

My Time Machine, a 1991 Honda Accord; Fuck You H.G. Wells

Prologue

Fuck you William Ernest Henley. Where are you now? Stuck in a dedication.

My piss hissed against the water, two gator eyes burned in the canal, watching my dick. Above the two of us, a slither of moon reflected next to the gator. I swayed back and forth on the sea wall like a detached pendulum. Tots and G'haad debated the morality of the Romeo and Juliet Law behind me. Tim was talking shit about us whilst sitting in the back of my car with Goldie-Locks on his lap. Tots was an ex-marine, G'haad a soldier, Tim an ex-soccer star, and me, not much. Goldie-Locks was a girl they knew from Twitter. We were collectively sober, bored, and didn't feel much of anything else. I wondered what would happen if I fell into the water. I decided I'd finish my piss and spit at the gator.

The car rattled down Pine Island. It was an old work mule with chattering teeth and scars and dents. I'd cry if I crashed that car, but I didn't give a fuck about it then. The speedometer touched ninety, spitting and coughing every time. We passed a blunt around; two hits and then pass. Goldie-Locks was allowed four. I couldn't see my hands. Small fires crackled at our lips. And all of our eyes were rotting olives floating in martini glasses.

It was a year since I had driven those streets. Everything was the same but the faces. The same buildings, roads – with the same divots and cracks – and the trees hadn't grown. Driving along, in the car I got sophomore year, I felt me again – a younger me; a me I recognized. A Thin Lizzy song came on. I used to play it with Jed all the time. He killed himself two months before the very moment I'm writing this. I don't listen to it anymore. At the time it came on, though, he was alive, and I missed him; I turned it up. *Guess who just got back today.* We ran out of rolling paper and cigarillos. I opened the sun roof to let the smoke out. The car exhaled.

We were in purgatory: too old for HS parties but too young to drink legally. We did both anyway. Goldie-Locks knew the kids at the party. She left us at the pong table to talk to a kid that seemed vaguely familiar. I thought he went to my school when I was a senior and he was a freshman. *Fuck him*, I thought. I was blazed and room's light seemed fake and everything glowed. G'haad disappeared into the living room. I lost him in the crowd of kids who all looked the same; sexless with hairless legs and yellow heads. Goldie-Locks was one of them, but different because she was with us. Tots and Tim played pong without beer.

Is she old enough? asked one of them.

It matters, said the other.

The Romeo and Juliet Law, they agreed.

Soon a girl, sexless like the rest of them but a bit thicker, and a boy, a bald newt, told us we had to leave. You guys don't go to ___ HS, they said. The ex-marine, Goldie-Locks, the failed soccer star, and I went to the car. It was hot and everything (the air) stuck to us like wet leaves. The soldier wasn't with us. I found him in the garage. He had two bottles of Jack that we didn't come with and handed them to me. He retrieved a bag of empty beer bottles from the garbage can. With the bag held like an axe above his head, he stood atop of the Mustang in the garage, and swung down. The bottles smashed; hundreds of lightning bolts striking at once. I can't remember how many times he swung or if there was an alarm. I do remember that no one came out of the house. I wondered if that's how my car was dented.

We headed to an ex-girlfriend's parent's house. I hadn't spoken to her in years. I knew that the house had been foreclosed for weeks from Facebook. The power was off. It smelled like burning hair on the inside, and though there were no lights all I saw were shadows. I parked the car in the lawn with the headlights shining through the house windows. We drank until I forgot. What? I don't know, just forgot the things that it all reminded me of. Jack convinced me that nothing had changed and that we were all there for good. I didn't try thinking. I went back to the car for the second bottle. I saw someone in the rear-view mirror. I asked who it was. I am, they said. It was me. I stumbled inside a stranger.

Everyone skinny-dipped in the pool but me and Tots. Goldie-Locks, at first glance, was sexless too. From behind, the few yellow coils that fell down her back were all that identified her as a girl. She had no lines on her body, just a smooth skin like that of an apple with just the right amount of curve to be recognized as what it is. Tim and G'haad were in the pool with their heads just above the water. I could see the red in their eyes. She jumped.

She's sixteen, said Tots.

The sun was an orange island along the horizon, and G'haad was getting a hand job in the backseat. We watched, we laughed, and bled the last bottle dry. I laughed till tears and I screamed, cheering them on. I laughed from the absence of anything I felt. I was thirsty drinking from an empty bottle. I don't know if he finished. I still don't know her real name. I didn't know where Jed was, or what everyone really felt about it. I know that we drove back to the canal where we started, with the headlights off, swaying my car wide across the road. We jumped into the canal.

Epilogue

Mr. Wells, do not wonder anymore; for I have returned with two new flowers. They too will wilt and die, but do not fear, someone else will then again bring more flowers; so on and so forth – the reader will always return.

