

Weight

A long time ago I was locked in a basement with my friends Peter and Alice. Peter and Alice were of a kind to play together each day. They would rarely boss and would rarely tattle. I knew them for one year when that was one fifth of our lives.

How did we get locked in the basement? The door was open to the alley and then it was closed. Whose basement was it? A man or woman who lived on the block.

The basement was empty, only dust on the floor and dust in the rafters and dust on the empty shelves, in the light that came through a window over our heads. The dust and a black umbrella we found on a hook.

We sat on the floor and waited. How quiet it was, the sound of blood in our bodies. We got up and started to wail, to shout and kick on the door. How unnoticed it was.

We stood in the corner and waited. Alice needed to pee and went in the drain. Some hours, or minutes, or days went by. We played with the black umbrella.

Late

A long time ago my dad was dying. Although he hadn't been conscious in a week, he gripped the steel sides of his bed, holding on, as it seemed, for life. It was nine days since he took water. He was past the window of living.

My dad had been dying for a long time—three months. At first he was delirious with life. He looked at the trees, the clean mountains of the distance, and he cried. He clutched to his wheelchair and the water bounded his face.

My dad had been alive for many years, wars and children and the trails he'd hiked. He told the same stories again and again, not only when he was older but when he was younger as well.

Later as he slept we sat near him and talked of his death. We talked of the funeral he wouldn't have and that he wouldn't have wanted the company. If dead we saw fit to honor his nature I wonder why sleeping we'd not reckon his fear.

Once he seemed to see and speak to his mother. Once he got drunk on a swallow of beer. I told him he should go. I begged him to go on. I was over and wanted to go home. He held to the rails of his bed. Something kept working when the nurses said it would quit.

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Planes

A long time ago some cows walked through the forest. Each cow had a bell on her neck and each bell went clonk-clonk as she walked. This was an hour or two after the planes had struck. No one could see the cows, out in the forest.

Drift

A long time ago I lived in my sister Gloria's house—she and her two small children. This was the same house I lived in as a child. The many nights I walked asleep into my mother's darkened room.

My sister woke her children early so they would sleep early as well. Once put to their beds, she would light cigarettes and drink beer. I drank with her and the two of us would play Scrabble. How to use the letter Q—quietus or qualm—the letter J.

For a while in that time I took to drawing. I drew a picture of my arm, a picture of the illustration on my copy of Conrad—a bald man suffused in jungle green, presumably Kurtz. Gloria praised my drawing until she realized it was only a counterfeit of the book's.

There were days that led to weeks that my sister would not sleep. She was of the kind to sink into fantastical thoughts. Did the TV speak to her? Did our dead cousin build fires in the garage? How many men were out there on the lawn? Around and around she would talk, her querulous jangle of words.

In that year I lived with my sister it was winter for a very long time. The kids brought wet into the house with their boots. Gloria thought that was fine. Why worry about nothing in a world replete with snow.

Hypothesis

A long time ago I made a bong out of the bottle from no more tears and the barrel of a pen. I smoked it in my bedroom. I'm not sure why I didn't care if my dad would come home to smell it. He was at work training rats to push levers for heroin. Wires clipped into their brains recorded activity.

I drove to look at the geese and fish. The drive was a wonder of sunshine. The fish were of the kind to swim with their silver bellies, no bigger than the barrel of a pen. Silver bellies and how the geese would walk, as if out of some novel of stars. I could tell you about my brain.

In a year if I smoked I went paranoid. Those kids over there were speaking of me. My mom believed I was shit. My heart was a yellow, ridiculous balloon. I could tell you about my activity.

No more tears—the barrel of a pen. My dad and his rats and the light was a soft and wonderful thing.