

THUNDERCLAP! MAGAZINE

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We will not say so long. This is not goodbye. Let's just say we'll see you soon...

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WHEN JOHN FELL/ DARRYL PRICE

it was war of the ancient sort come to the shore at last. No one leaves this world without an arrow through their heart. Why would I lie to you? We all fight in different ways because the enemy is so very good at mutating into the one you love. It's a crime against nature but most hardships are, brought on by a dishonest approach to the day at hand. Everything turns on that wheel. And that brings me to tears more often than the knife in my back. We might as well gather our dreams in the fields at night and sell them in the market place the very next afternoon before they're stolen anyway. I didn't want things to be this sad, they just are. When John fell so did a star but it was hard to tell what was happening because the sky is like a jelly jar full of countless seeds. Because the rain doesn't stop to count itself. Because so

many of us are already way too old to be so young. You don't want to hear about that. I don't blame you. There's plenty of guitars headed in the other direction. They'll be glad to take you out dancing. I've got that on my list, believe it or not, but when John fell I missed a step and flew over my own crying shadow. And there was suddenly an emptiness inside where the world used to rub shoulders with the wind's elbow. And I don't like to pretend that nothing's wrong with us. It does no good for anybody. But it's also moot. The world isn't going to stop having love. Yeah I recognize that fact. Children climb into flowers as easily as bees. Clouds come out smelling like warm cotton. So is it a real possibility that we might become true ourselves to the meaning of being

together like this? I give it half-heartedly a try only because I might as well put down two cents on happiness. Everybody gambles for one more day, one more night, one more kiss, one more moon, one more summer. Only accountants are interested in the end of that long equation. But I swear when John fell the needle jumped off the recorded history of mankind and left a nasty scar in the wax. No one wants to hear a warped echo following them around. But that's what I mean.

Sooner or later you have to go down to the valley and see for yourself if you are meant to live or die, knowing that you're always running out of the stuff that keeps you stuck together in the first place. I miss my friend.

Hell, I miss all my friends. I hope I gave you something to hold. I don't know any other way to say

it. And now there's always going to be someone else answering a phone, saying ooh, baby, baby, and that's alright with me. I'm down with it. Have a big ball. I just can't pretend that it didn't happen to me, too, you see. So when John fell we all ran, retreated into our silly-assed caves and decided to live on nothing but luminous fish for awhile, but that's a diet that slowly eats you out of your own skin from the inside, and leaves you more skeleton than fabulous dreamer. It seals you off from other musicians of the soul. You become a one man band. It steals your ability to imagine a lover's sly smile. That's all I'm saying. Don't forget. Ask yourself. Do you like it? If you don't, what are you doing? When John fell a train lifted off a track and disappeared into thin air and it's never coming back,

we might as well get that straight right now. You can hear the chorus of so whats growing louder and louder by the moaning minute like a bunch of frogs that don't believe in predators in the moonlit grasses. Surprise! Pretty soon they won't even know what they're harmonizing for. Everybody will head for home with a flip and a splash. When you get there you realize it isn't there anymore, but only somewhere you used to feel pretty good about yourself. Well, man, that's the whole point. We carry it. In that sense we are it. When John fell so did the collective, knowing smile, but it's coming back. It's always there. Let's do what we can to meet the fear with something new. That's what John would want for us. To find a fresh way. To continue to carry each other forward. And have fun.

MONKEY CAGE / THOMAS ALAN HOLMES

Riding in the monkey cage

when I was just fourteen,

I saw the car in front of me

dash out a carny's brains.

He jolted when he hit the ground

like electricity

had shorted out, and then he lay

untouched from shoulder down

ADAM ROOTS / MEGHAN SCHARDT

you sped in cocaine detective uniform new

britain, connecticut couch enveloped your

physical body (waxen tall ashen curly faded) as xanax slowed your subtle

breath

to a stop when you settled

on heroin

snort substitution left behind

a kitten called

gollum your parents flew back siblings & mine

REVERSE OSMOTIC PROCESS IN BUG MUTATIONS OF ARTIFICIAL FOODSTUFFS/ JASON GRAFF

I. INTRODUCTION:

- Thesis: The proven side effects of the numerous chemical and industrial processes through which we put our food far exceed even the most pessimistic epidemartficiologists' in less than two years.

II. 'Bug Cake'

- The first so-called bug cake was reported in late 2017 in a small town in Northwest Nebraska. The town's name has never been revealed, purportedly for reasons of security.
- After Easter dinner, a yellow sponge cake was served by Ms. X to her family and loved ones, who had come to celebrate the end of Christian Holy Week.
- Before she cut into the dessert, it crumbled and crawled away in separate directions causing great panic and disgust at Ms. X's table. Her husband told reporters that her cooking was usually 'beyond reproach' and 'hardly ever moved' once placed on a plate, bowl or serving tray.

III. 'Crumb Aphids':

- Upon examination, the 'crumbs' did not turn out to be crumbs at all but millions of 'yellow cake aphids.'

- Unlike their organic twins, these ‘crumb aphids’ are unable to reproduce asexually.
- Instead, they couple with inorganic materials used to produce food, mutating their host’s molecular composition through a reverse osmotic process not yet fully understood.
- Once the mutation process had been catalyzed it continues until the host organism matched the ‘bugs’ DNA exactly.

IV. Early Research:

- At first, it was thought the mutation was only possible in foods that had been artificially altered prior to their birth and emergence as living organisms. Studies since show the dangers of post mortem tampering of animal proteins and plant matter have yet to be fully researched.
- The bugs seemed to thrive primarily on food products with high glycemic index ratings.
- Thought a novelty at first, the problem was not taken seriously. For example, due to their prevalence in doughnuts, the glazed aphid (so called because of its unusual milky white appearance) is known as cops’ dandruff.

V. Gourmet Grubs

- It was not until more substantial, gourmet food stuffs were affected that any serious research was undertaken.

- On July 3rd, 2019, a Mr. Y sat down in his favorite restaurant in SE New York state and ordered a steak of Kobay beef, the highest quality partially artificial beef on the global market. (Again no further specific on the town's location are available.)
- Manufactured by a concern that was under the direction of a former star athlete who shared a name with the meat, Kobay beef was popular item in 'upscale' urban restaurants.
- Before Mr. Y cut into the steak, the meat proved itself to really be made of millions of legionary ants or 'marabuntae' that swarmed Mr. Y and devoured all of the flesh from his body within minutes. His screams were thankfully sufficient to clear out the restaurant and the problem was contained.

VI. CONCLUSION:

- Despite a vigorous research in the intervening year since the 'Kobay Incident' scientists have only faint ideas of the exact processes by which this mutation occurs. There are no current food products that can be thought of as 'safe' at this time.

ONE AT A TIME/ MATTHEW DENVIR

“Well, there is one thing...”

“Go on.”

“When he eats peanuts he eats them one at a time.”

“What?”

“Yeah. He’ll dump them in a bowl and then use his pointer and middle finger to pick them out, one at a time. And then he puts them in his mouth, one at a time.”

“That’s not that weird.”

“Well it really bugs me. Sometime he’ll even eat a single peanut in two bites. Two bites! I mean, who does that?”

“It’s not very masculine; is that the problem? Too, I don’t know, effeminate?”

“No, it’s not that. I don’t know.”

“It just really bugs you...”

“Yeah. I mean, I’m not, like, going to call this whole thing off because of it. But yes, it honestly bugs the shit out of me.”

“Oh come on. That’s crazy. Getting all flustered over peanuts.”

“One peanut, then another peanut, and then another. I’m telling you. Watch him sometime.”

PATRIOTIC/ FARHAN KATHAWALA

in the city
I was born into,
race
taboo
glides on
the underside of
all minds

and

violets with clovers
bloom to be pressed
by rubber-soled shoes

and

creeks spatter and
froth over
mud and fish who
once believed but
now stumble drunk
and force chatter
to pass time.

but

we still shuck our
clothes and husk
molded personas
to dip toes
in dumpsters
occasionally
alone.

THE JERK CHICHEN IS SARDONIC/ SEAN DANIEL MALONE

I had a teacher in college I've always wanted to write about. Well, grad school to be specific. It wasn't very specific, the same as undergrad really but they liked me less. I was studying creative writing but still spent most of my time reading books by old dead people or new people I'd never heard of that would someday be old dead people.

Fitzpatrick was his name. His last name. I always called him by his last name as if we were in a high school gym class.

“Fitzpatrick, get over here!”

“Nice shot, Fitzpatrick!”

“Good game, Fitzpatrick.”

I never patted him on the ass or anything, that seemed out of line.

I took his class over and over partly because it was easy and he gave a completion grade, but I also found him sardonic and self-effacing. Those were two words I'd learned in grad school and came to identify with. They were the only real things I could hang my hat on after I was done and serving Jamaican cuisine for a living.

I worked at a restaurant called Duo that had originally served East African and Jamaican cuisine. After reverting solely to the latter, the name became a misnomer.

Sometimes I'd try to slip the words in on people eating at the restaurant.

“The Jerk Chicken is sardonic and spicy with a hint of lemon.”

“What does that mean?”

The owner had to counsel me in the back of the kitchen later that night.

“Quit using those weird words, mon. You're upsetting the customers.” His accent was fake, I had it on good word that he was from Toronto and had played major junior hockey in Saskatoon.

“You mean, ‘sardonic’?”

“Yes, mon. Quit making da customers feel stoopid or I fire you. Nobody cares that you have a master's degree here. They just want food.”

I didn't quit using the word and they did fire me. But not before Fitzpatrick happened to come in to eat with his wife. The hostess showed them to a corner table near a window.

“Fitzpatrick, how are you?”

“Very well, yourself?”

I looked down at the black unassuming uniform I was wearing and shrugged.

“You know, I always wanted to write something about you. I saw you as a real... ‘tragic’ figure.”

He scratched lightly at the stubble on his chin before responding.

“I think ‘sardonic’ is the word you’re looking for.”

“You’re right.”

“So how’s the Jerk Chicken here?”

“It’s alright.”

THE GUILTY HAVE STOLEN DAD'S TROPES/ ERIC BURKE

“A mushroom decays
unevenly,” he rehearses,
“unevenly releases its carbon

load; the stem
stands last,

strong,
equable.”

LASCAUX/ ERIC BURKE

“The crack in the basement wall wasn’t made by water running down it over centuries. The wisdom of an old woman isn’t made by brooding over the world for eons,” she used to tell our father. He now tells her grown grandchildren how she inhabited a tiny, cracked world, how she too often colored it for others, how she was always telling everyone at the end, even her children, how she was bound and determined not to outlast her reverse mortgage.

PARADISE/ ERIC BURKE

harvested for winter tinder,

three bird nests

in the ivy above the door

SELF-CHECKOUT/ TIM GURNIG

You rub me the wrong way
like a dry stale fuck.

HOLOGRAM/ ALICIA HOFFMAN

I'm tired of being brave.
Lay me down with the dead

tulips and vegetable skins
spread like someone's ash

in the composting bin
at the back of our yard.

I want to compose myself
slowly like that, a flat

one dimensional thing
once again ready to rise.

HOME SPACE/ DAVID RAWSON

1.

The first greenhouse, stripped
by hurrinado. Dad rebuilds for another.

2.

My brother Nathan in a feed store, saving
for the ghosts of names, becoming
his own shadow, is the snake, the consumption,
the ending morsel with every
day's potential of One Day.
All the men applying for one feed store position,
the unpacking of no packing.

3.

Grandma Betty has no battery.
her son took it out and drives her.
She is falling, is risen, an isolated
state between. Her house, overlooking
her son, a quarter mile away.

4.

The letter from home. The envelope a pinched
smile. I am a dying ember of his son, unfolding.
Reading: *We have black tomatoes. They are showing
Nathan on the news. I'm taking Grandma
to the bank.*

5.

I will count every black tomato, every
tree behind the feed store, every
inch from floor to telephone, every
space between the spaces.

A SPECIAL EGGPLANT/ CHRISTIAN BELZ

The wood stove warmed the chapel and our snowy footprints turned to puddles. The light from votive candles played on the faces of the minister. Outside, the wind howled.

The minister's monotone continued, "If any of you can show just cause . . ."

A cough by the door caused us to turn.

"Barry," I said. "I should have called you" Elise squeezed my hand.

"It's ok, Dad".

I had journeyed from suburban Detroit to the cabin my parents left me. Two years before, a freeway accident had taken Barry's mother, my wife. It was time now, to spend some alone time at the cabin, stop grieving, and start life over.

During college, I had kept a secret stash in the cabin, notes from ex-girlfriends, pictures, Valentines Day cards and the like. I hadn't touched that stuff in twenty years. There were photos of my old girlfriend Elise, very personal. We dated in college, until she met a ROTC brat that swept her off her feet. She broke up with me and left school. I hadn't seen her since.

But a few days earlier, I was shopping at the local market.

"Excuse me," she said, curling her fingers around the vegetable, "I've got plans for that eggplant."

Anger rose, and I started "Well, this—" I sighed. Two pools of laughing sapphire gazed at me. The memories flooded in. "Elise?"

Her lips smiled. "Hello Barry."

I was stunned. “Oh, hey,” I took my hand off the shiny veggie, and placed it on top of hers. “Wow, Elise, it’s so incredible to see you.”

I took in her chestnut hair, tender earlobes and her pale, delicate neck. She slid her hands alongside my face, fingers nudging me toward her. We kissed, in the produce aisle.

That evening, we shared pasta and wine at Ike’s Restaurant. We talked and laughed until four in the morning, returned to the cabin, and we made love.

We constructed a huge breakfast of potatoes with green pepper and onions, eggs, and bacon. I asked her to marry me over orange juice.

Of course, I should have told Barry, Jr. right then and there, but we were swept up in the immediacy, the paperwork, and convincing the county clerk that we had “good and sufficient cause” to waive the waiting period.

We were lucky to find this little chapel, nestled into the woods by Higgins Lake. The quaint cottage, perfect for our nuptials. But how could I get married without telling my son? He was at college just an hour away. I should have invited him. Wait. He had entered behind us. How did he know?

“Sorry to interrupt, Dad, but I wanted to see this.” Barry looked handsome in a grey blazer. “Oh, and I brought flowers for Elise,” he said, holding up a mixed arrangement.

“Thank you Barry,” Elise said. The she put her hand on my arm.

We turned around, and I nodded to the minister. We took our oath, exchanged rings and I leaned in for our married kiss.

We ambled to the back of the chapel, and I turned my puzzled look first to Barry, then to Elise. We all sat down on a pew.

“I started thinking about you last year.” Elise’s eyes twinkled at me. “I searched for you on the Internet, but I ended up finding your son instead.”

“When she came to see me, Dad, I recognized her from those pictures you have in the cabin.”

“The pictures?” I said, suddenly embarrassed.

He grinned at me, “Yeah, Dad. I found them a couple of years ago, when I came up with some buddies. I guessed you must have known her before Mom. I thought it was funny that you had a life before, but, whatever. Last weekend when Elise stopped by to see me at school—“

She continued the thought, as I looked on, “He told me you were up here, at the cabin, and I found just what I was looking for.”

“A special eggplant?” I said.

We all laughed.

CONNECTING FLIGHT/ MATT BETTS

Sunlight glistening off
swimming
pools and cars parked
on blacktop driveways.

Clouds drifting over
woods,
trees green on the edges
of the cities.

Over every wing a ball field,
Through each town a river.

SOME NEW KIND OF WALKING/ REGINA GREEN

there is a forest about your knees. you run
hobbled and morose. you are beautiful. i have
been unkind in all the right ways. open your
chest as you would your eyes after a long sleep.
some see-through language and your bones are
interpreters. this is for what happens next.
flowers, the kind that matter.

EVERY RIVER HAS A NAME/ GARRETT ASHLEY

I have trouble remembering the name of the river. It flowed south and branched off into many small creeks and streams, turned our bad lands into green wooded plantations. The river made our home habitable. Mother calls it Miracle Creek, but the church frowns at the name, and the community is against it, because of Maria Schroeder's accident.

Maria and I used to play together by the creek. That was after my father built a standing shelf in the water to keep jars of milk and honey cool. We had a special stick with a hook for pulling trash and debris from stream. When the creek turned, we would build another shelf. The milk was always cool. We would drink milk and taste honey and Maria would ask me to river dance, when my father was not around—this time in the new creek.

We trampled prints into the sand. Then the river would moan, shift and its creeks would turn and cover our prints again. The river never liked Maria, she had said, because of the things her family did up north with trash and debris. But she was a good girl, though she drank too much water from the river. Our creek was fragile, it turned from her like a scared dog. Weaved through the hills into the forest like a snake. Anything to be away from Maria. Father wanted her to stay at home with her equally irresponsible parents. "Water that doesn't like the girl," he said, "won't like the woman."

Maria used to shout the creek's name at it. It would turn and move into the woods away from her. I used to stand behind her and put my nose in her brown hair. She always wore a tiny red bow on the side. Always smelled liked eucalyptus spearmint.

My mother said she smelled so good because Maria's mother was once a prostitute. But I said what about Mary Magdalene? Wasn't she forgiven of wrongdoing?

"No no no," said my father, red faced. And he used the horsewhip.

Not long after, the river took Maria. It outsmarted her, flanked her from all sides like a hundred stone fountains and swallowed her whole. I was there with her, up north, but could do nothing to stop it. The water has never listened to me. I have never had the will to make it listen.

"I've eyewitnesses saying they saw you dancing with Maria Schroeder at the river. You know anything about the river?"

"I don't know anything about the river."

"What would your deddy have to say about Maria Schroeder?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You know anything?"

". . ."

"I'm going to tell the deacon what you told me."

" . . . "

"You wouldn't lie to your deddy, would you son?"

I lied to my father many times about Maria Schroeder. Because he is never just an impasse; I have avoided three arranged marriages, and the women keep coming. I don't know where my father even finds the women. Since mother died, I figured he would have found himself a good woman to take care of him. To read verses with at night, and at mornings before breakfast.

The women he brings don't care much for the creek. They act like they've seen too many greater things. And the creek never moves, for them.

They pay no attention to the water. They dip their blackened feet into the chill and talk about how cold it is, how stupid the water is for not being warm and right for this time of the year.

"Be quiet," I say. "It'll hear you."

They throw rocks into the creek, but it never moves.

TULIP UNCUPPING/ J.R. KANGAS

Six petals, seven
inches wide rim to rim,
like a miniature enameled
lacquer-red wok, a starburst
in the center flaming yellow
and black, where stamens

and pistil stand, pale
and sticky, joined at the base,
a weird fleshy cluster,
a sexual assemblage,
to some eyes a prong-headed
vegetable, frying.

TOO SOON/ GLORIA MINDOCK

The blade sliced through skin so easily. Fast and it was brief. Death was quick and his life was broken. The life Ricky was accustomed to, over. He laid there by the river for hours. No one found him until the next day. Sad. Maybe he could have been saved, maybe not. Another history written in the papers. Another story unsolved. Another family mourning, crying, and asking why. In church, the Mass was beautiful. It was like you could feel the soul touch your hand. Out at the cemetery, when the casket was left for burial, when family and friends were gone, it was a lovely trip into the ground. A new beginning for Ricky. A closure and an opening to the underworld. Would he be a Prince or a King or some other unknown? It would be nice to give him something. After all, he was a hero. He went before us on that autumn morning. Bravely. Never knew who murdered him. But you know, when we die, we all are murdered. Death is murder, a life taken from us, always too soon, by someone or something.

THE TRUTH/ GLORIA MINDOCK

When Lorca wrote “Blood Wedding” what was he thinking?

Did it have to be this or that? Does everything have to be bloody today or political?

Did it have to be back then? When the bride walked down the aisle in her ivory gown, in my play, not Lorca’s in her gorgeous wedding dress, it was covered in blood, her arms, sliced, and she was laughing as she walked toward her lover, her man, her fiancé, the man she was going to spend the rest of her life with. The crowd in the church gasped. The priest did the sign of the cross. Her man, who will remain nameless, fainted. What a wimp! She stopped, stood there, looked at him, and pulled off her fake arms and declared, “I wanted to see if he was a real man. I wanted him to run to me to see what happened, he did not. I can’t marry him. In this holy place, the heart tells all. He is green. I need someone touched by paradise.”

AT 21/ KEVIN RABAS

“Guess she gave you thinkgs
I couldn’t give to you”
 (“Someone Like You” Adele, 21)

The tantric goddess,
with her many hands,
something new in each grip-
a crown, a tiny horse, a sword,
some grapes.

“take it, if you want it,”
Maryanna says, the large popcorn tub
in her lap, our only movie date.