



Journal
Creative Writings 2012

The Last [Homeless] Man Alive Prepares a Speech

No one saw us coming,
 Us homeless monarchs,
Scum of the planisphere,
 Cockroach surface dwellers,
 Rejected economic-sociopaths,
Victims of divorce, downsizing,
 and debt.
There was a time when we cried for their prayers
 and toonies,
Feeding our obsessions,
 our wants.
The drugs have run out
 and the world has gone to shit.
We are the evolution of man,
 unstoppable, death incarnate
On bicycles wielding butter knives.
 We are the effects of global warming,
rotten from heat, like discarded fruit.
 And even on our forged shopping cart pedestals,
all we have
all we know
all we are
 is
 Misery and Time
 ...much like before.

Evangelos Lambrinoudis II

Nineteen

You know I am different,
the way my skin tells a foreign story.
Of a cultured tongue,
a deliberate step,
and a face that does not hide
behind hair.

I almost forgotten.
The slimy, outplace feeling of swimming alone
with sharks.
Only slithered to join in a massacre
that was my own.

I cut my crumbs then dumped them,
into a bottle of pills.
Hidden shelf, bottom drawer,
secret panel.
Some of me spin with vodka bottle
shards.
I am drunk. I am green
I am distorted.
My reflection says so.
It lies.
It takes one to know.

Bits are ravaged by throbbing lights
throbbing dicks
throbbing sheets.

You know I am different,
the way I now give a Cheshire smile
in the hooker-smoke moonlight.
I know many things now,
in this world full of sharks

Pauline Anunciacion

Miracle Worker



We don't live together, her and I. It's too soon. I love her but she likes me. Maybe if I'm around long enough she'll learn that I do. Still, I do have to go home.

I feel like I'm disappointing her every time I leave. She still wants to see me again, but her smile suggests that perhaps this is the last time I'll ever have the option to leave. She's better than me, so I should be thankful that she isn't kicking me out.

I could've stayed. She didn't invite me to but she's never offended at the suggestion. I have stayed. I don't leave every time. Those mornings are tough. I don't want to overstay my welcome, but her smile suggests that I should stay longer.

I've built a place for myself. My bed is more comfortable than hers. My computer is on my desk. My cat, whom she adores, is waiting for me. I think she adores me but my cat is still very young. He's got at least fifteen more years. My longest relationship, with a woman, has only lasted a year and a half. Some of those women still resonate in my apartment.

There's nothing sexual about the women of my past that resonates. Sometimes I find a trinket from one of them. I'm a bit of a pack rat so those things are buried under piles in closets. She's on the forefront of my mind. I throw the trinkets away, when they remind me of the women who gave them to me. But, I'm a sentimental pack rat.

I want her to love me when I'm not there.

Here's the thing, I can't even tell when she's happy to see me. I imagine — this is all me — that she has had so many men fall in love with her that she is only protecting her interests. Given the option to leave, for something better, she doesn't want to have to deal with another broken heart. I can't blame her. Nobody can. She won my heart, and I'm no easy game.

It's not that I'm a diamond in the rough, even though if you called out, "Prince Ali!" I'd respond. She could be my Jas-

mine, but I don't have a genie. I've never been that lucky. Come to that, I don't even have a lamp. I have desk lamps, but they have switches. Buttons, really. To be true, I have one desk lamp on my desk and another on my bedside table. Nothing happens when you rub them. You need to push their buttons. I have a long fuse but a big bang. You have to light fuses. She turns me on.

She's really too pretty to be with me. If you saw us together you'd make sure to point it out to the person you're with. While that could be awkward for you, because you'd have to explain why the person you are with is not too pretty for you but that you're both on an even keel, I have to remember my father telling me that she's too pretty for me. He tried to explain that I'm good looking. To see me you'd be on your own. I belong to a niche of good looking men. It's a matter of taste, really. She's simply stunning.

She kisses me in public. I mean, she initiates the kiss. I often wish my lips were softer. You will always find Chapstick in my front left pocket. She can apply cherry-flavoured Chapstick with one hand. She keeps a hair tie on the barrel, just in case. I've only started leaving a hat in my car for the mornings after I've spent the night at her place. It's as if she knew that she'd want to kiss me. It's hard to think about anything other than her kissing me when she's kissing me. Most times, before the kissing begins, I'm enamoured with the fact that she's here, wherever, with me. If you ever see us together, you'll now understand the look on my face when you're talking about her and me being together. You'll almost wish you were me so that you could try to figure out what she sees in me.

You won't find anything that surprises you. There really isn't a reason for why she likes me. Perhaps she just likes me. It's hard to believe. But then, some people believe in a god. I'm a miracle worker, if I've ever met one.

Aly Gulamhusein

Caretaking 2011

Rather than get in a fight,
It's easier for me to write,
If I spend a little time,
A few words I could rhyme,
I would try to express,
Some critique to relieve my stress.

From Facilities Management in 2011 year,
This is what we usually hear;
"Not enough money to hire more staff,
We understand it's going to be tough.
Challenging year that's what they say,
Just to have a job we all should pray."

Managers are not like in the past,
The good ones don't seem to last,
They try to do what's right,
Some of them are even bright.
More managers would be the best,
Put caretakers to a real test,
Keep them quiet keep them busy,
From the office cleaning looks easy.
Solving problems it takes forever,
Hiring more staff probably never.

Despite the criticism I must say,
Caretakers are "appreciated to-day,"
We may not make enough money,
But we did get a chocolate Easter bunny,
Appreciation Bar-B-Q late at night,
Managers flipping burgers, isn't that bright.
It's a tradition every year brunch,
Stampede breakfast and a chilly lunch.
We are invited to a management dance and dinner,
At this party some of us could be a winner.
For Christmas we got a box lunch,
It appears we are a homeless bunch.

Human Resources and Union are always there
Protecting us and being fair,
Working hard with pride,
Always on our side.

Financially we might be in a hole
IS2 project will help us all.
Big changes that is their plan,
They know how, and what needs to be done.

Velika, caretaker

Wonder Women

Wonder Woman star spangled undies Victoria's
secret sly undercover heroine on a Grecian urn. No
Pegasus here. Gold jewelry gold riches golden lasso
of truth ruthless uterus. Eagle flying free dominating
Diana, princess.

Fantastical, phantasmical, unmasked white bread.
Shackles with no meaning for her, attacks with no
purpose for her, weaning her off naivety, posing for
peace ability.

Circling evil, defeating Circe, beasts monsters furry
little animen. Beauty brutality black tea curling
tangling hair.

Glory for Gaea, demanding gait, opening homeland
gate to Men. Ambassador for unity, community,
opportunity, computability of war and waste, gore,
ruled by lore.

Zeus Ares Hermes Apollo Hades; overseeing gods
overbearing feminist women: Athena, Aphrodite,
Artemis, Hera, Diana, Lydia Chapin Taft, Abigail
Adams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst,
Agnes Macphail.

Loyalty unity peace equality: moral code a heavy
load for slender shoulders supported limb by limb
of sisters. Praise Gaea, so say we all.

Sarah Dorchak

The Silver Dragon

There's no free parking here.

Just meter after meter, waiting for quarters. I step off the number three bus, Evan behind me. We walk beside one another, careful not to stand too close, to let our fingers brush. The wind touches his cropped hair; his peaked brows rise as he turns to grin at me. I promised to show him Chinatown.

I close my eyes and cover my face with my forearm as the wind throws dust into the air and sends it shooting toward us. A man carrying a crate of eggs into a store turns away from the blowing dirt; the wind whips the hat from his head. It teeters in the air for just a moment before falling to the ground. The man puts down the eggs and chases after it, now a green circle gathering dust as it skims along the sidewalk.

We enter the warmth of the small mall and run our hands along the bellies of the ceramic cats on the shelves. We pick up lunchboxes and laminated posters decorated with anime characters, read the titles of the manga lined up along the bookshelves. Evan rummages through a collection of sailor dresses and the storekeeper shoots him a look of contempt as he holds a ruffled French maid outfit against his chest. The woman grabs the hanger from his hands and orders in a high clipped voice, *You go now*, as she points to the door. Evan giggles while my cheeks stain red. The woman shoots me a reprimanding glare as I scurry past her shop door. We stop for bubble tea downstairs and I order taro, Evan chocolate banana.

You ready? I ask as he sucks up the last of his drink with a big slurp.

Evan grins. *Let's go!*

I nod. I place my hand against the small of his back for just an instant as I guide him out the mall doors.

Outside, the wind whips. We walk in great strides toward the beaming round yellow sign for the Silver Dragon restaurant. We walk through the doors and immediately the scent of barbecue pork and steamed buns greets us. As we ascend the stairs, the chorus of two hundred voices blends with the smacks, sucks, sighs of people eating and the click of chopsticks. A man with a square jaw and

glasses half a centimetre thick pops a shrimp dumpling into his mouth. A little girl with pigtails and a striped red and yellow shirt plays with a steamed bun on her plate. A sallown-faced man returns my gaze as I watch him slurp the last of the hot and sour soup from his bowl.

A woman in a black vest and white shirt greets us. *For two?* she asks. We nod. She seats us in the middle of the restaurant, at a small table with a red tablecloth that drapes to our knees. Immediately a server plops a white porcelain pot of green tea down in front of us. I smile tentatively at Evan as I wait for it to steep. We turn our attention to the hustle and bustle all around us. Everywhere, ladies roll carts full of succulent-smelling dim sum, shelves stacked high with bamboo steamers. They stop at our table, pull open their boxes, entice us to taste their goods.

Evan trusts me to choose for him. I stop the first lady; she doles out a serving of congee and marks our slip of paper. Next, a plate with deep-fried taro sitting in its centre. Fried rice wrapped in banana leaves, layered with sausage, mushroom, five-spice. Salt and pepper squid, deep fried to a crisp. Chunks of green 100-year-old egg swimming in our congee. Tiny fish, flesh replaced with fish eggs, fried in the skin. Steamed shrimp dumplings, barbecue pork buns. Evan attempts to eat with chopsticks but the hostess who seated us brings him a fork when he drops a dumpling on the floor. He gingerly spoons congee between his lips and nods his head. The flavour of sweet pork bursts in my mouth as I bite into a steamed bun. I dip my dumplings in liquid pink sauce.

The servers talk to me in Mandarin.

The words flit on their tongues and join the chorus of voices all around me. I stare at their lips in confusion, willing myself to understand. I speak to them in English and they look down their noses at me, reprimand sharp in their eyes. I sit small in my seat. They all assume I speak their language. I do belong, in my skin. My past, my parents' tongue. But I moved across the ocean when I was three,

my sister an infant in my mother's arms during that long journey from Singapore to Lethbridge. We spoke English at home. My roots live inside of me but sit still against my tongue. And now whenever I visit this Chinatown, any Chinatown, the people speak to me as though I am them.

The sweet yellow centres of the egg tarts ooze down our throats, joined soon after by spoonfuls of sticky mango pudding. We sip them down with more green tea, the pot refilled twice now, and sit content as piglets at a tea party.

Evan smiles at me and joins his hand to mine under the red tablecloth. For a moment everything else disappears. The cacophony of voices and clashing pots, the hiss of steamers in the kitchen, the rock and squeak of carts full of bamboo-wrapped delights. Just me and Evan. I gaze into his grey-green eyes and take in his faintly stubbled chin, upturned nose, the small silver hoop in his ear, the careful messiness of his short blond hair.

And then a serving lady with pinched lips and a slight hunch sidles up to the table and grasps her thick-fingered hands around the edges. She pulls away the tablecloth, all of the white serving bowls, cups, spoons inside. She points to the cash register by the door. *You pay there.*

I nod, dismissive and annoyed. She speaks to me in English. They all know. Funny. If I don't fit in here, where some people call me a banana – yellow outside, white within – and I don't belong in Singapore, even though I was born there, know its customs and history.

Where do I go from here?

Evan stands up and wraps a striped brown scarf around his slender neck. I slide his coat from his chair and wrap it around his shoulders. We share a smile as the two elderly couples at the next table look on with disapproval. We pay and exit. The wind whips us as soon as we open the doors at the bottom of the stairs. Dust belts into our faces along with pellets of ice. I throw my gloved forearm over my face and wrap my arm through Evan's as we plow through the biting winter chill toward the bus stop.

Words from a Concrete Indian

My heart beats to the native drum
but only 'til recent have I begun to hear and understand its
rhythms.

Justice is finally being returned to my Kokum (grandmother),
and other First Nations women
who had their status stripped from them the moment they said
“I do” to their non-native lovers.
The fight to regain status for their children and grandchildren has
been long, too long.

A letter arrived in the mail the other day congratulating me of
becoming a status Indian.

A gleaming smile I could not resist as I read the good news.

I may not have grown up on a reserve,
spoken native tongues,
or fancy danced,
but here I am
an Indian
in a concrete city.

Generations mislead and forgotten.
These tears will keep on rolling down the mountains
and flooding the streets.
We have drowned before by the waves of the first ships
yet managed to survive.
Some say to move on what is done is done
yet our moccasins are still wet.

Julia Shaw

Speak Now, or Forever Hold Your Peace

Apparently,
The apparent is such a slight window of opportunity
When life breathes short whisps into your lungs
But the lungs choke for the air is too sweet of scent
Then,
A form
A shadow light golden strewn across a hemline twinged in hurry
Bites at the skin and holds the tongue captive in a narrative
For looks and longing and hair lavishly playing upon the neckline
A passing figure
A communion etched in the slightest fortunate accident that never
occurred,
And to watch her go
To feel the twinge, the loss, the unbridled attempts to run free;
contained
Abrupt and unapologetic
What love that never occurred
What words that were never spoken
I envy you, the birds that fly free above in the air; I watch them gyre
and float on always tumbling, never contained
Always singing, speaking, never missing a moment
And yet,

Apparently
We of gravity know no such mercy
Us in our cumbersome skin not of feathers free
For feathers are light and not of man's inane drudgery
From there a bird's eye view
The world watched,
The apparent seen
So much a slight window and then it is gone; utterly
Us
So much scent upon the lips and shudders at the distance she does
The lungs choke on cold and ice that forms between the eyes
Fleeting, flowing, fading, drowning, struggle
We appear for a mere moment and then are gone
In a blink
I assume the birds laugh at our follies
Our misdeeds and our misfortune; our lack
Our happenstance and our weighted skin weighed down by this
narrative
A life script of prophecy beget
A round-about self fulfilled discontent
That 'intolerable neural itch' that itches deep
That is only broken by death and sleep.

Oliver Arduor

Called Home

This isn't the way home. We'd pulled off Spiller Road, right across from the Stampede grounds, and stopped outside the gates of Union Cemetery, near the dark, locked-up little groundskeeper's building. Snow fell — the small, hard, granular snow that falls when it's really cold. I'd told him at a red light back on Macleod Trail that this wasn't the way to my house, my highly populated house in Victoria Park where my roommates, I was sure, would be absolutely delighted to meet him.

"I just thought we'd take a little detour," he said, as the power lock clicked punctuation on the pickup's doors. The light turned green, and he took the turnoff to the graveyard.

I really didn't know this guy. He was a friend of a friend who offered to give us both a ride home from a party. Sure, save us cab fare, why not? I got a little suspicious when he dropped off Corrie first, especially since I lived closer to where the party was than she did, and I hardly knew him. Well, he seemed like an okay guy, you know, kind of a big goof. Pretty harmless, Corrie said when I noticed his eyes on me a few times. Now, there I was, locked in his truck with him at three o'clock on a bitterly cold night. In a graveyard. He put the truck in park, left the motor on, lurched over toward me.

"Couldn't we do this some other time? I have to get up early tomorrow." If I'd known him better, I might have told him to fuck off and drive me home. As it was, I had no idea if he wanted to kill me or just get laid. Or both. His choice of romantic venue gave me a bit of pause. I had to tread this ice very carefully.

"Don't worry. This isn't gonna take long." He unbuttoned my coat, took long, wet slurps at my neck. I squirmed, pushed him away.

"Hey. Relax," he told me shortly, as he slid his free hand under my shirt, pushing me onto my back with the other.

"Please. I hardly know you. I'm sure I —"

He wrapped his big hand around my jaw and whacked my head down twice on the armrest — it hit the ashtray squarely. "I told you to fucking relax."

Pain and fear stung my eyes with tears. I was too afraid to make a sound, though. He slid my hand into the front of his jeans. Yep, he had a bone on, all right. A not very impressive one, I might add. "Jesus, your hands are like ice," he grumbled, and yanked my hand out. He grabbed me by the shoulders and turned us over. Now I was on top

of him, he was on his back. He unzipped his jeans, pushed my face into his mighty manhood. Prince fucking charming, this guy.

I decided to go along with him for a while, do what he wanted, pretended to enjoy having the pathetic thing in my mouth (thank God I was sufficiently anaesthetized at the party). He relaxed, groaned, beady pig eyes rolled back in his head, and just as the salty gism started to spurt, I pulled away and kneed him between the legs as hard as I could.

Before there was time to think I reached behind me, unlocked his door. He screamed, fetal positioned, and I jumped out, slammed the door, squeezed through a hole someone cut in the chain-link fence of the graveyard, and ran.

Adrenaline shot through me and I ran like hell, didn't know where, just had to get away as fast as I could. The snow fell harder, thicker, now, bigger, wetter flakes. I could barely see. I stopped behind a big crypt on the top of a hill, gasped for air. I could make out the gate and the building. The truck was still there. He stood outside it, looked for me.

His voice sounded small from up there. "You fucking bitch! You frigid slut!"

Frigid indeed. My gloves were back in his truck, and my fingers, even jammed in my pockets, were frozen. He started after me. His screams sounded far away, I couldn't see him, but I had to move again. I ran blind with tears, sickened by the taste of him in my mouth, stumbled sometimes over the little flat headstones. One put me flat out on my back. I brushed some of the snow off it as I got up, noticed the inscription: *Killed by lightning.*

I should be so lucky.

I ran, I can't say how long. Maybe ten minutes, maybe half an hour. I really had no idea and I couldn't stop to look at my watch. Finally, I tripped again, hit my mouth on a stone and collapsed into the snow under another, a big family headstone. I gasped for breath, my lungs ached with the effort of running, with the cold. I didn't care now if he did find me. If he killed me. Maybe some of the blood would run onto my hands and warm them up before I passed on to the next world.

I lay there for a while, listened for him, let the snow shroud me. Every now and then I wiped the accumulation off my face, stared dumbly up at the faintly purple snow clouds. On a clear night, I could have seen every star in the sky from there. It was dark in that goddamn graveyard. Nice Catholic girl like me, the least he could have done

was taken me to St. Mary's Cemetery across the road. The hairs in my nose were frozen, my upper lip and chin were caked with frozen snot and blood. I felt my teeth with my tongue, sure one of them was loose. *Called home*, the stone above me said.

With everything in me, I listened for him. My breathing was back to normal by then, so I could hear better. But the snow muffled all sound. He could have been ten feet away and I wouldn't have known. Then again, if he had any brains, he'd be on his way home by now, attending to his damaged member. It must have hurt like hell, I thought. Would he use a hot pack or a cold pack?

I decided it was safe to get up after a while. Besides, I would have frozen my ass off if I'd lain there much longer. I offered up a small prayer of gratitude as I felt around in my inside coat pocket and located my wallet and my beloved cigarettes. I stood up, shook the snow off, lit a smoke. And warily began to walk. I'd lost all sense of direction, had no idea where I was going or whether he might have been standing behind the next tree. But I had to move, keep the cold out of my bones. As I decided on a direction, an explosion shattered the stillness.

For a minute I thought my heart would burst out of my mouth. I pictured him as he drove home with me lashed to the hood of his truck. Blonde season is now officially open. But I heard nothing else and eventually realized it must have been a car backfiring somewhere.

I walked, disoriented, for a while. Then as I came over a hill, I spotted the gates and the building. This was where I'd stopped before. The truck was gone. My whole body went almost limp with relief. Now I could get back onto Macleod Trail and get a cab.

Which was no easy feat in the grey, unreal city of four a.m. There was almost no traffic, no buses, no cabs. And I certainly to Jesus wouldn't hitchhike. There wasn't even an open store or café around where I could call a cab and wait for it. So I walked the frigid mile and a half to our house. There was a frigid slut who walked a frigid mile. I'd never been so glad to see it before, and I'd never been so tired before. Bone-weary.

I let myself in. Everyone else was asleep. I quietly climbed the stairs, poured a hot bath, slid in almost before my clothes were off. My cold body ached, and I thought of an inscription at the head of the bathtub: *Home at last.* I disappeared under six feet of bubbles.

Camels

Students are well known for their humps. They do not, however, store beer in them as is commonly believed, though they do serve this purpose through roundabout means. Their humps are a reservoir of fatty tissue that allow them to survive without beer for about two weeks, and without food for up to a month. All member species of the students have a highly unusual immune system, whether and how this contributes to their resistance to harsh environments is currently unknown. Students are able to withstand changes in body

temperature and water content that would kill most other animals. They can withstand at least 25 per cent weight loss due to sweating before midterm or final exams. Their mouth is very sturdy, able to chew thorny plants and pens. Long eyelashes and ear hairs, together with sealable nostrils, form an effective barrier. Their pace (moving both legs on one side at the same time) and their widened feet help them move without sinking in. Students have been known to swim if given the chance.

Ian Kinney

In pursuit of happiness,

Follow closely the golden rules of Western society like a foot fit snugly in an argyle sock; it's beyond important, in fact, the only colour of rule one must follow. Turn a colour-blind eye to reds, oranges, yellows, greens.

Put the fucking orzo back in the sterling silver refrigerator. And drink more white wine less beer from Singapore and less red wine in order to monitor your caloric intake and it's (insert word here that epitomizes cool, perhaps classy but less hegemonic because drinking grapefruit coolers can yield no excuse).

Only one article of American Apparel per outing because, as Patrick Bateman, the classiest of gentlemen, suggests, you are what you wear. Don't provide an excellent excuse to an axe-waving psychopath to drive a serrated knife into your plush retina.

In the most berated form of literary defeat one must rely on lists to proliferate a point.

EVERYTHING

is what you need.

Erin Shumlich



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