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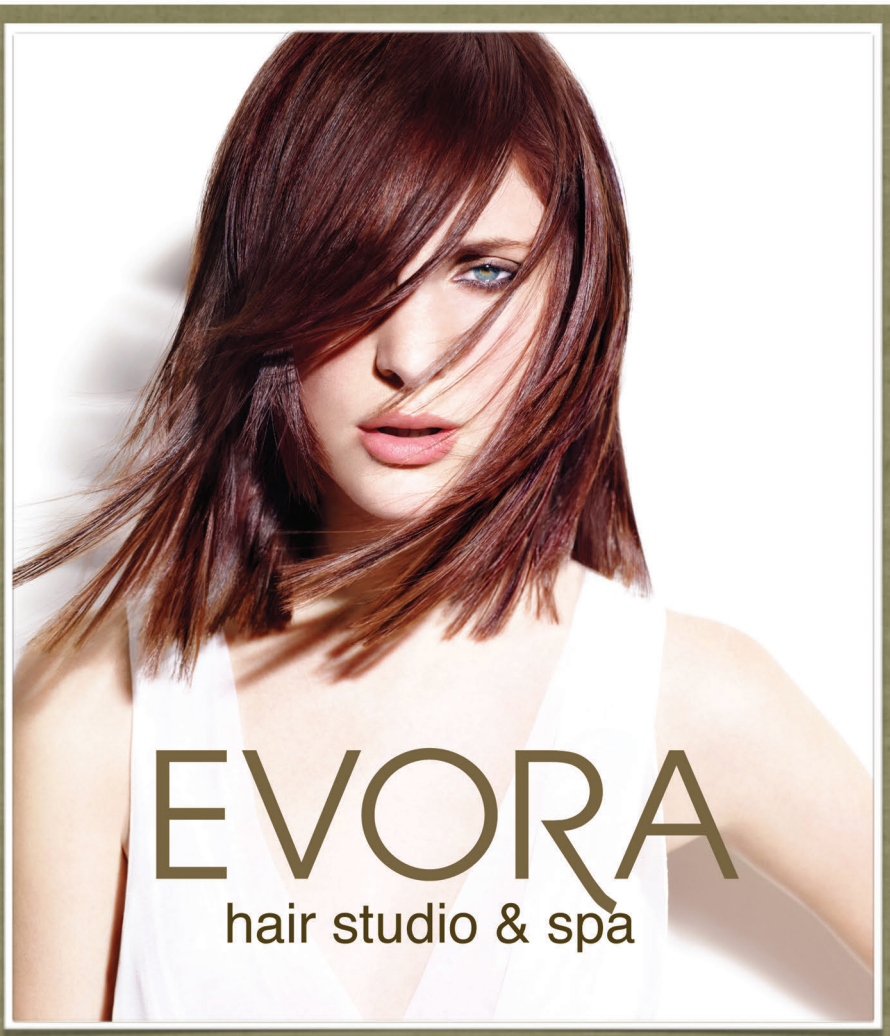

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TADDLE CREEK

DIDN'T REMEMBER TO THINK ABOUT MONEY

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THE CONTRIBUTORS

Alex Boyd ("Tomorrow at Ten," p. 9) lives in Roncesvalles Village. He is the editor of the Northern Poetry Review online journal and the *Best Canadian Essays* series (Tightrope), and the author of the poetry collection *Making Bones Walk* (Luna, 2007). For five years he hosted the I.V. Lounge Reading Series, and edited the anthology *I.V. Lounge Nights* (Tightrope, 2008).

Ethan Rilly ("Ex Montreal," p. 12) lives in Christie-Ossington. He is a cartoonist and the past winner of a Xeric Foundation grant and the Gene Day Award for Canadian Self-Publishing.

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Kasey Coholan ("Trial By Fire," p. 28) lives in Niagara. She is an associate editor for *Canadian Business* magazine and keeps a strangely popular blog about life on the *Taddle Creek* Web site.

Adrienne Weiss ("Surrender Dorothy," p. 43) lives in the Junction Triangle. She teaches part-time and writes sometimes.

Paul Vermeersch ("Rubble," p. 45) lives in Parkdale. He is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently *The Reinvention of the Human Hand* (M. & S., 2010). He teaches at Sheridan College and is the poetry editor for Insomniac.

Jason Kieffer (The Spots) lives in Cabbagetown. The *Toronto Star's* Joe Fiorito called his full-length debut, *The Rabble of Downtown Toronto* (Old Boot, 2009), "a nasty little book." His autobiographical comic, *Kieffer,* was nominated for a Doug Wright Award in 2008 and 2009. He currently is working on a comic biography of the local personality Zanta.

Jackie Linton (the protégé) lives in Dufferin Grove. She is a recent graduate from the University of Toronto, where she edited the *Hart House Review.* Currently, she publishes the independent arts and culture quarterly *Bad Day.*

Gary Taxali (The Cover) lives in the Junction. He is an award-winning illustrator whose work has appeared in many major magazines. He is the proprietor of Chump Toys, and teaches and lectures at various arts organizations and schools. He contributed cover and interior artwork for Aimee Mann's 2008 album, *@#%&*! Smilers,* which was nominated for a Grammy Award for best package design. His first children's book, *This Is Silly!,* was recently released by Scholastic.

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THE MAIL

Such a Night

The *Taddle Creek* reading in Saint John, New Brunswick, at the Happinez Wine Bar, was such a great night. I go to the University of King's College, in Halifax, and we have lots of similar events, but never one quite as lovely as that. It was a real bright spot in my summer. I'm very interested in magazines and literature and writing, and to see writers and readers alike in one room communicating and sharing ideas is exactly what appeals to me when I imagine the literary scene come to life.

Kristen Flood
Saint John, New Brunswick

Thanks, Kristen. Saint John history buffs should check out Kristen's book, Saint John and the Fundy Shore, published this spring by Neptune. For those who weren't able to attend, Taddle Creek's magical evening in Saint John took place on July 22nd, and featured the local author Robert Moore, Fredericton's Jesse Patrick Ferguson, and Toronto's own Jason Kieffer, who only got yelled at on the street once for his nasty little book of comic drawings the entire time he was in the city.

Agreeing To . . . Agree?

I find Section 9 of your submission guidelines embarrassingly condescending (www.taddlecreekmag.com/submit). While I don't doubt you've received a wack load of bullshit poetry and fiction submissions over the years, for a newcomer to your Web site, such as myself, your guidelines seem so unnecessarily aggressive, not to mention limiting.

I can't say I disagree with many of the rules, but I disagree with their elevated tone. Then you say you will edit poetry for style and spelling, with the final decision going to the magazine?

I keep trying to connect the tone of voice presented here to the shitty cover images, horrible font, and mom-designed Web site, and wonder where all this confidence comes from.

Being relatively new to poetry, I have found the world mainly full of boring, tight-assed dorks whose parties remind me of the insular drama-kid pizza lunches that to them were so amazing.

Lastly, what's wrong with being "serious"? (Your quotes are so sarcastic.) As if it isn't totally fucking trendy and "contemporary" to be aloof, embarrassing, and sardonic, to talk about little insignificant things, subjective things, our boring lives and relationships–I'd kill for a genuinely serious poem.

I understand your magazine's field of interest, but find the ego-tripping just sad and hopelessly predictable for a "cool" writing mag.

Matthew Vanstone
Toronto

Return To Beaver

I just came across Alfred Holden's fascinating article on the city of Beaver ("The Paper Pompeii," Summer Number, 2006). I had to laugh, as I did much the same thing in my childhood. We built a town called Mudville in the backyard that lasted several years. I had all my brothers and the neighbourhood kids involved at various times. We had a currency (shovels of a rare type of dirt), and people would buy and sell property. There were paved roads (a special type of clay) for the Matchbox vehicles, drainage systems, bridges, irrigation systems, and stone and wood houses and buildings with landscaping and swimming pools. There were outlying towns and exploration posts up in the fields accessed via "airstrips." Sometimes the "government" would expropriate properties that were not kept up to standards. Interest would peak and ebb as various kids became too wealthy and got bored with their multiple residences and businesses. The weather would wipe out various sections of the town, which would get rebuilt. We never did get quite as elaborate as the Holdens though.

J. Toth
Toronto

The Out-of-Townerror

The architect John Leroux is on a mission to let people know that the flat-roofed Saint John City Market has nothing to do with the bottom of a ship ("Tragic Hero," Summer Number, 2010). In fact, were it a ship, it would promptly sink or break apart. It's a roof that is modelled more on the fashions of train sheds than anything else.

When I heard this at a lecture I thought to myself, "Finally someone else has actually given it a good look." So at least you know that, as far as errors go, it is very common.

Peter Josselyn
Saint John, New Brunswick

Hmm. Taddle Creek is going to have to think about this, Peter. Expect a reply by page 47. And Jason Kieffer says to tell you he's recovered from your having yelled at him on the street while he was in town.

Making no compromise with public taste.

— MARGARET ANDERSON, *The Little Review*

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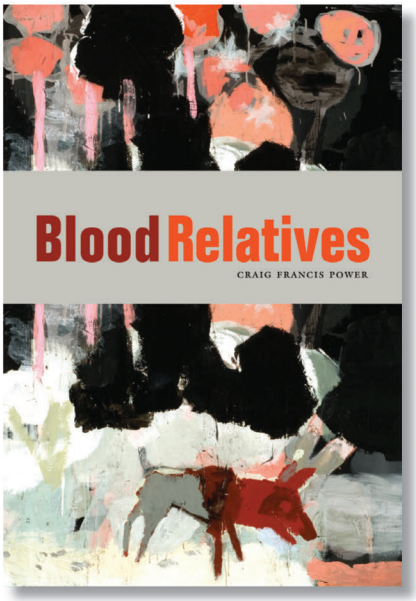

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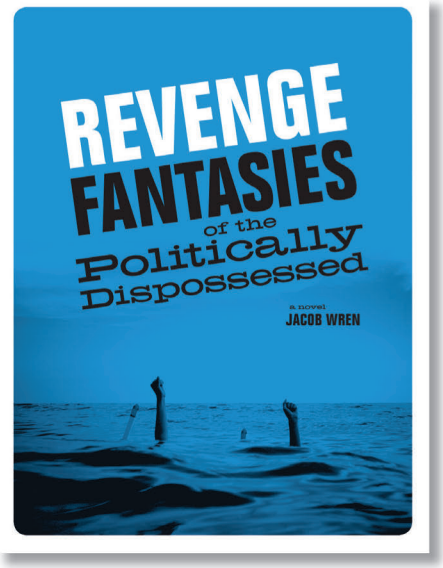

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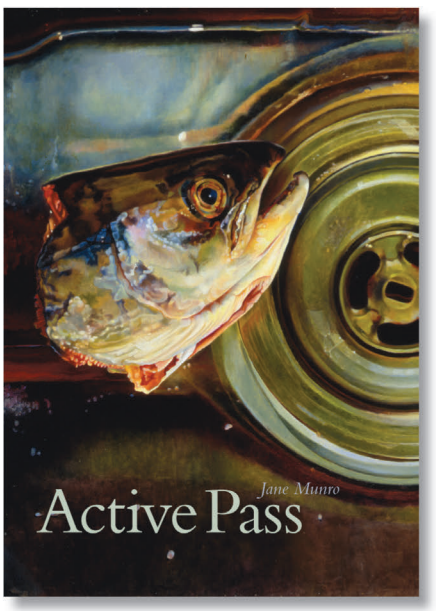

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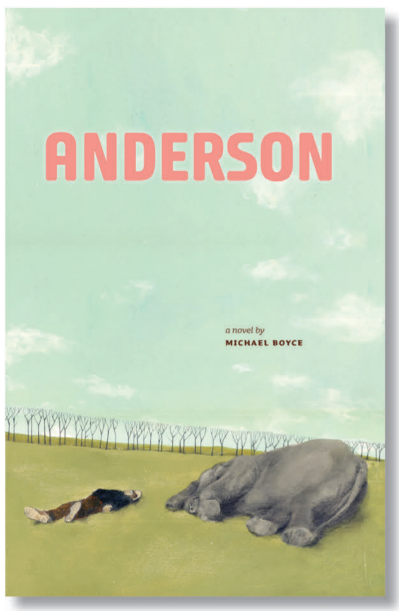

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THE EPHEMERA

More The Corrections

By popular demand, more corrections from *Taddle Creek's* past:

The small type in the fake ad "Be an Artist," by Michael Cho, in the summer, 2009, issue, read, in part, "No guarantees, express or implied are made with this offer." The correct wording is, "No guarantees, expressed or implied, are made with this offer." *Taddle Creek* caught this error before press and pointed it out to Mike, but he refused to make the change. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The photograph of the urban guru Jane Jacobs, by Phillip Smith, in the Christmas, 2004, issue, really looked like crap when it was printed, even though the original photo was perfectly clear. (A much better, albeit smaller, version of the photo can be found in the summer, 2006, issue.) *Taddle Creek* takes equal blame along with the printer for this technical mishap. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The photograph of a small stuffed dog accompanying the story on how much the Japanese love Ian Phillips–"Big in Japan," by Conan Tobias, in the Christmas, 2003, issue–had a line through it. It shouldn't have. It was the printer's fault. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

In the most ironic of errors, the masthead title of "Proofreader" was spelled as "Proof Reader" from the summer, 2003, issue through to the Christmas, 2005, issue, even though the magazine's style is the former. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The photograph of the cartoonist Joe Matt, by Phillip Smith, in the Christmas, 2002, issue, really looked like crap when it was printed, even though the original photo was perfectly clear. *Taddle Creek* takes equal blame along with the printer for this technical mishap. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The photograph of the cover star Ken Tobias on the Christmas, 2002, issue was credited to Ian MacEachern and Gordon Anderson. Mr. MacEachern deserves sole credit. The stamp on the back of the original print credited both gentlemen. *Taddle Creek* has met Mr. MacEachern since and learned that his was the only finger on the shutter. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The cover of the summer, 2001, issue was printed with a matte finish. It should be a smooth gloss. It was the printer's fault. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

In Andrew Loung's biography in the Christmas, 1999, issue, the name of the journal *Ça Met Égal* was spelled without accents. *Taddle Creek* could not find a copy of or contact information for this obscure journal in those days of information superhighway infancy, so it asked Andrew if he was really, really, sure of the spelling, and to please look at a copy to be super-extra sure. He swore there were no accents. The twenty-first-century Web calls you a liar, Mr. Loung! *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The cover of the Christmas, 1999, issue looked like it was printed in black and white. It is actually a blue duotone. It was supposed to be printed with a deep blue, much like the summer, 2002, issue, but came out so light as to appear to contain no colour at all. It was a printing error, but the magazine takes blame for this one. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The first three issues of *Taddle Creek*–Christmas, 1997, 1998, and 1999–were not very good. There's some great stuff in them, but the issues are pretty sloppy in general. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

Page 36 of the Christmas, 1998, issue was printed off centre. The copy should be slightly to the right. It was the printer's fault. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The Christmas, 1997, and Christmas, 1998, issues were not fact-checked in any kind of trustworthy way. They should have been. *Taddle Creek* wasn't yet at the top of its game. Readers are cautioned not to believe a word in these issues without proper verification. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

In the essay "The Forgotten Stream," by Alfred Holden, in the Christmas, 1997, issue, "courtesy" was spelled as "courtsey" in the photo credit on page 3. It was a typo. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The spot colour on the cover of the Christmas, 1997, issue came out a pinkish orange. It should be a bright red, like the Christmas, 1998, issue. The magazine told the printer what colour it wanted, but the printer didn't oblige. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

The cover of Christmas, 1997, issue–the magazine's first–contained cover lines. It should not have. The magazine caved to peer pressure and bad advice and never made the mistake again. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error every single day.

The Christmas, 1997, issue–the magazine's first–was eight-and-a-half inches wide by eleven inches high. It should be eight inches wide by ten-and-three-quarter inches high, just like all the rest. The magazine knew better, but somehow, inexplicably, it still happened. Chalk it up to gross stupidity. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

Stop Loss

BY KELLY WARD

The edge of the last building slid behind the retaining wall of the highway as she headed southwest, her bumper discreetly duct-taped to the chassis and her driver's-side door panel fluttering like a rusted leaf ready to whip away in the wind. She'd driven for what seemed like ages with the town lingering in the rear-view, losing a letter from Walmart every few minutes, the bubbly little car on the Minute Lube sign soon looking more like a flickering pink distress signal. Sullivan Avenue morphed from shop-lined street to rural route to provincial highway so effortlessly it was hard to notice the distance but for that reflection, the town clutching the road as if mooring itself.

From the highway she could see nearly everything but the casino. It was tucked behind the hospital and the jar factory in the left-hand corner of her mirror. She could imagine it, though, the neon just flickering to life in the dusk, the setting sun bouncing off the street lamps in the parking lot, turning them to gold cylinders.

In front of her the sky domed pink across the five lanes of light traffic, the red ball hovering just above the horizon. She and Dodds had loved that time of day. They'd rush dinner in winter to make sure they didn't miss the chance to run the stretch of highway behind her apartment and watch the setting light bounce from asphalt to snowbank to the hood of her jalopy, where they rode freezing and happy.

His cassette still whirred on the tape deck, "Fortunate Son" strumming its tinny first notes into her ears. Nearly every morning in the shower he'd gargled those words with a watery, mock-Southern drawl.

He talked incessantly about swimming the Niagara River and sneaking into the States. Cover of darkness. Homemade scuba gear. His black hair hanging slick over his face would twitch against his lip as he spoke of it. His eyes, wrinkled into a smile well ahead of his lips, were ignited by the idea. When she told him she planned on heading south he slid a hand between her back and the sweaty vinyl of the sofa cushion.

"You should go," he said, resting his forehead against her shoulder. "It was not uncommon for men of his age to mistake her desires for their own.

John Fogerty was beginning to piss her off. That song did it to her every time–made her think of him. She couldn't help but see Dodds in the passenger seat, wrist bent out the window, ash from his cigarette streaming a white line into the night air. This car was Dodds all over. Just deodorant and du Maurier. Could have been anybody, but it was him.

When she met the kid she was working three machines in the fifty-cent-slot pit and was up by a hundred and fifty bucks. She binned the coins, cashed out, and for the first time in five years bought a pack of Player's menthols to celebrate. A downpour had washed all but the most desperate of smokers inside. She leaned against the building under an awning in her jeans and sweatshirt, her three empty coin buckets on the ground next to her, and pulled hard on her smoke.

She noticed him nestled with a bunch of his fellow maintenance workers under another awning. The rain began to fall sideways, gently at first, then fierce, leaving the awning useless as cover. Her car was parked in her usual spot–first row, third spot in–so she broke across the lot and jumped into the cover of the driver's seat. She watched him through the streaming windshield as he pulled the collar of his uniform up around his jaw and leaned into the wall for cover. He mouthed a few curse words and wiped the dripping hair from his face. He tucked his chin into his chest to protect his feebly burning cigarette and cursed again. She started the car, pulled up to him and unlocked the passenger door as a courtesy–helping the kid get dry before he returned to the craps lounge, where she'd often seen him sweeping napkins and swizzle sticks into a tiny, long-handled garbage bin. She wasn't even sure he'd get in. But he did.

Chicago's "25 or 6 to 4" was playing as they sat parked against the curb, thickening the air of the tiny cockpit with their smokes.

"Hey, thanks for coming over, eh? My uniform is soaked to shit."

He spoke into the windshield without looking at her. He had a profile she couldn't ignore. His nose, without a single bump in it, swung smoothly up at the end, like a baby's. He had an awkward way of chewing his lip between words.

"Oh yeah, don't even mention it." She cracked the window and slid her cigarette out to ash it. "You just on a break?"

"They give us fucking twenty-five minutes to eat. Cheap assholes."

She didn't respond, just looked at the dashboard clock, which perpetually read 88:68.

"And what the hell does that mean, anyway? '29-5-6-2-4'?"

"It's '25 or 6 to 4.'"

"And?"

"Hell if I know."

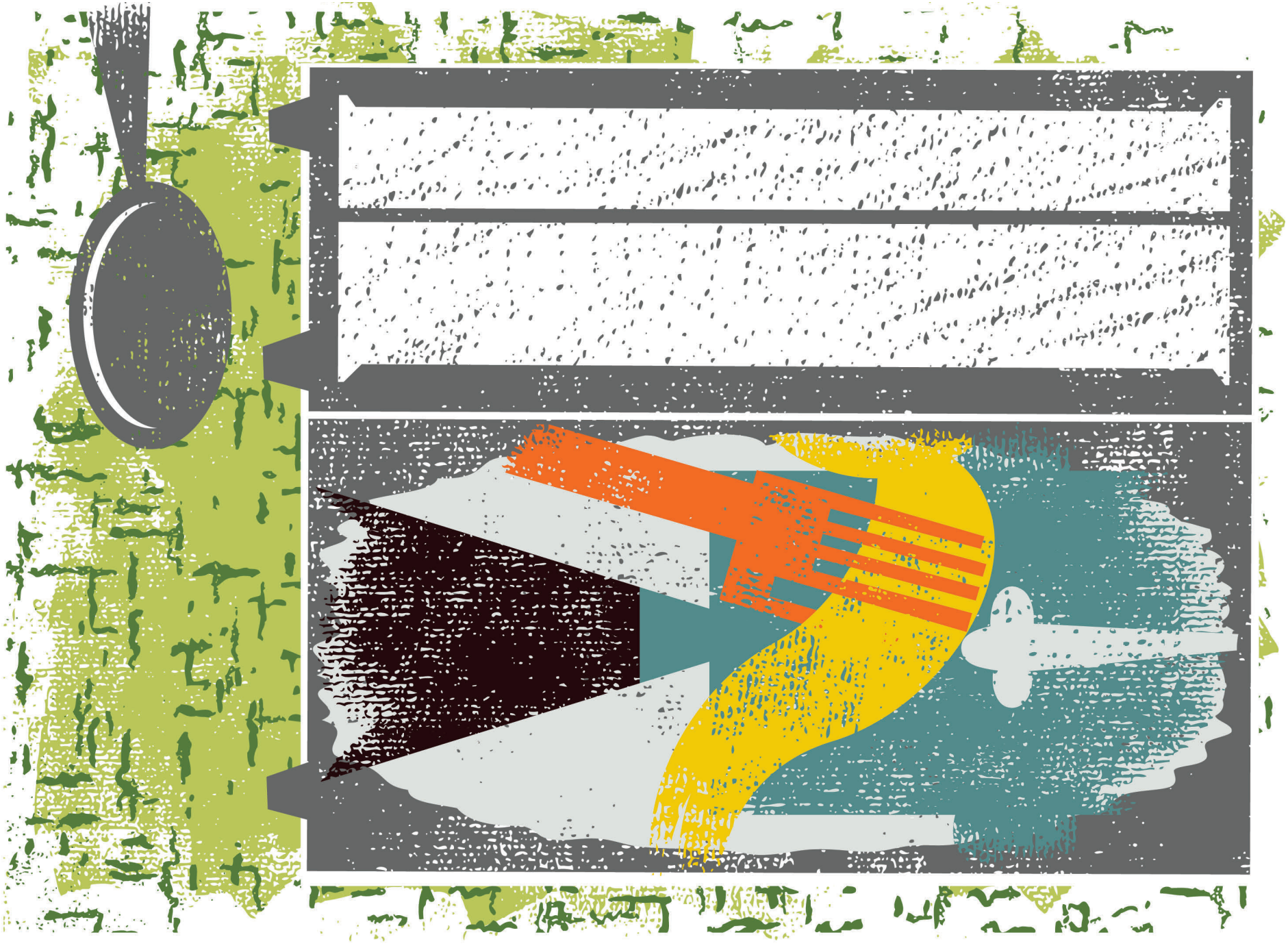
He smiled and let his head flop on the headrest so he faced her.

"I dig this music. This old-timer's shit. It's–"

"Old-timers?" She feigned shock.

"Oh, c'mon, you know you're an old timer."

MATTHEW DALEY



"Bull."

"O.K., name one Top 10 hit from the past five years."

She rolled her eyes and ashed her cigarette.

"And that wouldn't even make you cool, not by a long fucking shot. It'd just make you not old."

"I dunno."

"Old." He took a long drag from his cigarette. "Timer. Anyway, it's cool, this old shit. It never makes any sense. Like the whole 'I am the walrus' thing."

"So not the same thing. Two different decades, man," she said, sounding much more like a hippie than she meant to.

He laughed, lightly stamping his feet and shaking his head.

"'Man'? Aw, lady, there's more to you than this Northern Reflections getup suggests, isn't there?"

She smiled and dropped her head back against the headrest. The rain had let up enough for her to crank her window all the way down and flick her cigarette against the building in a burst of sparks.

"All right, better get back."

He sighed and bit his cigarette as he stepped out of the car. She tugged the sleeve of his uniform as he left.

"Hey, maybe I'll make you a mix tape of this old-timer's stuff. For your car, eh?"

"We use MP3s now, hon. Those'd blow your mind. They don't even actually exist."

He wiggled his fingers toward her as if to illustrate the witchcraft of this new technology, strode in front of the car, slapping the hood once, and ran toward the double-glass doors clutching his pants by the back of his belt.

There are three surefire ways to make money at the slots: play loose, play progressive, play quick. Duane "the Odds" Schmidt was as loose as he was quick and more progressive than a lesbian at a parent-teacher conference. Looser than an anorexic's bikini. Quicker than a priest in a whorehouse. He had dozens of those.

If a local player came back to the pit at least three times a week for at least six weeks they earned the talk from the Odds. He'd size up a new player's demeanour, their style of dress, whether they showed outward displays of disappointment and glee as they played. Then he'd slide onto the stool next to the guy, put his full coin bin on the ledge so close to the guy's elbow he'd knock it off if he even twitched, and say, "You know what you oughta do, dontcha?"

It was like this. In any pit in any casino the odds of hitting on a slot machine are determined by three things: the payback percentage for that machine, progressive jackpots and how you use them, and the probability of house mathematical advantage.

"Number one. They might say the payback is seventy-five to ninety-eight percent. That's not all denominations, and it's not all machines. It's an average. Some machines are looser than others. Watch the payback. That old broad on that quarter machine? She never leaves it. Makes seventy-five bucks a day and eats a

Tomorrow at Ten

I'll have a problem walking in. Beyond that,
I'm good, my heart a dull little apple learning
to swagger like an eggplant, just on the inside.
I'll be wavering on a street corner, caught
in someone else's tourist photo and framed
for a desk in Italy. Over there, the convenience
store has one toy, the Electronic Gorilla,
"Funny," but guaranteed to be bellicose again
and again, throw tiny chrome arms in the air.
What heart can it have but one the size
of a peanut, reserved for toys and dictators?
A man starts each day descending to the basement,
stands a full minute with eyes closed, his back
to a wax Jack the Ripper. With this, each day
is a bonus. Heaven has too much sparkly shit
each time he pictures it. It's all about being alive.
An explorer hollers into a squall, her placement
on a particular cliff edge the product of one
slightly melted compass, one dented heart.
A Belgian man is in a coma twenty-three years,
conscious without anyone knowing, dreaming
his own comfortable jungle, the click-clack
of a stretcher, his favourite metal insect on the wall.
We are what we repeatedly do, Aristotle said.
And people have been saying it ever since.

–Alex Boyd

steak dinner every night. Swear to God.

"Number two. Machines have got a maximum bid for a reason. Use it. A progressive jackpot only works if you're paying in full each spin. Don't cheap out if you're here to win.

"Number three. You keep playing the same machine when it's not hitting and you lower your possibility of cashing in. It's the house advantage. They're banking on you being rational and thinking that by simple probability the higher the number of attempts you made the more likely you are of hitting the jackpot. This ain't a fitty-fitty draw. No matter how many times you throw your hat in the ring, if that machine isn't bleeding, it isn't bleeding. If it doesn't give you something at least every three spins, get outta there."

Then he'd clap the newbie on the back and shuffle off to his Klondike Gold machine against the back wall of the pit with its six hundred dollar Daily Prospector's Jackpot and sip a beer until closing time.

If you called him Duane, you worked for the bank. If you called him the Odds, you didn't know him very well. If you called him Dodds, you knew his shoe size was fifteen and a half and had probably thrown his dirty boxers into your washing machine.

She slept with him the second night they spoke. He'd given her the talk on a Tuesday and on the following Thursday, after three hours of playing the maximum at a bank of Major Moolah machines and coming up empty-handed, she walked over to Dodds and leaned against the machine next to his.

"You're full of it, aren't you?" she said.

He didn't take his eyes off the reels, just nudged his coin bucket with his elbow to hear the satisfying jingle of hundreds of quarters.

"Yeah, well, I never see you cash out. You probably just bring that thing in with you full every day, don't you?"

He looked up and smiled.

"That would be a good way for a guy to make himself look flush, wouldn't it?"

"So you admit it? You got nothin' on these machines."

"Honey, I can tell you're going to think whatever you want to think and I'm thirsty as hell. I'll buy you a drink if you keep your voice down and don't go spreading the rumour that this machine ain't even plugged in."

They sat in the lounge across from the pit covering three cocktail tables with empty Canadian bottles. He talked about working as a security guard in the high-rise that went up in eighty-three over at Seventh Street and King. Nights tossing pencils into the drop ceiling like a frat boy, early mornings spent teetering on the security desk pulling them out.

"So, I guess that was the training you needed to become so good at sitting on your behind all day," she teased across the mouth of a bottle.

"Honey, I wouldn't go calling the kettle black if I was you. I mean, you're a pretty little thing, but I don't see you leading us all in one of those Tae Bo workouts around here."

"Hey, don't tempt me, Dodds. I might get your ass into one of those neon leotards yet."

"I think that'd be better suited to you, missy, but I'm open-minded, I have to admit."

By the time the waitress came to settle up she was hunched over him using a chunk of her ponytail to show him, in their reflection on a napkin dispenser, how dapper he'd look with a moustache.

They staggered out into the empty parking lot and sat on the hood of her car.

"That's how I know it's time to go home," Dodds muttered, tucking his hand nonchalantly up under the bottom hem of her sweater.

They fumbled into the back seat of her car, kept their shirts on, hers a doughnut around her neck, their pants around their knees in the cool autumn night.

She didn't see the kid for a long time. Thought she glimpsed him once running into the staff room across from the pit, but nothing substantial.

Dodds had been living with her for about a year. He'd moved a huge television he'd had in storage into her studio apartment and they spent most nights lying planked in front of the wood-encased behemoth watching reruns of *Banacek* and *The A-Team*. They kept a half-full coin bucket beside the bed for trips to the hallway vending machine during commercial breaks and consumed more Reese's Pieces than a six-year-old millionaire. She was beginning to feel queasy at the first glimpse of George Peppard.

On weekends the regulars were outnumbered at the casino by part-timers, as they called overdressed townsfolk who treated the casino as a date destination, a nightclub, and a pickup joint. She hated standing in the front grounds having a smoke surrounded by pin-thin tipsy twentysomethings, so she made periodic trips to her car, leaving Dodds to his Gold Rally and beer.

She sat watching the smoke from her ten o'clock cigarette fogging the rim of the half-cranked window and was jolted to attention by a slap on the hood and the sudden presence of the kid in the passenger seat.

"You got a smoke I could borrow?"

His voice was louder than was comfortable for the confined space and she winced.

"Sorry, what? Borrow? You mean you plan on giving it back to me afterward?"

"You know what I mean."

"Yeah, I know what you mean."

She held the pack out to him. He pushed in the cigarette lighter on the dashboard and snubbed the smoke against his knee while he waited for it to pop.

"So?" He looked at her. "What's happening?"

"Oh, you know, same old. We 'old-timers' don't get much excitement in our lives."

"Wow, you really don't let anything go, do you?"

"Hey, when you reach my age, you're lucky to remember anything at all. It's a blessing, really."

"Shut up. You're a brutal little old bat, aren't you?" He laughed.

As she reached to turn up the volume on the tape deck, she brushed his knee accidentally. He didn't pull away. Donovan's "Sunshine Superman" was just waning on the speakers.

"Now, this should be something you like. This is real psychedelic stuff."

He began nodding his head and smirking.

"I know this, you know. I know all the lyrics."

She scoffed.

"No, for real, I do. I used to listen to this shit when I was a kid. My dad had all these *Solid Gold* oldies tapes and we used to rock out to them."

He licked his lips, looked at her mock-longingly, and began to croon the first verse, matching the cheesy serpentine intonation perfectly.

He tipped his smoke in her direction at the end of "you're going to be mine" and winked. He snaked his head side to side to the beat. He had just had his hair cut. She could tell by the crisp black line at the base of his neck. She could almost feel the smoothness of that skin. He pointed at her to

join in and she belted it out. It was child's play, a song she'd been singing since the Grade 9 dance where she'd first been tongue-kissed by a boy she didn't know in the hallway outside the gym.

Suddenly she noticed he had stopped singing. She had her hand on his neck, two fingers tucked into the collar of his shirt, stroking the hard smoothness of his collar bone. It had made its way there via a caress of his cheek. It was too soft-looking, slightly goosebumped in the cool night with the windows open. She hadn't even thought about it. She had just wanted to touch him and she had.

He looked at her with his eyes only slightly narrowed for a moment and shrugged her hand away. She said nothing.

She expected him to leave, but he smoked and stayed, not looking at her. Finally he turned.

"How old are you, anyway?"

She laughed and shrugged. "Too old," she said.

She looked down at her lap and realized she had, out of habit, fastened her seat belt. A bulge of embarrassing fabric ballooned over her stomach making her look far heavier than she was.

She had never been one to be embarrassed. That night in the back seat, Dodds had whispered, "You don't hide it," looking down at her nakedness in the neon glow. But now she felt so much shame she couldn't help but cry. She turned toward the window and breathed deeply.

"It's not so bad," the kid said, facing the passenger-side window, speaking barely audibly.

The song ended and there was a moment of dead air, only the amplified wheel of the tape coming through the speakers.

"So, you living with the Odds? I see you guys together all the time," he said, his tone so changed you wouldn't know he'd just seen a middle-aged woman break down in front of him.

She managed an "Ah, yeah" without her voice cracking.

"He's been around a long time, eh? You know he lives off one jackpot he got down in Niagara Falls? Apparently he made, like, a couple-hundred grand in one score down there and he moved up here cause it's so cheap to live."

She nodded.

"I don't know if he's ever won a thing here, but he seems to be doing O.K."

"He eats Zoodles and toast for dinner."

She sniffed and looked toward the kid.

"And I don't mean if there's nothing else to eat in the house. I mean he asks for it."

The kid smiled and flicked his cigarette against the window of the car beside them. "Barracuda," by Heart, filled the car with its driving lead guitar. He pointed at the dash as he got out.

"Now, that's truly shit."

She smiled. "You've got no idea, kid."

"Think I do," he said. With a slap of the hood he was gone.

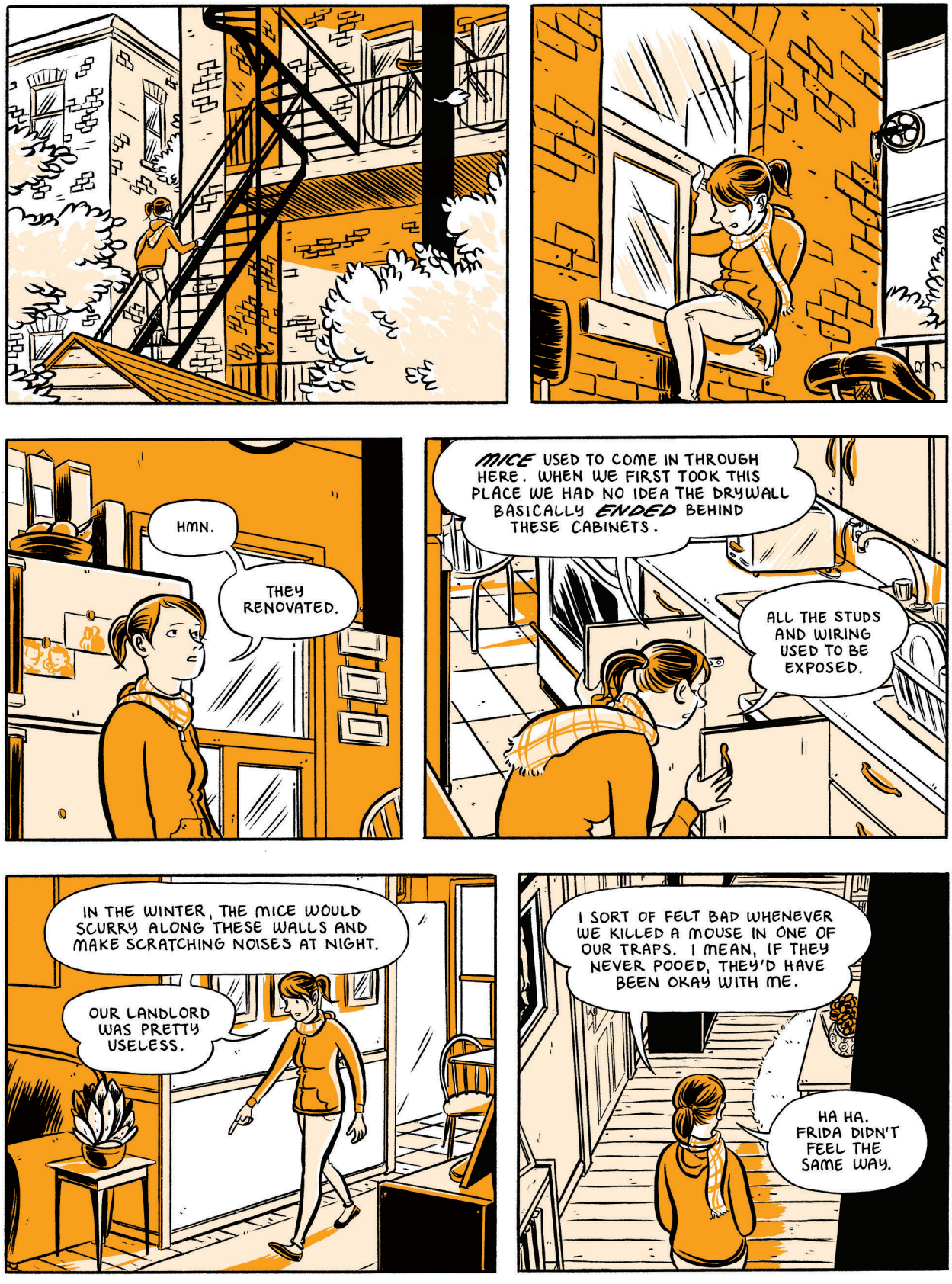
She leaned her head against the seat and breathed. She started the car.

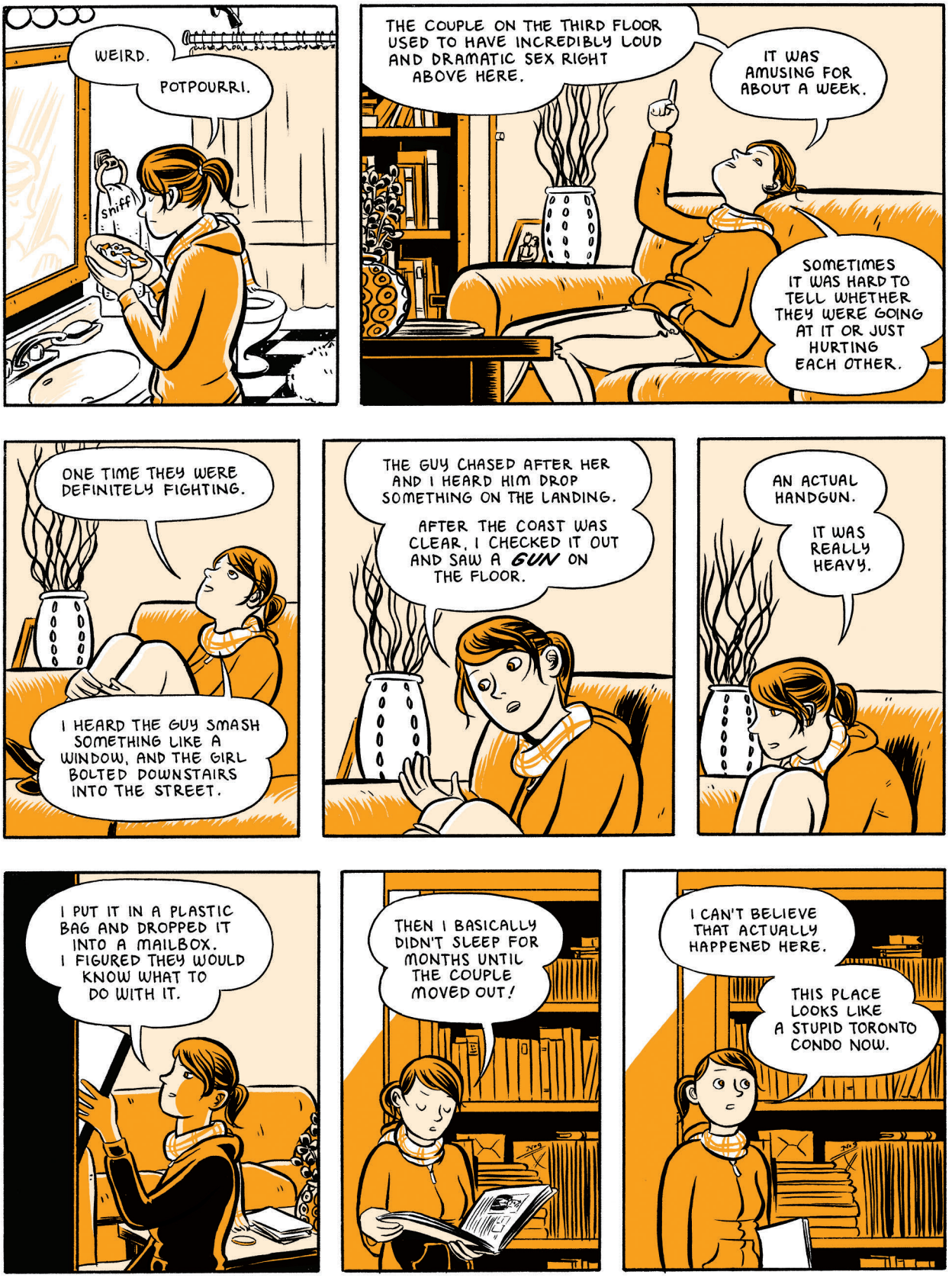
There was no fight with Dodds later that night when she told him she was leaving. She sat up until he got home, half his winnings in his pocket, half pissed away in the form of Bud and two shots of Jäger. He just loaded his TV into his truck and took it back to storage. She wondered where he slept that night. Whether he had a bed crammed into his All Canadian Self-Storage unit. Whether he had a bed waiting somewhere else. She never asked. Two days later, he checked her oil, made sure the brake fluid was topped up, and called ahead to a guy he knew at the casino down south who could put her on the V.I.P. list so that she'd at least have a suite to stay in until she found a place. He pulled two one hundred dollar bills from his wallet and pushed them into her purse saying, "No fighting, now." Then she left.

A sign whipped past her window telling her she had fifty-six kilometres left to go. The sun had set. The road had lost its sparkle in the orange highway light towering above her. She drove with the high not-quite-silent whir of the tape deck in the air to keep her company. She waited for it to change sides yet again, knowing exactly what she'd hear when it did.

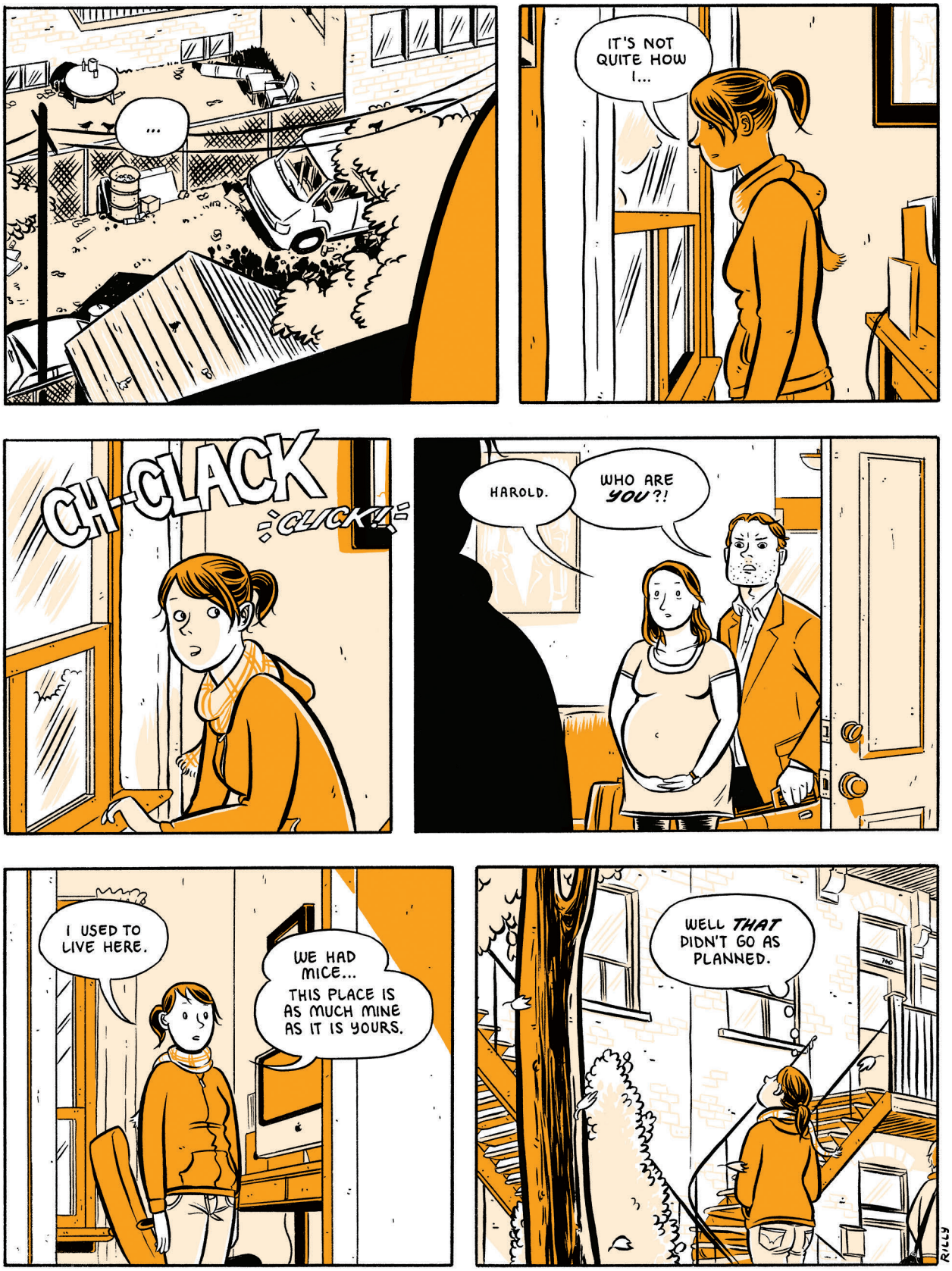
Kelly Ward lives in North Toronto. She is an editor and freelance writer whose fiction, poetry, and journalism have appeared in publications across Canada, including the Hamilton Spectator, Matrix, Word, SubTerrain, and Existere. She was the winner of the 2008 Lush Triumphant award for fiction.

Ex Montreal


HMN.
THEY RENOVATED.
MICE USED TO COME IN THROUGH HERE. WHEN WE FIRST TOOK THIS PLACE WE HAD NO IDEA THE DRYWALL BASICALLY ENDED BEHIND THESE CABINETS.
ALL THE STUDS AND WIRING USED TO BE EXPOSED.
IN THE WINTER, THE MICE WOULD SCURRY ALONG THESE WALLS AND MAKE SCRATCHING NOISES AT NIGHT.
OUR LANDLORD WAS PRETTY USELESS.
I SORT OF FELT BAD WHENEVER WE KILLED A MOUSE IN ONE OF OUR TRAPS. I MEAN, IF THEY NEVER POOED, THEY'D HAVE BEEN OKAY WITH ME.
HA HA. FRIDA DIDN'T FEEL THE SAME WAY.


WEIRD.
POTPOURRI.
sniff
THE COUPLE ON THE THIRD FLOOR USED TO HAVE INCREDIBLY LOUD AND DRAMATIC SEX RIGHT ABOVE HERE.
IT WAS AMUSING FOR ABOUT A WEEK.
SOMETIMES IT WAS HARD TO TELL WHETHER THEY WERE GOING AT IT OR JUST HURTING EACH OTHER.
ONE TIME THEY WERE DEFINITELY FIGHTING.
I HEARD THE GUY SMASH SOMETHING LIKE A WINDOW, AND THE GIRL BOLTED DOWNSTAIRS INTO THE STREET.
THE GUY CHASED AFTER HER AND I HEARD HIM DROP SOMETHING ON THE LANDING.
AFTER THE COAST WAS CLEAR, I CHECKED IT OUT AND SAW A GUN ON THE FLOOR.
AN ACTUAL HANDGUN.
IT WAS REALLY HEAVY.
I PUT IT IN A PLASTIC BAG AND DROPPED IT INTO A MAILBOX. I FIGURED THEY WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT.
THEN I BASICALLY DIDN'T SLEEP FOR MONTHS UNTIL THE COUPLE MOVED OUT!
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED HERE.
THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE A STUPID TORONTO CONDO NOW.


THIS IS WHERE I HAD "RELATIONS" WITH KARL FOR THE FIRST TIME.
WE WERE OUT AND DRANK WAY TOO MUCH, AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW, WE'RE BACK HERE UNDRESSING EACH OTHER.
HE MADE IT EASY FOR ME IN THE MORNING. WE WENT OUT FOR BREAKFAST AND IT WAS LIGHT. I REMEMBER SECRETLY BEING REALLY EXCITED ABOUT EVERYTHING.
IT FELT LIKE WE WERE INVINCIBLE. LIKE WE HAD A FORCE FIELD AROUND US.
THEN WE DATED AND HAD A YEAR OF PURE TORTURE AND JEALOUSY.
WELL, IT WASN'T ALL THAT BAD...
WHAT IS WITH THIS DUVET? IT'S LIKE A GODDAMN M.C. ESCHER PRINT.
I WONDER WHAT FRIDA'S ROOM LOOKS LIKE NOW.
OH.


...
IT'S NOT QUITE HOW I...
CH-CLACK
:CLICK!:
HAROLD.
WHO ARE YOU?!
I USED TO LIVE HERE.
WE HAD MICE... THIS PLACE IS AS MUCH MINE AS IT IS YOURS.
WELL THAT DIDN'T GO AS PLANNED.
RILLY

Our Many-Splendoured Humanity

BY JESSICA WESTHEAD

We've got Neil and Maxine over, and Neil and Maxine are not getting along, as per usual.

"That's funny," she says to him.

He frowns. "What's funny?"

"The label on that barbeque sauce."

The label on the barbeque sauce Neil is putting on his burger says, "TOO BOLD FOR YOUR WIFE." He looks at the label. "What's funny about it?"

"It says it's too bold for me."

He takes a bite of his burger, chews. "It is."

Maxine holds the bottle upside down over her meat and squeezes out a thick, red line. She fixes the top of her bun in place and looks at me. "I bet this is Deb's barbeque sauce, isn't it, Deb?"

"Oh, no." I throw up my hands. "Don't get me involved."

Marv just sits there, watching Maxine about to blow her head off with his barbeque sauce, which I never touch. I'm not one for hot things–except maybe for Marv, when we're both in the mood and the lighting is right, ha ha.

Maxine takes a bite, and we all watch her chew.

"You like that, Maxine?" Neil asks in a loud voice. He flaps his funny tie at her, which is Neil's trademark. This one's shaped like a pickle, of all things.

Maxine starts to sweat, and I go to the kitchen and get her some water.

"Gaaahhhh!" she says, and grabs the glass from me.

There's a knock on our door, hard enough to jerk our welcome mat forward a bit.

Marv squints over. "Now, who could that be?"

Neil and Maxine have a welcome mat outside their house that says, "FRIENDS WELCOME, RELATIVES BY APPOINTMENT." Neil bought it because he said it cracked him up. One time Maxine's mother came by and rang their bell. Neil was the only one home at the time, and he peeked out the window to see who it was. When he saw his mother-in-law outside, he waved at her and pointed to the mat, then he actually waited until she went away. Which kills me, because if Marv ever did that to *my* mother? Well, suffice it to say he would not be welcome after something like that.

Marv walks to our door and there's another knock, even harder this time. "O.K., O.K.," he says. It's our new neighbour, who recently moved in down the hall from us. We haven't really talked to him yet, but we've been meaning to introduce ourselves so here's our opportunity!

"Hey, um," he says, "I just moved in down the hall?" Then he mumbles his name, so I don't catch it.

"Nice to meet you," says Marv. "I'm Marv."

I walk over and stand next to him. "And I'm Deb. Welcome to the neighbourhood!"

Marv extends his hand, and his soft arm does an eely dance with our new neighbour's nicely muscled one before their palms connect in a sort of half-shake, half-slap. "What can we do for you, neighbour?"

"Um, yeah. I was wondering if you guys have any DVDs I can borrow?"

"DVDs, eh?" says Marv. "I think that can be arranged. Come on in."

Our new neighbour grins at us and strolls into our living room, and I am almost literally blinded by the whiteness of his teeth–he could be in a commercial, they're so dazzlingly white, like stepping outside on a sunny winter day.

We all smile back, but I notice that Maxine's smile is kind of lopsided, and I feel bad for not telling her about him earlier. But then I think I shouldn't feel bad, because whenever I've seen him in the hall he's always been very polite, and when he and some helpers were carrying expensive-looking stereo equipment into his apartment on the first of the month, they all seemed very friendly, and why should I always have to inform people, anyway?

The thing about Neil and Maxine, though, is that they're not quite as liberal-minded as me and Marv. They're our best friends and all, but you know how it goes when you and your friends have diverse opinions on certain issues–you have to agree to disagree. For instance, if a commercial for those poor starving African babies comes on and your friends roll their eyes and change the channel, you know that's wrong, but you don't necessarily say anything. You have to be content just knowing.

"You're doing me a real favour here," says our new neighbour. "I got my girl over with nothing to watch."

"How about watching each other?" says Neil.

"Right," says Maxine, "like you ever watch *me* anymore."

Neil scowls. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Our new neighbour starts going through Marv's video shelf. "Huh," he says, "you got that one. I heard that's a good one."

"What kinds of movies does your girl like?" says Neil.

He raps his knuckles on his leg. "Damn, I should've asked her that."

"Don't feel bad," says Maxine. "The most important thing is that you care."

Neil holds up the end of his pickle tie so it points in a straight line. "What's that one we watched last week, Marv? Give him that one, with the gangs."

"I was thinking more a romance," says our new neighbour.

MATTHEW DALEY

Maxine rolls her eyes. "Oh my God, Neil, you are the biggest idiot!"

"What?" he says. "I'm making conversation."

Don't get me wrong–we love Neil and Maxine. But when it comes to things like social justice and all that, there are questions that arise such as, What can the average person do? or, Can one person make a difference? Now, if you asked me and Marv those questions, we would say yes right away. But all I'm saying is, if you asked Neil and Maxine those same questions, you might get a different answer.

For instance, a few years ago for New Year's Eve, Marv and I volunteered at a soup kitchen downtown, which is something Neil and Maxine have never done. I served the tables and Marv was in charge of potatoes, and we had a ball. I went in there not knowing what to expect, and I'll admit I was slightly worried, safety-wise. But I'm telling you, every one of those homeless people I gave a plate to (with the exception of a certain rumpled gentleman who complained about portion size) was so well-mannered and so grateful that frankly I was overwhelmed by a love for our many-splendoured humanity. You can be sure that all of us went home that night feeling a little bit better about ourselves.

"I like your earrings," our new neighbour says to Maxine.

"Thank you." She blushes. "I made them myself."

Maxine is heavily into Fimo, which is jewellery you bake. Lately she's been doing desserts–her earrings tonight are two teensy blueberry pies.

"That's pretty cool," says our new neighbour. "I wish I was creative like that."

"Oh, everybody has creativity inside them," says Maxine, who, I'm relieved to see, is clearly warming up to him.

"Here." Marv hands our new neighbour a video. "This is one of Deb's."

"Right on." He looks around at our half-finished plates. "Oh, man–I'm interrupting your dinner. Sorry about that."

"No problem at all," says Marv, and I'm reminded yet again of the size of his heart. Which is very big.

Then Neil has to go and ruin everything by asking our new neighbour, "You ever tried this barbeque sauce? It's really hot, I bet you'd like it."

Maxine glares at him, and I want to hide somewhere, but thank goodness our new neighbour doesn't take offense. All he says is, "Nope. But if it's too hot for your wife, it's way too hot for me."

Maxine giggles and Neil is speechless, which is very out of character for Neil.

Marv and I wave goodbye to our new neighbour, who is now so much closer to being a friend than a stranger.

I have a bad day at work the next day because, as a reward for a project I did, my boss gives me another card. On the front is a photo of a snail on a skateboard. The inside reads, "CONGRATULATIONS–YOU'RE ON THE FAST TRACK TO SUCCESS!"

"Now, how do you think they found a skateboard small enough for a snail?" says my boss, Lee-Ann. "Imagine, somebody has the kind of job where they go out into the world and look for tiny little skateboards for snails, isn't that something?"

"They doctored the photo," I tell her. "That's what they do with photos now. The skateboard isn't really that small."

"You get it, right?"

"What do you mean, do I get it?" I say. "Is it a joke?"

As Louis Dudek, In Love

Umbrella held aloft like paper pulled
from a piñata, we trace the limits
of Marie-Reine-du-Monde and bull
inside. Bad luck: the basilica chaste
save for the confetti of our entrance,
the incline of a room within a room
inked-in in happenstance. By chance,
we've stumbled on our Waterloo:
elderly parishioners lulled to sleep,
pews like broken fingers on a working
hand. I take yours now, know your grip,
the clots that bulge like latticework,
confine the prize of blood's ascent.
See here? Your skin grows lean. *Exeunt.*

–Jim Johnstone

"Of course it's a joke. Because snails are usually slow, but it's on a skateboard so that means it's going fast!" Lee-Ann throws her head back and laughs, showing her teeth. Lee-Ann's teeth look like pylons around a bad accident.

"I don't think it's supposed to be a joke," I say. "A joke has a punchline. This has a photo and some words about the photo."

"Oh, you!" says Lee-Ann.

I close the card and the two pieces of flimsy cardboard make a sound like this: "whap."

"She's always giving me cards with backhanded compliments on them," I say to Marv over wine spritzers that night. Marv makes spritzers like nobody's business. "It's getting to be too much, I'm telling you."

He shrugs his round shoulders. "Maybe you're reading too much into them."

"No, Marv." I sip my drink. "That is not the situation here at all."

My Marv has the roundest shoulders of any man I've ever known. I tell him he's got ice-cream sundaes under his sleeves, his shoulders are so nice and round–and he says I'm the cherry on top, aw.

Knock, knock.

Marv looks at our door. "Who could that be?" He answers it and there's our new neighbour from down the hall again, with our video.

"Hi," he says to us. "I brought your DVD back."

"Did your girlfriend like it?" I ask him.

He nods, and grins. "She cried all over me."

"Glad to hear it." Marv takes the video and taps it on his leg in a thoughtful way. "She sounds like a special lady."

"She is special," says our new neighbour. "She's the best."

"How'd you meet her?" Marv asks, and I do a double take because Marv isn't usually interested in this sort of thing.

Our new neighbour half-closes his eyes. "We were at the arcade."

"Ah." Marv nods. "The arcade."

"Marv and I met on a blind date," I tell our new neighbour. "Actually, I was supposed to go out with his friend Joe, but Joe was sick that night so he sent Marv instead–isn't that a hoot?"

"Do you have nice handwriting?" he says to me.

"Pardon?"

"Because I wrote her this poem." Our new neighbour takes a few steps into our living room, and hands me a folded-up piece of paper and a card. On the front of the card are two champagne glasses, bending toward each other. "See that?" he says. "It's like they're kissing."

Marv leans in for a peek. "Huh, will you look at that."

"They doctored this photo," I say. "Glass can't really bend that way."

Our new neighbour shrugs. "I like how it looks."

The card is blank inside. I unfold the paper, and scribbled all over it are rhyming words like, "unite" and "appetite," "sunshine" and "super-fine," and "mirage" and "camouflage."

"That's my poem. I was hoping you could maybe copy it down into the card? Because ladies have better handwriting than guys? So it looks nice."

"Deb's handwriting is the best," says Marv. "Her grocery lists are as fancy as invitations from the queen."

"Thanks, Marv," I say, and I'm kind of blown away because I didn't think he noticed things like that.

Our new neighbour beams at me. "You don't mind?"

"Of course not," I say, and I close the card and it makes a sound like this: "whutt."

The next day at work I copy out the poem because who are we as human beings if we can't be neighbourly?

Then Lee-Ann sashays into my cubicle with a bag of St-Hubert, that French chicken with the rooster, and she has the sauce that comes with it and she's drinking the sauce right out of the container. "My husband's taking me out for our anniversary tonight," she says. "Mmm, this is good chicken sauce."

I cover up the card and the poem with one of my reports. "I prefer Swiss Chalet, myself."

"We have a coupon for the restaurant we're going to, but Ronnie said he might not even use it because it's our anniversary and we should splurge."

"That sounds decadent."

"It *is* decadent! That is exactly what it is." Lee-Ann smiles, and smacks her lips. "What are you and Marv doing tonight?"

"Oh," I say, "I don't know. It's not our anniversary or anything."

"Ronnie says we should treat every day like it's our anniversary. Because what if you die and you don't get another one?"

"I have to finish this project, Lee-Ann."

"Oh! How's it coming?" She reaches into her bag and digs around and pulls out a wing.

I shrug. "I'm doing my best."

"I know you are, Deb," she says, and pats me on the arm with her greasy hand. "I know you are."

"She's very patronizing," I tell Marv again over spritzers that night, after leftovers. "She has a real tone she uses with me."

"Maybe if you told her how you felt," he says.

"Do you really think it's that easy, Marv?"

Knock, knock.

Marv looks at me. "Did you do the card for him?"

"Yes, I did the card for him. Sheesh, you're getting as pushy as he is."

"Sh!" Marv's eyes are wide.

"Oh, for Pete's sake," I say, and I get up and answer the door.

Lo and behold, there is our new neighbour. "Hi," he says.

"Hello," I say.

He crosses his arms, uncrosses them, then lets them dangle at his sides. "So did you get a chance to–"

"Yes, yes." I hand him the card, with my neat poem in it–I threw away his messy piece of paper at work. "Here you go."

He opens it, and his face lights up like a neon sign on a very dark street. "Oh, wow. She is totally gonna freak over this!"

"I put extra Xs and Os at the bottom," I say, and I smile and try to catch Marv's eye, but he's looking at our new neighbour.

"Do you love her?" Marv asks him.

"What?" I say.

"I love her so much it hurts."

Marv nods. "That's what I thought."

"Oh, man." Our new neighbour glances around. "You're drinking wine. Am I interrupting a romantic moment here?"

"Well–," I say.

"Nah," says Marv. "They're spritzers–you want one?" He gets up and heads to the kitchen with our empty glasses.

"Yeah? Hey, that would be great!" Our new neighbour winks at me and steps inside. "You guys are too kind."

"Aw," I say.

"Here you go." Marv walks over with three spritzers and hands one to our neighbour. "Pull up a couch, ha!"

And I have to laugh because every so often Marv can be a real riot, in his own way.

"Look at that, a lime and everything!" says our new neighbour, still standing.

"Don't mention it." Marv sits next to me on the loveseat, and we both smile and wait for our new neighbour to sit down.

"Well," he says, "my girl's waiting so I better get going."

"Oh," I say.

"Oh," says Marv.

I look at Marv and he looks at me, and I say, "We didn't realize–"

"Gotta keep her entertained, you know?" Our new neighbour grins. "I was actually wondering if I could borrow another DVD for tonight."

Marv puffs out his cheeks, but then in true Marv fashion says, "Well, sure. Why not?"

"Great." Our new neighbour goes back to Marv's video shelf and grabs something. Then he says–and this is the kicker–"Do you think you could make a spritzer for my girl too?"

"For . . ." says Marv, and then, "Of course." And he goes to the kitchen and makes a spritzer for this girl, who we haven't even met.

"You guys are the best." He tucks our video under one arm, next to my poem, and takes the second spritzer.

"Don't mention it," Marv says again.

"You're gonna make a hero out of me, you know that?" Our new neighbour gives me another wink, and then he's gone.

Marv closes the door, and after a few seconds, he shakes his head and says, "Can you beat that, Deb?"

"No, Marv," I say. "No, you cannot."

"What are these?" Marv asks Maxine a few nights later, when we've got her and Neil over again.

"Cream horns," she says. "We got them from the Greek bakery down the street."

Neil waggles his eyebrows. "*I'll* give you a cream horn."

"Shut up, Neil," says Maxine. "You want to try one, Marv–they melt in your mouth. Those Greeks know pastry." She fondles one of the miniature cupcakes

Dreams of the Donkeys

Here is a picture of the younger donkey,
eyes downcast or canted in mimicry
of the slant shadows on the grass. Sun fiddles

through his fur, and everywhere he looks
is down, down where the trees kick
their spindly shanks into stories

about devils, about flaxen-maned
jennies asleep in the boughs,
waiting for tallish drinks of princely water

to wake them. Meanwhile, the older donkey is out
of the picture, fretting in more philosophical
pastures. Thirty-odd is too late

for happy endings and magic trees; he needs to know,
do grasses grow up or do they thrust in their roots,
and what do the humans dream? Let them hasten

to their deaths who know not the secret,
sensuous rewards of patience
and the beasts will gather to keen

at the clifftop, to bray for rebirth.
He, white and older than he can endure,
would like to be among them.

–Katia Grubisic

swinging from her earlobes.

Marv peers inside the white box, at the pile of greasy cones with their pale filling. "I don't know."

"Come on, give it a go, Marv," I say. "I'll split one with you."

"All right," he says, and takes a bite.

Neil polishes off a whole horn by himself, picks his teeth with his finger, then points that same finger at Marv. "So you just gave him another spritzer, is that right?"

Marv's mouth is full, so I say, "What else was he supposed to do?"

"He could've said no. This is your apartment, is it not?"

"It's your home," says Maxine.

"He still hasn't returned our glasses," I say. "They're part of a set."

Marv swallows, frowning. "He should definitely bring those glasses back."

I hand him a napkin to wipe some cream off his chin. "The thing is, if you give someone something and they don't say thank you, that's when I start feeling uncomfortable."

"Who wouldn't feel that way?" says Neil.

"What you're describing is a very normal reaction," says Maxine.

"It's taking advantage, is what it is." Marv balls up the napkin. "Plain and simple."

Then there's a knock on our door, with a definite banging quality to it.

"What kind of person knocks on someone else's door like that?" says Maxine.

"Guess who," I say.

"Should I answer it?" Marv says to me.

I shrug. "He can probably hear us in here."

Neil smoothes his tie, which is shaped like corn on the cob. "If it's him, you should probably say no to whatever he's asking."

Maxine nods. "Otherwise he'll keep coming back for more."

Marv gets up, and I can tell he's nervous because he forgets to put down his cream horn. He opens the door, and surprise, surprise–it's the new neighbour from down the hall. With his arm around some girl. "Hi there," says Marv.

"Hi," says the girl. "Here's your DVD back."

"Great." Marv takes it and nods at her with a stiff neck. "Thank you."

"It was a good one." She's got the card in her other hand, pressed against her leg.

The new neighbour peers inside at us, smiling. "Sorry for interrupting the party, but I wanted to–"

Maxine coughs, and Neil clears his throat loudly, and I say, "Marv," and Marv says, "No," shaking his head fast. "I don't think we have anything more for you here, I'm sorry." He squares his round shoulders, and the rest of us all sit up a little straighter.

The new neighbour stops smiling, and he tightens his grip on the girl and says, "Sure. I wanted to introduce my girl to you guys, but whatever, that's all right."

The girl frowns and tightens her grip on the card, which they haven't even thanked me for. "I thought you said they were nice," she says.

"They were." And he takes the card from her and flicks it onto the floor–how do you like that!–and the tip of it gets stuck under our welcome mat. Then the two of them turn and walk away.

Marv's shoulders fall, and he stands at the open door with our video in one hand and his half-eaten dessert in the other, looking at the empty hallway. He bends to put down the video and pick up the card, which as it turns out doesn't have champagne glasses on the cover–it's got flowers all over it. He flips it open and it doesn't make any sound at all.

"That's telling him, Marv," Neil says, and he pinches Maxine's thigh and she squeals like a teenager.

"Hey, Marv," I say, to snap him out of it. "Give me that goddamn cream horn."

Because he's just standing there, doing nothing as per usual, and it's killing me. ⊳

Jessica Westhead lives in Riverdale. Her fiction has appeared in the New Quarterly, Indiana Review, and Geist, and on Joyland.ca. She is the author of the novel Pulpy and Midge (Coach House, 2007), and her short-story collection, And Also Sharks, will be published by Cormorant in spring, 2011. She was short-listed for the 2009 CBC Literary Awards.

Comic Therapy

Dave Lapp revists a dark time with the collected publication of *Children of the Atom.*

BY PETER BIRKEMOE

Dave Lapp is an illustrator and comic artist. His first book, *Drop-In*, an autobiographical look at his time teaching cartooning to underprivileged children, was nominated for a Doug Wright Award and an Ignatz Award. He has also been contributing to this magazine since 2000, most notably via the full-page version of *People Around Here*. His strip *Children of the Atom* ran on a weekly basis in Vancouver's *Georgia Straight* from 1998 to 2003. His new book, *Children of the Atom* (Conundrum, 2010), collects this five-year run. He discussed the work recently with Peter Birkemoe, owner of the Beguiling comic shop.

Peter Birkemoe: I want to ask you first about the unique technical approach to this comic. Children of the Atom is very, very different from your previous book, Drop-In, or any of the other mini-comics that I've seen from you over the years, and you've told me your working approach was much different.

Dave Lapp: When I first created the strip, I was attending the University of Western Ontario, studying psychology. I worked on the student paper there, the *Gazette.* The cartoon I'd done prior to *Children of the Atom* was a gross, horrible, embarrassing thing, but I crafted it really well. I'm right-handed, and I penciled everything with my right hand and inked everything with my right hand. And after doing that for a couple of years, I had an urge to create something completely different. Around that time I began reading [Chester Brown's] *Ed the Happy Clown* and other alternative comics like *Raw,* and my best solution to doing something different was to write and draw the rough work with my left hand, and the finished work I would do with my right.

P.B.: What made you think using your left hand would produce as dramatic and interesting a result as it did?

D.L.: I probably flipped though [Betty Edwards'] *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* at the bookstore. But it dawned on me that my left hand has these certain capabilities that it has learned from the opposite hemisphere of my brain. I wanted to do something so foreign, so strange, that nobody would guess I drew it. People would come into the office and say, "Oh, that stupid cartoon, it's so weird." They kind of hated it, but were intrigued by it at the same time.

P.B.: Those strips are not reprinted in the book, but they're similar in character?

D.L.: They have the same kind of surreal world or philosophical curiosity, but I didn't know what I was really doing then. I had the merest gist of it.

P.B.: There's a gap between the strips done at Western and when the strips we see here began appearing in the Georgia Straight, in 1998. What happened during that gap?

D.L.: The gap . . . . I felt I had something really good with *Children of the Atom,* and I wanted to make sure I kept it out of OCAD [Lapp began attending the then-named Ontario College of Art in 1988]. Nothing against OCAD, but *Children of the Atom* is mine, and I didn't want to submit it as a project, or have people tinker with the concepts or ideas and help me develop it. I wanted to protect it.

P.B.: There's a considerable amount of emotional exploration, or soul-baring, in the strip. The concept of art therapy is pretty well accepted, but I want to discuss this idea of art therapy in a public forum. This is cathartic or therapeutic art, but it's done in a way so it's out there for all the world to see. Was that an important part of the project, or something you contemplated when you set out?

D.L.: I did not realize how intimate it would become. But I do know that the re-genesis of *Children of the Atom* was definitely caused by the termination of a long-term relationship, in which things just got worse, and worse, and worse.

P.B.: Well, relationship dynamics are kind of at the heart of the strip. We have two characters, Franklin-Boy and Jim-Jam Girl, who each have a very specific emotional profile. Was this a single relationship then that lasted from the beginning of these cartoons to the end of it? I mean, nine years is a pretty long time, and it seems that the creative genesis from beginning to end could all fit within that.

D.L.: The original strips at Western would have been around five years into the relationship, which was in 1988. When I was in my fourth year at OCAD, in 1992, that's when the breakup occurred. Not to be melodramatic, but I seriously underestimated the effect ending a nine-year relationship would have on me. As I graduated art school, whatever dreams and hopes I had of being with that person and having that life were gone. I did *Children of the Atom* because I decided to process it with those two little characters. It became a much bigger area of exploration, starting from the point where I had just assumed I knew everything about relationships, and my assumptions created a feeling of total control, and then when everything collapses you suddenly find out what you don't know. I decided to process everything through the comic strip because it was the only outlet that seemed true to me.

DAVE LAPP

P.B.: How did it end up at the Georgia Straight?

D.L.: Using my protectionist attitude, I drew maybe fifty or sixty strips to make sure I had it up and running the way I wanted, whether it was accepted or not. I certainly didn't consider it a graphic novel, or that I would do two hundred and forty of them, but I knew I was going to continue with them, with or without publication. I mailed it out to some papers, and the *Georgia Straight* accepted it and started printing it once a week, in 1998. It was in Vancouver, so I wouldn't even see the paper. It was out there and I was guessing that people read it. I just kept cranking them out.

P.B.: So, in terms of the need for an audience, there's an assumption of one there as you're doing the work, but there's not necessarily a guarantee. Was there any interaction at all, even with an editor, or the people you're sending it to? Was there ever any feedback?

D.L.: No. That was one of the things I thought was great–there was no particular commenting or critiquing or editing. I just sent them in as is, and they printed them as is. It seems unbelievable to me now.

P.B.: Did your relationship to the strip or the work change at all once you did start hearing from people?

D.L.: Things changed when I started publishing mini-comics. For four weeks, right around Christmas, I would have one sentence, about a millimetre high, beneath the cartoon, advertising my mini-comics. You know, send your name to my address, and I'll send you one for five bucks. People would order the comic, but some would include letters, and they were really personal, saying how this cartoon resonated, or they hung it on their locker, or they were going through this bad patch, which in terms of feedback is amazing. I still find it remarkable, because they were hand-written letters. Maybe it's because people don't really do that any more, but back then, just getting those handwritten letters–and they're buying the comic!–that was a major, major turning point, and very encouraging.

P.B.: You mentioned some influences that are more obvious on the surface in terms of design–Chester Brown's Ed the Happy Clown–and that affected your perception of what kind of comics you could do. Can you tell me what influences of yours you see most in Children of the Atom?

D.L.: Mark Beyer's *Amy and Jordan,* for sure. And the other one was Lynda Barry. She had *Ernie Pook's Comeek* running in *Now,* and even though she would have narratives, which all seemed kind of goofy on the surface, her drawing and writing styles were very deceptive. Some of the issues she was dealing with in the cartoon had remarkable emotional clout, and my response to it was, I like Mark Beyer's graphics and bleak world view, but I really like Lynda Barry's heart. She communicated warmth, emotion, and care, and had a subtext dealing with more difficult issues that she never made obvious.

P.B.: I guess the other similarity to Beyer is that where Lynda Barry's characters are very easily recognizable as real children, Beyer's Amy and Jordan are not quite as easily imagined as real people. Franklin-Boy and Jim-Jam Girl have very human personalities and characteristics, but there's no confusing them with actual people, or the landscape they inhabit with our world.

D.L.: Some of the things I did with *Children of the Atom* were definitely on a subconscious level, and by calling them "children" I felt more comfortable that a lot of the issues communicated as symbols or metaphors could be adult issues expressed in a childlike way. You would accept their language, you'd accept their naïveté, you'd accept their innocence, because they're kids.

P.B.: It's unusual for someone to choose a comic to work through emotional concepts or ideas and to work out individual emotions and interpersonal relationships on a reductive fundamental level–not that there aren't other comics that have real emotional resonance. Did that seem odd to you approaching it, or are comics simply your chosen medium.

D.L.: I think it's the chosen medium. While going through OCAD, one of the things I made sure to do was take all kinds of courses outside my program–fine arts, print-making, experimental arts, I wanted to see everything. My vague sense of what it meant to be an artist was just to be some kind of a commercial artist. I don't want to sound highfalutin, but I think I approach the comic more as a fine artist, and it really doesn't matter whether it's economically viable–you have your other job to support it.

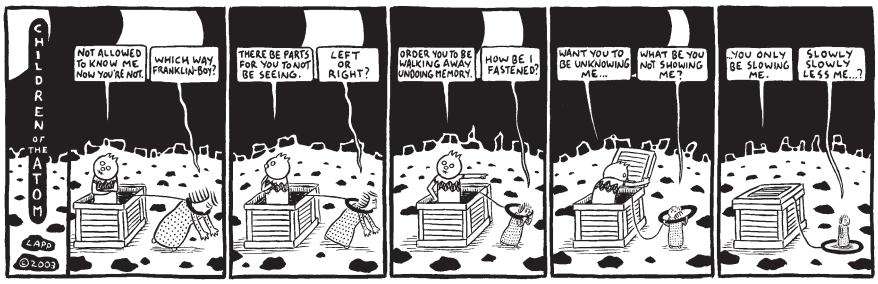
P.B.: You touched there on this not being particularly commercial for what we think of as a conventional strip–having a certain rhythm and presence of a punchline. You've created a comic strip that definitely doesn't deliver, and perhaps uses that expectation to an effect by not specifically being funny. It plays with people's expectations by not being something that reads simply, having a linguistic inversion to it. This is not an easy or immediate read. It feels like there's a meaning to these strips, but it is not consistently obvious. Can you talk a little bit about some of those barriers to the reader, particularly in the language?

D.L.: I had a pretty crystallized mindset when I entered OCAD. I was coming from university, where you have structure. Going to OCAD and learning about art was very different. There was a teacher named Ross Mendes who I was fortunate to have in my first year. One of the concepts he talked about was ambiguity. He said, "People are very uncomfortable with ambiguity. They want things clear: one plus one is two, A, B, C, D." And it fascinated me that art could be so ambiguous, without a clear end, or you have to interpret it, or there are multiple interpretations. So I wrote the language in the strip that way because I felt

some of the stuff I was dealing with was so agonizing and embarrassing and shameful and awkward, that if I told it straight, it would maybe seem maudlin or self-pitying. And then if people actually get it, and if they've had anything like that experience, maybe they'll have the same sense of calm or clarity. Just for a moment.

P.B.: These strips are meant to be processed and read as a weekly strip. This is not a graphic novel. To sit down and read these beginning to end, it's a little too much to process. But it's hard to put the book down and not sit there and read it page after page.

D.L.: I think it can be read through as a whole, because it's not supposed to be one long narrative. I had a sketchbook in which I had hundreds of these strips written, and then I would choose certain ones at random to make into final art. But I was very careful to make sure that all of them were properly sequenced in the book based on when I wrote them. My hope was that while going through this long, agonizing process of self-examination there just might be some strange revelatory undercurrent that I didn't even know I was expressing. Aspects of my life, my comics . . . it's approach and resolve, approach and resolve, approach and resolve, like going up stairs, slowing taking steps toward resolution.



P.B.: It doesn't seem like the characters are nearing that resolve, but as a reader you're nearing that resolve for what you're learning from their interaction. We don't see these characters grow in the way that it seems you are growing in your understanding in creating these strips, or that the reader might.

D.L.: Basically what was happening was, I was pretty seriously depressed, and after being with a woman for nine years then having to go out and date again, I had no idea what neuroses and insecurities I'd developed, and processing these issues while trying to date was disastrous. However, I really thought that by letting everything out, reasoning and talking with friends and family, processing with women, and drawing the cartoon, that somehow I could resolve everything on my own and not have to go into therapy. The cartoon was a way of externally manifesting these things into a concrete form. By doing it over and over like meditation, I would finally achieve some enlightenment. The catch is that at some point I realized I didn't. I resolved some things, but not enough, and the bad things were somehow closing in. And they were closing in in such a way that whatever resolve I thought I was achieving, there's another sort of insidious presence. And it's often with Franklin-Boy, that little shadow figure that comes out of him. And that insidious presence, I don't think that ever goes away. You know when there's a shift, and you shouldn't be this low, and you've gone a step lower, and you know you shouldn't be that step lower. That's when I needed to seek professional help.

P.B.: We talked a little bit about the two characters, but there are other recurring elements. One of them is the box, and the other, toward the end of the book, is the black ball.

D.L.: The ball was basically all I felt was dark: bad, difficult thoughts and actions that were bothering me quite a bit. Franklin-Boy is basically showing it to Jim-Jam Girl, basically just showing it off. And I had felt, that even prior to having therapy, I wasn't showing it off to anybody. When I was talking to friends and family, I was showing it to them, but putting it back. So that dark ball was when I was seeing a therapist and hoping to genuinely resolve something I was unable to with friends or family.

P.B.: To some extent, you are known now as the guy that did the Drop-In book, which is a very specific approach to cartooning, and one I think people can engage in without as much thought. You can pick up that book and know what it's about. In your work going forward, are you likely to revisit the style or approach of Children of the Atom, or is this something you're dropping?

D.L.: The next book I'm working on is not going to be strange like *Children of the Atom.* It's more conventional. To revisit *Children of the Atom,* I don't know if I could. There's two hundred and forty strips there, there's probably at least another two hundred to three hundred that are written that I never drew.

P.B.: Is the therapeutic quality for you the fact that you are, though the arts, having the courage to talk about the issue, or is it that you're spending a certain amount of time with the issue, and therefore having a better perception of it through this process?

D.L.: Yeah, when I go through and I look at those strips, there are certain ones where I will look at it and think I did it just right. I carefully codified it, I carefully drew it, and everything has the right emotion and the right body language, the darkness, the shadow, the symbol, and when I look at it it feels done. I feel like that issue–I might not remember directly what it relates to, but I know I've resolved it. Yet at the same time, regardless of the difficulty of the problem, you might just think, "Oh that looks nice." But for me, I'm aware of the agony that went into it. This many years later there is some calm and a quality of resolution. I think that anybody who does art, if you feel like you've really done it and you've hit your best level of self-expression, even if nobody else gets it, you'll get that feeling. If you really know that thing you're dealing with and you know exactly what's going on and exactly what it relates to, and exactly what you've released or processed, then that gives you that feeling of calm or clarity or certainty, and those are rare moments in life.

Peter Birkemoe lives in Christie-Ossington. He is the owner of the Beguiling comic shop, and one of the founding directors of the Toronto Comic Arts Festival.

Hey! It's For Horses

Saint John's equine population can't get a drop to drink.

BY CONAN TOBIAS

When Peter Josselyn moved back to his hometown of Saint John, New Brunswick, in 2009, he wanted to find an artistic outlet to keep him sane in a city he now found more sedate than what he'd become accustomed to after a decade in Toronto. "I wanted to, in some respects, be the sort of trouble that I felt needs to exist in this city," he says. Josselyn found inspiration in a historic horse trough/drinking fountain located in front of city hall, and the Saint John Society for the Preservation of Horse Troughs and Water Fountains was born.

Originally donated to the city in 1882, by the local chapter of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the trough has not been connected to running water since it was moved to its current location, in front of city hall, in the early nineteen-seventies. Today, it serves as a flower planter and unofficial garbage bin. If Josselyn has his way, the trough will someday flow again, for horses and humans alike. "The fountain really hasn't fallen into disrepair, it's just fallen into misuse," he says. "The city has banned bottled water, and presumably that ban means they've also banned bottled water for horses. So I think they should make water fountains and horse troughs available. They're multipurpose. They could be used by large dogs, or even rickshaw drivers–they're kind of like horses."

Although horses gave way to cars some time ago, and the Saint John Police Force has no mounted unit, the port city is not without its equine population. "There are horses that haul around American tourists in fake-looking historical trolleys," Josselyn says. "The estimated cruise ship traffic in the next five years is three hundred thousand tourists annually. What better to add to the historical experience than a horse just meandering over and *maybe* taking a drink of water–because, as we know, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. The horse may take a drink. We don't know."

To date, the society's campaign to restore this and the city's other remaining historical fountain has amounted to little more than a Facebook page, a Twitter feed, and a series of signs stuck into the S.P.C.A. fountain's flowerbed, featuring the slogan, "HEY–IT'S FOR HORSES!"

"The signs in the trough are to let people know this isn't a flower planter, and also to remind them that horses can't drink flowers," Josselyn says. "Our signs are quite popular. I notice that they keep getting stolen. Or potentially removed by people who think we're agitators."

Josselyn says he hopes to step up his campaign soon, possibly through the addition of a Web site. He might even contact a politician.

TOP AND RIGHT: PETER JOSSELYN. LEFT: VALENTINE AND SONS' PUBLISHING COMPANY LIMITED

Top: dating from 1890, a fountain donated to the town of Carleton (now Saint John's west side) by the Band of Mercy is the only other remaining trough in the city. Left: a fountain donated by the Polymorphian Society once sat in the city's Haymarket Square. Right: the S.P.C.A. fountain and trough in front of Saint John city hall.


1882
S.P.C.A.

Trial By Fire

A local artist uses traditional craftsmanship to create art with a moderne flair.

ART BY BLAIR McLEAN

Good art does more than just hang on a wall. It communicates something in the moment you encounter it, whether it's a painting or a statue or, in the case of Blair McLean's work, a carefully burned piece of wood depicting an alternate way of life. In McLean's vision, the utility of a wind turbine moves beyond being simply a form of renewable energy and asks you to stretch your imagination concerning the spaces in which we live. You notice how the favouring of functionality and space evoke a Bauhaus aesthetic, a nod to modernist architecture; how selective scarring transforms an elongated triangle into a looming conifer with what looks like the texture of bark, or how a darkly burned series of varied, oblong shapes renders a sun in the sky.

McLean has been burning one thing or another for twenty years. As a young artist, he worked in scarification, a process similar to cattle-branding that burns human skin with heated metal to create an artistic design–a much more permanent type of tattoo. Five years ago, when this hardcore form of body manipulation began to lose his attention, McLean–who also works with the more traditional brush and canvas–switched his medium to wood. "Wood doesn't complain that it hurts," he says. "I can design what I want without direction from silly people. I get to own the art."

McLean's work has an intricacy, a certain precision in the crisp lines blackened onto pieces of Canadian birch, his preferred canvas. His self-taught technique is a bastardized form of traditional pyrography, in which various sizes of blowtorch stand in for the heated metal wire of a child's wood-burning kit. Though some strokes are made freehand, the detail so prominent in his work is achieved with the help of two steel rulers set apart at various widths and angles, along with various pieces of shaped and stencil-cut metal. The sanded and lacquered result is as much craftsmanship as it is visual art.

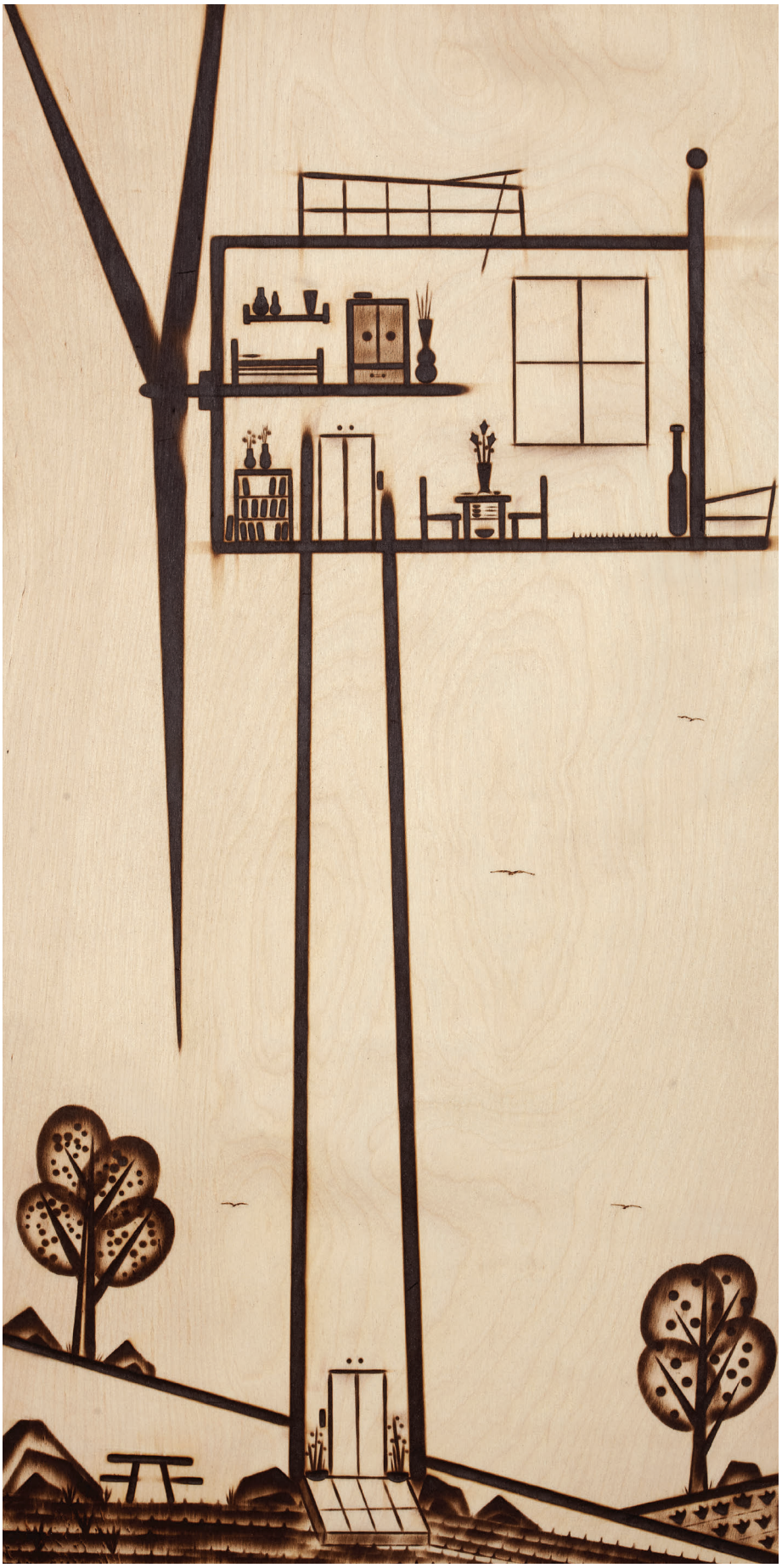
Pieces scattered throughout McLean's Mirvish Village studio depict a variety of settings, ranging in theme from the abstract to the architectural to the scenic: camping trailers, cross-section views of multi-level modernistic homes, a forest of majestic trees.

Unlike some artists, McLean doesn't subscribe to the esoteric attitude that makes some art unapproachable and obtuse. Looking at his work evokes instant curiosity. How does he do it? Can I touch it? Why is there a home inside a wind turbine? McLean chats freely about any one series or piece, relishing the questions and conversation each brings. "Don't you think that if they can put the space shuttle into space that we can live in wind turbines?" he asks. That's part of his work's appeal–it is not only visually captivating, it's also thoughtful in a way that doesn't ask why but rather, why not. Why not envision a future where the majesty of a wind turbine is put to even greater use? Why not learn by experiment instead of by rote? Why not make art out of fire?

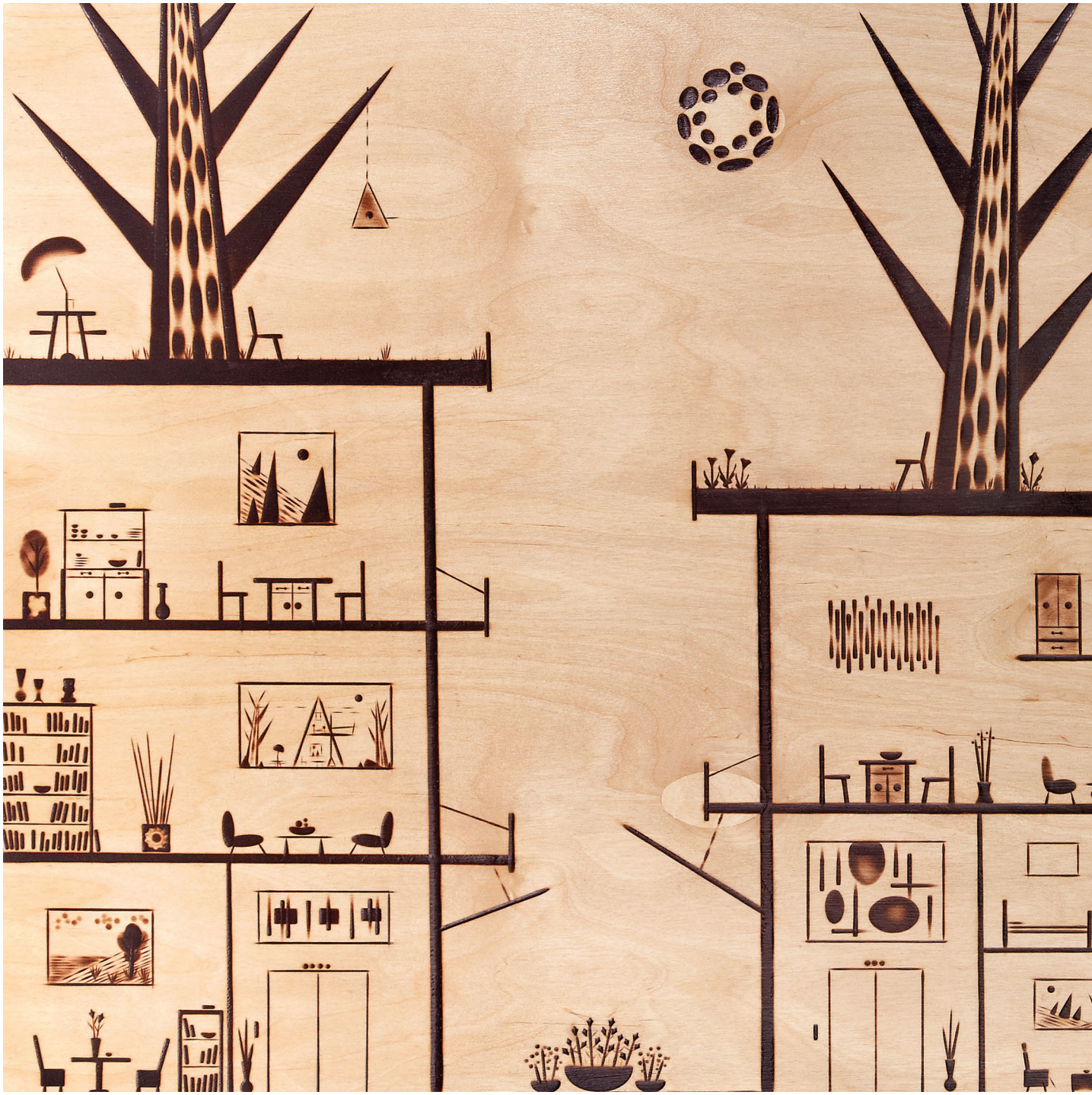
–Kasey Coholan

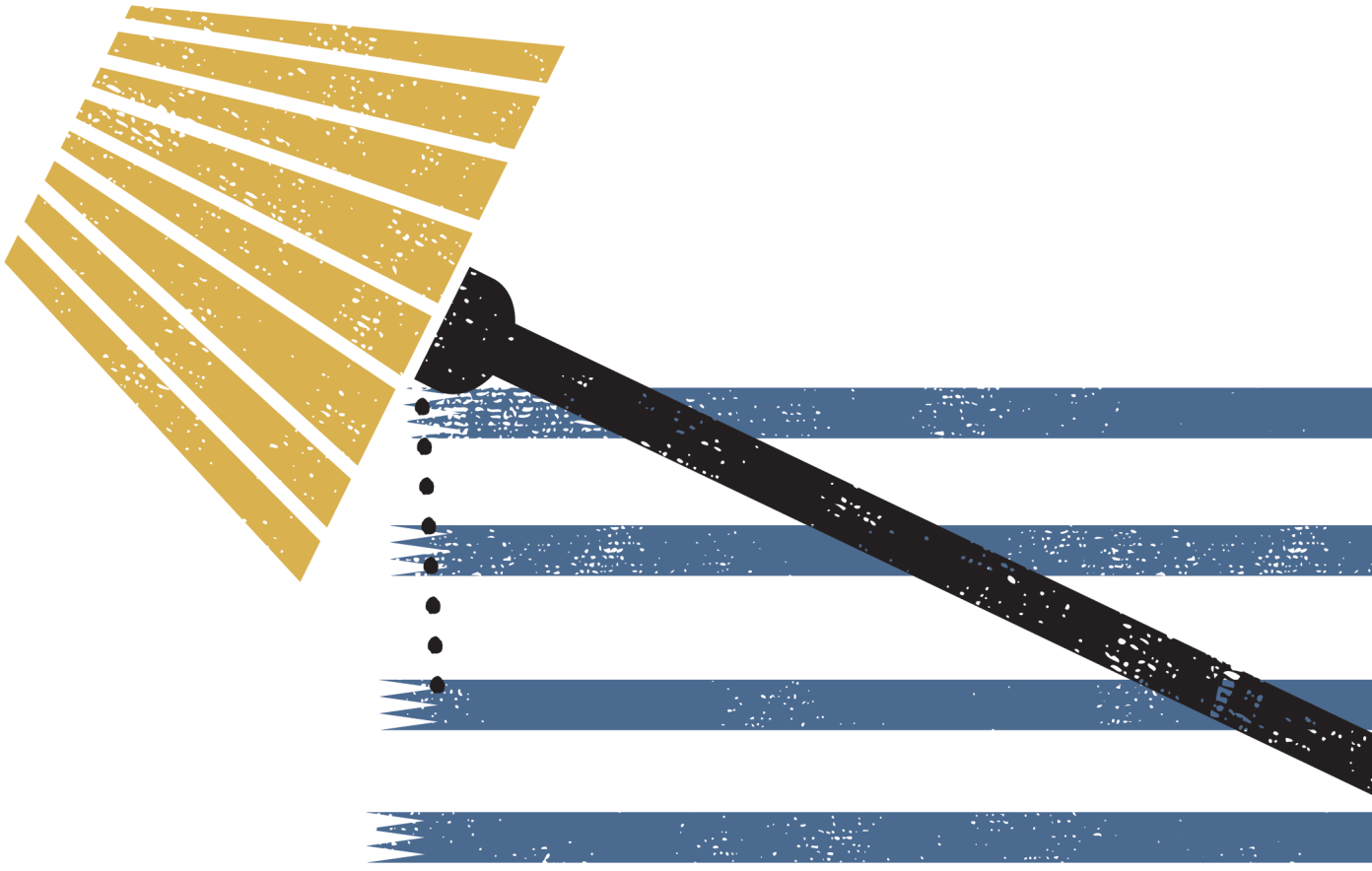
TRACY COX

Above: The Vacation! Opposite: The Vase Collectors House.



Opposite: The Park on the 5th Floor. Top: The Murder in the Forest. Above: The Power Source Condos, Starting at 3 Million. Next page: The Green Roof Community.





MATTHEW DALEY

Remember the story about the girl who's sitting in her room and a headless chicken bursts through the door and runs around and around, bumping into walls and overturning a floor lamp? I wrote that story.

Remember when that guy climbed to the top of a building, right up onto the roof, convinced he could fly, and then he lit a cigarette and thought for a while, and then he came walking back down the long narrow stairwell to the ground floor, convinced he was actually flying, even though he was just walking? My story. Every word.

And then the one about the guy who– He does something that involves looking up ten random people in a telephone book, and there's a woman named Maggie, and– The story is called "Ten Perfect Strangers." I don't remember anything more than that, but I wrote it, a very long time ago. It's in a box somewhere.

Amazing how I do this, how I just sit down and these ideas come flowing into my head like my head is the inside of a four-door car that has gone off the road and into a small body of water, and the water begins to gush into the car, which is my head.

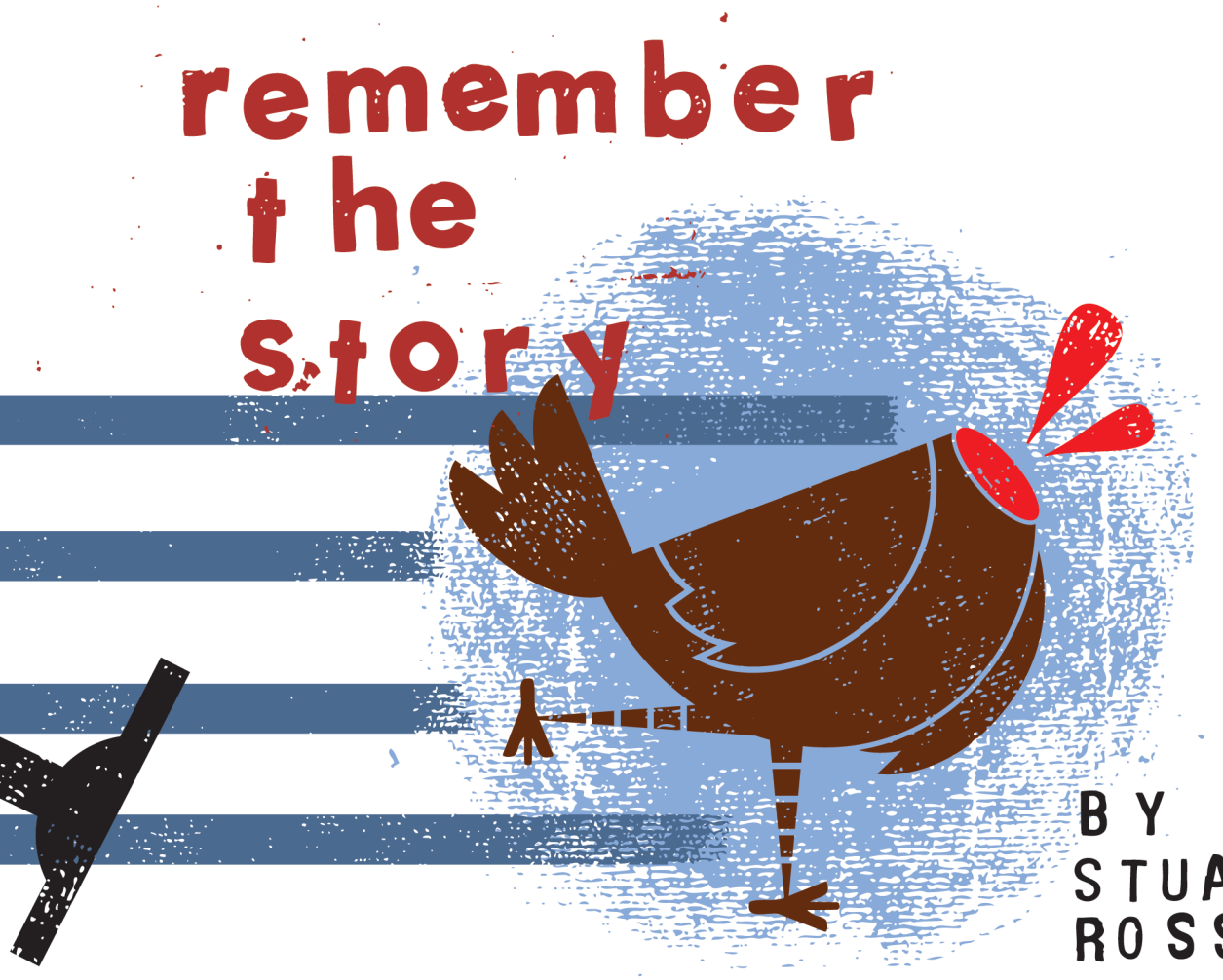
My friends come over to my place at all hours and they are amazed. They see my stories lying around on the coffee table, where I just happen to sometimes leave them. Many of my friends ask me where I get all my ideas, which is a fantastic question. I bring them cold beers and pretzels and we sit around and talk about me and my whole creative thing. Because when we were in school, none of us had a creative bone in our body. Our bodies. Somehow, though, I just got this gift. I didn't learn it. You can't *learn* it. You have to wait for it to just appear in your body one day, out of the blue, like a bolt of lightning. Also, because this gift of creativity, as I call it, is in your body, taking up room, you lose weight because you can't fit as much food inside you.

It's not that my friends don't also do remarkable things. For example, Andrew can fix a car like nobody's business. Thomas, whom we call Tom or Tomboy, is in charge of distribution and promotion of a new type of embalming fluid that's better than the old kind. And Pete, he can pick up a pencil, or borrow one from a waitress, and in about two minutes he can draw a picture that looks exactly like you on a serviette or a coaster. He's got a Web site that has everything on it.

When you are a writer, the whole world is at your door. That's what I've found. Or if not the whole world, then at least your friends. Every writer has his Andrew, Tom, and Pete. Or if it's a woman writer, her Andrea, Tamara, and Petra. (Isn't it amazing how many girls' names have an "a" at the end?) This is what we in the writing trade like to call our "audience," or our "market." It is they who consume or experience our art.

However, the life of a scribe is not one without bumps in the road, to use another metaphor. Or maybe it's the first

remember the story



BY STUART ROSS

metaphor. I can't remember if I already used one, but if I take the time to look back over what I've written, that would be time wasted when I could be putting down new words, giving my view of how the world is, straight from my heart. Although no young writer has ever come to me for advice—not yet anyway—if one did, that's what I would tell them or her: If you write straight from the heart, if you are true to yourself and true to your vision, and you include an S.A.S.E., you can't go wrong. What you wind up writing may not be everyone's cup of tea, but no one could say that you pulled the wool over their eyes.

So you are probably wondering where I *do* get my ideas for my stories. I always say you have to have "a nose for a story." You get so you can just sniff one out when you need to write something. I notice that many girls have cold noses, and I don't just mean women who I've dated. I mean any girl whose nose I've ever held, either formally or casually.

But there is an exception to this idea that girls have cold noses. Several years ago, when I was on the subway, going downtown to bring a manuscript to a publisher with whom I didn't have an appointment, I saw a lady sitting across from me. At first I thought she had just a bland, ordinary face. But when I leaned forward a bit, I saw that she didn't have a nose. Not even like Betty or Veronica from *Archie* comics, who at least have a little arrow point for a nose. There was no nose on the lady's face, although there was a kind of barren plain between her eyes and her mouth where a nose might have inhabited.

I found myself staring at her, which is what a writer must do to gather details. Everyone else on the subway car was doing their best not to look at her, or perhaps they just hadn't noticed her. I remembered a story by a Russian writer (was it Google?) about a man whose nose falls off. My suspicion is that this woman just never had a nose in the first place. Wondering how she breathed without nasal apparatus, I stood up and moved closer to her, pretending to look at the ad just above her head. I saw now that she had two small perforations where her nostrils would be if she had had a nose. Therefore she had the capacity to breathe, which was a relief. To cover for the fact that I was looking at her while pretending to read the ad, I said aloud, as if to myself, "'Earn a college degree at home!' Why, I'm going to look into that." The noseless woman disembarked at the next station.

And that brings me to speak now of my own disembarkance. Because a writer must always strive for clarity, I don't want to overload you with my insights. My achievement here has been modest, but not in vain. Go about your day. I have improved you. ☙

Stuart Ross divides his time between Toronto and Cobourg, Ontario. He was the writer-in-residence at Queen's University this fall. His novel, Snowball, Dragonfly, Jew, is due from ECW in spring, 2011.

Beautiful Anomaly

The century-old Sylvan has much to teach about city living.

BY LAUREN KIRSHNER

When Sheila Ziman first walked through the door of a ground-floor unit in the Sylvan Apartments, she thought, "I will never rent this place." The space was as gloomy as a mushroom garden, and she couldn't imagine her life fitting into the four small rooms already crammed with heavy furniture. "There was this flocked fleur-de-lys wallpaper, and everything was so dark and dull," she recalls today. Ziman, an English-as-a-second-language teacher, turned and walked out, resigned to continue her search for affordable rental housing in downtown Toronto. But something about the apartment stuck in her mind. A week later she returned, strode into the room, and threw open the curtains. Light made the space magic. From the porch she saw roses and a magnolia tree growing in a back garden. In the bathroom was a huge pedestal sink. A beautiful hardwood floor ran through the whole the apartment. "I saw that the rooms were absolutely huge and the ceilings were high," Ziman says. "And I thought, 'Yeah, I can make this work.'"

Nearly three decades later, the magnolia tree Ziman admired is still there, but the life of the century-old Sylvan is at an end. Its dark wood exterior doors are boarded up, graffiti sprayed across the particleboard like a hieroglyph eviction notice. The bricks are chipped, and the two-storey back porches are sinking into the ground. Lacy curtains still blow uncannily in an upstairs window. Yet, for all its eerie decay, the Sylvan doesn't look quite ready for the wrecking ball. Rolled-up newspapers lie in a doorway, waiting to be read. Stenciled graffiti of a kissing couple and a bird-chasing cat almost bring the shuttered building to life. And, in the summer, the back garden still overflows with hot pink and red roses.

I first discovered the Sylvan, located at 48 Havelock Street, at the corner of Sylvan Avenue, on a trip to the grocery store three years ago, shortly after moving to the Dufferin Grove neighbourhood. Having spent most of my life in the midtown Toronto of concrete apartment buildings–those elephant-grey tomes to Modernism that scrape the sky with their monotonous efficiency–I was captivated by the Sylvan's Grey Gardens quality, its Edwardian classicism. I set down my grocery bags and wondered how this huge, weirdly appealing ghost house was allowed to decay in the middle of the city. Who had lived here? I was struck by how the Sylvan seemed designed to draw people out of their private spaces, with balconies and porches built around the inviting back garden, which resembled a quaint public square. I decided to find out as much as I could about the Sylvan before it seemingly, inevitably, lamentably became a hole in the ground.

The story of the Sylvan is as much tied to the picturesque Dufferin Grove as it is to the family who owned it for nearly a hundred years. A middle-class neighbourhood in the city's downtown west end–bounded by College Street to the south and Bloor to the north, between Dufferin and Ossington–Dufferin Grove is a neighbourhood of semi-detached and single-family Victorian homes. While many still function as such, others have been subdivided into apartments populated by young professionals or students. Modest Japanese cars line driveways, and residents like to shop at the thriving farmers' market. In an area like this, the Sylvan, a low-occupancy rental building, is something of a beautiful anomaly.

It must have been just as anomalous in 1910, the year it was built. In the early twentieth century, Dufferin Grove had

ALFRED HOLDEN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the appearance of a gated village for the home-owning class. In vintage sepia-washed photos, women stroll with parasols through Dufferin Grove Park, and merchants sell bananas from carts. There is the impression of endless space, of genteel rural life come to the city. Dufferin Street, the Sylvan's closest main thoroughfare, was a barren, real-estate developer's dream.

Toronto first turned to multiple-resident housing in the period before the First World War. The Sylvan's architect, James A. Harvey, was noted as one of the first in the city to focus on designing low-rise apartment houses. Originally running west along Sylvan Avenue from Havelock, with its balustrade pillars and solid brown-brick exterior, the Sylvan was the epitome of comfortable, affordable Edwardian Toronto living. In 1927, an additional row of apartments was attached to the Sylvan, down Havelock Street, surrounding the backyard and creating the unique L-shaped building that exists today.

The Sylvan was developed by Harry Hutson, of the real-estate firm J. T. & H. Hutson. Hutson's building met the increasing demand for accessible housing with consideration and care. The two one-bedroom and fourteen two-bedroom units were approximately seven hundred and nine hundred square feet, respectively. Along with the pedestal sinks, each unit's bathroom was outfitted with either a cast-iron deep soaker or a claw-foot tub, and residents had access to a large basement storage space. A row of garages stretched across the back of the property, and most units led out to private balconies and porches overlooking the garden. Beautiful and spacious, the Sylvan offered working-class renters all the trimmings enjoyed by middle-class homeowners–a 1924 classified in the *Toronto Star* lists the price of a five-room unit at fifty dollars. By the time Ziman left her sunny two-bedroom apartment, in 2003, her rent was approximately seven hundred dollars a month. "People didn't leave the Sylvan unless they died or bought a house," she says.

City directories of the day suggest many of the Sylvan's early tenants were involved in service-based work: store clerks, assistant managers, and the like. Units were rented by a diverse population and included single women, the elderly, and bachelors. Clare McGarrigle, a teacher who rented a two-bedroom apartment on the second floor of the Sylvan throughout the nineties, recalls the day she was cleaning her fireplace and discovered a piece of paper behind the mantle. "It was this little card from someone called Leckie–his Air Force or flying club card. It was very special and I kept it," she says.

Graffiti at the shuttered 60 Havelock Street.

ALFRED HOLDEN

Management of the Sylvan was likely overseen by Arthur Hutson, Harry's brother, who lived one street east with his family in a foursquare home on the grand Rusholme Road. Upon Arthur's death, responsibility for the building fell to his daughter, Gwendoline, who eventually moved into the Sylvan's southernmost second-floor apartment.

"She preferred to be called Miss Hutson," McGarrigle says. Despite a name worthy of a debutante in a Henry James novel, Miss Hutson was no Pollyanna. Ziman remembers her as a down-to-earth woman whose greatest vice was a taste for pearls, gloves, and hats–a throwback to her genteel Rusholme Road upbringing. Hutson, who worked as a secretary as a young woman, remained unmarried into her old age, still living in the same apartment–a place that Ziman recalls as being "old and cracked, cluttered with knick-knacks" by the nineteen-nineties.

The Sylvan's rose garden was Hutson's pet project. In the summertime, when the backyard became a sunning spot for neighbourhood cats, she donned a long flowered housedress and a straw hat with a large brim and tended her flowers. The back garden was such a point of pride Hutson asked tenants not to hang laundry on Sundays. "She thought it looked bad for the building," says McGarrigle.

Even in her later years, Hutson refused to leave the Sylvan. Eventually, she stopped renting the apartment below her own, in the event she needed to house a caregiver on-site. But she never required the use of her nurse's quarters–Hutson died, in 2003, in hospital, at the age of ninety. Her funeral was held at the nearby St. Anne's Church, on Gladstone Avenue. Many of Hutson's mourners were tenants, who likely knew that her passing would end an era of community that had defined the Sylvan.

"I knew that the Sylvan would be torn down and someone would make a mint," Ziman says. "It always made me sad that [Miss Hutson] could have made money selling it and gone to live in some nice place. But that's not the kind of person she was."

Months after her death, Gwendoline Hutson's estate sold the Sylvan to J.D.C. Property Management. Although tenants realized some kind of change was possible, they were reassured by a city bylaw passed the previous year limiting developers from demolishing or replacing rental properties with condos. As the *Toronto Star* stated in an editorial on February 25, 2002, "It's not enough for Toronto to build some new affordable housing; council has to protect what stock it has."

But in October, 2004, despite not yet having applied to develop the property, J.D.C. served the Sylvan's tenants with

notices to evict. The building's heat was reportedly lowered throughout the winter, and the property was allowed to deteriorate. Some tenants say they were told by the property management to expect things to get worse. Many moved, and their units were boarded up. Although the city intervened and the evictions were withdrawn, the next year J.D.C. applied for an application to demolish the Sylvan and replace it with a forty-five-unit condominium townhouse with an underground parking garage. Neighbours voiced the usual concerns of increased density and building height, and tenants were offered replacement units at a still-to-be-developed J.D.C. site on Dovercourt Road, though obviously it would be nothing as luxurious as they had known at the Sylvan. But stopping the demolition of an affordable rental property and replacing it with private housing was the primary concern for the city, which rejected the proposal outright and, in 2006, designated the Sylvan a property of cultural heritage value, citing its "architectural significance as a well-designed early 20th century apartment."

For two years the Sylvan existed in purgatory, as J.D.C. appealed the city's decision and tenants continued to move out. More than half of the Sylvan's sixteen units were vacant by the time J.D.C.'s case reached the Ontario Municipal Board in 2007, by which time the city, in a closed-door meeting, had agreed to a revised proposal provided certain conditions were met, including the retention of the façade of the original 1910 portion of the building, and making ten rental units available at the Dovercourt site to existing tenants. In its decision, the O.M.B. agreed with the city, saying it did not feel that J.D.C.'s proposal was an overdevelopment, nor that the city's willingness to lose sixteen affordable rental units was out of line with its housing policies. With the O.M.B.'s decision, the ninety-seven-year-old Sylvan was lost.

Lynda Macdonald, a manager in the city's planning department who oversaw the Sylvan through the hearing process, says extenuating circumstances made it next to impossible to save the apartments. The building was in such a deteriorated state at the time of Miss Hutson's death that it did not qualify for designation under the highest category of protected historical properties. Furthermore, the fact that many of the tenants had moved out by 2005 nullified the argument that redevelopment was displacing real people, not just vacant units. "We generally don't like to preserve just a wall. The part of the façade that will be preserved will be the most recognizable and decorative part of the building," Macdonald says. "Was the resolution ideal? No. But can we live with this? Yes."

Dan McIntyre, the former program co-ordinator for outreach and organization with Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, says the case of the Sylvan Apartments is a prime example of how the city failed to maintain affordable housing for its population when the market failed to do so. "Of all the cases I've seen over the last ten years, this one saddens me the most," he says. "[This is] planning gone wrong and affordable housing issues being subjugated to the wishes of the developer."

J.D.C. can not redevelop the Sylvan site until displacement housing for the Sylvan's tenants is completed. The developer says construction of the Dovercourt building has been stalled by the current economic climate, and city representatives says they do not know when development will begin. (A J.D.C. representative did not return calls to comment on this story.) Meanwhile, the Sylvan remains vacant.

Miss Hutson's roses continue to bloom in 2010.

LAUREN KIRSHNER

In the end, the Sylvan is less a ghost story than a relic from an era when renting didn't have to be a compromise. The building gave working people amenities usually associated with home ownership. It was a place where people lived well even if they weren't well off–an idyll that likely will never again be possible for the average renter in downtown Toronto.

I returned to the Sylvan's garden this summer. It was a steamy July afternoon, so bright that the roses shimmered like Kool-Aid. As I walked in the prickly grass, I felt wistful. It's easy to imagine life here: Miss Hutson in her flowered housedress, a woman owner in a city of men, her sleeves rolled up for work. Housewives with clothespins in their mouths hanging laundry. A clothesline of history stretching one hundred years.

Having walked the perimeter of the garden, I stopped, like Romeo, below one of the weathered balconies. Although I wasn't bearing a soliloquy, or even a Dollarama birthday card, I did bring what I believe old buildings, with their crumbliness, their unloved rooms, their low rates of return, need from us most–imagination. Only with imagination can places such as the Sylvan transform from cobwebbed capsules of history to viable opportunities. This is especially true in Toronto, where more than sixty thousand people sit on a waiting list for affordable housing while the Sylvan's sixteen units remain empty. Only with imagination can we find creative ways of renewing buildings like the Sylvan, so they can continue to speak of history–and provide a future. "People didn't leave the Sylvan unless they died or bought a house," I recall Sheila Ziman telling me, and now I can see why. There is a sense of peace here. In fact, it feels like a home.

Lauren Kirshner lives in Dufferin Grove. She recently was named Toronto's best emerging author by Now. Her debut novel, Where We Have to Go (M. & S., 2009) was short-listed for the 2010 Toronto Book Award.

Atikokan is for Lovers

BY AMY JONES

I met him six days ago, at a bar on Queen Street. His band had just finished playing a gig at some other bar down the street. They were from Fredericton, touring across Canada in a Kia Sedona with a roof rack. He told me his name was Pete Mars. I told him that sounded made up.

"It's real," he said.

We were sitting on high stools at the bar in front of the draft taps, watching the bartender pour beer after beer. This wasn't exactly an olive-Martini kind of place. The bartender's name was Liam, and he was wearing black eyeliner, which he always puts on in the staff room at the bar because the people in his apartment building are all old and he doesn't want to scare them. I know this because Liam is my best friend. And I've seen the old people.

"It's my real name," Pete Mars was saying. "Well, sort of. It was originally Marsh, but when my grandfather emigrated from England, in 1872, they made a mistake on the papers. They left off the 'h.'"

One of Pete's bandmates pushed in between us.

"Are you actually trying to pick up chicks by talking about your grandfather?" he asked.

He grinned at me and put his hand on my leg. He was sexy in a drummer kind of way, but I liked Pete–he had skinny arms but wide shoulders that looked like they could carry you on them for miles. I wondered if he ever grabbed the mic stand when he was singing.

"I was just telling him I liked his name," I said, shaking the drummer's hand off my leg. "Makes for a cool band name. The Pete Mars Rover."

"It's Pete Mars Attacks!" the drummer said. "What have you been telling people?"

"We agreed on the Pete Mars Rover," Pete said. He leaned over his pint, which was very full, and slurped back some of the head without lifting it from the bar. "After you shot down the Pete Mars Exploration."

"That sounds like a fucking *ambient* jazz group," the drummer said.

My drink was empty. I was trying to get Liam's attention, but he was ignoring me. He doesn't like it when I flirt with strangers in front of him, even though we haven't slept together since high school. He says it makes him feel emasculated. I told him, "Liam, my mother has more balls than you do." I can say stuff like that because my mother doesn't live here.

A couple of girls pressed up against the bar beside Pete. One of them had positioned herself sideways so her breast was brushing against his shoulder. This was tactical, I decided. The laws of war applied at a bar, especially when musicians were involved. I've always had a thing for musicians. I think it's because I work at a library.

"How about Pete Mars Bar?" I asked.

The girl wasn't looking at me, but I could tell she was listening. I laughed and bumped my shoulder against the drummer's arm so she would know that I was part of their conversation. I was like one of the guys, but sexier.

"You know, Mars? Mars bar? The one with all the nuts?"

"Gimme a break, gimme a break . . . ," the drummer started singing.

"That was Kit Kat, douche bag," Pete said. "Mars was . . . wait, what was Mars?"

I could see Liam twitching behind the bar. He didn't want to give me the satisfaction of getting involved in the conversation, but he couldn't help himself.

"A Mars bar a day, at work, rest and play," he sang. He tapped his fingers against the bar then turned, pretending to wipe something down.

"Oh, yeah! Thanks, man," said Pete. He was smiling. We were having fun. "Can you imagine eating a Mars bar every single day?"

I laughed. What I wanted to say was, "You'd probably be almost as fat as that girl behind you!" in a voice loud enough for her to hear but soft enough so that Pete would think I was trying to be quiet. And we'd have this moment where we'd realize we had shared this funny secret, then maybe one day in the future when we were having that conversation that you always have six months into the relationship, where you talk about the first time you met and what you thought of each other and how nervous and excited you were, Pete would say, "Remember that fat girl at the bar who kept rubbing her tits on my arm? I just kept wishing it was you," and I'd say, "Oh, Pete!" and swat his shoulder, and then he'd press me up against the wall with his hands all over me like he was making sure he'd never forget what I felt like. But I didn't say it because when I looked over, the girl was gone, and before I could think of anything else to say, the drummer had moved in and they were talking about something that didn't include me.

"We should totally cover that at the next show," the drummer was saying.

He had blocked Pete from my line of vision now, as far into his space as a boy is allowed to be in the space of another boy.

"Yeah," Pete said. He seemed very enthusiastic. "We could do a medley of chocolate bar jingles. Do you remember the Snickers one?"

They were full-on ignoring me now. I didn't like it.

"People think Sari sounds like a fake name, too," I said, reaching around the drummer to touch Pete's arm. "But I

MATTHEW DALEY

never fake anything. Just so you know."

The drummer stared at my hand on Pete's arm for a minute, then turned.

"Pete's going home with a chick who thinks that a Mars bar has nuts in it," I heard him say as he walked away.

The next morning, Pete told me he was really bad at keeping in touch.

"I mean, I haven't been on Facebook in so long someone actually put up a memorial page for me."

"Very funny."

I licked his ear.

"No, seriously. The Internet thinks I'm dead."

"Facebook's for high-school kids, anyway," I said.

I didn't tell him I actually had four hundred and twenty-seven Facebook friends, mostly people from old jobs who I didn't even talk to any more, but on whose walls I still faithfully posted birthday messages, even though I could never come up with anything better to say than "Happy Birthday!!" I always used two exclamation points so they would know I actually cared.

"Grown-ups just text each other."

They were leaving Toronto that afternoon and driving west. They had shows in Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay, and then they were stopping in Atikokan to visit the bassist's brother, who owned a hardware store and had a camp on a lake where they were going to spend a few days fishing.

"Where the hell is Atikokan?" I asked.

It sounded northern, isolated. I pictured rutted roads, low-flying bush planes, bears. People in ugly coats.

"Dunno," said Pete. "On a lake, I guess."

"Isn't it going to be cold?"

"It's April in Canada," Pete said. "It's cold everywhere."

I had this picture in my head of us going for breakfast in the morning then taking a walk around Trinity Bellwoods and making up stories about all the people we saw–what they did for a living, when was the last time they had sex–maybe meeting up with the guys for a smoke in the back of the Sedona before they hit the road. Maybe Pete trying to convince me to come with them while we said goodbye on the sidewalk, our hands tangled up together, our eyes squinting in the sun. And me laughing, saying something mysterious and interesting

Surrender Dorothy

"The only mistake I ever did, the only harm I ever did, was sing 'Over the Rainbow.'" –Judy Garland to Barbara Walters, 1967

"Two minutes," someone calls, and the makeup artist rubs a calloused thumb into the apples of my cheeks. The meticulous imprint of her thumb, engrained in black powder, now smudges my skin, like a fingerprint on a doorknob, like a criminal's mistake.

Isn't it funny someone does this for a living? It's funny that I let her touch me at all. That I don't think twice about such intrusions–the constant plucking and pruning, because, well, you get so used to things. Now, if it were Sid, well, that'd be a different story altogether. A different touch.

Most likely, no one will notice the smudging's effect, how one touch could so fearlessly embellish a face–its hard lines. And it's hardness I've got, standing behind the curtain, ready for my encore, still dressed the tramp, *because there's no time to change,*

Judy, they tell me, *you're live.* And don't I know it–a real live wire. So, I've got to sing *that* song to a television audience, no longer *that* girl, but a mother. And a wife. A headline. An American tragedy. And so many other things I haven't become yet.

So, the lyrics now run through my head, like answers. And, you know, I'll never know what rainbow it was I was expected to get over, because I was never like *her*–I didn't grow up that way. Long before she walked that road, I lived like a gypsy child, skipping across America's stages for pennies. *Don't you know each cloud contains pennies from heaven. . . . Pennies . . .* to give my mother. Ah, but that's another song.

I glance back at the vanity mirror, contemplate my mouth, if it should be redder. Ha–a tramp with a perfectly red mouth, and a perfectly arranged mess of rags. I suppose I was always your tramp, worked to the bone. And I suppose, all these years later, I am still your tramp, still singing for my supper, still singing the same words, out of a still perfect and red mouth.

I think about this as I stand in the wings. I think about never singing that song again. That this might very well be it. The last goddamn time. And it's like I'm getting off a decades-long train ride, having finally arrived, somewhere, like the end, the final surrender.

–Adrienne Weiss

about why I couldn't go, but that maybe I'd see him around sometime, if he was lucky. And then he'd think about me all the way to Atikokan, wondering whether he actually would, and then one day, when he had almost stopped thinking about me (almost, but not quite), there I'd be, emerging from the shadows of some seedy northern bar, the way he'd thought he'd seen me do every night since he'd left me, so much so that he wouldn't be quite sure it was me at first, with the lights in his face and the smoke and the noise.

I had that picture in my head, but then it was raining. And the guitarist wanted them to go check out some vintage sound equipment some guy was selling in Kensington. And Pete had to go.

"I'll call you," he said, as he tied his shoes, one eye out my apartment window watching for the Sedona to pick him up. Then he laughed. "That sounds so lame," he said. Tilted my head up to kiss me, his hand balled in a little fist under my chin.

"It's O.K.," I said. "I believe you, like . . . sixty-forty." I thought that was a cute thing to say.

That was six days ago.

For six days I tried to distract myself. It's not like I don't have anything else going on in my life. Liam shakes his head, like he's seen this happen before. He doesn't know anything.

We're in Liam's apartment. He is cooking dinner for three. One is Liam, two is me, three is the old man who lives on the floor below him. Every day at 5 p.m., the old man, whose name is Dom, takes a TV tray up one floor and sets it up in front of one of the benches outside the elevators and just sits there. He has been doing this since before Liam moved into the building. He also used to bring his dinner with him on a china plate covered in tinfoil, but that stopped a few months ago. Now Liam brings him his dinner.

"Bernice says Dom's wife died a long time ago," Liam told me once. "After that, he couldn't eat alone in the apartment. Not even on the same floor."

"That's so romantic," I said, although I wondered why Bernice didn't feed him herself. Old people should stick together.

Dinner is rice and salad and Swedish meatballs that Liam bought at Ikea when he went there last week to order new shelves for the kitchen at the bar. He had been so excited that out of everyone else he could have sent, the manager had sent him on the errand, even though it turned out the real reason was because Liam was the only one with a car. The rice is just Minute Rice, but Liam has chopped apples and walnuts for the salad, which he says Dom will just pick out and leave on the side because they are too hard for him to chew. The Swedish meatballs are in thick gravy, and I try not to picture it dribbling down Dom's chin.

"Maybe there's just no cellphone reception up there," I say to Liam as we walk down the hallway.

"It's northwestern Ontario, Sari, not outer space," Liam says.

We reach the elevators. Dom isn't there yet. Liam checks his watch. He looks worried.

"Dom's never late," he says.

"Maybe there's something wrong with *my* phone."

I pull the phone out of my pocket and flip it open. It looks the same as it always does: "SARI'S PHONE" suspended across a picture of me at Canada's Wonderland, posing with the guy who played Joey Jeremiah on *Degrassi Junior High.* We had met in the line for the Behemoth. We were both by ourselves. I made a security guard take the picture for me, and afterwards we stood around awkwardly for another forty-five minutes. I had thought maybe we would get to go on together but as soon as we got to the front he went and stood with another guy who was by himself, and I ended up riding alone. He looked a lot older in person than I thought he would, although I guess I was just remembering him from when I was a kid.

"I don't even know which apartment he lives in," Liam says. "I can't even go down to check."

I put my phone back in my pocket.

"Does anyone else know?" I ask.

Liam shrugs. We both stand there, side by side, staring at the elevator doors, trying not to think about it. A piece of walnut falls from the plate Liam is holding and onto the hallway carpet. Then the elevator doors open and there's Dom, with his white hair and liver spots, his TV tray under his arm.

The next day on my lunch break I take my phone to the Telus store at the Dufferin Mall. I wait in line behind a young mother in too-tight jeans and Ugg boots, whose baby had somehow managed to make a two-hour call to North Carolina. The woman's jeans have very elaborate gold emblems stitched over the back pockets, and I stare at them while the guy behind the counter tries to explain to her that she will still be held responsible for the long-distance charges.

"But I don't even *know* anyone in North Carolina!" she says. "Why wouldn't they just hang up?"

"I don't know why," the guy says. He is blond and very tall and looks like the type of guy who gets really annoyed if you ask him if he plays basketball. "Maybe you should call and ask them."

The girl shifts her weight, and the gold emblems twinkle.

"Would I have to pay for that call, too?"

"Well, yes."

"Are you kidding me? Why would some random-ass person talk to Jayden on the phone for two goddamned hours? He only knows, like, ten words!"

I can see this is going to take a while, so I wander through the store. I look at some phones that are all much nicer than mine, and at a display for BlackBerrys, which apparently now come in pink. I am not really the type of person who is into getting new gadgets, but those pink BlackBerrys make me think that I might want one. At the back of the store there

Rubble

Here, whence all have departed or will do,
here airless,[1] each dead child coiled,
a white serpent, one at each little pitcher
of milk, now empty.[2] Coldest of winds
have blown this hair, and mesh of seaweed
snarled these miniatures of hands;[3] bones piled up
like coal, animal bones shaped like golf balls,[4]
how they disturb the brown silence of a field
lying ecstatic with itself.[5] Frosted eyes
there were that lifted altars;[6] the head,
charred, featureless–the unknown mean–
is thrust from the waters like a flame,[7]
like the sea in the moon's blood ray.[8]
Behold what quiet settles on the world.[9]

–Paul Vermeersch

1. From Dream Song No. 19, by John Berryman. First published in 1959. Berryman committed suicide on January 7, 1972.
2. From the poem "Edge," by Sylvia Plath. Poem dated February 5, 1963. Plath committed suicide on February 11, 1963.
3. From the poem "For My Daughter," by Weldon Kees. First published in 1943. Kees committed suicide, it is generally assumed, on July 18, 1955.
4. From the poem "Loving the Killer," by Anne Sexton. First published in 1969. Sexton committed suicide on October 4, 1974.
5. From the poem "The Ravens," by Georg Trakl. First published in 1913. Trakl committed suicide on November 3, 1914.
6. From the poem "At Melville's Tomb," by Hart Crane. First published in 1926. Crane committed suicide on April 27, 1932.
7. From the poem "Burning the Letters," by Randall Jarrell. First published in 1945. Jarrell committed suicide, it is widely suspected, on October 14, 1965.
8. From the poem "Corona," by Paul Celan. First published in 1952. Celan committed suicide on April 20, 1970.
9. From the untitled poem that begins "Past one o'clock...," by Vladimir Mayakovsky, found among his papers after his death and containing lines also paraphrased in his suicide note. Mayakovsky committed suicide on April 14, 1930.

is a computer set up, which I guess is there so people can look at the Telus Web site while all the guys behind the counter are busy. Since no one is around, I bring up a search engine and type in "Atikokan." I click on the first link and it tells me Atikokan is less than three hours from Thunder Bay and is the canoeing capital of Canada. Underneath there are little tabs that tell me who Atikokan is for: Atikokan is for boaters, Atikokan is for anglers, Atikokan is for golfers, Atikokan is for lovers. I click on the last tab, but it looks like the link is broken. Suddenly, a Telus guy is standing next to me.

"These computers are really for setting up your accounts and stuff," he says.

It is a different guy from the one behind the counter, who is still arguing with Jayden's mom. This guy is short and dark and speaks with an accent, Spanish maybe or Portuguese, and wears a gold chain around his neck. I smile at him even though he is really not my type. Then I think about Pete and it knocks the wind out of me for a second.

"Sorry," I say. I grab on to the table.

The Telus guy takes a step back.

"Are you O.K.?"

"Yeah," I say. I reach for my pocket, but my for some reason I just can't find the opening. "It's . . . my phone. There's something wrong with my phone."

I finally jam my hand into my pocket and pull the phone out so fast it flies across the room.

The Telus guy jogs over and picks it up.

"I think it's O.K.," he says.

He flips it open. I wonder if he recognizes Joey Jeremiah, but he doesn't say anything about it.

"What's the problem?"

"It hasn't been ringing," I say. "I mean . . . I haven't been getting any calls."

The Telus guy stares at me. His hand goes up to play with the chain around his neck. At the front of the store I can hear Jayden start to cry. "Shut up!" his mom yells. "You're the reason we're here in the first place!"

"Never mind," I say, grabbing my phone from him. "Never mind. It's nothing."

I tell Liam we are going to Atikokan. "It's the canoeing capital of Canada," I say.

"I hate boats," Liam says.

Today he is making pork chops and apple sauce. I wonder why everything he cooks for Dom has to involve some kind of sauce.

"You know I've hated boats ever since my dad made me take that stupid water safety class."

I have heard about the water safety class, about how none of the other kids would be Liam's partner for the mouth-to-mouth lesson, how he had to do it with the teacher. I find it hard to believe that this still bothers him.

"Whatever," I say. "There's lots of other things you can do there."

I hand him a stack of pages I printed off the Web at work. I know Liam likes things to be on paper. The Lovers tab was still broken, but I printed out Boaters, Anglers, Golfers, Antiquers, Hikers, Birdwatchers and History Buffs. One of these has to appeal to Liam. I'm thinking Birdwatchers.

"History buffs?" He stares at the page. "That's a pretty specific demographic, don't you think?"

"Lots of people like history," I say. "It's the second most popular section of the library."

This is a lie. The second most popular section of the library is the kids' section. The most popular is the magazines.

Liam puts down the pages. "Sari . . ." he says.

"It'll be so fun," I say. "We'll have this awesome road trip, just you and me, some really good Sari and Liam bonding time. And then once we get there, maybe Pete will teach us how to fish. Maybe we won't even have to go in a boat. Or you can stay back on shore, go birdwatching with the drummer. He's really nice, you'd totally like him. He said the funniest thing, at the bar–"

"Sari."

Liam takes my hands. I pull them away, hard.

"What, Liam?"

He closes his eyes.

"Nothing," he says. "I'll just go pack."

Later, I'm sleeping in the back seat of the car when Liam shakes me awake.

"Sari. Sari," he says. "Fucking wake up, will you? Jesus Christ. I just saw a U.F.O."

I sit up and rub my hand over my face. I have a feeling we haven't travelled very far. I'm guessing we're on the shoulder somewhere, probably somewhere very rural, but it's too dark for me to see anything. It's darker outside than any darkness I've ever seen before.

"Can you turn on the lights?" I ask.

"No," Liam says. Even in the dark I can see his eyes are all lit up, shining. "Then you won't be able to see."

We both get out of the car and I follow Liam along the shoulder. We're next to a field, but I can't tell what is growing in it. Straight ahead I can see a yellow light belonging to a house. It's probably only a mile or so off, but it seems very far away.

"Look!" Liam says.

It's a cloudy night, no stars, no moon, but I see what he is pointing at: a row of about five lights, slightly curved, moving slowly across the sky. They blink on and off, one by one and in a random sequence. For some reason it makes me think of playing a piano. That was something I used to know how to do.

"Did you ever take piano lessons, Liam?" I ask. I'm still half-asleep. Then it occurs to me that this is something I should already know about him, and I am immediately sorry I asked. But he's not paying attention. He's locked in on the lights in the sky. I wonder what percentage of him actually believes he is looking at a U.F.O.–how much of him is up in the sky with those lights and how much of him is down here on the ground with the world. My guess would be about sixty-forty.

Amy Jones lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She is a graduate of the University of British Columbia's M.F.A. program in creative writing. She was the winner of the 2006 CBC Literary Award for short story. Her first collection, What Boys Like (Biblioasis, 2009), won the 2008–2009 Metcalf-Rooke Award and was shortlisted for the 2010 ReLit Award.

THE MISCELLANY

The Production Notes

• This past summer and fall, *Taddle Creek* undertook an eight-city North American tour to celebrate its first-ever Out-of-Towner issue. Although there were a few bumps along the way (*Taddle Creek* can only apologize so many times, Portland!), the magazine had a wonderful time meeting a tiny percentage of its small audience. The cartoonist Jason Kieffer was the tour's most-travelled participant, flying all the way from Toronto to Saint John, New Brunswick. While in the Maritimes, Jason became enamoured with the donair, a local-ish delicacy usually resembling a gyro, but also taking many other unfortunate forms. Jason's newfound obsession inspired his series of spot illustrations seen throughout this issue. Due to the donair's . . . unusual taste, the magazine has not fact-checked these illustrations for accuracy.

• Of the three most recent works of fiction Stuart Ross has contributed to the magazine, "Remember the Story," found elsewhere in this number, is the second to reference *Archie* comics, specifically the characters Betty and Veronica. *Taddle Creek* fact-keepers will also want to note that, as of his contribution in this issue, Stu once again ties Chris Chambers as the magazine's most frequent contributor.

• Beginning this issue, *Taddle Creek* will begin capitalizing the word "Martini," giving this proper noun the respect it rightfully deserves.

• *Taddle Creek's* Twitter feed reached the one thousand follower level as this issue was in production. Despite the dubiousness of that achievement, *Taddle Creek* must admit Twitter did prove useful during the editing of the summer number when the magazine decided to seek out late-night opinions on the proper way to spell the vocal emanations of a chicken. *Taddle Creek* thanks all those who helped it arrive at "bock-bock-bock."

• *Taddle Creek* will no longer be running paragraph-long recommendations of books published by its contributors, mainly because the magazine was finding it too hard to come up with amusing things to say about collections of poetry.

The Books

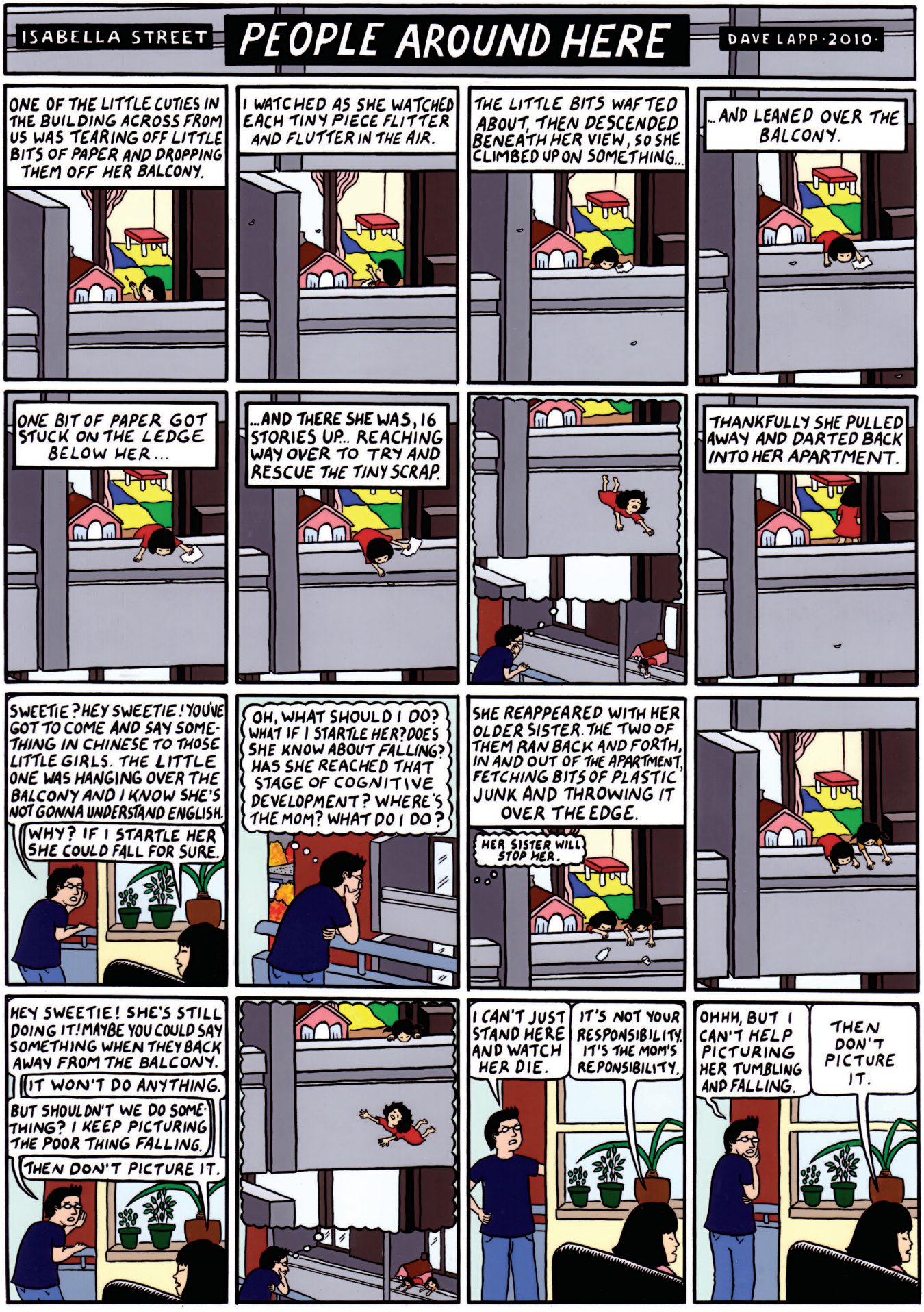
Two books *Taddle Creek* neglected to mention last issue came to the magazine's attention at this spring's Toronto Comic Arts Festival. Jim Munroe teams up with the illustrator Shannon Gerard for *Sword of My Mouth* (No Media Kings/IDW, $15.99), a quasi-sequel to 2007's *Therefore Repent!,* and the collage artist Sonja Ahlers finally returns with a new collection, *The Selves,* and a new publisher (Drawn & Quarterly, $20.95).

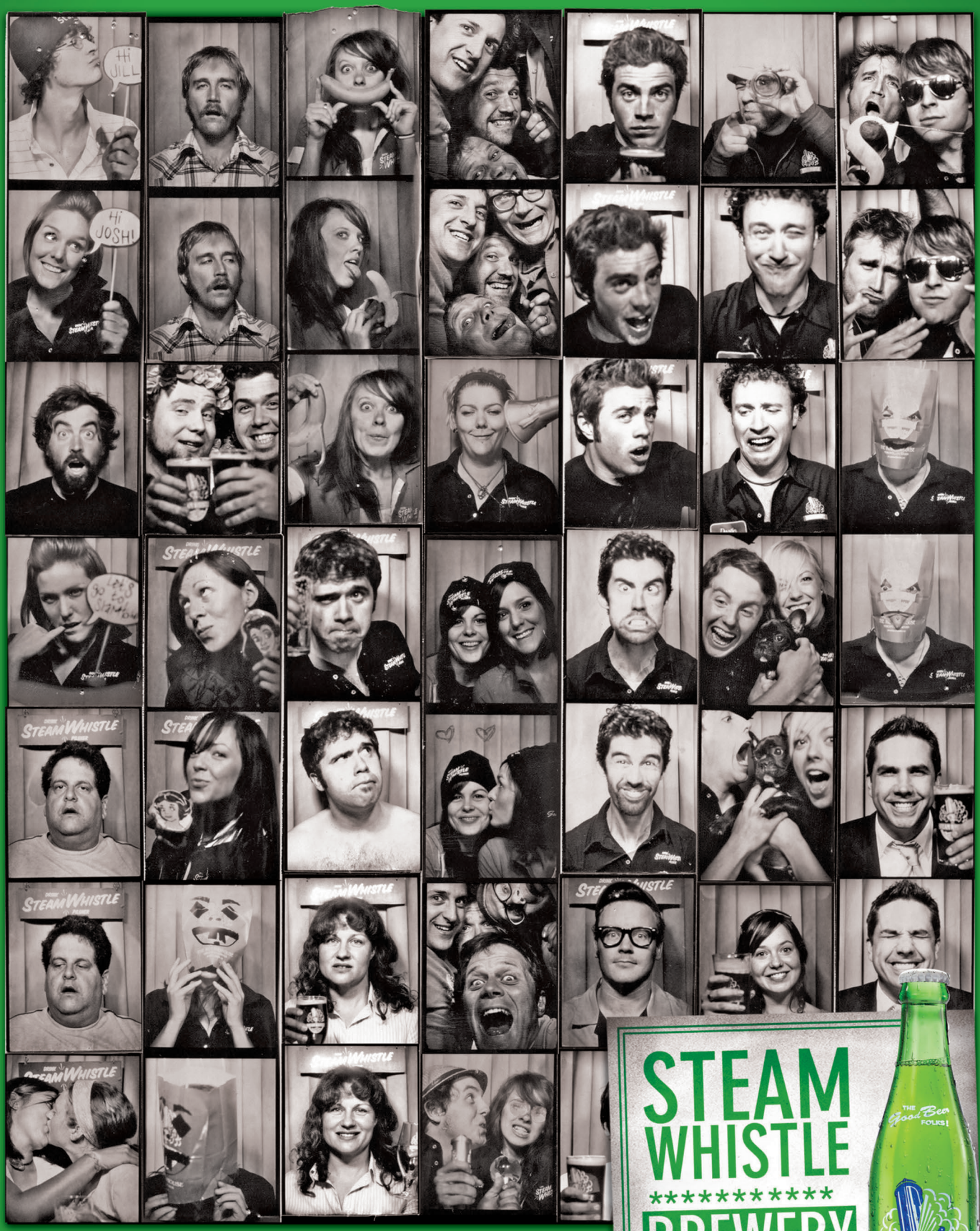
More recently, Camilla Gibb's novel *The Beauty of Humanity Movement* (Doubleday, $32.95) sports one of the most appealing book covers *Taddle Creek* has seen in some time. Catherine Graham and Gary Barwin are both back with new poetry collections, *Winterkill* (Insomniac, $11.95) and *The Porcupinity of the Stars* (Coach House, $16.95), respectively. Michelle Berry follows up her recent book of short stories in record time with *This Book Will Not Save Your Life* (Enfield & Wizenty, $29.95), her first novel since 2005. Those with Sheila Heti crushes will be excited to know the front cover of her new book, *How Should a Person Be?* (Anansi, $29.95), features a duotoned photo of the author. Evie Christie makes the jump to fiction from poetry with her debut novel, *The Bourgeois Empire* (ECW, $18.95). And Tony Burgess releases two new books to scare and delight: *Ravenna Gets* (Anvil, $18) and *People Live Still in Cashtown Corners* (ChiZine, $17.50).

Finally, a big congratulations to Ian Phillips, proprietor of *Taddle Creek's* favourite tiny press, Pas de Chance, on twenty-five years of publishing the most beautiful, most interesting, most noteworthy handmade books around. Pas de Chance celebrated on October 7th, at Naco, in Toronto, with the launch of three new chapbooks by the one-time *Taddle Creek* Out-of-Towner Elissa Joy, and yet another bizarre *objet d'art* collaboration with Derek McCormack, containing the chapbook *The Count.* It's only nineteen pages of text, but that's nearly a full-sized book for Derek.

The Corrections

In the Gallery article "Tragic Hero," in the summer, 2010, issue, a photo caption written by Conan Tobias stated that the roof of the Saint John City Market resembles the inverted keel of a ship. Although that is the locally accepted lore, apparently there is some controversy surrounding this theory, depending on how one defines "resembles." Reportedly the work of unemployed ship engineers, the roof is indeed flat and, to an expert, most likely does not look that much like a ship's keel. To others, it may. *Taddle Creek* regrets the uncertainty.


ISABELLA STREET
PEOPLE AROUND HERE
DAVE LAPP · 2010 ·
ONE OF THE LITTLE CUTIES IN THE BUILDING ACROSS FROM US WAS TEARING OFF LITTLE BITS OF PAPER AND DROPPING THEM OFF HER BALCONY.
I WATCHED AS SHE WATCHED EACH TINY PIECE FLITTER AND FLUTTER IN THE AIR.
THE LITTLE BITS WAFTED ABOUT, THEN DESCENDED BENEATH HER VIEW, SO SHE CLIMBED UP ON SOMETHING...
...AND LEANED OVER THE BALCONY.
ONE BIT OF PAPER GOT STUCK ON THE LEDGE BELOW HER...
...AND THERE SHE WAS, 16 STORIES UP... REACHING WAY OVER TO TRY AND RESCUE THE TINY SCRAP.
THANKFULLY SHE PULLED AWAY AND DARTED BACK INTO HER APARTMENT.
SWEETIE? HEY SWEETIE! YOU'VE GOT TO COME AND SAY SOMETHING IN CHINESE TO THOSE LITTLE GIRLS. THE LITTLE ONE WAS HANGING OVER THE BALCONY AND I KNOW SHE'S NOT GONNA UNDERSTAND ENGLISH.
WHY? IF I STARTLE HER SHE COULD FALL FOR SURE.
OH, WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHAT IF I STARTLE HER? DOES SHE KNOW ABOUT FALLING? HAS SHE REACHED THAT STAGE OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT? WHERE'S THE MOM? WHAT DO I DO?
SHE REAPPEARED WITH HER OLDER SISTER. THE TWO OF THEM RAN BACK AND FORTH, IN AND OUT OF THE APARTMENT, FETCHING BITS OF PLASTIC JUNK AND THROWING IT OVER THE EDGE.
HER SISTER WILL STOP HER.
HEY SWEETIE! SHE'S STILL DOING IT! MAYBE YOU COULD SAY SOMETHING WHEN THEY BACK AWAY FROM THE BALCONY.
IT WON'T DO ANYTHING.
BUT SHOULDN'T WE DO SOMETHING? I KEEP PICTURING THE POOR THING FALLING.
THEN DON'T PICTURE IT.
I CAN'T JUST STAND HERE AND WATCH HER DIE.
IT'S NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. IT'S THE MOM'S REPONSIBILITY.
OHHH, BUT I CAN'T HELP PICTURING HER TUMBLING AND FALLING.
THEN DON'T PICTURE IT.



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