



ANEMONE SIDE CAR

CHAPTER 9
of
THE
ANEMONE SIDECAR

CHAPTER 9

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The Anemone Sídecar, Chapter Nine, 2010,
built on the work of select multitudes.

Cover image by Daniel Boyer.

Chad Scheel: five poems

New Deli

Prudent, yes.
While an accustomed

place—this counter
top—strains blow

in the open door.
I could sing

to you
that way. Sheepish

children throw
nickels

against the bricks.

Contrapuntal

Today, he removes
his hat. Her eyes

twitch. They see

vigilance
as a fingered scale

played less
for the practice

than a compulsion

to finish. There is the memory
of shop windows

whose displays only work
if reflections are considered.

To praise
the chosen is to praise

resignation. Simple trick,

to plead.

The Business

1.

The business means
cold coffee

cards held close
to the chest. Thumping

children make
what is subtle

burlesque

2.

Flood lights dilate
pupils

make them small
I shudder

give it to them

3.

Hours past
prayer

body cowers
folds

as if the light
were cold

You're just another part of me

I tell you no lie.
I try not to.

*

Trumpet, cornet, same thing.

*

When I say I believe
in complete

disclosure, I mean

in form and
for men

to say otherwise,
I am nothing.

Anything less
would be uncivilized.

April in Hallam

Shiver of peeled bark.
Debris, a child's doll

whose face falls.
Brown water.

Rib-grip sick
moaning. Mooning

wind-missed poles
glisten—useless banter.

When you deal with hands
you deal

with hands.

Chad Scheel lives in Scottsbluff, NE with his wife and son. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in freefall, Poetry East, elimae, Arch, Indefinite Space, Raft, and the Horse Less Review; a review of Jill Jones' Dark Bright Doors appeared in Jacket #40.

Patrick Barron: two pieces

You rake me
over the dead grass
with purple spines
daggers for foragers
with sticky mouths
a porcupine tree
food for a porcupine

[326-96-A *Gleditsia vestita* 53-NE]

—

Outstretched episodes
distal distaffs
how much flower power
violet tiny violences
oh so
demented + scintillating

[1495-61-A *Prunus serotina* 49-SE]

Jennifer Stasak: *The Morning After*

Cool cerulean whistles as it taps
Over the weathered limestone or
Sandstone, or
Whatever it is that sits near my hands.
The wooden dock behind me creaks sadly
As the scent of last night's beer and
 Pizza fritte wafts
Down the almost-deserted beach.
I close my eyes and dig my toes deep into
Powdered sand, wiggling as miniscule
Broken seashells
Crackle and stick to my ankles.
Ribbons of violet and maroon float along
Jet-blue horizons, wisps of cotton
Clouds breaking near
The old lighthouse a few miles down-
Shore. I open my mouth only to marvel,
But swallow saline and stale sunscreen.
Flip-flop footsteps trudge through the
Early morning air, intent
On discovering the much-
Needed cup of coffee from the abandoned café.
The sea foam kisses my
Tired legs gingerly,
 Promising to protect the
Fragile secret I am clutching with
 As much devotion as
 That elderly couple a
Few feet away hold onto each other.

Rachel Lieberman: *A Missed Connection*

*Between a Common Dwarf Mongoose and King
William III of England*

The place: A gelato shop in Hamilton, Nevada

You: Nine inches tall, adorable pointy nose, tiny twitching ears, black glassy eyes like shimmering onyxes, and an illustriously unkempt coat of thick brown fur. You ordered vanilla, but became inconsolable when the teenage girl behind the counter informed you that termites were not a topping option. My heart pulsed with pure adrenaline when you leaped onto the counter and clawed at her face, and then scampered off, leaving only your intoxicating grassy scent behind.

Me: Wearing a black wig, cravat, armor, puffy gold pants, and orange ceremonial cape. I ordered the small butterscotch. Protestant, if you're into that. My guilty pleasure is "Full House." Invaded England in 1688, so I would describe myself as a go-getter. Please call, e-mail, or gnaw at my foot.

Ed Taylor: three poems

Juju

on Shinnecock a lone trapper
mailing address for mind-body correspondence
discretion from creatures without mouthpieces
no miracles after all, just this world of grease
for Jesus
electricity like balm to spiked ears
snakes and ladders
batter for cake and wife
the option-encrusted throne o'god
bracing for dust

Easter in the Horse Latitudes

A fiftieth birthday like calmed ships, the ocean smooth
as abdomens, a hundredth made of video, twice,
the thousandth by doctors locked in cells.

In the mud of Serbia, among Somalia's *khat* women.
The roots of grass.

Here,
this Sacramento field where brown hands pull
from their sleep the deep vegetables
& someone
 walks among them
offering balm from a torn shirt, an arm reaching
out with a little rouge, fruit colors.

Today the 2000th attempt to forgive & this walking
is among guns, the rusted hulls of every thing
wrecked, bones of bones stirring dirt, as names
rain down, the names of all unable to straighten
under the day's weight, under wind that is
something pleading. Flowers, breath,

an eye unafraid of water's soft belly
that closes, dying to go home.

Dream of Home

watching the numbers run
in a fog of bells

reading an address
knowing nothing but the place
5 minutes past

over now but for the shouting

where is it
equator
where is it
kitchen bed
split level

a sign—egret wings
pointing north
pointing south

at the mouth of the queen
drying under stone sun
dying toward home

Rita Buckley: *Time for College*

It was time for Junior to go to college. He'd sprouted pubic hair and was eyeing all the girls.

"I want to go to college," he said.

"Yes," I replied, "It's time."

His mother, my wife, was resigned to the fact that it was time for Junior to leave the nest. She sat on a stool at the granite kitchen counter, spiked coffee beside her, reading the New York Times. She looked almost real.

"I knew it would happen," she said.

"Yes," I said sadly.

"Do you think he'll want the car keys all the time?" she asked.

Junior walked into the kitchen dressed in J. Crew jeans, an army green Che Guevara T-shirt, and boat shoes. He looked almost normal.

"Can I have the car keys, dad?"

"No," I said. "It's time to go to college."

"But I want to drive around town and troll for pretty girls."

"No," I said. "You have hair on your back. Where do you want to go to school?"

“Northwestern, Southwestern, Columbia, Stanford, Harvard, Yale, Brown, Berry Berry Brown, Isle of Man, Isle of Woman, Transylvania Institute of Phlebotomy, Red’s School of Psychogenic Sciences, Ishkabibble College of Higher Learning, they all have excellent reputations.”

“Delicious,” his mother said.

“Nutritious,” I remarked.

“I want the keys to the 325i.”

“No,” I said. “Take your tricycle and go play somewhere.”

“How am I supposed to pick up girls on that thing?” he asked.

“Very carefully,” I replied

“A pox on you,” he said.

He slammed the door on the way out. The house shuddered and the birds stopped singing.

“Youth is wasted on the young,” I said.

“I wouldn’t know,” my wife replied.

The Ishkabibble campus consisted of red brick buildings scattered here and there. No trees, no grass, no singing birds. Very peaceful.

“I don’t see any girls yet,” Junior said.

A pygmy from New Zealand walked by, followed by a large toad.

“They let you keep pets,” I said. “Dogs, cats, frogs, small lizards, amphibians of all kinds.”

“I don’t like it,” Junior said.

“We have to take the tour,” I said. “The president is escorting us.”

The president appeared on a dusty path heading toward us, surrounded by a crowd of secret service men with cell phones screwed to their heads. He was tall and lanky, with a short black beard and a high black hat.

He took long strides along the well-worn trail.

“Fourscore and seven years ago,” he said, holding out a large grey hand.

I put on a latex glove and shook it. Junior did likewise.

“Where are the girls?” he asked.

“In the library,” the president said, “studying by candlelight.”

His retinue closed in around him, and kicking up a cloud of dust, headed toward one of the red brick buildings. We walked close behind, holding handkerchiefs over our faces. An Aborigine strolled by, followed by a midget.

The president stopped and pointed in their direction. “We don’t discriminate on the basis of height,” he pronounced. “We also allow marsupials.”

“I don’t care about marsupials,” Junior said.

“Conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are...”

The library doors slid open automatically and we walked in.

“Ipso facto doralée doralie.” The president sang a little tune.

The girls were studying by candlelight. Some were lounging on sofas, others on beanbag chairs. Several sat in carrels, their laptops glowing in the dim flickering light.

“Voilà,” the president said, his large hand sweeping across a room with seven stacks of books and an old IBM Selectric on a stand by the door.

“Where are the guys?” Junior asked.

We walked into an identical room.

Young men, anywhere from 50 to 79 years of age, were planted at long wooden tables, hunched over textbooks.

Junior retched and ran out of the library.

“Ipso facto,” the president said.

“Fort Myers,” I replied.

We were in the office of the president of Berry Berry Brown University. The commander-in-chief warmed up considerably once he had the donation check, and seemed genuinely happy to meet Junior. He came out from behind his overly large desk flanked by two American flags and held out his hand.

“Berry berry nice to meet you,” he said. “I hear you have hair on your back.”

Junior slipped on his latex glove and shook the hand. I did likewise.

“That’s a real plus here at Berry Berry.”

Junior nodded. I smiled.

“Shall we?” he asked, leading us toward the door.

A group of eight large misfits in black suits rushed into the room and surrounded him. We followed the group down a long hallway lined with photos of skinny old white men, then went outside.

“This is the quad,” the president said, pointing to a student in a wheelchair.

“This is the commons,” he said, pointing to a patch of grass.

A naked young woman with thick golden locks hanging the length of her back rode by on a horse. She was followed by four

Marines in full dress uniforms marching in formation. They stopped to salute the president, then continued on their way.

“ROTC,” he said.

We walked to the next building.

“This is the cafeteria,” he said. Coeds in skimpy shorts and halter tops were sunning themselves on the steps of a low-slung, mostly glass facility. Junior smiled and stared. The girls giggled and waved.

“Hi cutie,” one of them sang out.

“Ich bin ein Berliner,” the president said. He made his way toward an imposing grey marble structure covered in ivy.

“This is the library,” he said.

“This is a coed dorm.”

“This is a swimming pool.”

“This is a post office.”

“This is an ATM”

“This is a book store.”

“This is a stray dog.”

“This is a wandering minstrel.”

“This is an eremite.”

“This is an orgasm.”

“This is a rocket propelled grenade.”

The security detail closed in around the president.

“Ask not what your country can do for you,” he said as they trotted back to the administration building.

The president’s secretary escorted us into his office. He was sitting at the desk, flanked by aides, with a pen in his hand. A photographer was setting up lights and other equipment.

“Hurry up,” the president said. “I have guests.”

He put pen to paper and a blinding strobe flashed. Young women in revealing dresses rushed in and out of the room, delivering documents. The president eventually came out from behind his desk and sat down beside Junior.

“Well Junior,” he said. “Will we be seeing you in September?”

A young aide walked by in high heels. Junior’s eyes followed her across the room and down the hall.

“Let the word go forth,” the president said.

“Cool,” said Junior.

“San Mateo,” I replied.

Salvatore Zóida: two pieces

Afterwards

Glen A. Baird, Esq., was talking with his neighbor at the top of the neighbor's driveway when the neighbor's teenage son arrived home from swim practice and interrupted their conversation with a smile that the neighbor and Glen A. Baird, Esq., each accepted as his own, when the neighbor's teenage son meant it for only one of them; afterwards, Glen A. Baird, Esq., looked at the neighbor's teenage son in a way that could have been interpreted as influenced by the height, and strength, of the afternoon sun.

The Face in the Ceiling

The little boy held his brother's hand the way their mother instructed him to and after she filled out a deposit slip they walked over to the teller who wore a sweater and a pendant and had her hair done up like the ladies in the magazines and as his mother and the teller were talking he backed away from the counter still holding his brother's hand and the two of them turned and started walking towards the lobby past men in suits whose resemblance to their father made his pulse race and when they reached the lobby his brother let go of his hand and stepped into an elevator and they stood facing each other silent and unmoving as if they already knew and the doors closed, irretrievably, to his everlasting remorse.

Carlos Rowles: *Except from a Manuscript*

twenty mile north of the creek replied the stranger carefully ... steep, almost inaccessible bluffs and ravines upon the top of which ... slave pension up and assassinated him ... form an army and send them ... spent a delightful morning in cumberland ... of the indians, the rights of women were respected and clearly defined ... always afterward associated in his mind with the shadow ... the pines on mount jackson to the east cut blue ... of its numbers and situation, and waiting ... step back to admire his work, and the running fire of comment covered ... court—was mending a quill pen ... on our left rose the dock (suggestively) ... one day a party of boys returning with their dogs after a bout of this ... standard conduct ... his admiration for thorndyke was unbounded, and uh ... was condemned, as a matter of course, and when she was removed to jail ... indian—she was the law ... you kin call it off, like as not ... make yuh run a lame horse ... belles of the forest ... could mr b himself be the thief—his failure appeared sudden so ... carried it in triumph as a token of friendship ... like that ... random opinions—the white folks ain't got no reason to mistreat colored

people ... as he reached the place, the blood was spattered around ... contains upon its summit set in a spacious duty ... finds you here ... when he returns, our lives as well as yours will pay ... full of light and brightness, where there was a multitude in white ... always amid nature's most powerful manifestations one observes ... opening resolved itself into a race, to commence promptly at high noon ... but the ingress of the white population in this indian country ... strings to look and listen ... we did, it was straying ... for a moment he stood in the open doorway, keenly scrutinizing ... voice of lieutenant hanley filling us with hope and inspiring us ... left the country amid the ringing cries of the politicians (who) ... war songs ... whole scene would be full of strange and awful associations ... whereupon he buzzed off in high dudgeon to dry them in the sun ... key—down the hill—head chief of the ottawa nation did not go ... it seemed that the crowd was larger ... that of a net cast over the prostrate forms of monarchs ... gave you five thousand in currency and the balance in a cashier's check ... whispered through the wicket 'sent it' ...

Changming Yuan: *Behind a Ballad*

to bring this single word
into the mind, the cherry flower has prepared to bloom
for the whole spring

to bring this single line
onto the paper, the thunder has rolled
through the entire summer sky

to bring this single stanza
into the mouth, the west wind has blown
over all the golden fields

Bryan Jones: *Forgotten Birthday*

I'm barefoot on this cracked and sunshine-warm sidewalk wearing only some swimming trunks I bought in college. The fifteen-year-old trunks fit fairly well. The house where I grew up is in front of me. My mother's curtains still hang in the windows. It's a small house, really, in a colonial style, with white columns and a dark blue door. The house next door looks just like it. So does the house after that. In fact, for as far as I can see, my childhood home repeats itself, hall-of-mirrors style, on this street named Eternity.

I seem to bethe only one out and about on this neighborhood sidewalk of my childhood memories. I stroll past house after house. Everything about the house is just as I remember it. That is, before the fire that brought it down around my brother Stephen who was trapped inside.

But I notice something different: new mailboxes sit on top of wooden posts in the front yards near the curb. Each mailbox bears the name of someone I know who is dead. I walk along looking at the mailboxes for Stephen's name.

Suddenly, I hear foam sandals scraping on the sidewalk behind me. I turn round and there's Lauren in a green bikini shuffling up

to me. She's a girl I met after my family moved and I transferred to a different high school.

I remember how my best friend messed around with Lauren one time in the deep end of the community swimming pool. I had held my breath in the chlorine-clouded water and watched through fogged swimming goggles as their young hands explored each other's hips until the life guard blew the whistle and told them to knock it off. A couple of years later, at the beginning of our senior year, Lauren had been killed in a car accident. Kids who hadn't even known her very well put on exaggerated shows of grief at her funeral.

"Hi," Lauren says, with a smile that somehow allows her to secure discreetly between her molars a piece of chewing gum.

"This house has the best pool."

She takes my hand and leads me up to the porch. But then the front door opens. A gray-haired man I don't recognize steps outside. He's dressed in my favorite business suit and holding my leather briefcase. I could have sworn I'd left it back at my office. The man scowls and uses his free hand to pull out a set of keys to lock the door behind him. Then he turns to us. Lauren drops my hand. The man looks her over. He shakes his head at me in disapproval before jamming the keys back into his pocket. He puts the briefcase down on the porch and takes off his suit coat and

wraps it around Lauren's shoulders.

"Get in the car," he says to her gruffly.

He picks up the briefcase and then escorts Lauren over to the driveway where a shiny Italian sports car is parked. The car is the expensive one I had admired once in a sparkling showroom until a high-pressure salesman insulted me when I finally had to admit I couldn't afford it. They get inside the car. The man shoots me a stern look through the driver-side window before starting the engine. The car goes out into the street. I watch it zoom past my repeated childhood homes. The man drives very fast. Soon, I can't see the car anymore.

I stand there on the porch and notice for the first time that this version of my house doesn't have a mailbox near the curb like all the others. I turn back to the door. The woven-rope welcome mat my family had for all those years is at my feet. I kneel and lift up a corner and find the hidden key. I get up, insert it into the lock, go inside, and pull the door closed behind me.

It's dark in the foyer. I leave the key on a table and walk into the den. Suddenly, the lights snap on and people in party hats jump out from behind the furniture and yell, "Surprise!" Everyone is someone I know who is dead. They blow loud party favors and point at me.

But this isn't the house I grew up in. It's all wrong. Paper

letters hang from a string across the room and spell HAPPY BIRTHDAY STEPHEN! A long-dead neighbor who succumbed to heart failure comes out of the kitchen bringing a birthday cake with a small wax forest fire of burning candles planted in the icing. He puts the cake on a large turntable in the center of the room.

"I'm not Stephen," I say with some force. "It's not my birthday."

The room gets quiet. Several dead people huddle around the cake and blow the candles out. The room fills with smoke. It makes my eyes water.

My long-dead neighbor comes over to me. He reaches out with a trembling hand and asks me to leave. I tell my neighbor I can't go back the way I came. He nods and discreetly escorts me to the back door. He opens it and I look out into a backyard I don't recognize. There's a little inflatable wading pool meant for small children waiting to be filled with a garden hose. Behind it, at the far end of the fenceless lot, I can see another street with different houses on the opposite side. I ask my neighbor about that street.

"It's called Sudden End Road because of what it does," he says.

I thank him and leave the house. I walk past the wading pool

and across the overgrown lawn. The tall grass makes my ankles itch. I stop at the curb. Down the street, I spot the sports car approaching. It pulls to a stop in front of me. The driver-side window rolls down and I see Lauren behind the steering wheel in her green bikini. She's by herself. My suit coat and briefcase are on the backseat.

"Hop in," she says.

She doesn't have to repeat it. I hurry around and get in the car. Before I've even fastened my seatbelt, she stomps on the accelerator and the car takes off.

I have no idea where we're going. But I like it.

Conor Robín Madígan: *Finally*

Finally,

after the walrus slow-dances fear out to sea, I can decay into complete witness and bliss and the better for my standards and needs as I will be at writing which is written best.

On the other side of my soul's duplex an ever - changing mass of movement and mercurial swirls splash lightness against walls and windows, heaters and floor baffles.

An organist runs through scales and muscular bitches eat steak, purr their doggerel innocence.

satnrose: *The Wind is Burning*

the window is open and the rain falls inside I am too paralyzed in the half waking state to be able to move I hear you going I hear somebody crying what can I do your footsteps clatter down an empty hall I hear the front door closing through the wall the rain is blowing through a shattered room the paint is peeling the bare light bulb is flickering is it midnight is it noon cracks in the ceiling seem to spell something out if I could just focus in on it I could read what it says a message rune the rain is open the wind is soon the floorboards are moaning the joists are creaking the whole house is swaying in the storm a twist of pain I just cannot get up I cannot close my eyes the wind is burning the fire is rain

Django Gold: *Tomales Bay*

Green's dog is dead, and the two of us are driving south along Tomales Bay, it's two o'clock. The dog's name is, was, Doctor, he's in the backseat. Green has him wrapped in a blanket, not a nice or shabby blanket, just a blanket. I have slept on Green's couch a few times, and it's not that blanket, but whatever its use once was it is now and forever the shroud for the dead dog. Doctor is an egglike lump.

Green takes a left and now we're headed inland, away from the sand and cold surf. It is August still, and the beaches are as cold as they have ever been, fit only for goosebumped children and bodysuited surfers. When I as a child first moved to California, I was disappointed that the beaches were never what I wanted. We moved first to Mendocino, then further south to Occidental, but not south enough. One, two, five times I pulled my parents towards the beach and no matter the heat in the air the water was ice and veined with salt. Stepping out from the water you would dry yourself in the meager sun, pulsing in the wind.

We have not reached our destination, but it is evident that Green has one in mind. We have taken a series of lefts and rights and though I couldn't tell you where we are I can say for certain

that we are moving away from the coast. The land around here is wild with straight grass and black cross-on-cross fences. If you had a house here, you would have a lot of land to look at. Green tells me now that an uncle of his used to live out here, but then moved to Tempe, Arizona to open a hardware store. He heard from his parents that the house got sold to an old Japanese gardener. I can't say anything to that, but it's alright because we're here.

Between the two of us, the blanket and the dog don't weigh a whole lot, we could be carrying a coffee table. Green has the spade under his armpit, the blade up and the handle trailing behind him as we saddle down a little dirt road that runs parallel to the driveway of the old house Green's uncle used to live in. It looks much like the other houses in the area, beautiful and lonely like the houses do in Northern California when you drop them near the beach and allow the salt air to eat at them. There is a car in the driveway, but no movement from within the house and I wonder what that old Japanese gardener is doing with himself right now.

The path hooks right but Green gestures to keep going straight, shifting his handhold on his end of the shroud. We walk through the underbrush and come to a fence. This one isn't so fashionable, a crumpled mess of crappy wooden stakes and rusted wire. Green eases down his half of the burden and steps over the

fence. On the other side he gestures for me and I drag the blanket over to him and somehow we make it over and before long we're in an open yellow field.

Any spot is as good as the other and as Green works he begins telling me a kind of corny story about how when he was a kid he came out with his parents and sister to his uncle's place and he and his sister ran around in this very field and he thought then that it would be a good place to live and he still thinks that. It's not much of a story, except that his parents bought them both a bag of saltwater taffy on the drive back up.

I have known Green and Doctor for ten years now. When I first met them, they were ten years younger than they are now, and not much else. Green has finished his hole and he steps up out of it. It isn't very deep, but Doctor is not a very big dog, and we lay him down soundlessly in the small grave. Green starts to scoot the dirt he removed back into the hole, over Doctor's body.

I say something suitable, that Doctor was a good dog and this is a good place for him. I'm trying to think of something better, not necessarily poignant, but better. As usual, I don't get much and soon we're back in the car making our way to the 101.

And it is true that I have been at points like this many times in my life. I feel like a lost astronaut: I look down and can no longer see the point from which I took off, but I know I'm only getting

farther away from it as the cosmos fold around me. Green stands across from me, the burial mound between us, and I want to shout something down to him, but my voice is weak and I have no radio and then I'm gone.

Meg Baird: *Portal Eyes*

The sun is bright

Her youthful beauty
accentuated the light

she's in repose
and lightly dozing
beside a portal to the sky
with lush mascaraed eyelashes

Cheyenne Nimes: *Soul Statistics*

YELLOW STREET lines taking in these wild things: a black stone, a souped up Chevrolet with a Virgin Mary ravishing up the rearview. You saw him there & decided to start inviting it further. You saw him so you can see where you've been. Yet knowing no answers will transpire. It was a seacoast town, remember, leaving only one way back inland. What else is truth? These last things coming back. And later strolling into a night circus, the black town air humid with pink cotton candy & crickets. Those neon game stuffed animals sad they're not won. Yet. Deconstructing the first things you got told, new languages from a roadside perpendicular in its wanting. Stepping out into the strange light.

Margaret Walther: *Leaf Geometry 1*

rico-
cheting
to the
ground
in brittle light
gold hiero-
glyphs of autumn
lost
loves
lost chil-
dren scuffed
underneath our
feet
old age, its
brutal
leaf sca-
rs

remem-
ber spring
what multiplic-
ity of arcs
angles
of hope
we were pull-
ed as sky warmth
pulls buds
to op-

en
uncloak peti-
ole, midrib
veins

summer
's heat
roared
through root
and leaf
we reached
for the upper ver-
tex
its under-
current sucked
us into the emer-
ald lamina
of lac-
quered
desire

now
fall twilights
us toward the chill
cloison-
ne of
winter
bar-
ren womb
of branch
what naked ang-
les we must
live in
the geom-

etry
of loss graph-
ed on our
skin

Rodney Nelson: two poems

Deliverance

might you have better taken the gravel road
to a side valley or were you fated to
mistake no matter the route

you do not know
and saw the other road too early in your
time but do remember cattle and meadow
at the turn that might have been meaning you to
wait and then heading on as if in aware
resolve to make your time in two where it had
to be done

you think of the story of men
friends canoeing in a woody mountain range
and humiliation and death awaiting
or that wanted any cause and the sheriff
department out on the gravel to put it
right and you wonder if they had seen cattle
and meadow en route to the range and might have
better taken another road to a side
river of no mistake

either wrong or right
you would have brought your time there as well and made
it two in the fate narrative of the place

Midnight in the Narrows

the ferry inched on into the no more
than river's width between Kupreanof
Island and Mitkof keeping within the
rows of lit buoy

a young woman inside
talked to her own window reflection and
another listened

I'M NOT TAKIN YOU
THE MIDDLE NOWHERE HE SAYS
I GOT FRENDS
IN KETCHIKAN AN JUNEAU

outside were
only wild night and bear in the unlit
pine-thicket world too near to the hull but
an awakened young man inside wanted
to relive a joke

YOU HEAR ABOUT THE
BECKPECKER WHO

another guy jumping
in quick to chagrin him
'THOUT THE BECKPECKERS
THE CANNERY'D SHUT DOWN

livid sore point
that the joker ought not have reopened
so had to squint and nod in the light and
out on the deck the big humming engines
were heard

in the midnight whale waters too

Thea Swanson: *Small Happinesses of the Day*

the floor creaks

Adélaïde palms the porcelain sachet. The weight is cold and mmm. She lets go of the cord, and the sachet falls in her bag, landing on a faded handkerchief. A moonbeam bends in the old, thick glass, and she steps out of its spotlight—so close to view she is now. How daring she is this night!

she wakes

The morning grass is white-tipped when she opens her eyes. A blade in her mouth refreshes, and she rolls onto her back, onto a quilt of one hundred squares. Each square was a wish for baby June. Adélaïde stretches her arms to her sides, grabs the edges of the threadbare cotton and pulls it to her. *Your wishes are now mine.*

detection

Adélaïde rests her head in her hand, her elbow on her left knee against the car door. The drive has made her sour. Her foot

gases the car without trying. Though she loves the perpetual glide through space, the books and clothes and purloined treasures need a stationary spot. She pities the music box, sideways on the rubber mat, the frilly man bowing to the frilly woman. *I will find a floral rug for them.* She shakes her head, *It is not enough.* She senses their unhappiness. They need a proper *bonheurs-du-jour*. Or is it something else she senses? A curl to the suitor's lips? She straightens the steering wheel and takes the next exit to think about things and to eat. Syracuse. Two hours, she's been.

remembering

The jam jar is empty. The berried bonnet that covers the lid could be a doll's hat, and she pulls the elastic away and tucks the cloth in one of her bags. She frowns at the white metal lid, plain and naked. *How easy we get used to adornments.* At fourteen, Adélaïde gathered her tight-fitting shirts in a pile—shirts her mother bought from a cheap store in the mall—on the stove. The burner ticked and caught, but the material was striped with metal and plastic, and stank and smoke, so she chickened and poured water over the lot. She had worn one of the blouses to school, and the boys—all of them, every single boy, and girls too—stared at her bosom. A grandmother word, but “chest” wasn't enough.

Chest was for boys and skinny girls, for grandfathers whose ribcages rattled when they came in your room in the night. Chests were not for treasures. She tried to hide hers with big flannel shirts and suede jackets—then, and still.

Adélaïde's bread is gone too. She's parked in a gas station's lot, and there's a diner across the street. Hot potatoes and stringy beef—a warm plate would steam her chin and ears. Microwaved burritos would be cheaper though, and with less eyes.

The Sunoco is empty and its order is tender—a fast-walking customer could knock over the chips that are now in squared rows. She exhales in its white space, in its quiet. Snug inside an aisle of stacked candies and cookies, with no one in the store except the woman at the register, she is able to think, which relaxes her so much that she has to use the restroom. But first, she catches sight of a purple and silver rectangular package. Violets: his bait in the beginning. A mint on his lap. How was she to know that a snake crawled from the smell of flowers and powders? Adélaïde frowns and her intestines harden. She rubs her stomach, then looks over to the counter. The cashier is blocked from her view. She grabs all the Violets and shoves them in her brown purse.

She crosses her arms—a browser's stance—and makes her way to the freezer. Two for ninety-nine. Both burritos go in at

once, and as they spin on the dish, she pulls green tea from the icebox.

reciprocation

Off the highway in a wooded park, surrounded by oaks, Adélaïde unwraps the candy, throws it on a patch of dirt and stomps it with her boot heal, square by square. Something moves in the shrubs; small creatures must smell the sweetness—naughty Peter will nibble all the purple dust and tear his stomach to shreds. Adélaïde coughs and rubs the moisture from her cheeks; in her fist, she gathers curls that have fallen from a slack and dirty rubber-band and shoves her hair in her flannel collar. Plucking the larger candy sections from the ground, she throws them one by one: first east, then west, flinging a wedge north, and then south, knowing that small beings are drawn to the sickly sweet—things that are very bad for them, things like candy and touch—but maybe a little won't hurt, though she has no reference for this, and she claws at the ground and throws dirt willy-nilly until she drops. Her lashes are wet. Grit on her tongue, she spits in her hand—she has cracked the tip of her dogtooth! Between her thumb and finger, she rolls the calcium while lying on her side. With her nose to the earth, she's aware of a fragrance, like

patchouli, from her tantrum. Adélaïde whimpers at the problem: she adores flowers and powders.

return

Two more hours brings her back to Buffalo, to the street that holds her. She parks near the curb, across from one of the many antique shops. She bites a piece of nail from her thumb. This shop she hasn't dared enter. The façade does not have the splintered wood surrounding the door, nor, at a closer look, as she closes the door of her car and has her thin fingers on the gold-finished handle, does it have the simple-cut key lock. Yet, the handle is familiar, cool in her hand, like a gun. Bells jingle as she enters.

"Hello," The woman is lost amongst the rococo. Adélaïde looks up, past a brief flight of stairs, and locates the welcome.

"Hello," Adélaïde's voice is neutered. She clears her throat and smiles, smoothes the placket of her shirt, rubs down her purse. At the top of the quasi-staircase is a vast room that takes her aback; from the street she had only seen the showcase—one *Limoges* pitcher atop one dresser, and one Louis Phillipe mirror behind the two. Diaphragm holding up her breath, she strokes a diminutive gilded gryphon cornered on a table leg—like that of a

fawn. “My little French table.” Adélaïde doesn’t know she speaks.

“In the style, of course. Louis VX. A reproduction.”

Intrusive, this need to air dirty laundry. Adélaïde frowns.

“A good reproduction.” The woman peers above her glasses and adds up, to a short sum, Adélaïde’s legacy. The woman’s washed hair shimmers like crème brûlée as she resumes organizing papers. Her baggy sweater droops—there is no need for this messenger of disappointments to burn *her* shirts. Adélaïde averts her eyes that flash momentary hauteur, lets go of the woman like lint she picks from her purse, and moves further into the shop.

The climate is cool, and the lighting, she imagines, as she gazes at an opaline chandelier, is that of dinners in cozy castles. She sees servants wearing shawls and snuffing oil sconces in the hallway. She sees herself in the white boudoir, alone, a foot-high feather pile sewn into sweet cotton. Alas—she is not alone! Guarin, her protector and companion St. Bernard, is on the woolen rug, spanning the length of her bed. His head is massive, sparrow-gentle, his jaw unhinging only to clamp a wicked visitor’s wrist.

Adélaïde comes to, her vision blurred while dreaming at the crystals, and beholds a dining table fit for her imagination. Fingering the carver’s chair, she sits.

incongruity

Minutes pass; still, she sits. Eyes closed, arms on rests: this is her new table, her new home. But a rickety gray staircase slithers from the back of an apartment, entering her adopted abode—this grand room—and she furrows her brow and shakes her head. One brick can shatter one window, one cheekbone, when thrown from a gray step. Two bricks at close range can shatter an old cranium. The pistol would have deafened and alerted, but was not necessary—how splendid! Grandfathers should not be up at night, tiring themselves out, leaving themselves unguarded in their afternoon forgetfulness.

Adélaïde cannot forget. The armrest breaks in her hand, and she opens her eyes. Inside the armrest wood is nothing—a chewed cavern.

Taken by a coughing fit, she drops the lie on the Oriental rug.

Musky sage hovers at her left. She looks.

“You okay?”

Stupid question. How is one to answer? She coughs more, embarrassed by her honking when she sees his exquisite countenance.

He leaves.

He returns.

“Here’s some water.” He moves closer, handing her a plastic tumbler and stepping on the armrest. “Oh.” He picks it up.

“I’m sorry.” She drinks.

“Hmm,” He chuckles and looks over his shoulder, toward the register. “We’ll just put it right back.” He reunites the arm to the chair so the grooves mingle. “Our little secret.”

“I was just sitting.”

He looks at her. “Can I help you with anything? Were you looking for something?”

“I like two things so far.” Scanning the room, it becomes too much, and she wants to sit down again, but she grips the table.

“Two things, you say?” He smiles, and she doesn’t know why.

“Yes. Two things.”

Still, the smile.

“And what might those be?”

“I like that chandelier.” She swivels. “But more, I like the little table, back there.”

“I like those two things too.” His hand comes close to her face, as if he’s going to take something from her loose curl, but then he blinks and pulls his arm back. “How about something smaller, do you like anything smaller?” He walks towards a credenza covered with ceramic figurines. “What do you think

about these?" He picks up a cardinal. "I'm not sure what you would do with this, really." It looks useless in his hand.

"I would look at it." She wants him to put it down.

"There's so many." He scowls at the fantasies.

The bird is on its side in his hand. Its bottom reveals a hole. Adélaïde's purse drops to her fingers. A curl falls from behind her ear.

He sets the bird down.

Adélaïde gathers her hair, tucks it in her collar.

"So, which one do you like?" He forces his black t-shirt into his black jeans.

Adélaïde hangs her purse over her shoulder, crosses her arms. "I like the bird," she shops more, "and the lady."

He picks up the bird and the lady. "Two figurines for two cups of coffee."

She doesn't say no or yes but follows him to the register.

The lady and bird are squeezed in his hand and stuck to his thigh.

"I'm going out for a while, Mom." He grabs his leather jacket from behind the counter, draping it over his gifts.

Mother's mouth hangs.

Son comes around the counter and nudges Adélaïde's back with his coated hand—the third time in twenty four hours she

thinks, *revolver*. She reaches the little table and stops at once. The figurines that Son hides gouge her spine. Her eyes tear, but she knows the pain will soon be over. Touching the tulipwood of the *bonheurs-du-jour*, she asks, “How much?”

Mother and Son look at her. Son shakes his head, a flinch in his cheeks.

“How much?” She repeats, angered.

Mother barks flatly, her eyes shining. “Twelve hundred.” *En garde*.

Adélaïde steps back from the table, tilts her head left and right, steps forward and runs three fingers on the floral plaque on its drawer. To Mother, Adélaïde turns. Her eyes glow with a promise: “I’ll come back for it later.” *Froissement*. She heads for the exit, noting the electric eye.

Creeping Son is behind Adélaïde now, like death. At the door, Adélaïde turns to see what death looks like. It has faded irises. It has a sunken chest, she now knows, as she stops it with her hand. It is a boy. It is a ghost.

“No.” She says.

He pulls his head back. “No?”

Shadows drain from his eyes in the light that comes through the glass door. His face would always estrange. His worried glare would crack her accoutrements. His anemic touch would mold

her skin. His disappointing seed would rot her womb.

She takes her hand away from his chest, smears it on her shirt.

“You judge without knowing me.” Adélaïde looks at Mother, then at Son. “I only drink tea.”

clarity’s reward

Outside, the street is clear, and her car awaits. In a moment, she is there. Opening the door, lavender wafts, greets her. She smiles in return, bends into its company. Closing the door, she ignites the fuel with her key and glides into the city, up the escapist avenue, its Victorian pink houses selling red oil paintings, hammered gothic lamps. The bouncy shocks of her auto, cradle.

In her car’s rearview mirror, red lights flash atop a white vehicle, and more flash at the corner she approaches.

Her breath catches in her throat, and she hiccups.

“It is time.” Her eyes tear. Her life, she knows, begins to slip away.

But forward there is no red flash, and so she drives.

Faster, she goes. She turns right and then right again. She weaves in and out of the downtown streets—so many one-way streets—and somehow manages to evade the captors. On a broad street now, one that follows the lake, she is free and for the first

time ever sees the Peace Bridge that connects this country to another as a sign.

Traffic is minimal. She is on the bridge in sixty seconds! The lake is dark green and glassy to her left and right. It is hardly anything, this water that separates all that she is and all that she could be. Yet something in her very being still doesn't feel quite right, and the water suddenly seems inches away, its toxic algae slapping her cheek, and she jerks the steering wheel, skimming the curb of the narrow walkway. With great agitation she remembers, as she bites her lip, that her mother's sister and other forgotten relations indeed reside in that close province—Niagara Falls?

On the bridge, she is second in line. Other cars roll up behind her, securing her crossing. Quickly, she is in Customs' face. She's done this before as a child, on her way to the amusement park, to ride the shaky roller coaster over the water.

Rolling down her window, she blinks back her fear.

"Citizenship?"

"United States."

"What brings you to Canada?" His face is stone.

"I'm visiting Toronto for the day."

"What are you going to do there?"

With her nails, she digs into her hamstring. "Shop."

She looks away to avoid detection, and in her rearview mirror two police cars pierce her passageway. Their lights flash and spin. Customs-man doesn't notice yet, so intent is he on ruining Adélaïde, whose chest rises and falls in time with the spinning red alarms.

"Are you bringing anything into Canada?"

The uniformed men are walking fast but stealthily alongside cars now, ten cars behind.

She stares at Customs-man. His head is almost hairless, gray threads atop. His nose is red and dotted with large pores—his eyes, unforgiving.

A drop of cool sweat trickles down Adélaïde's temple. In his cross eyes, she searches, in these last few seconds, for a morsel of kindness.

There is none.

She glances into the mirror again and sees two shaven faces approaching with dark spectacles. Still, this man of stone, of gray matter, is fixed on only her.

"I repeat, are you bringing anything into Canada?" He leans out of his protective booth, pushing his trunk forward.

Adélaïde opens her mouth to speak, but doesn't. Words have rarely served her well. Pleas are silent, strange things, heard only in one's own mind and even then are smothered—even in

dreams.

Her heavy breathing ceases. On her cheeks, rivulets of water, of which she is unaware, flow no more. Somewhere behind the calm that has taken the place of thought, muffled voices demand, pummel. Part of her requires that she replies.

She reaches over, strokes her quilt, and feels for her answer, hidden underneath.

Wain Ewing: *Uroom*



Curt Eriksen: *improbable likenesses, impossible
comparisons*

One is still alive (after all that has happened, in spite of the risks) and (for the moment) one is glad to be alive; one reads, if reading pleases, say, for example, *The Way of Ants* or *Homo Ludens* or something like *Man's Unbearable Mind* and, (reading) learns and (learning) thinks and (thinking) reflects and (reflecting) discovers and, like Marco Polo, (discovering and living long enough to return and tell) realizes some part of what it means to be alive, that one is united in some mysterious way, fortunate (for there are innumerable roads leading to innumerable fabulous cities), blessed. But one has lost a friend (a friend is dead)—a suicide, a traffic accident, a riot, an incomprehensible disease, a war that has not yet begun (the list is endless); one is not consoled by the fact that there will be more deaths, many more deaths (more deaths than all the roads leading to all the fabulous cities combined), that there is much more to be lost, more than one can ever hope to imagine or believe, that death in every form and in all places (even in the wonderful cities) is necessary and inevitable. Still one (spends one's days) read(ing)s and learn(ing)s and think(ing)s and reflect(ing)s and discover(ing)s and

know(ing)s that one is alive and should be grateful (to whom, and for what?).

By means of a conceivable, if not a conceptual, analogy: the word gossamer. Goose summer or gaze à Marie? Early each autumn (sometime around Michaelmas, the 29th of September [by the Gregorian calendar], about the time of year when geese may begin to be observed migrating south) the tiny nearly invisible spider young (perfect imitations to the smallest detail of the mother who has brooded over them—after [probably, almost certainly, yes definitely] devouring the foolhardy father who had fertilized them—for the last six months to a year) wait for the calm apparently breezeless morning when the heat on the earth's surface will be just enough to create a slight upward vacuum of warmed air which will carry them, borne by the silk gliders they have spun and cast for themselves, to their various destinations, places they do not yet know before they set out (places which may be only a few meters away, or perhaps several kilometers away, maybe hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away, as far away as another continent, depending upon the winds), where they will float down to another world like miniature paratroopers, new beings fully instructed as to their purposes, ready to begin at last their new lives. Thus Mary ascended (miraculously it seemed, invisibly) to heaven and left behind only the delicate but amazingly

strong (an estimated tensile strength second only to that of fused quartz) white threads of her silk veil which unraveled and fell (as she climbed) for six weeks or so, until one mild late summer afternoon the strands of silk were observed (like the geese combing the clear blue skies) to have covered the entire earth, the light-fall of pious dreams. She too had traveled to a new world, to begin there a new life?

I shall (if I may) elaborate: we are none of us immune. We must count our blessings: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and nine...like a cat's lives, always one too few (never too many).

For example, you got drunk that night. Just so, drinking one, two, three, four, five and more bottles of beer. It was only beer, nothing but beer, but your stomach was empty and the beers, one after another, went directly to your head, where they swished around, like water in a large empty pail.

Fortunately you weren't alone. The middle-aged mother (wife of the owner of the bar), was there, with her two pubescent children, an older boy with a cracking voice and a younger girl with a pair of buds for breasts. The three of them were sitting at a square molded plastic table with a newspaper spread upon it, watching the beginning of a movie on the brand new color television set that they had recently bought with a share of the

summer's profits. You stood behind them with your first beer in your hand and watched the opening scene of the film.

It was, according to the introduction—as the long weary struggle for supremacy dragged on from year to year, and the economic ruin and distress of the land intensified, the commanders of both sides increasingly relied upon the looting of towns and villages, both for supplies and to make up for the arrears in the soldier's pay; the soldier's became, therefore, more and more mere brigands, leeches sucking the blood of the countryside, and the traditions of plunder as a legitimate operation in warfare and of outrage as a soldier's prerogative were established for all time—an adventure drama set in Bohemia at the time of the Thirty Years War.

You sipped your beer and watched the words (Book Antigua script) fade from the screen; the music merged into the sound of leather rubbing and the hooves of many horses clipping, and the camera followed a group of cavalrymen, the sunlight striking their polished cuirasses, as they emerged from a deciduous forest and walked their horses to the edge of a cliff, where they stopped and looked down at a cluster of cottages with thatched roofs separated by a furrowed field from a muddy river. The lead horse snorted and shook its head, rattling its decorative bridle, and the camera zoomed in on the leader's face. He was a young man with long

blond hair and high wide cheekbones. His eyes were a menthol blue and his face was smoothly shaved. Unlike the other riders he wore no helmet.

The leader adjusted his weight in his tooled saddle and cocked his head to one side and said something in a strange language (you didn't look at the bottom of the screen quickly enough to read the subtitles). The man beside him, carrying a long pike with a banner draped about its neck (the breeze fluttered the cloth while the pike man responded to the leader's question—once again you missed the subtitles—and you saw a pair of battle axes forming an inverted V above a Christian cross on one field, and a rearing lion with a streaming mane wearing a scarlet flowing cape on the other), nodded his head gravely. Simultaneously all the cavalymen jerked on their bridles and the horses made a lot of noise turning around.

You finished your beer and asked the owner's wife for another one. She scowled and rose heavily from her chair and went behind the counter and opened another bottle of beer and set it on the counter. You thanked her, picked up the beer and resumed your position behind the others.

Now the camera swung across the field and into the settlement where men wearing plain woolen doublets and breeches drawn tight below the knees busied themselves with

happy chores. It was a quiet peaceful scene, complete with birds chirping in the background. Everyone wore wooden clogs covered with leather uppers and they greeted each other with hearty shouts. The women, dressed in low cut bodices (covered by long white collars draping across the shoulders like shawls) which tapered to a point below the waist, from which the long skirts fell in folds to the ground, easily churned liquids in rough hewn wooden buckets with their thin arms hidden beneath three-quarters-length sleeves trimmed with broad turn-ups (of an immaculate cotton identical to that of the collars). A flaxen haired boy hung about the door of the carpenter's shop, inspecting a toy he had just finished carving for himself.

The music resumed on a dramatic note eclipsing the chirping of the birds and the camera turned its eye on the cavalrymen riding out of the forest and into the field beside the river. A little girl drawing water from the river saw the cavalrymen, screamed and dropped her bucket and ran towards the cluster of cottages. There was a close-up of the leader again as he fixed over his face a masked helmet which looked like a fantastic lion's head, complete with oriental eyes, small ears, a wide powerful snout and a long flowing mane. The cavalrymen drew their swords; a few held maces at the ready. A couple of riders prepared their heavy match lock muskets (priming the pan, charging the piece, ramming the

powder, holding the piece with the pan guarded, the fuses slowly burning). The leader shouted something (you were so intent upon the elaborate preparation of the muskets that you missed the subtitles yet again, but you did notice the way the mask changed the leader's voice), and the men spurred their horses and charged.

The music accelerated and the camera chased the little girl as she ran, out of breath, into the middle of the cluster of cottages, screaming and crying. Everyone dropped whatever they had been doing and gathered around her. Then everyone looked in the direction of the charging invaders. There was frantic shouting as the men ran for the tools they would wield as weapons and the women and children ran for shelter. The music rose and blended with the sound of the stamping hooves. Then the action began.

It was hard to make out clearly what was happening because the camera switched rapidly from one angle or point of view to another, creating a sense of vertigo; but the peasants basically ran clumsily, scattering in every direction, while the graceful horsemen (seeming larger than life and especially magnificent when the camera shot from a low angle emphasizing the singular blended nature of horse, man and metal) bore down on them brandishing their swords and maces and firing the muskets wastefully into the air, easily overtaking the men and stabbing them in the back or clubbing them across the head and jumping off

their spirited steeds and kicking in the heavy wooden doors of the cottages with a single mighty blow of a booted foot and rushing in and grabbing the women they found huddled in the corners inside and throwing them on the floor and tearing with their powerful hands at the nonresistant fabric of the long folds of the skirts (when they could have simply raised them) and raping the women (without bothering to remove their breastplates) before the shocked and gaping children while others pillaged and set fire (tossing torches that had materialized from nowhere onto the thatched roofs of the cottages which instantaneously leaped into flame) so that in no time the entire settlement was burning, a terrific conflagration which blazes in the background of the final pursuit of the flaxen haired boy who has managed (miraculously) to escape the initial onslaught and who now runs wild-eyed like a rabbit (zigzagging) towards the river, tripping and stumbling over the enormous clods of the obviously plowed but not yet furrowed earth and nearly falling but not letting go of his recently carved toy just as the leader (whose mask seems to grin above the wild thrusting of the head and powerful neck of his—also blond—horse) raises high his gleaming sword and with a single fluid swwwwwoooooooooooooooooooooooooop of the tempered iron—which, being the first egalitarian metal (four to five percent of the earth's crust is iron as compared to the relative scarcity of

copper and especially tin), dramatically changed both agriculture and warfare (and consequently gave the illusion of changing as well the comparative strengths of the different social and economic classes, allowing poor men the opportunity to both arm themselves and by virtue of their now more efficient labor become less absolutely poor while remaining relatively poor, but at the same time enabling kings and even princes to arm if not maintain, as evidenced in this film, large cumbersome armies and project with these the capricious claims, decrees, personal eccentricities and ambitions of their egos and empires, thus altering as well the relationships of the individual to society [creating, in fact, the individual] and societies vis-à-vis each other [creating the interdependencies of the functional groups known as producers, consumers and governments which would steadily evolve into the complex of powerful and established interests which operate like a circulatory system, recycling for further destruction that which has been created in order to be destroyed]), forever—blade cuts the boy's head off and sends it flying up and out and over and into the slow moving muddy water where it lands with a definitive plop, bobs once, twice, then sinks.

You drained the last (warm and frothy) of your second beer and, having decided that you had seen this movie before—or one near enough like it—you asked the wife of the owner of the bar

for another beer which she reluctantly got up and got for you. Then, without so much as glancing at the television again, you took your third beer and went outside and sat at the only round molded plastic table that had been left (the season being over) on the patio.





ANEMONE SIDECAR

RAVENNA PRESS