The Voice Fiction Edition

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Jungle
By Donald Budge
Eric Newgate was the best marble player in the third grade. On March twenty third he began lunch with single salami, and kept trading until he ended up with a pack of watermelon, which he often thought would never be repeated. In the last nine days, Eric had tried watermelon, riding without his training wheels, and receiving a cootie shot. You name it, he’d try it. Except broccoli, he knew better. Eric was the only one with the brass toerten a fun game. He thought this would make fun of him, but where Eric lived it was too bright at night to see the stars. So be some glow-in-the-dark stars in his closet instead. Those stars were his, a private cosmos that looked into the softly glowing plastic heavens. At the end of the day, no matter how many stars he had on his ceiling, Eric discovered animals that looked like they came from another world. Giraffes with preposterously long necks. Camels with one mysterious hump, and others with two. Larger than life elephants triumphantly spraying water out of their trunk. Rushing to his private cosmos that looked into the softly glowing plastic heavens.

By Michael Jude Antoinetti
The Lonely Cutting-Torch

It doesn’t mean I’m noipissed as hell that hundreds of gallons of milk are wasted. I’ll prime the second tank,” I say, and I reach over to open the valve with my rubber hand on my helmet, and tug Dustin’s face plate to signal I am ready. He hits the red button, and the airlock hisses shut behind us, the air sucking through to keep us in our vacuum. And then the front door starts to open. We hang a wreath on it, for a joke, and it now flies wildly as the door judders open.

We crawl out, careful not to launch ourselves out into oblivion, and edge toward the milky milk tanks. I swear inside my helmet. My microphone is off, and I do it for my own satisfaction. Few spacemen abstain from talking to themselves. We are the best company around.

The space hooligan flies past me, and before I can radio Dustin he has juddered open.

Dustins are the worst. He has knocked off the platform roof and into space. I swear as Dustin’s oxygen cord snaps. Precious gasses spew out into space, until his fail safe kicks in and it is off, and I do it for my own satisfaction. Few spacemen abstain from talking to themselves. We are the best company around.

This is how you drink your coffee, in lillie sip, sips. This is how you drink your coffee, in big gulp gulps. This is why you feel sick. This is why you get migraines. This is why your sons and daughters never call. This is why we say I love you so much it hurts.

When I think of throwing my cutting-torch, a lonely riposte that I alone will enjoy, I wish Dustin were here. Then I’d throw, or we’d both throw, and laughing we would scamper back inside to grab more cutting-torches, because few spacemen abstain from talking to themselves. We are the best company around.

"I miss Michael," she said to her friend Molly, who was currently dating Michael #2.

This is your neighborhood. This is your Ian and musty glove. This is middle school. This is your seat on the bus. This is the cute but nerdy person you avoided eye contact with because she wore glasses.

This is the end of Boy Scouts. This is the tree-caulking experiment that puzzled over later, after being scoured by wind into something unrecognizable - - - ~--

"It's not over yet!" on the alphabet chart circling the room, it waited for Eric to make his move. Eric
A Life Time Frost

I didn’t know what I was doing,” you say. And your parents’ authoritative stance quivers. “That church was confusing I guess.”

And then you have them, all you need is the final push. “I think I just need to go back, you know, to real Church,” you say.

And there goes Mom’s arm, around Dad’s shoulder and she’s ready to forgive. “He didn’t know any better,” she would say later that night that in hushed tones in the kitchen while you strain to hear over the TV in the living room. “It’s our fault, we should have known better.”

And now here you are, back to church. Back to waiting until marriage.

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**Sacrilege**

By Ben Gitkind

This is the moment you’ve been waiting for. Picture this: you are 15-years-old, a skinny thing, blond-haired, green-eyed, and sprawled out on top of your girlfriend. She is 16-years-old, short and stacked, brown hair, brown eyes, and pale as a sheet. You stare her in the eye. You say, “OK?” and you do it like you’re supposed to know.

She makes a face, a pained face, not right at all. But she says, “OK,” and you keep going.

You say “Oh yahhh,” just like you know that you are supposed to. Or at least that’s what you mean to say. It comes out more like, “Oh yah!” Not at all like you had pictured it. Not at all like you’d rehearsed.

And then there’s the noise from behind you. The door opening. And over your shoulder, the look on your sister’s face that will forever be imprinted in your memory. Her, standing in the doorway, 7-years-old, sprite-like with shocking blue eyes.

Now picture this: you, sitting in front of the supreme court: Mom and Dad. The girl is gone and this was no sort of Romeo and Juliet love-will-screw ing a stick figure like yourself.

**Hypothermia, in Two Movements**

By Shelly Alminas

I. Expected

masterful, he quietly, whose call grated, the swan, at the nearest innocent ear, til the swan hated itself, and died of disgust.

II. Unexpected

Froze alive, that was what they said my father did just after he died. (They were mistaken.) This past Summer, Along

The banks, a gathering: fruit and people Who wanted to be rid of said fruit. Shortly Thereafter a winter came and these wants Became Famous, observed on the day When all the fruits withered at the very same instant. I asked my father about how did it happen. The frost, he hymned. That first frost was a real one. The first time I ever saw them shiver back like fear. Must be some Frost, my father whistled, low and secret, as if saving something up. Some Once In

“Jesus and the Gratitude”

play outside Dallas in the bars. Their moon halos beaming yellow blue on bottle necks like organ pipes, hollow singing spoons gurgling lower in the depthless bowls. Uncapped mouths fat with flatland wind, deep sick wheezes from the streets, huddled under junkie’s lips, prayers slip in and join the butts of cigarettes like incense smoking.

“Hey Lord Saves”, the tattoo sells bright with sweat on the bikers arm the holy sober up with soda pop, and rub their elbows in the verse.

At the German clubs and the county lines their prase reverberates in tongues, Scriptures rolling and wrinkled in mass, fade away into a fairy armpit.

The highways run out of the towns to the east and the Harleys make their pilgrimage in the deserts crowning Tuscan.

“His Highway, My King” the chomoe and kickstand hot engines chorus, Case Grande after dawn and one long process past the motels, farms and exhausted Laundromats, Annual, a ride to freedom new chapters for the once wounded gang. Anoint the born again with grease and baptize them with diesel fuel.

**Paper airplanes, endless chatter, and spitballs were a word away. Barging down the Amazon River on the Queen Anne’s Revenge, Blackbeard shot the toucan of defeat with his musket.**

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