be intrigued by the park's legend. In 2016, the friends of Bronnum who bought the park after his death reopened it as a campground, leaving all of the sculptures in place. Ulie Fournier, one of the owners, said his reasons for reopening after so long were partially to take advantage of the asset but also to avoid the growing liability issues. "There's no real financial gain," he told the *Telegraph-Journal*. "The real issue was people assuming it was abandoned and coming in here and vandalizing and taking advantage of it. We just didn't want to be subject to it anymore so the only way to do that is to have fun."

In 1882, P. T. Barnum, the legendary American showman, purchased an elephant named Jumbo from the Royal Zoological Gardens, in London's Regent Park,

for the sum of two thousand pounds. Jumbo was nearly twelve feet high and weighed seven tons, earning him the title of the world's largest elephant. Jumbo was not named after a word for big things—big things were named "jumbo" after him. The sale didn't sit well with the British public, who saw the elephant as a national treasure. Despite protests, the transaction went ahead. Jumbo was transported by ship to his new home, in New York, and became the star attraction of Barnum's travelling circus. Over the course of the next four seasons, Jumbo travelled tens of thousands of miles across North America, warming audience hearts through his impressive size and gentle nature, and earning, in Barnum's estimate, more than a million dollars.

On September 15, 1885, Jumbo and a smaller elephant, named Tom Thumb, were being led along the tracks just outside of St. Thomas, Ontario, when an unscheduled Grand Trunk freight train struck them both from behind. The engine pushed Jumbo a hundred feet, and he died within minutes. Barnum continued to profit from Jumbo after the elephant's death, taxidermizing his hide and displaying it alongside his skeleton for several more seasons. The residents of St. Thomas eventually found a humane way to profit from and pay tribute to Jumbo. Ideas for a monument were first sug-

gested soon after the accident and again on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, in 1935, but nothing materialized. Finally, in the years leading up to the centenary of Jumbo's death, citizens and the local Kiwanis Club raised enough money to hire Bronnum to create a life-sized effigy of Jumbo. The statue's steel frame weighed six thousand pounds and was encased in thirty-four thousand pounds of concrete, making it several times heavier than the real Jumbo. Bronnum spent more than a year researching—including time at the Ringling museum, in Florida—and one year building the work before it was transported, in pieces, along the Trans-Canada Highway, to St. Thomas. Not long before the statue's unveiling, in June of 1985, Bob Stollery, chairman of the St. Thomas Jumbo Monument Committee, said Jumbo's death was "about the only exciting thing that's ever happened here." Bronnum sold the event with a little more Barnum-like flourish, telling the *Telegraph-Journal*, "The commission to do a life-size African elephant for the folk of St. Thomas was a challenge, yes. I had thought and worked mostly in terms of the smaller creatures of the New Brunswick woodlands. But an elephant? That was something else. Despite his tragic death, I have given Jumbo the up-raised trunk. That's traditionally the good luck elephant."







Bronnum completed one last major work the year before his death, at the age of sixty-two. In the nineteen-eighties, a group of Shediac Rotarians attending a convention became enamoured with the eight-and-a-half-metre-long steel salmon located on the Restigouche River waterfront in Campbellton, New Brunswick. The statue, known as Restigouche Sam, was created as a symbol of salmon's importance to the local economy. The club brainstormed ideas for promoting Shediac as the world's lobster capital and eventually commissioned Bronnum to create a thirty-six-foot-long, sixteen-foot-high, eighty-ton lobster. (Bronnum's lobster often is said to hold the Guinness record for the world's largest lobster, but it does not.) Bronnum said the piece was the largest he'd ever created and "probably one of my best." He built the sculpture over the course of two years at the four-thousand-square-foot studio he maintained at Animaland. "The artist began by studying lobsters while wintering in Florida, videotaping them as they flitted about in a glass tank," reported the *Moncton Times-Transcript*. "He used an embalmed creature as a reference point. The massive Shediac beast started out as a pencil sketch, evolved into a 30-inch model made

of clay, styrofoam and wire, 'and from that I went on to the real thing.'"

The statue was moved by flatbed trailer to Shediac's Rotary Park and secured to its sandstone base in time for the 1990 Canada Day weekend. In 1987, the club estimated the statue, base, and surrounding park, all told, would cost about two hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars. This sum was large enough that construction was put on hold for a year while funds were raised and critics were quelled. At the time of its unveiling, the reported cost had risen to more than three hundred thousand dollars. When the lobster, which draws five-hundred-thousand visitors a year, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, in 2015, the total original cost was reported as four hundred thousand dollars. Bronnum brushed off criticism of the price, reportedly saying, again with P. T. Barnum flourish, that he was giving the town a concrete lobster at a rate "cheaper per pound than real lobster would cost."

In 1953, the *Telegraph-Journal* reported, "Wooden potato samples, so perfect they have been okayed by Ottawa potato experts as exact reproductions of New Brunswick spud varieties, have been carved by Winston Bronnum, the artist."

In a career filled with oddities, Bronnum's Big Po-

tato Man is possibly the oddest. "My father asked Winston what he could build for a thousand dollars," Buzz Harvey told me last summer. "So, he started in the fall of '68. He put the base in, and Winston worked on it in his shop, in Sussex, and he brought it up and placed it, and then he coated it. It's about four to five inches thick. They had a plastic thing around it, and they unveiled in on July 1 in 1969. I did a facelift three years ago. It needs another one. We didn't do much to it the first thirty to thirty-five years. When we put it up, we doubled our business. The Americans all call him a peanut—Planters peanut. Probably because he's a blob. He's the shape of a Green Mountain potato. It's a variety that originated around 1880, 1890. A white potato. Closest to a Kennebec. It's dry. The old fellas around here like their potatoes dry, dry. They're good for everything. We used to French fry them. They're high in sugar, so they brown up."

"My father was around when we had a twenty-fifth anniversary for the Big Potato Man. We reduced everything to 1969 prices for the day. It was probably our biggest day ever. We're thinking about doing something for the fiftieth. I don't know what yet. We never really got promoted by New Brunswick enough. It's kind of a shame. Idaho said they had the biggest potato, but we have the biggest in the world." 🍠

**BIG DEALS:** Bronnum's humane tribute to Jumbo, in St. Thomas (opposite). Above: Bronnum considered the Shediac Lobster "probably" one of his best works.



### The Book Review Scarf

This is a simple ribbed scarf, designed to be a visual review and reminder of the books you read over a chosen timeframe. I chose four colours that co-ordinated and assigned each colour a star rating (the star rating is important—you will need it for the pattern).

#### The Star Rating

1 star = 2 rows of K1, P1 ribbing  
2 stars = 4 rows of K1, P1 ribbing  
3 stars = 6 rows of K1, P1 ribbing  
4 stars = 8 rows of K1, P1 ribbing  
(One right side and one wrong is two rows.)

#### Needle Size

8 mm/U.S. 11

#### Yarn

Berroco Mercado, four skeins  
(or other bulky weight yarn,  
820 yards)

#### Colours Used in Sample

4153 Agua Marina  
(dark blue) = 1 star  
4016 Niebla  
(light grey) = 2 stars  
4128 Cielo  
(blue grey) = 3 stars  
4129 Laguna  
(sea glass) = 4 stars

#### Notions

Tapestry needle to weave in ends.

#### Pattern

Cast on 36 stitches, using the colour of your first book review. Work the number of rows that you assigned that book in your star rating. Continue alternating (or not alternating) colours as they correspond with the star rating stripes. Continue until scarf measures 80 inches long. Cast off, and weave in ends for your stripes.

If any of these techniques are unfamiliar, I recommend doing a search online to find tutorials or videos, of which there are a staggering number.

*The arrangement of words on a page  
really aren't that different from  
the arrangement of stitches in a fabric.*

## NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

BY JULIE CAMERON GRAY

When I can't sleep, I mentally curate a personal list of "secret cabin" books. Most people call them "desert island" favourites, but my secluded isolation fantasy isn't tropical. It centers on a beautiful cabin in a deep wood, possibly on a small lake with a mysterious name, where I am surrounded by piles of books I love and new ones I'm about to love even more.

But I am not suggesting this book list as a means of falling asleep, though, if you struggle with falling asleep, like I do, then have at it. No, I'm going to suggest you knit a scarf—one based on the books you've been reading and how much you enjoyed them.

This is where one might typically say something about the proven psychological benefits of making something with your own hands from beginning to completion. So many of our typical tasks are just a piece of something else, and our brains aren't wired to find that fulfilling or satisfying. It's the math of knitting that soothes me—the laws that numbers operate, the equations devoid of narrative. A framework where you are the one who interprets and applies meaning instead of having it handed to you in a pithy tweet while scrolling, casually searching for the next bad-news fix that exempts you from doing something good or useful.

What I love about knitting is the same thing I love about writing poetry—it's math that makes both work well. Different mathematical principles for each, yes, but math all the same. Poetry is improved massively by rhythm (a lot could be written on the geometric

shapes that underpin what makes a rhythm effective), length of line, physical structure, and patterns. Knitting is a textural relationship between the variables of algebra and the dimensions of geometry.

Geometry is the relationship of points and lines, and those connections fascinate me. The arrangements of words on a page, the arrangements of stitches to form a fabric. I am taking liberties, absolutely—the kind of connections the brain can leap to and from, like a bee staggering from flower to flower. The kind of connections that bloom when you read a stack of new books and let their various images bang together in your mind and cross-pollinate. An idea made from the relationship of those discordant pieces into a series of points and lines, your mind creating a new geometric equation connecting them in something you've never experienced before.

There is poetry in that. In these stitches, these colours, in your two hands looping a soft, tiny cylinder of fibre into a wearable representation of that repetition. A multiplication of hope, of anxiety, of whatever churns inside of you. Fingers functioning as levers, the machine of your body turning all of that into a scarf while you sit in your home or a park—or a secluded cabin in a deep wood, possibly on a small lake with a mysterious name.

Keep it. Give it away. Whatever you do with it, it came from you. ☺

**SECRET CABIN FOR ONE:** Julie Cameron Gray and her ribbed Book Review Scarf—a four-colour visual reminder of recent reads. Photograph by Guy Crawford.









## THE MOST TOYS

*Mysterion the Mind Reader  
needs a bigger bathtub.*

PHOTOS BY THOMAS BLANCHARD

Mysterion the Mind Reader, one half of the celebrity mentalist act the Sentimentalists, is well known for the cabinet of curiosities he houses in his Toronto lair. But beyond the tribal skulls and freak animal specimens lies another collection of enormous proportions—his toys. A bedroom of wall-to-wall shelves houses Mysterion's assembly of approximately fifteen thousand pieces, encompassing mainly action figures, along with some related playsets and vehicles, dating from the nineteen-twenties up to about 1990. To browse the display is to witness a century—and an alphabet—of popular culture heroes, villains, and oddballs: Annie, Buck Rogers, Captain Marvel, Darth Vader, the Fonz, Grover, He-Man, Pee-wee Herman,

the Smurfs, Superman, and pretty much every professional from the golden age of the former World Wrestling Federation, to name just a few. "It's like an alligator in the bathtub," Mysterion said. "It's going to grow to the size of the tub. When I got my first apartment, I got a two-bedroom. One bedroom was for toys."

No mid-life crisis, Mysterion's collection is a continuation of a childhood fascination. "I never stopped buying toys," he said. "They're something I've always navigated to, even as an adult. I worked at Zellers when I was fourteen. I'd make five twenty-five an hour, and each week I'd get my paycheque and buy three toys. In high school, I used to put notices on the bulletin board: 'SELL ME YOUR TOYS.'"







Mysterion's toy-buying motivation, now, as always, is joy, not collectability or projected value. He rarely shops eBay, preferring the thrill of an unexpected flea-market find. "There's nothing more wonderful than to rediscover something you used to own," he said. "I once had a guy come over with a friend who looked like he'd just stepped out of a Mexican prison: face tattoos, his teeth were all silver, he was a dangerous-looking dude. Super nice guy. And when he went into the toy room, he picked up one of the little luchador wrestlers I had, and he started to cry, because it was something his grandmother bought him when he was a little boy. I was like, 'You can have it.' Toys are almost like magic." 🍷





# TIM

BY ANDREW DALEY

## *An excerpt.*

The girl was sheltering in the laneway when he came down it to open the bar at five o'clock. A small girl, maybe eighteen years old, looking cold and scared in the black rags the hard-core kids wear. By that time of day, in February, the lane was in deep shadow. She'd built a nest for herself with cardboard under an exhaust vent from the taco place next door. It looked dry there, and warm in the greasy underdraft.

She wasn't the first street kid to make camp there. Last fall, a group of them spent a week in the same spot when the cops kicked them out of the square. Tim asked if she was all right, and she said she was. It wasn't his laneway, and it wasn't his vent.

He kept thinking about her as he pulled pints behind the bar. Or made small talk with the two regulars watching the Leafs game. No dog, and no boyfriend. Not that she had to have either. It was odd for a homeless kid to be alone. And why was she there in winter, when most kids returned to what passed for homes or endured the shelters?

The Leafs lost, and his customers left. Tim sat behind the bar for a while with a book of crosswords, held at a distance because he'd misplaced his reading glasses again. He closed up at eleven. It was a sad new normal for a Saturday night, as was his fourteen dollars in tips. A decade ago, the Garage was packed most nights, for rock shows and fringe theatre. Tim had done a steady business too, selling weed behind the bar. In the days before people with money began moving into the Market and smokers got their weed home delivered by cheerful young men driving BMWs.

The girl wasn't there the next afternoon, although she'd left a bulky knapsack half hidden by cardboard. He thought about taking it inside the bar for safekeeping until he realized she would think it was stolen. So, did he leave a note? He stood in the laneway trying to figure it out.

When he checked again, early in the evening, she was under the shelter. He couldn't say why he felt relieved by her return. It wasn't right that a young girl should be out there all alone. That anyone should be out there all alone. It had snowed that morning, and more was coming.

A few hours later, when someone ordered food, he made extra fries and little microwave pizzas. The girl's name was Sabine, and she had a French accent. She popped a few fries into her mouth right away but hesitated over the pizzas.

"Oh, thanks, but I'm veg," she said, looking unhappily at the little slices of pepperoni.

"My daughter's a veg too," Tim said. "I'm sorry. It's the only kind we've got."

"No, no. Don't be. They're good. I can just pick it off. Thank you."

She held a black sketchbook. He might have asked if she were an artist if that didn't seem so obvious and dumb.

"Do you want something to drink?" he said.

"I've got some water here, thanks. But would you mind if I used your washroom?"

The owner of the Garage hated street kids, but he never came by so late in the evening.

"Yeah, no problem."

When she stood she barely reached his rib cage. He also offered to charge her phone behind the bar and later brought it out to her. She'd draped a blanket over her shelter and within it was wrapped in a sleeping bag. She smiled her thanks, and that eased his concern somewhat.

That night on television there were warnings of an approaching storm. Tim thought about Sabine's solitude. And his own, which he couldn't deny. He hadn't thought twice when the other kids crashed in the lane last fall. That's when he remembered having seen Sabine and a young man among them. And then seeing her and the same boy together at Christmas begging in an empty storefront, on Spadina Avenue. Their tattered cardboard sign—"LIFE IS A PLAYGROUND. LET'S ENJOY IT TOGETHER."—hadn't looked so cheerful in the slush and rain. Yet they'd seemed happy with each other.

So where did the boyfriend go? Did they break up, or was she hiding from him?

When he opened the bar the next afternoon, Tim found his boss, Dmitry Bendel, deep in conversation with two other men. A large, imposing Russian in his fifties, Bendel had a headful of black hair and favoured pinstriped suits. With him was a red-headed young man named Armand that Bendel called his cousin, despite a lack of family resemblance, and a Market guy named Hector, who used to play in punk bands. Tim hadn't seen either of those two in months. They sat at a table near the stage and lowered their voices when Tim began turning on lights.

Bendel didn't visit the Garage much, and it had been years since he'd used it for business or as an unofficial clubhouse. The boss lectured his stone-faced associates with muted agitation. Tim obliged them by popping in his earbuds for music from his phone while he filled buckets of ice and checked the beer tanks and lines. He didn't want to hear anything Bendel said. Ever.

Soon only Bendel and Armand remained. Tim knew, without hearing, that they'd switched to Russian. When he looked up again, Bendel stood alone at the bar, watching him. Tim removed his ear buds and Bendel asked why the police had visited the bar earlier that week. How Bendel knew that, Tim wasn't sure. Only a fool would try to keep something from him.

"They were looking for some guy," Tim said. "Martin something. I didn't know him, and I know everyone who comes in here."

Bendel considered this.

"Did you think that I might know him? Or that I should know if the police come to my bar looking for someone?"

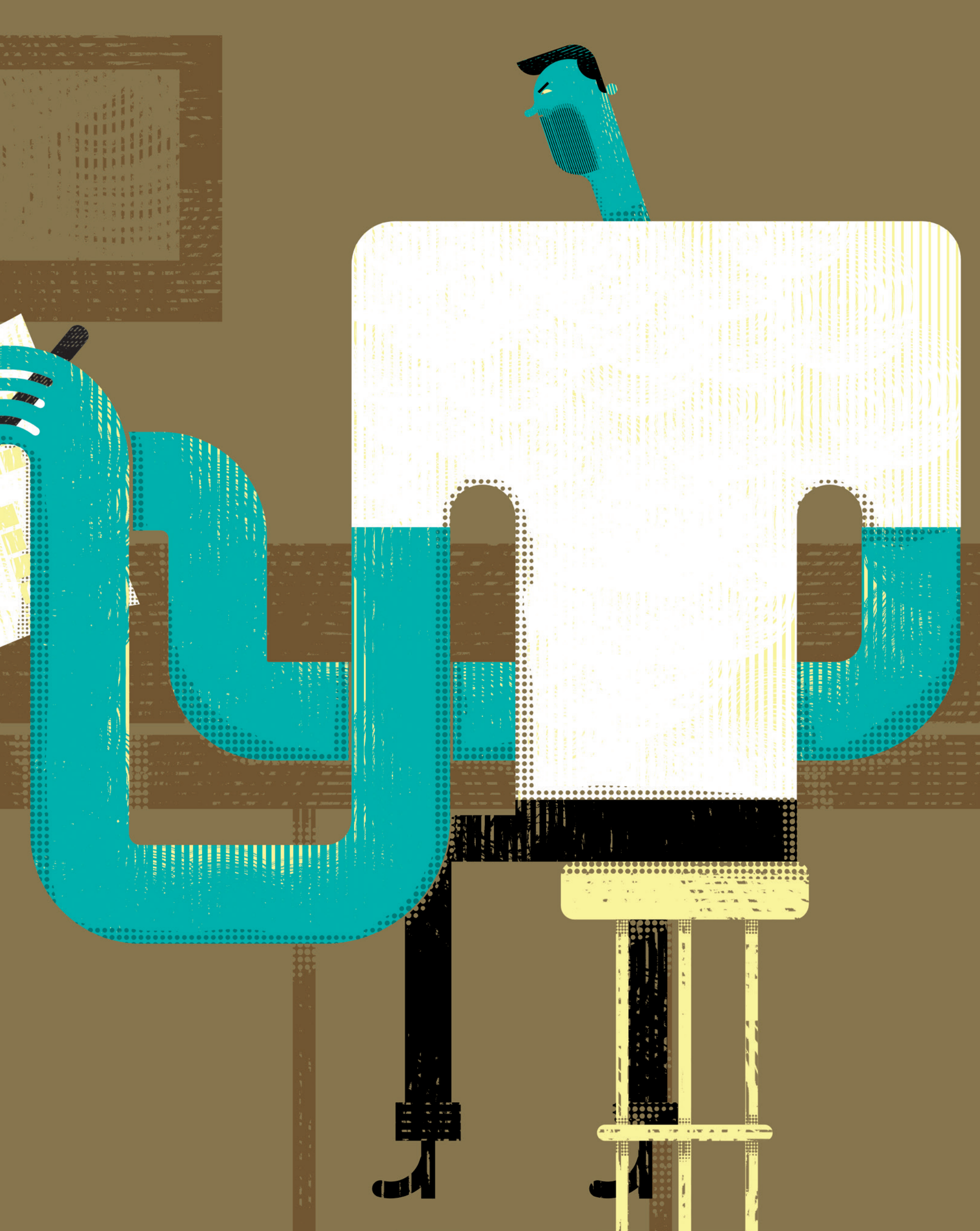
"For sure. It just seemed like a random check."

"We don't know that. We need to find out why things are happening so they don't get into our business, right? No secrets."

ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW DALEY









## NO PUNY MASTERPIECE

Wish I had a better lawn back there.  
This year. Lawn of the Year.  
I gotta try something. The patches are bad.

Tony's got a decent lawn.  
It's like a single perfect cemetery plot, his front lawn  
—three by six—  
no gravestone, just a lush five-foot tree  
wearing an oversized Beatles wig,  
looks like one of those dreadlocked dogs—  
a puli mascot crowns Tony's pristine lawn.

I carried ten rolls through the living room and kitchen  
to get my ten by ten on the ground out back  
and did it take?

•

In the yard behind the house  
in the corner by the shed  
where the grass has never grown, trying to find out why  
I dug a spade into the soil and plunk  
struck concrete six inches under.

A bunker no doubt  
financed in part by a government grant in 1959—  
a buried crypt from the fear of an earlier apocalypse  
dug in the flip Beat spirit  
of some groovy underground scene—

(still holding out for an invite to descend  
into a *Bucket of Blood* coffee house  
and read a poem in a turtleneck down there—)

Up above we live in hope and wonder  
what size trunk of Heinz baked beans would it take  
to survive in our backyard bunker from 1959 to today.  
That's a lot of finger snapping and a big equation.

But I digress.

•

There's no dispute: Tony's lawn's a puny masterpiece.  
If only I knew how to say "puny frickin' masterpiece"  
in Portuguese. And: "Is April too early for a re-sod?"

How does a guy spend forty years—a career—at Toronto Works  
and not learn English that isn't cursing?

This year I monitor the situation.  
I copy Tony—his lawn game.  
He seeds. I seed.  
He waters. I water.

Quit my job to spy on my neighbour all day for lawn tips.  
Should really just learn Portuguese.

—CHRIS CHAMBERS

Tim nodded his understanding. Bendel had many secrets, and they concerned gambling, an escort service, and stronger drugs than the marijuana he allowed Tim to peddle in the bar. Or used to peddle, when there were customers. None of these secrets, so far as Tim could tell, concerned the tired and all-but-forgotten Garage. Business might be better if they did.

"There's filthy cardboard in the alley. Have there been more kids camping out there?"

Tim chose his words carefully. "It wouldn't be the first time."

"I don't want them there. I don't want them near my buildings."

A point Tim would never raise is that the Garage wasn't Bendel's property. It belonged to his wife, the heir to an established Forest Hill family who'd been landlords in the neighbourhood for generations. If Bendel shared anything about himself, it was his rage for the historical preservation groups and city bureaucrats who'd been preventing him from transforming the family's west-end properties into condos.

Bendel left Tim with a problem. Should he tell Sabine to leave her shelter or risk that Bendel wouldn't check up on him. Imagine him discovering not only cardboard in the lane but a girl underneath it. With the storm coming, maybe she should get to a shelter, even if they were filthy, dangerous places. She couldn't stay in the lane indefinitely.

By eight o'clock it was snowing lightly. Hopefully that was the worst of it: too often the media overhyped bad weather. Yet by ten, as he was closing, he could hear the wind raging outside. Nearly six inches of snow had quickly fallen. Sabine's shelter was already half collapsed. Despite the wind, he could smell cigarette smoke emanating from within it.

There wasn't much debate. Unfortunately, he couldn't insist. He wished there was a woman he could call to act as a chaperone. Or at whose place he could park Sabine until she sorted some things out. But if there had been a woman in his life, he'd have called her long ago.

He collapsed his six-foot frame and lifted the flap of the blanket covering the shelter. The flaring orange point of her cigarette lit her pale face beautifully.

"Sabine, you can't stay here. Not tonight. Is there anywhere else you can go?"

Her eyes answered for her.

"Then I think you should stay at my place. There's an extra bedroom my daughter uses when she visits. Just for tonight. Or until you get something else figured out."

"Where do you live?"

"Not far. Over in Chinatown."

Her uncertainty was painfully evident. The snow in the little time he'd stood there had covered the side of his peacoat. "I know this is weird," he said. "It'll be O.K. Unless you've got somewhere else to go. I can take you wherever. But you can't be out in this shit."

Sabine surprised him by filling her knapsack with a few things and hauling it and herself out of the shelter. The wind as they turned from the lane onto Augusta Avenue nearly knocked her over. Tim took the knapsack from her. The snow on the street was already a foot deep in places. With their heads down against it, Sabine followed in his footsteps. He led them up to College Street, where he hailed a taxi. There were no other people and few cars along the street.

Once they were in the back seat Sabine took the



driver, an old man in earmuffs, by the shoulder. "Could you please take our picture?" she said to him. "So people will know I'm with this man."

The driver gaped at Tim then took his phone down from its navigation mount on the dashboard.

Sabine's accent was thicker for her agitation. She turned to Tim.

"Where are we going? What is your address?"

In that moment he glimpsed perhaps a tiny fraction of how terrifying this must be for her. How vulnerable she felt in a way he'd never experience. He thought of his own daughter, Maeve, presumably safe from the storm in her suburban bed. The taxi slid sideways through a red light at Spadina before the driver regained control. Tim and Sabine shared a glance. They were lucky no cars were crossing on the green light against them.

The storm churned beyond the car windows, nearly a total whiteout. Sabine's anxiety was like an extra person in the car. But she was understanding, he sensed, that she couldn't have spent the night on the street.

"My place is pretty messy, so don't mind that," he said, hoping to reassure her. "Actually my daughter's a clean freak so her room is the tidiest in the place."

He neglected to mention it had been over a month since Maeve last visited, because her stepfather increasingly disapproved of Tim or anything urban. He missed her. And if he wanted to see her he had to drive an hour west of the city to where she lived, with his ex-wife and her stepbrothers.

"And I've got tons of records," he said. "If you like music. I think you do."

He told Sabine about his cat, too, an old tabby named Greg, and he babbled about his neighbours until he realized Sabine wasn't listening. He'd simply have to accept that she wasn't comfortable with the situation. How could she be? He was a stranger.

He'd lived on the upper floor of an Edwardian on D'Arcy Street for fifteen years. Bendel kept rent low in exchange for Tim keeping an eye on a few of the boss's houses in Chinatown.

Greg smoothed the path for him, waiting, as usual, just within the apartment door. Sabine was delighted to meet him. When the introductions were over he

showed her the kitchen, the washroom, and his bedroom. She lingered over the photos of him and Maeve scattered throughout, and the solid wall of his record collection, more than three thousand of them, in the living room. He knew she'd like them.

"We'll get into them tomorrow," he said.

And finally, Maeve's bedroom, which overlooked the backyard. Sabine dropped her bags and got her phone charging in the first outlet she could find.

"Is there Wi-Fi?" she said.

"For sure. I've got the password written down somewhere. I'll get it for you."

Sabine sat on the edge of Maeve's bed.

"Thanks. It would be great if you could."

"My daughter has shampoo and other stuff in the shower. And if you're hungry there's food in the fridge. Probably not much, but you're welcome to it."

"Thank you. I'm O.K. for now."

"Cool. I like to have a smoke after work. You're welcome to join me. And if it's not your thing, don't mind me."

"O.K. I'm gonna shower, if that's O.K., and then go to bed. I'm pretty tired."

"I don't doubt it. Well, there you have it. If you need anything, I'll be in the living room."

Tim, in fact, liked a smoke at numerous points throughout the day. When he got up around noon, before he left to open the bar, mid-evening in the lane, when he got home from work, and whenever any of the Garage regulars invited him to join them, which was generally at least once every day.

Lately, with the government taking over marijuana sales, he'd been rethinking his habit. His lack of customers had left him with far more weed than he could ever possibly smoke. Yet he worried that he might just smoke it all. And his plummeting income had him behind on support payments for Maeve. His ex-wife told him to not to worry about it, she and her husband were doing well. But what kind of father would let that go? And what would Maeve think if she found out?

Tim got comfortable on the couch and filled his bong with a mild indica he preferred at nighttime. The sound of the shower running down the hall startled

him. So far, the girl had been so quiet he'd forgotten about her. Which was another reason he should smoke less: he couldn't remember anything anymore.

He liked two bong hits at night, sometimes three. The smoke hung suspended over the couch. Once he'd settled into its expansive measure he dimmed the lights and moved to the bay windows. The houses across the street came in and out of view in the whorl of the storm. It was a night to be grateful for his many blessings. Like his home. His daughter. Or his ability to help others, despite the many poor life decisions he'd made.

Or maybe because of them.

The spell was broken by Greg leaping off the couch. He was in a hurry, for a cat his age, to greet his new friend Sabine in the hallway. Her hair was wet and she was wearing, if he wasn't mistaken, a pair of Maeve's pyjamas.

"Thank you, Tim Franklin. I'll see you in the morning."

He read her distance, and the line she was marking. He needed to say, as loudly as possible, that he'd respect it.

"For sure. There's a lock on that door, if you want. We'll do some laundry in the morning, and spin some records. Have a good sleep."

Tim returned to his couch. He'd been enjoying a show on Netflix about a love cult in the eighties that he sort of remembered hearing about in his childhood. The indica kept him sharp enough to let the film reverberate within him but chill enough to fully relax. Greg pawed Maeve's bedroom door for a while, then gave up and rejoined him.

In a quiet moment in the show he could hear Sabine speaking emphatically down the hall in what sounded like French. Or Québécois French, he realized. Neither of which he understood. To the boyfriend or maybe a parent. She sounded upset, and why not? She was homeless and alone. Still, it cheered him to think there was someone out there who cared about her.

The indica brought a deeper mellowness, and the old house creaked and moaned through the storm. He'd have to shovel the sidewalk out front before work and should probably set his alarm. He caught himself again listening to the stranger in Maeve's bedroom and turned up the volume of the television. ☾



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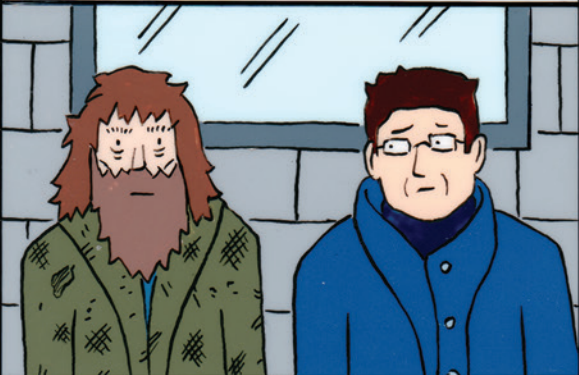
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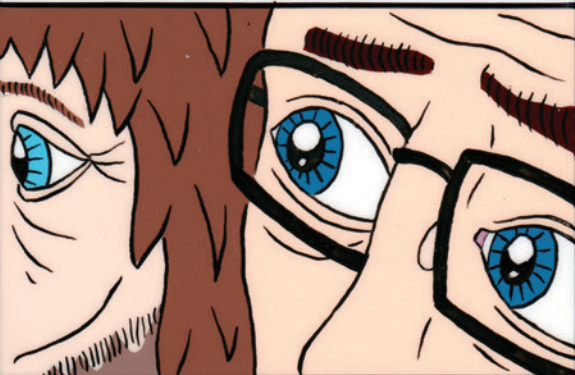
# What if he sees me?

• Dave Lapp •

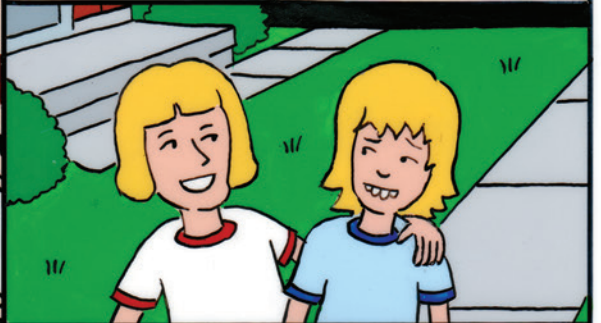
Have you ever had that moment when you're standing beside a street person...



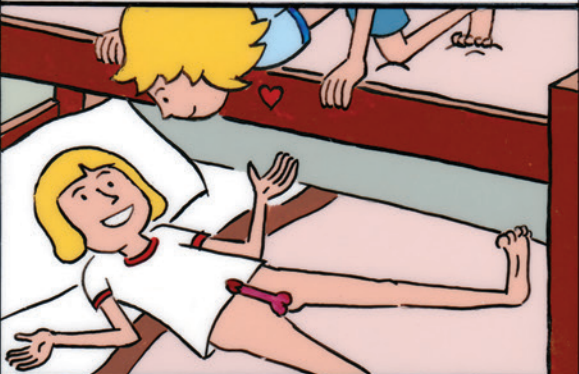
...and you look sideways, sidelong at them, trying to get a better look at their face?



And in a flash you can remember a sleep over from grade 8?... A dreamy chance to be with your new best friend for a night.



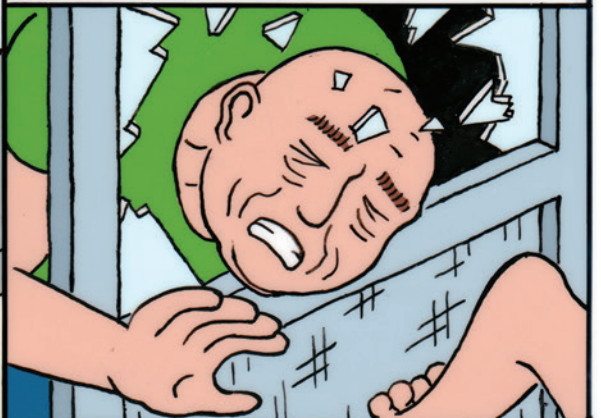
How he invited you to his bottom bunk so you could rub each other's prepubescent boners...



And the next morning his drunken dad chasing his brother with great joy and fatherly aggression...



... then putting his head through the back door window.



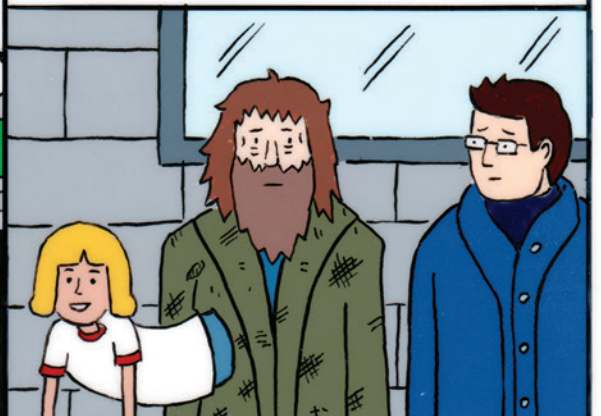
My friend letting out an agonized cry... oh how I wanted to help him, to comfort him.



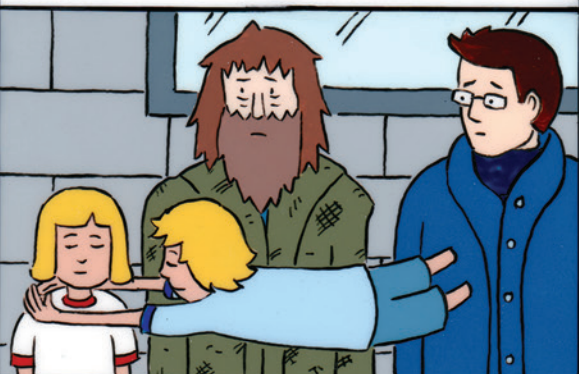
Later that summer that same friend broke into our house while our family was away...



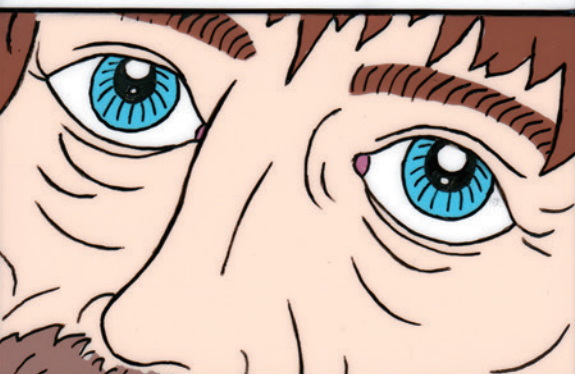
... and here, right here! 40 years later here he is! Right beside me!



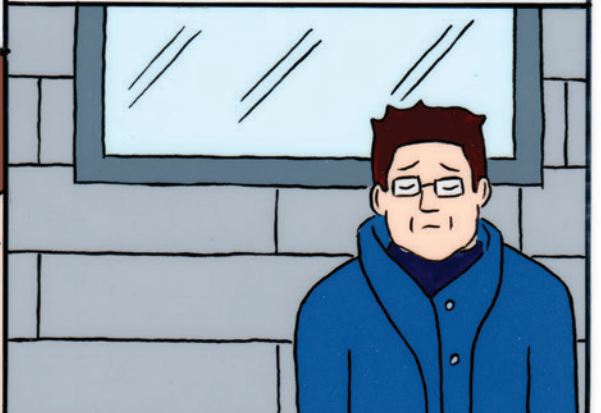
Destitute, downtrodden, and those ice blue eyes, and that face that you once loved so much...



The panic if he recognizes me... my desire to help him... my desire to run. I'm frozen... What if he sees me?!



Later I learn that he was partially blinded after trying to kill himself.





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