

"The imagination imitates, but the spirit creates." - Oscar Wilde

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Myth of Flight

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Without love, I was a foreign word, often read but barely spoken.

Then, I'd wear a girl's perfume,
a drab girl swirling
scotch in her mouth, vaguely plagued
by moths hitting the light bulbs, bits
of hot wax cycled in with the rain.

TWELVE

PART ONE

EVAN KOSER
Copy Editor

The barrel was against his temple. Trembling anxiety surged through his arm. The hair on the back of his neck stood tall, and he briefly felt the breeze from the circular attic window. Hexanol from the freshly cut lawns in the real world stung his now hyper-aware nostrils. He smelled searing steak, charred hamburgers and chlorine from a nearby pool. His grip on the gun was tighter now—he had begun to sweat and the gun tried to slip away. On the face of his watch, the second hand moved.

Adrenaline coursed throughout his body at a rate of three feet per second, bolstering his basic senses, his now acute hearing focused on muting the world. Desperately, he tried to zone out the loud ride-on lawn mower he lent his neighbor hours prior. His own lawn begged to be trimmed, as he had yet to do so today. Unusual as that was, he had also skipped his after-trim coffee. The coffee that followed the morning-trim called to him now. The pot hissed at him from one and a half stories below. This, too, he pleaded for his ears to ignore. His decaf Foldger's and 2-inch lawn would just have to wait—something neither of which understood, both accustomed to instant notice. His watch's face changed.

Fortunately, he did not notice the barking of the canine whose stomach still played host to his new necktie. Two days had passed and he wondered then if he'd ever see a tie like that again. It was beige and blue diagonally striped. Unfortunately, he also did not notice the slamming of the car door in his driveway. It was his wife. His cheating wife. Only days prior did he find out that his best friend had been standing where he was now, this very spot in the attic, pounding his wife mercilessly, unashamedly, with his superior sense of manhood. Of course he felt betrayed. His own senses were tingling again and he cringed at the memory of seeing three condom wrappers scattered on the very floor he stood on. The face of his watch moved again.

Once more, the sensations in his nose took the forefront of thought in his frontal lobe. It was outside and thus hot in the attic. Whether it was the peculiar scent, or lack thereof, that a hot day gives off or the saline sweat trickling past his nose that gave it away, he was unsure. Nor did he care. His left arm let out a quick jolt for his nose and his index finger wiped the sweat from above his lip. A warm, metallic scent graced his nostrils and he did not wonder where it came from, or why his finger smelt that way. He knew that just minutes earlier, he had used that hand to put the bullet into the clip, the clip into the nine millimeter, and the nine millimeter into his right hand. He knew that in order to fire this gun, he would have to squeeze the trigger. He knew all of this without ever handling a gun before in his life. Hollywood had done this man a favor. He was unaware that his watch's second hand had moved again.

He thought about his backstabbing friend. Yesterday his friend car-pooled him to work because his own car was with his wife. He remembered the resentment he felt for his best friend as he sat in the passenger seat. The heat in his cheeks as he forced a smile through his gritted teeth. He remembered the façade he portrayed and how hard it was to fake laughter that came so easy to him only days before. But the day before all of that, he remembered, that man had his penis in his best friend's wife. In his mind, he saw the zipper go down. In his throat, he swallowed hard. His stomach churned. It was brewing a concoction he knew he wasn't ready for, but he could feel it coming. His watch let pass another second of time.

to be continued...

Under Your Boot Soles

Part One

NATHAN CARTER
Showcase Editor

I had just finished rolling a cigarette on the dash, when my brother called to tell me that he'd be out of the airport lobby shortly. I acknowledged him and hung up. I lit the cigarette. Since dad died, Chris had been in Arizona renting a house near the desert.

We hadn't tall'ed much, but he had sent me a letter accompanied with his first novel, *Wheatgrass* and a *Tumbleweed*. In the letter, he said that I was the sole inspiration for a character, as was Pop. I wrote back, simply: 'Don't write about me.' A year later, I find myself here at the airport.

The passenger door opens and I jump at the sound of a close car horn. Chris doesn't have a suitcase, just a duffel thrown between his legs in the passenger seat. There's a beat-up novel stuffed into the side pocket, the pages yellowing. "You're smoking again?"

"Yes," I say, exhaling. I had started again the hour after he'd called and said he was coming, two weeks ago. I lie to him, "Laura's been on my back a lot lately."

I turn the key; the radio tuned to an acoustic station begins mid-song. Chris asks, "About what?" There's a long pause. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't ask things like that."

He produces a pack of cigarettes from his coat, snivels from the winter weather, and then grabs his Zippo. I laugh, awkwardly breaking the tension. "You're smoking again?"

He turns, smiles. "I never stopped."

We take pleasure in filling the Jeep's ashtray on the way home.

...I watch her. She strains to read a novel on a rusting bench at the local train station. I sit across from her, opposing her experience with mine. At one page, she tightens, enthralled in the text, leaping into its every word, sending its literary flow outward towards me and other commuters. Yet, at the next page, she relaxes, laughs at an exercise of the author's wit, a textual jab at reality, simplistic but everlasting. I want to keep watching her, the orange locks of her hair fluttering onto the pages, her black fingernail polish turning the pages with the slow glide of her wrist.

A man sits down next to her; and, at this, I tense. She glances, peripheral. The man sets down a suitcase, then a green duffel, possibly from war-times; it's weathered and the strap is losing its threading. The woman waits a moment until the man is settled to resume her reading; her thought process, broken, no longer enthralled. She begins again, a lowering of the brow, too tense to regain her escape. The man begins to cough through deeply yellowed teeth. He produces a hankie to dispose of what he coughed up.

The woman stops reading; can no longer continue. She produces headphones. My train has arrived."

Laura left dinner on the table: undercooked spaghetti with canned meatballs.

"Is she working now?" Chris asks.

I smirk. Laura wouldn't work a day in her life; just doesn't take orders well, as simple as that. "No." I reply. "She's taking night courses at Jackson Community."

"What in?"

"Something with animal psychology. I don't know. Whatever passes her time and keeps her interested," I say. The truth was that I was damn surprised she hadn't flunked out yet. She studies with cocktails, reads her assignments with a joint in her lips, and listens to her lecture recordings while simultaneously experimenting with the keyboards her parents bought her last year. I love it, so I lie, "She's doing well."

Chris sets his duffel next to the couch awkwardly. "Is this where you want me?"

"I was thinking the loft guest bedroom, but that will do," I crack.

Chris sits down and takes off his coat. "Can I smoke in here?"

I stare at him for a moment. His face has gone solemn, dark, bewildered from something. Was it something I said? "Ya, is there something wrong?"

Chris pauses before he lights the cigarette, sighs, "You ever just think that you've wasted your life? What am I saying? Of course you haven't. You're an architect, and you've got Laura... I just... I don't know."

I hesitate to mention his novel, because I haven't read it, but I do, "You've already published a novel, Chris. What more do you want?"

I sit down next to him, thinking I should smoke but declining; my mouth is too dry. My brother starts to tell me about why he left here so long ago but stops, proclaiming that I won't understand. He moves, "You hungry at all? I'll take a crack at that spaghetti. I'm famished. The flight only had the options of microwaved fish or pretzels."

I didn't laugh, but frowned at a tear that formed in the corner of his eye. He caught it before he thought I saw it. I reply, "You don't have to eat that. There's some Chinese in the fridge you can have. I wouldn't force Laura's cooking on anyone."

Chris laughs, and his eyes make that watery transition from sadness to complete happiness. I smile and make him a plate.

...My father never really understood my writing, my love. He was an architect, an alcoholic, a token drifter in the minds of his friends. Tuesdays were bar days, every other day of the week was, too, but he didn't call them such; they were merely days of the week. I remember when my mother was in the hospital, her spine had been sending random pangs through her entire body and headaches kept her awake at night. We were supposed to bring her dinner. We didn't. Instead, my father saw Harry Miller walk into the Maverick Tavern. The drafts rolled, money changed hands for raffle tickets, the game was on.

Peanut shells.

Peanut shells were scattered across the bar and floor, discarded, left alone to gather in the corner at the end of the shift. Thrown in the trash with the empty vile of my mother's medicine. She never said anything to him, watching him web his thread of red-faced lies. She took her hospital food with dignity, spooning day-old mashed potatoes through the pain and the whispers from the nurses. I knew I'd leave then. I knew I'd leave when I was old enough...

to be continued...



TRUE FEAR

CASSIDY BOWERS - Senior Communications Major