

Tracks of Madness

This is all I have left from childhood memories and from this point onwards the precedent for my entire life had seemed to be set and shaped cruelly in this moment by an unknown force beyond my control. Somewhere distant in mind, at back of my adolescent home there are shredded lines of red, fleshy silk hang from a telephone pylon which started to fall away like slick, coppery autumn leaves splayed out amongst broken chestnut casings, their green spiked tips dulling and rotting on the asphalt of the West highway. The thin, glossy strips of tissue over a metallic skeletal structure being the last indistinctive remnant of a woman. This woman was my mother.

A few years later, when my mother's death had departed to a quiet emptiness in me and my siblings' minds, but our father's lasting shadow lived on to finally become a kind mental suffering. We would all come to learn, each in our own way, that the minuscule existence our father had led was surrounded by a sort of delusion and madness, brought on by his own destructive narcissism; our love for him existed only in relation to our hatred. And just like our mother and without any desire to we coexisted along with his narcissistic tendencies, to gain a love we couldn't ever have.

Our mother wasn't the type to forgive; she would often regurgitate the common language of hatred and resentment she felt for our father, at us. She seemed to continually run in the same tracks of madness he had constructed for us. We could never hate her because we knew she was broken by both him and in herself long before any of us had been born and in ways we couldn't comprehend. Not even now. It would be this way even when death would part them. Sometimes my sisters and I were afraid we could see ourselves breaking like our mother. Sometimes my sisters and I were afraid we could see ourselves breaking, like ceramics my

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father threw but mostly like our mother. But we all planned our escapes when the glow of childhood ignorance and the perfection-each manufacturing a in our small minds to save ourselves-had faded to a mere spot and before then we saw painful for the first time there was no future where both our happiness and father could belong together; he was a parasite but not draining us of life but instead he took more cruelly: our futures.

Glitching and flickering in the same tedious, recurring living nightmare, I am roaming across the familiar bleary sidewalks of unwanted thought. The same constant pedestrian of thought seems to cross my path, hostile feelings pulls me like a noose: full of animosity and roughness. Staving me of thought and leaving me to wonder if I'll know what normality feels like in this augmented, manufactured reality: where a question mark is always placed after the question of reality.

In somewhere that I called home a gloomy light from the garden casts an unnerving glow into the kitchen, as several conspicuous shadows form on the opposing side of the kitchen door resembling a series of haunting images found in the monochromatic flipbooks of my childhood. Shackled to my hollow frame, I stand hunched over the tarnished aluminium kitchen sink; whilst the right-hand steadies my weak body on the draining board. The long spider-like fingers of the left hand twist the kitchen tap anticlockwise. A steady clear stream of water sprays out into my outstretched hand: resting in the intricate lines of my palm, becoming dewy droplets of fresh blood, which fall and dissipate into my fingertips like spectres of the mind, figments of a violent imagination. They almost resemble drops of congealed red paint off the tip of a childhood paintbrush: only to be numbed into oblivion by the swallowing of bitter candy.

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The combination of medication and a sharp knock at the door snaps me violently from the clutches of a hallucination. In this fractured reality, I pace feverishly towards the kitchen door and hope to find refuge and traces of neon sanity. But glancing at the door, I only make out some undifferentiated, shadowy character staring back at me. Their indistinctive dark eyes meet mine in a strange omniscient way. Trailing towards the door like some trespassing house mouse. Closer and closer. Until instinctually I begin to piece together a jigsaw of the unknown face looking back at mine. Then the fragmented dark figure behind the glass becomes whole. Bobby.

His umber eyes search for mine through the window as I reluctantly open the door and let him into the back of the kitchen. Like an automatic reflex, the corners of my mouth twist up into a weak smile. My arms greet him, pulling him closer to my body, enveloping in his electric warmth. The familiar warmth seeps into my bones like wild currents through a circuit board. Running his charged hands drift down his spine and back hooking my fingers into the belt loops of his trousers. Standing on the very tips of my feet, I turned my head upwards so that my face became in such perfect alignment with his. His cheeks blush in a light salmon hue as my lips brush against his. My nose bumps into his and I feel his mouth curl into a mischievous smile. His quiet laughter ringing in my ear as he tucks a stray strand of hair behind my elfish ear. At this moment we're two symbiotic beings, his every breath being my own.

Reaching into a fleeting kiss and knowing his answer but all the same, I ask if he's coming upstairs with me. Bobby throws me a lustful smirk and takes my small hand in his. His soft palms grazing against my callous skin, some small insignificant beautiful contrast of personality. Silently, stripping components of my wardrobe off, I lead him upstairs hurriedly.

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Bobby grips my wrist firmly forcing me to pause and turn around throwing him a confused glance.

"You're okay aren't you, Elliot?" He asks, worried.

"I'm fine," replying almost defensively.

I pull him into the bedroom as though he was the weak one, not me: God, what a lie that was. wanting to distract him from the painful narrative with my body. Our electrified bodies spark each other in the stagnant blackness of our bed. Smothered by the hanging dreary cloud forms, any trace of sunlight blanketed in grey. A slug of stale light breaks from cracks hidden along the sky's cloudy circuit; the long, sparse tendrils of morning light enter through the thin wooden shutters and infiltrate into my room falling into the gaps between shadow like some dim, unforgiving creature.

Underneath the window sill, a small wooden cabinet stands squat neatly against the side of my bed like a toy soldier; I finger the deep grooves of grained wood in the top drawer in which my right-hand fumbles fanatically for a textured surface of the barrel. Recalling a familiar surreptitious sigh of relief, I bring the small hooked trigger between my two forefingers and pause. Hanging on my chest-his bare face remains in a deep state of inertia- like a marked man descending from the gallows. The apexes of my fingertips stroll along the dark, bony contours of his face as though they were suburban street corners floating away from my feet. I resisted

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the urge to run my hands through his untamed mop of dark curls as his features begin to stir into a stark consciousness: one last time.