

SCAB

ISSUE #3

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EDITOR'S NOTE

SCAB's been here for a whole year now. A whole year and two weeks, to be exact. Wow. I imagined the birthday issue to be thick (virtually but you know) and full of dirty pictures and even dirtier prose - or something like that. What was born instead is the shortest issue yet, consisting mostly of experimental or otherwise deliciously weird poems. Okay, a few raw prose pieces and one single photo also made it.

This is not a complaint, of course. Merely an observation.

I choose every single piece for SCAB based on this gut feeling, on this "yes, we belong" feeling - and this time, it led me here. I think it's done its job well. But see it for yourselves, please.

Without any further ado then: I hope the following pages will feel like home to the reader too.

Well. If "home" feels like an uncomfortable amount of indecency, at least.

D.

September 2018

Enterrar y Callar

I called John a 'friend' when I was thirteen, I don't know what he called me. He had greasy red hair, tangled down his neck; he wore death-metal hoodies and chains, earrings. I wasn't cool enough to hang round with him, Callum and Ben, getting stoned in an abandoned substation, but occasionally we'd cut class and smoke together at the back of the playing fields (empty cans, dog shit, discarded baggies I wouldn't understand the significance of until a couple of years later). He was an outsider to the chavs and I was an outsider to the nerds so the arrangement almost worked. I wanted to fuck him (I wanted *him* to fuck *me*, brutally, pushing my face into the mud) but he was straight and hated queers, so we just smoked, and John would illustrate how amazing and awful his life was. He had an elaborate personal history, full of sex and violence I could only dream about. The events would fracture, mutate, recombine with each telling.

My favourite story was on the death of his ex-girlfriend. They were dating in the summer of 2006, before I knew him, and she was beautiful in some way or another. They'd gone to Home Bargains to buy cigarettes/pot noodles/ice cream, she started crossing the road when a roar came from around the corner... leather, metal, petrol... thunder... it was John's *brother*, on a motorbike! Aimed straight at her!! She crumpled under the front wheel. John ran to her but it was too late. She was dead... he lifted her splintered body and dragged, *dragged* it to her parents' doorstep.

Who then, he said indignantly, blamed him for her death. Took him to court. Sued him!

John tried to prove this story once; he showed his phone, said that he still had his ex's number in his contacts. I was never sceptical though, I never questioned him about it (why would I, I wanted to fuck him) – but *nobody* questioned him. They either ignored him or listened closely, hunted for variations like me.

Sometimes, increasingly, he told the truth. By the time he disappeared it was impossible to tell the difference between his lies and whatever happened to his life. He said he was prescribed drugs so he wouldn't go crazy; sure enough, in his rucksack was a bottle of Lithobid. He said he could build bombs and then his shed exploded. It fucking *exploded!* He didn't even mention it; my mum heard the gossip on the phone the morning after, and at dinner she gave a stern talk about keeping 'appropriate company'.

He disappeared Christmas 2012. We hadn't spoken for a while. Sandy Hook happened and John's jokes about blowing everyone up started sounding an awful lot like plans. Well, I also had a secret boyfriend who took up most of my time. I didn't care anymore. We drifted apart. Then John dropped out of school. No-one knows where he went. Sarah said she saw him last, on the bridge over the trains, he was having a screaming match with himself. (This could have been true, he was on pills.)

Jesus, John, I found your story, a week after you left. The one where you murder us all with a TEC-9 semi-automatic handgun, a Stevens 311D sawed-off shotgun, a Savage-Springfield 67H pump-action shotgun and a Hi-Point 995 Carbine (copied straight from the Columbine Wikipedia page, you even kept the citations in). The one you left in the school library recycling bin. Why did you even print it out? Did you mean to? Were you trying to print something else, homework? You never did any homework. Did you know that I went through that recycling bin for spare paper every day? Maybe you meant me to find it.

It's thirty pages long. There were maybe two black kids in our entire school but millions in your head, ones you thought up in order to kill. Then the rest of us; you shoot us and you rape us... until you get bored and decide to go to a Slipknot concert at the Anchor in town. You mention me specifically, in a mosh pit with writhing women. I guess I'm flattered. But that's not why I kept your story (I have it here, spread around me on the floor, I'm typing in a haze). I kept your story because you forgot that you'd already executed me. I kept it for the things you describe doing to my body.

I still fantasize a lot about you but I can't remember what your face looks like.

John – if you're reading this – I dream about you. At the abandoned substation (I was never cool enough to go with you but I get stoned there now, on my own, some evenings), it's night, everything glows like a monochrome negative. Dirty and empty inside. Something awful has happened. And you, John, are dead, hanging in the corner, arms and legs pointing upwards. Ropes of semen unwind from your anus, mouth, eyes... to the ceiling. Where they all collect together in a dense spider's web. Hanging hovering John. You can hear the city burning through the walls.

“finger-fucking”

the porcelain prince kneels before himself
and bestown upon the majesty
a crown encrusted in crusted expulsions
a hydrochloric euphoric epidemic
rhythmic affliction and acidic addiction
culling crops and burning babies
caloric cataclysts and bubbling burdens
hush your flushings
and flush your flushings
for the walls are your thinning desires
for the walls are your thinning esophagus
rawed and ravaged and ripping
coated in candied bile and blood
awaiting a-wishing a woeful event
when flesh is fucked a final time
throat bursting at the seams
leaking liquids from every orifice
as the coroner announces you
“dead on arrival”

Timothy Jupiter, otherwise known as MOTHMAN, frequents bridges at night, where he kidnaps nazis and eats them alive. He is happily married to local legend Bigfoot, and they be livin' their gayest trans lives out there in the woods.

Twitter: www.twitter.com/clownmoth

Pinot Noir

two appealing bodies on couch broadening oddly Un-
 concealed feelings We've seen double like stealing snake-eye glances like cheating at
 poker like jeepers like creepy-crawly

closings of A Major masses of Bach creep up
 revealing clothings falling like treetops hit rock bottom A
 Spongebob in need of bikini and mistress
 two damsels in need of distress

licking weach other long with spontaneous fumes in looks like sweat Like flames of
 these evenings Leading from living to bed
 rooms Whispering naughty like follow me always

Eric Ingram is a writer from San Diego. He graduated from Columbia with a degree in philosophy and visual arts. He lives in Los Angeles, where he works as a video editor in Hollywood. Eric is represented by InkWell Management and is working on his debut novel, "The Best Man". You may contact him at eric [dot] ingram [dot] eric [at] gmail. His twitter is: @ingrandsandiego

WHAT GOES AROUND...

When we visited my father's family
in Tennessee, a fourteen-year-old uncle
with my name took me blackberry

picking on a sticky day
in the countryside. Suddenly,
pushing me into a ditch, he told me,

YYYYou can't tell anybody, unbuckled my belt,
sliding my jeans down my pale legs,
shoved his cock into my nine-year-old butt

four or five times while I screamed
to everyone who couldn't hear.
ShShShShut the hhhell up! he hollered,

pulling out before I yanked my pants
up and escaped, hearing his stutter
behind me, *I'll kkill you if you squeal!*

Another trip five years later, my father
allowed me to stay with my grandparents
and uncle—though I avoided him—

because the neighbor's daughter, Suzy,
and I puppy-loved each other.

One night, on the bed of a '50 Ford pickup

traveling from the Farmer's Market where Suzy
and her family sold fruits and vegetables,
she and I giggled, kissed, necked in front of Joey,

her skinny brother, who scowled at trees waving
at the truck speeding down a two-lane highway.

A week later, Joey waited for me

on a gravel road, said, *You little bastard,*

I'm gonna stomp the shit out of your ass.

I ran, but he caught me, blackened my eyes,

kicked my ribs until he tired of me whimpering.

When I returned to the house, my uncle asked me,

WWhat happened, BBig BBoy? I told him

and he said, *I'm ggonna cut off his bballs.*

That Friday, we noticed Joey leave

the general store with groceries.

Now for some fun! My uncle's stutter gone.

Joey glared into his gleeful eyes,

tossed the sack on the store porch, sprinting

faster than the star he rivaled in high school.

My uncle tackled him in ten seconds,

cackling with an icy voice, *Why'ja run,*

asswipe? He smacked Joey with fat fists

until he fell, knocking out two teeth, and said,

Big Boy—bust his nuts or anything that tickles

your wienie! Afraid not to, I booted him

in his stomach and chest, spitting a gob

into his face, and lied: *Joey, I fucked*

your stupid sister and she sucked.

My uncle snickered, grabbed me
by my skinny arms, *Hey Big Boy,*

you're a tough little prick. We laughed
all the way home. I rode the bus to Jersey
the next week, didn't see my uncle

until after my father died, and I was forty.
I had thought of him once over the years:
arrested for breaking his nagging wife's jaw,

he told my father he bragged to a cellmate,
mocking like a wrestler in a cage,
One thing I love better than eatin' steaks

is beatin' up on bitches and fags.

I winced when I heard this,
but, waxing my father's restored Zephyr,

I watched the large man panting toward me,
icy eyes in pain as he said in a hoarse voice,
Big Boy, I'm sorry I made you

beat up Joey that day, but he had it comin'.

I said nothing: I didn't hate Joey,
and I didn't hate my uncle. Two nights

later, drinking on the porch of their house,
yelling and scuffling, his twenty-year-old son
with his name shot him in the head.

David Spicer has poems in *Chiron Review*, *Alcatraz*, *Gargoyle*, *Reed Magazine*, *Raw*, *The Ginger Collect*, *Yellow Mama*, *Ploughshares*, *The New Verse News*, *The American Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. He is the author of *Everybody Has a Story* and five chapbooks; his latest chapbook is *From the Limbs of a Pear Tree*, available from Flutter Press.

Living in Oblivion

Last month, I went a week without sleeping. I was standing behind that tree over there. I saw babies tossed onto a pile of burning rubbish. "Holy cow!" I said. "Come over here guys." They asked all sorts of questions: Where's that ocean at? What happened to your ear? Do ants eat each other? There's no place anymore where you can say that it's safe. Bodies arrive in halves. Some arrive in shreds, with sounds of celebratory gunfire out front. So I really have to plan my day – every day and very well – if I want to get anything done.

Howie Good, Ph. D., a journalism professor at SUNY New Paltz, is the author of *The Loser's Guide to Street Fighting*, winner of the 2017 Lorien Prize from Thoughtcrime Press. His latest collection is *I Am Not a Robot* from Tolsun Books. He co-edits the literary journals *UnLost* and *Unbroken* and the chapbook series *White Knuckle Press* with Dale Wisely.



Metro Population Only

You walk around a place like this,
and you expect the drug store to keep
the really good painkillers next to the cookie cutters
and the halfway successful lottery ticket coffee table books.

You imagine the used bookstore to have titles
on a cigarette burn of a table that you will actually want to read.

Cheap speed at a Friends and Family of Redneck Necrophiliacs support group.
Better days at an audition for a play that no one is ever going to mount.
Train schedules that have as much time to waste as you do.

You believe that the beers will be free with your omelet,
if you happen to be turning thirty-two again.

These are the really deep thoughts,
entertaining you for the first time in weeks,
more than the usual other way around.

You're not dead. The long sidewalks of road rage
and hapless charity will not suddenly give way
to childhood games that want to reshape the rubber
that seems to make up more and more of your bones every day.

You didn't die along 95. You're just tired. Pretty tired.
You could stand a little rest amongst so much potential fortune.
Activist fortune tellers or scarecrow librarians can just find you
on the clean park bench of your choice, carry you over the resentful trees
to their place, and restore the necessary colors to the palms of your hands.

You feel newspapers gently flying past you in both directions.
They didn't mean to knock you over in their big hurry.
It just worked out that way.

Everything is monotone honesty.
Everyone is loan officer straightforward,
willing,
not eager,
but willing to be held accountable.

This is a place where people screw each other over all the time,
but they actually pay for your candles afterwards.

It's not bad. In a minimalist sort of way,
it's actually kind of impressive.

Gabriel Ricard writes, edits, and occasionally acts. He is a monthly columnist with both Drunk Monkeys and Cultured Vultures. His books Love and Quarters and Bondage Night are available through Moran Press, in addition to A Ludicrous Split (Alien Buddha Press) and Clouds of Hungry Dogs (Kleft Jaw Press). He lives on Long Island for some reason. Twitter: @HmGabeRicard

CRASH, BOOM, BANG!

Crash, boom, bang; tssss, zzzzt, thud!

This is not for you.

Click, clang, sluurp; fizzle, faddle, fart!

No, this is definitely not for you.

Screeeeeeeech!

You're hip, you get it.

Honk!

You hear what they're trying to do.

Ka-Pow!!

You're not an idiot.

Skroooooooooooooonk!!!

Much less a philistine.

WHAM!

This just sucks. It's not even music. Why would someone listen to this? It's just, well, it's just noise -- some random spurt of sounds. This is awful. More importantly though, why is she making you listen to it?

Pssszzt!

It's only been like two minutes. And already, you've had enough. You might be able to make it a few more spins. Maybe. If you focus on something else, perhaps you can tune it out. You can't. You won't make it through the rest of this side. Your ears can't take it. Just stare at her tits. Her eyes are closed, her head's thrown back. You bet she won't even notice. Who cares if she does anyways? She has to know you want her.

Gfffffft!

But does she want you?

Kffffffft!

Does she want you, too?

Vffffffft!

You think she does. Why else would she have invited you in? You just met. You don't know; you're terrible at this. You're such a pussy. You always read these wrong. How did you even get here? You got dragged to that terrible show in that even worse

basement. You didn't want to go. Your roommate's the one all into this scene. "Noise music" -- what does that even mean? Really? There's music, which you like - all kinds, actually - but this ain't music. No. Of that, you are sure. You're not quite sure what this is or what to call it, but you do know that it blows. The only reason you stayed was to watch her. She was incredible, all aloof there in the corner. It was hot, cramped and reeked of pretension, but she was just so gorgeous. You didn't even care. You can't believe she asked you for a cigarette.

KERRANG!!!

You should've left when you had the chance -- both that basement, and now her loft. You don't belong here. This is not you. Fuck. Why did you tell her you liked that band? You don't even know their name, assuming they had one. Guys like that are probably "beyond" names. You're not even drunk. She's going to catch on. She probably already knows you're a phony and is just doing this to torture you. Shit, the record's stopped. Her eyes are open. This *is* torture.

"Well, what do you think?"

"Um, I'm sorry, what was that?"

"Did you like it -- the record?"

Answer her, you fool. She's talking to you. Say something, anything.

"Uh, yeah. I mean, um, it was pretty good. I guess."

"Pretty good? It's one of my favorites. I saw them live a few years ago. And it was life-changing."

"Well, it's just... I suppose I didn't hate it."

"Wow, you're a tough critic."

Okay, that didn't go nearly as bad as it could've. Keep talking like you know what you're talking about. So far, so good. Christ, she's got a killer body. Just look at that ass.

"Have you ever heard any Merzbow?"

"Uh, I think so. I can't remember. I've just heard so much, you know."

"He's like the God of harsh noise."

"No, yeah, I know. I think I liked his earlier stuff better. Before he sold out."

"Me too. Yeah, he has gotten a bit soft. I'll agree with you there. Ever since he switched to digital."

"Oh, of course. I'm all analogue, baby."

What the hell was that? All analogue, baby? Don't blow this; no more stupid comments. Don't overdo it. Any more like that, and you'll expose yourself. And not how you want to.

"Have you heard his *Music for Bondage Performance*? That's one of my all-time favorites."

"Um, no. I don't think so. Should I have? Maybe I did. I think I might've."

"Probably not, it was only released in Japan -- on a limited pressing. I've got an import from eBay somewhere. Let me see if I can find it. You absolutely have to hear this one."

Fuck you, another record? No, not another. You barely made it through that one. And that was only a 45. Oh shit, she's thumbing through her LPs now. Calm down, you can do this. Sure, she's probably the hottest chick you'll never get with, but hunker down kid. You've got this. Don't let on.

"Found it."

"Awesome, I'm such a Merzbow fan."

"Oh really?"

"Totally."

"Then you know the proper way to listen to this one."

"Duh, through headphones -- like all good noisy albums."

"Well...not exactly."

"Not exactly? What's that supposed to mean?"

Careful, watch it. Don't overplay your hand here. Remember, you're the one pretending.

"Eh, it's nothing. Forget it. You probably wouldn't be down."

"Is that a fact? Try me."

"You sure?"

"You'd be surprised. This isn't my first rodeo."

"Nevermind, I'm sorry I brought it up. My fault for mentioning it."

"No, please, you've got me curious."

"It's fine, really. I mean, we did just meet."

"What? Now you've really got me whetted."

"No, I should've never said anything. It's not right."

"O.K. You have to tell me now."

"I just feel so embarrassed saying it out loud."

"You realize you're killing me here, right?"

"Promise you won't judge."

"How could I? It's not like they're your rules."

"Still, promise me."

"Alright, I promise not to judge you."

"Awesome. And no matter what, you can't say no."

"Sweetheart, I don't even know the meaning of the word."

"Say you promise."

"I promise."

You sly little devil. How did you wrangle this? And you were so scared. You're so in. Congrats, your friends will never believe this one.

"You have to be tied up to listen to this record."

"What's that? Come again."

"I said, you have to let me tie you up."

"Is that all? Is that what you were so worried about? It's just a little rope."

"No, it's Merzbow's *Music for Bondage Performance*, and if you want to hear it - you filthy little worm - you will do exactly as I say."

* * *

Crash, boom, bang; nnnnt, trrrr, thwack!

This, right here, is not for me.

Ping, pop, slooosh; fizzle, fattle, fart!

No, this certainly is not for me.

Skroooooooooonk!

I'm cool. And I get it.

Cronk!

I realize what she wants.

Bla-Dow!!

I'm not an imbecile.

Screeeeeeeeeeech!!!

Much less a prude.

BLAM!

This sucks. It's not even sex. She never got naked. How could someone get off to this? It's just, well, it's just rope -- albeit a carefully tied one. This is terrible. More significant though, why is she doing this to me?

Pzzzssst!

It's been nearly half an hour. I'm done; I can't do this anymore. My wrists just can't take it. My ankles are starting to chafe. I can't even see her tits. Her eyes are probably wide open, peering right through me. She's done this before. She doesn't care about me. I just want to go home.

Vrrrrrrrrrrrrt!

She doesn't want me.

Krrrrrrrrrrt!

She never did.

Grrrrrrt!

How could I have ever thought otherwise? She invited me in precisely because we just met. How could I have known she's into this? I couldn't. I'm such a pussy. I read her all wrong. I know how I got here, but how did I let her bind me? This hurts. Really. Fuck Barry for making me go to that show. I hated it -- totally not my scene. There's kink, which I like - some kinds, kind of - but this ain't kink. I'm sure of that. I'm not really sure, but I think this is torture. It's cruel, and unusual. And I don't like it. The only reason I consented was to please her. She looked amazing, all demure there on the corner of her bed. But I can't see anything now. Not with this blindfold on anyways. What have I done? I never should've done this. I can't believe she duct-taped my mouth.

KERRANG!!!

I should've left a long time ago -- both the show and this place. I can't now. I don't belong here. This is not me. Shit. Why did I say I like Merzbow? I don't even know him, or his "music." For all I know, Merzbow could be a girl. I'm clearly not drunk. I wish I were though. I'm scared. She's never going to let me go. She probably does this all the time, and I'm just another victim. Fuck, this record's still playing. How much longer? Will I make it through? My eyes are blind, I cannot speak. Should I try to escape? I've got nothing left. This, *this*, is bondage.

Chugga-chuk!!

"Well... what are you thinking? Do you like them? The ropes, that is."

Vrrrrrrrrrrrr...

Just this once, just this once I ask.

Kffffff...

I'm begging.

Grrrrr...

I'm pleading.

CRASH!

BOOM!!

BANG!!!

And there goes the speakers. Blown -- no more noise. It's over. It's all over now, save for the buzzing. Always the buzzing.

The volume loosened my blinder. I can see her. She's walking, walking towards me. She says something. Of course, I can't hear her. I think she says it again. I still can't hear. I read her lips as she's shouting.

"I said, I see you enjoyed it too."

I look down to find my crotch full of cum. Soaked. I'm in shock; I'm embarrassed. I didn't even notice. I feel ashamed.

She shouts something else, but I can't make it out. I'm confused. She rips the tape from my mouth. It hurts. I'm parched, bewildered. Still tied to the chair, I shout the first words that come to me. I have no idea how loud my voice is.

"I...I didn't know I was that kind of girl."

She turns and laughs. She's walking away. Slowly. And her ass has never looked better.

Logan K. Young's *1,000 Anagrams for La Monte Young* is out now via Peanut Gallery Press. A summer student of Thurston Moore at Naropa's Kerouac School, he's since been published everywhere from 3:AM to UPenn's Jacket2 to experiential-experimental-literature and anthologized as far flung as *That Devil Music: Best Rock Writing* (Excitable Press), *An Anthology of Asemic Handwriting* (Uitgeverij) and *Library of the Printed Web*, Vol. 3.

4.29.17

compressed i rush

to center. may i turn it in
-side out. are we to make our selves

pack, never more

than necessary, when there is no-
where to go? easy to

wish to be dehumanized

more often. i wish
it

rolled sweet off

more tongues wish
she was removed

wish i was inanimate: crucially

unbodied.
i wish not for *his*

depraved, saving grace, wishing

she was not a dagger
to rip stitches

Sarah Cavar is a full-time student of indeterminate gender. Their work can be found in Mad Scientist Journal, Breath & Shadow, Polyester Zine, and Gimmick Press; and is forthcoming in Sinister Wisdom's "Dump Trump" issue, "Changelings & Fairy Rings" from Three Drops Press, and elsewhere. You can find them here: sarahcavar.wordpress.com.

House of Wax/Rewind

Go outside for your fifty seconds of daylight

vodka in your coffee hit hate/saturate.

What girl doesn't like bite blonde-black and pink

a hit parade recovery or Dracula's daughter

in your bloody-lit lily-print negligee?

You want to be madcap but what is it really?

You had a friend in winter once.

When she gave you half the necklace

it was like getting her peridot moon

her period/bump-cherry faith.

You promised yourself you wouldn't leave lace
in her secret slit.

You promised yourself you'd go out in the daylight
voluminous shampoo or color-change arsenic
good and dependable to go with your mood
of half-achievement half wolf-shredded sheets
and you hate all your sisters
when in this cold you should love them—

Jessie Janeshek's second full-length book of poetry is *The Shaky Phase* (Stalking Horse Press, 2017). Her chapbooks are *Spanish Donkey/Pear of Anguish* (Grey Book Press, 2016), *Rah-Rah Nostalgia* (dancing girl press, 2016), *Supernoir* (Grey Book Press, 2017), *Auto-Harlow* (Shirt Pocket Press, 2018), and *Hardscape* (Reality Beach, forthcoming). *Invisible Mink* (Iris Press, 2010) is her first full-length collection. Read more at jessiejaneshek.net.

the light sucking demons hunt the wrong things: make mistakes

the light sucking demons attempt to steal girls' objects—things light filled: Case # 2814.

000 steal----- the girls101010 (mis print error) redo.

I.

purple lip gloss

Ashley went missing at the mall.

sewn alligator scarf

Hen's grandmother cried

glitter wax

Mabel's job ended in a sloughing off

paddle board shorts

Terry fought two off

pink tool kits

Syd's door never closed

moldy James Joyce

Alyse drowned one in a kiddie pool

towels embroidered with monsters

Emily never removed it from her neck

hair extensions

Sara lost an ear

II.

silver nail polish named *trash*
no one harmed

pencil skirts
no one harmed

1970s fawn art
Helen's painting knifed

ripped nylons
Keri's leg

wrapped earl grey
scattered into the wind down I-90

one broken nail
stashed in a pocket

one piece of hair
pinned under a microscope

smudged mascara wand
Item "A"

cheek rosiness
sucked out

knee bruise
sucked out

high heel

choke on it

blister blood

spilled

shimmer

from earth to heaven

the underside of a wrist

found in a dumpster

what's inside a

specimen

wound

to taste

a cut

to lick

an opening

to invade

something trying to get out

that never stops

the evidence of sun

bait

Jennifer MacBain-Stephens lives in Midwest and is the author of four full length poetry collections. "The Vitamix and the Murder of Crows" recently came out from Apocalypse Party. Her work has been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. She is also the author of ten chapbooks. Recent work can be seen at or is forthcoming from The Pinch, Black Lawrence Press, Prelude, Cleaver, Yalobusha Review, decomp, and Inter/rupture. Visit: <http://jennifermacbainstephens.wordpress.com/>

God I want to be ordinary

I jack off in the shower to help the mildew grow
 Jesus, Stacy, let me finish
 I do a lot of things that are gross and disgusting, okay
 I'm young and the pieces around my open bones
 hasn't grown in, *I've got just space*, and
 alright I see what you mean and of course I love you
 okay. Okay? Okay,

you keep saying that but
 Hypothesis: Bad people don't care who's hurt by their actions.
 Obvious. Anecdotal evidence only needed to prove.
 The *ramifications* of their actions I should say,
 point of fact. Hypothesis: Good people designate
 whether their actions are "good" slash "right
 " slash "acceptable" Theory:
 Conclusion: Good people are bad.
 How pretense-ious
 Pretentious to
 assume that every possible outcome is good
 when you (do)n't know shit. Listen

Listen. Listen. Listen. (*sick of being crazy*)

Listen. Listen. Listen.

(*humming now*)

*Stop, take the time to think
 figure out what's important
 you gotta make a ser-ious decis-ion*

Okay but that's a really broad statement about
a whole mess of other things and I'm sorry that
so sorry SOSorry okay Mokay
but JESUS STACY it's not like GAWD can help me

I am what is just beneath the surface, the zygomatic bone,
the mess sticking out but not quite
just barely bare before the glare of the
staring eyes rising out like cries
from a baby's infantized mouth
and yes it's gross and stuff.
Four score an hour of lore keeps the doctor bored.

I know.

Stacy, what I'm trying to say is that I'm sorry.
I'm a mess sometimes and I'm trying to air
out my spleen (as it were) but I see
that's cleanly not a good idea. Look
I shouldn't have said it but to be
fair, your mom does have it going on.

Alec Peterson works in Denver, and is trying to stop. You can find him on Twitter
@dikkipic

Funereal

Donovan is dead. Or at least he thinks he is, soon, he hopes. The other boy—Austin—is definitely dead. It's in his posture, a slackness you know isn't sleep or relaxation. The room is suffocating. The view outside the window is no better, it offers nothing but another facet of desperation in the form of a blank sky. So goddamn meaningless. The cat doesn't know what to make of any of this. She licks at the blood, now cool and coagulated. Donovan sees her but can't muster the strength or care enough to swat her away. It's morning, the dawn in cornflower blue grows brighter, diffused through the drapes.

AUSTIN'S LAST MEMORIES BEFORE HE SHUFFLED OFF THIS STUPID FUCKING MORTAL COIL

Austin saw a room with nothing in it. That means something, he thought, like in a dream how someone can be someone else even though you know that their face isn't the face of the person you think they are. It's tricky like that. He walked into another room:

"When you touch me, I want to die, Dad." Austin looked down, features dimmed and fuzzed by shadows.

"I'll have to remember that for next time," Dad said while pulling off his belt. "Now Austin, get undressed."

There is a graveyard. They went there one night, late. The boys were wine drunk, sorrowful, at least one of them was. That's why they went. To find peace or something more, whichever. But they just ended up stiff with holiness. It happened atop that mausoleum. Under the big, huge cross mounted on the façade. Mounted under stone saints, mounted under a stone Christus. Our savior's eyes cast up, not down. But, neither of the boys had blue eyes so they wouldn't weep. Not for this, no.

A back gate was left unlocked, they felt daring. It happened like this—they climbed up one ladder, then another ladder and reached the roof. They came up right behind the

cross. The roof was painted white, powdery with dust. The city was reduced to dots of green and orange sodium lights from where they stood. Sometimes a wind blew, and it was not warm, not that night. The comfort of body heat pulled them together, the promise of something more kept them that way.

Kissing and hands in certain places and exposed skin in others. But it was too cold so they left most of their clothes on. Cocks out, clothes on. That's what happened. "Want to come on Christian ground?" Austin smirked.

WHY DID THIS AWFUL THING HAPPEN???

Berlin was ugly. That's why it hurt Donovan so much. So much his ugly face hurt. Not a man, but a fish. Rubbery fish lips that stank of cock and dirty wash basins smeared with sick.

Austin let Berlin fuck him. A fat, hairy fish face and years older than the boy. Austin was too beautiful. Each time Donovan thought about them together, his stomach seized up and he had to hit himself really hard in the head or on his chest so that he could breathe again. So that it would go away, those thoughts about what happened.

Berlin's apartment was shitty, but he thought it was bohemian. Too many full ashtrays, crushed cigarette packets, and scrawled notes about band practice stuck to the nicotine coated walls. Insightful lyrics mean nothing when you have back hair and purple stretch marks. Berlin had both. He was a whore when he lived in Europe. So bohemian! He sold himself in Berlin, that's why he started calling himself *Berlin*. He did it in other places too, Paris, Zagreb, Rome, once in London. But Berlin just seemed apropos.

Austin was living with Berlin, he had no other place to stay. So he was a whore too, for that. Maybe he felt bad about himself. You could never tell these things in his face which was empty and flat. His scars seemed to say something different, "We like to hurt ourselves like this." They said, "Look closer. This is called rape."

Austin was on his back in Berlin's stinking bed, legs spread. Up until this point everything was okay. Berlin was down there, in Austin's ass, licking, sucking, et al. Austin was numb, it didn't matter where Berlin was, he couldn't feel it anyway. He was shut off, not there. That's how he coped. The light was dim and Berlin's pointer finger found a way in. Austin felt that, it wasn't comfortable.

"Relax." Berlin hissed.

Another finger wormed in. His nails were too long, they scraped and cut. Then they were replaced by something else, fast and quick.

"Fuck! What are you doing?"

"It's okay." It wasn't. Austin finally kicked away. But was too late. Blood and semen mixed.

"Were you wearing a condom?"

"No."

They had each other, Austin and Donovan. Austin found Donovan after Berlin. Donovan was a way out for Austin, but more than that, a friend. Someone to love. They were safe together. It was the way they touched, that's how they knew it was right. The decision, it wasn't so hard. There was no second thought. And it was in the end, three letters, the reason they killed themselves.

Right after they met, Austin and Donovan decided to go to L.A. They rented a motel room on Santa Monica. Over a 12 pack they decided to buy blonde wigs, become lesbians and move to Mulholland Drive. Once the lights were turned off, Donovan pulled Austin to him and it was like the first time. Donovan used to hate Hollywood. Austin liked it fine, and Donovan liked Austin so now Donovan liked Hollywood by default. Donovan was like that, it's called love, and so he didn't mind Hollywood, not so much, not anymore.

Ten days later, Donovan bought a plane ticket to New York. Austin was already there, waiting. That's all they could do. They never found any blonde wigs. There are no lesbians on Mulholland Drive either, it was endearing to talk like that though. *Silencio*.

The burn on his hand was thick and gnarled. Blistered skin, grey puckered yellow. To look at it you would think it to have been caused by more than a cigarette lighter. That's

thanks to the infection, yellow and bubbly. Donovan thought he was getting a cold, but it wasn't that. The burn had gone septic, polluting him. He was drunk when he did it, seemed like a good idea at the time because all he wanted was pain after he found out what Berlin did to Austin. At least it didn't smell like rot, yet. It'll go away at some point, he hoped. Leave it alone, buy a pair of gloves, maybe? It was stupid, it solved nothing. He knew that now as his body ached and pus balled up the sides of the scab.

Drunk with rage, Donovan called Berlin. He didn't answer, he was already too sick. The boy with the scabs on his hands screamed into the answering machine, "You don't know what he means to me. You've ruined our fucking lives!"

The boys were over at Lane's place to buy pills. All the pills. Lane shot coke in the kitchen. His wife was asleep. He only had one needle so no one else could shoot it. So no one else could be as cool as he thought he was. Austin and Donovan snorted it. Very retro, Donovan thought. Suddenly it's 1982 and licking the edge of his platinum Visa made his tongue numb. You two are so glamorous, Austin thought. But actually that was the coke's thought, not his. The needle was pretty thin and dull as hell. Lane pushed it around under his skin, nudging the vein, trying to sink it in. It finally penetrated and blood permeated the dropper, clouded the grey-white coke solution with feathers of red. Then it was gone, slammed into Lane's arm. He went slack-jawed and shivered while rubbing the injection site. Donovan lit a cigarette. Austin felt ill, like every night.

It all fades back to yellow, the filthy stain on a decaying wall.

THE LAST OF BERLIN

The world doesn't care about a lot of things, especially Berlin. It goes without saying that he dies. Berlin fades to collapse then smudges into a stain. An organic stain. Like a smeared, whitish flake on a pair of discarded boxer shorts, like dried pus and finally crumbles away into nothing.

When Berlin wakes up for the last time, damp with fever and night chills, he'll see them there in a dream wrapped with shadow and smoke. Both Donovan and Austin in his room. Clinging to the walls, mewling and disintegrating over and over. Berlin will shut his eyes, shit himself, but they remain, picking at bleeding wounds. Grey pallor mushrooms in Berlin's cheeks, bunched, sagging skin clings to brittle bones. His vision blurs and then he throws up. The boys will be together forever in a darkness, always knowing that the other one is near. Berlin dies alone. Fuzz and television snow; transition to black. Dead. Death. Fin. You should erase him from your mind as well. It's better that way. There are more important things to worry about than diseased rapists with disgusting fish faces.

O DEATH

At first, they took the pills, but there weren't enough of those to do much. It just slowed them down and the vodka numbed them white. It was taking too long, period. Then they brought out the scalpel. It was purchased at the campus bookstore where Donovan went to University. Truth be told, the idea of it scared him. They were made to cut flesh, and nothing more. But Austin's arms were so tender, it went into them softly. The blood gushed out, a lot. A lot a lot. Alcohol dilutes your blood, you bleed more. That's good then, Donovan thought as he let the scalpel slip under his own skin. Austin was already opened and oozing. Breath labored, eyelids a flutter. Donovan kissed him, then laid back, closed his eyes and prayed they died together. They came once, together. It was the best sex they ever had, in Donovan's mind at least. There's only one chance to get this right though. It—the scalpel—had a blue handle, anemic blue. When the blood webbed across the blade, it seemed more orange than red. But neither boy saw that.

They were starting to bloat by the time their bodies were found. Austin was slumped in a corner, Donovan had somehow managed to crawl into his arms and die there. It would have been a touching scene were it not for the blood, vomit, rot and stench festooning the room. The bottle of vodka; empty. The bottle of pills; empty. The scalpel; planted in Donovan's neck. He did that himself. As if there was any doubt. In the gloaming they

coalesced. Later they were separated into their own individual refrigerator boxes at the morgue. Something the boys never wanted. They hated being apart. They hated the cold.

CODA; A FOREST

There is a forest. It has trees and small animals and an expanse of leaves spread across the vault of the heavens. Maybe a creek too. There is a boy lost in this forest. At night it's hard. It is always night. He's slight, but not sickly so. Nondescript, with blond hair and brown eyes. His name is Donovan. There is another boy with green eyes, brown hair and a petite frame. He's fragile and his name is Austin. They find one another in that forest, lost in the night. Yes, still lost, but *together*. Not alone.

Aaron Nielsen's fiction has appeared in *Mythym*, *Userlands: New Fiction Writers from the Blogging Underground* (edited by Dennis Cooper), *Instant City*, *Fresh Men 2: New Voices in Gay Fiction*, *Mirage #4 Period(ical)*, and *The Chabot Review*. He has also been featured on KQED's podcast *The Writer's Block*. Additionally, Aaron's journalism has appeared on *The Fanzine* and *Hoodline*. Aaron holds an MFA in Creative Writing. He lives in San Francisco, California and can be found on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100012727093120>

AFTERWORD

The fourth issue of SCAB comes out in March 2019.

If you have something filthy and disturbing and queer and wrong to share, please do so. You know, the worse the better.

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