

Transnational Border Shopping

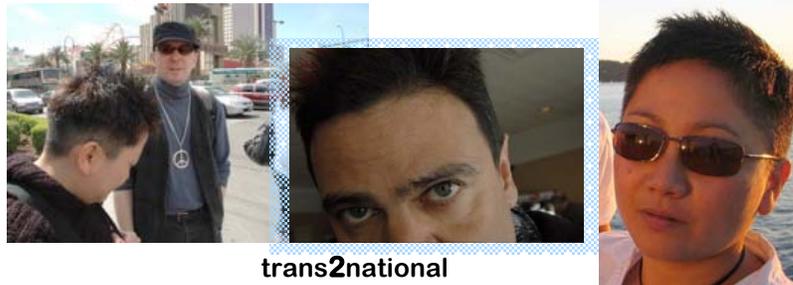
~ canadian writing across the line~



Writers' Tour of Universities in Taipei, Taizhong, Gaoxiong, Xinzhu
November 28 to December 1, 2006

The Concept

Canadian literature is undergoing a radical transformation as more writers from diverse backgrounds are being published and their works distributed regionally, nationally, and internationally. Three of these writers – David Bateman, Hiromi Goto, and Ashok Mathur – are visiting Taiwan in late 2006 to discuss their creative practice in the context of contemporary politics, particularly in their exploration of questions of gender, race, sexuality, and internationalism. While their practices range from poetry to performance to fiction to interdisciplinary artistic research, these three writers share concerns about the formation of identity and how to “cross the line” to open up new ways of writing creatively. “Transnational Border Shopping” will see these three writers travelling and presenting together, reading their works and discussing the politics and sensibility behind their practices. Rather than delivering formal or academic papers, they will be using their creative works as a springboard for a variety of informal discussions around Canadian literature, writing and arts practices in a globalized framework, and issues of identity in numerous contexts. This tour follows the 2005 “trans-Scribing Canada” writers tour of Taiwan that saw presentations from, Wayde Compton, Garry Gottfriedson, Larissa Lai, Glen Lowry, Roy Miki, Fred Wah, and Rita Wong. This year’s presenters will be travelling as a single team to five universities in Taipei, Taichung, Gaoxiong, and Xinzhu, and, in addition to presentations, will be meeting with scholars and researchers to discuss their work and the larger contexts of world literatures. Text, audio, and video documentation of this tour will be available at The Centre for Innovation in Culture and the Arts in Canada website at www.amathur.ca.



trans2national

The Writers

David Bateman has taught literature and creative writing at various Canadian post-secondary institutions. In 2005/06 he was writer-in-residence at Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops, British Columbia).



Prior to that he was artist-in-residence at the Emily Carr Institute (Vancouver, BC) teaching performance and queer theory. His research interests include gender studies, critical race theory, and queer theory. He is also a performance artist specializing in autobiographical monologues that he has performed across the country over the past ten years. His most recent performance — *Lotus Blossom Special; Metamorphosis & Misidentification in Madama Butterfly* — was commissioned by Centre A in Vancouver and has

been presented at Western Front (Vancouver), as well as venues in Calgary (Alberta), Kelowna (British Columbia) and Peterborough (Ontario). He has a PhD in English Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Calgary.

Hiromi Goto is an award-winning author whose short stories and critical writing have appeared, among others, in *Ms* magazine and the Oxford University Press anthology, *Making A Difference*. Her most recent book, *Hopeful Monsters*, is a collection of short stories released with Arsenal Pulp Press in Spring, 2004. Her first novel, *Chorus of Mushrooms*, was the 1995 recipient of the Commonwealth Writer's Prize Best First Book Canada and Caribbean Region and the co-winner of the Canada-Japan Book Award. Hiromi's second novel, *The Kappa Child*, was the 2001 winner of the James Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award and was short-listed for the regional Commonwealth Writer's Prize, Best Book Award, the Sunburst Award and the Spectrum Award. Her first children's novel, *The Water of Possibility* was also released in 2001. Her body of work explores immigration, the racialized body, the gendered



body and feminist and queer politics. Current areas of interest include the “normalization” and integration of “terror” in the global imagination and how it manifests in the seemingly safe space of suburban domesticity. Hiromi was born in Japan and immigrated to Canada with her family when she was three years old. Her childhood was spent in the rural west coast of British Columbia and then a small prairie town in Alberta. She studied literature and writing at the University of Calgary. She currently resides in Burnaby, British Columbia and is the mother of two children. Her fourth novel, *Half World*, is pending with Penguin Canada.

Ashok Mathur is a writer, cultural organizer, and artist-researcher. He currently holds a Canada Research Chair in Cultural and Artistic Inquiry at Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops, BC). His creative practice focusses on questions of identity including racialization, indigeneity, queer politics, nationalism/globalization, and interdisciplinarity. His recent novels include *Once Upon an Elephant*, an contemporary re-visioning of the Mahabharata’s creation story of Ganesh, and *The Short, Happy Life of Harry Kumar*, a retelling of the Ramayana through the lenses of current globalized politics and movements. His most recent project, *A Little Distillery in Nowgong*, is a multifaceted novel tracing the migration of a Parsi family from pre-independence India through postcolonial contexts and travels. This project will be published as a standalone novel but will also be an interdisciplinary arts installation involving video, audio, three-dimensional creations, and text in an attempt to re-situate the form of the novel.



The Writings

DAVID BATEMAN

excerpt from
he impersonated flowers all the time

they have seen such unspeakable tourists themselves

we wandered through Buckingham Palace together and you kept asking me if this was where Elvis lived and why did he need such a big place when he only had one child – “your dad and me we bought that little house in 1948 and that was plenty of room for three and one on the way”

and I conceal my rage over a life well spent in misidentifiable tourist traps and stop myself from saying that at seventy you really cannot go on living your life in the quicksand of a never ending country and western lyric and that although Robert Redford’s chest hair - even as a much older man - is still a place for us to rest our heads and weep in this is still not Memphis and I am not the altruistic flower of love I have been named oh no dear heart “that was another mother poem sweetie” could we just stop arguing and spend the afternoon watching an American film we have seen in a European city we have never been to

and you just cannot keep repeating the same images and place names or my monologic creative nonfiction rants with slight respites into pure unadulterated lies barely concealing the drone of white middle class rage shot through with a slight lyric intensity second only to Monseratt Caballe and Freddy Mercury gloriously mismatched to sing love duets on the Spanish Riviera

oh no, this simply will not sustain the kind of pitch and range a middle aged poet needs in order to insure one slim volume every other year throughout his fifties with a thirty something Spanish lover waiting dew eyed and duplicitous on the Catallan Coast when my love for you has been so enduring we have tumbled over cliffs together

we have cried out on half baked little wooden porches in good company bowing our heads in a circle of bitterness friendship and love spilling a perfectly delightful pitcher of store mix daiquiris that I forgot - in my impossible quest to make this tea party perfect - to put the rum in so we are drinking pure little non alcoholic chemically enhanced crystals and

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wondering why we don't feel any happier than we did thirty three minutes ago

"And where is the godforsaken rum" we scream and laugh and cry we are nothing without the godforsaken rum! we are nothing but this sad comical cliché wandering petal-like through palaces and theme parks and the fact that you honestly with all of your heart do not know whether we are posing in front of a plastic facade of la tour Eiffel at the godforsaken Epcot Centre or is this just another rainy afternoon in the middle of a low grade tropical storm on the gulf coast of nowhere

Paris! Paris! Paris! we have seen all three
France! Texas! Ontario!

"Sweetheart, where are we?" stopped being a question and became the flag of all of your racially detested countries when you turned seventy four in my middle aged arms and we cried ourselves to sleep in a lower berth somewhere between the Rocky Mountains and Dollywood and you said you didn't want to turn left at Ohio and go to Manhattan instead of Tennessee because you had already been there in 1938 and yes my love that was Princess Anne we could see from our seats at Burger King being corralled into a west end theatre by the paparazzi on her way to see Lulu in a matinee of Guys and Dolls

and no I don't think Princess Anne is a lesbian I think she's an equestrian and yes I do think that her dress looks like a table cloth and indeed I do agree that Lulu sang that theme song just lovely in that film with Sidney Poitier and no I do not agree that Poitier is unusually handsome for a black man you inbred cocktail party racist you - if you only knew how attractive I find black men you would report me to race relations - but we were happy then in London - weren't we - as we desperately made our faintly cinematic attempt to enact the European tour you have never had in eleven days on twenty three hundred dollars Canadian

and yes sweetheart I love you even though I sometimes lose it and yell and yell and yell and say such dreadful things and yes I agree that when you call something dreadful instead of mean or cruel it softens the over wrought and hateful sentiments that can pass between us so alright then "fine, believe it, this is Graceland, the King lived here without his Queen, and he does only have one child, and no, I do not know why Priscilla left him, and yes Vancouver and Athens do look a lot alike in "a certain slant of light" and no I did not have an affair with Prince Phillip in the back of a mini-van during the commonwealth games in the mid seventies

and perhaps when all these cities fall around us we shall wallow in these totemic plastic memories these displays of light and color wrap us impolitely in their arms and shuttle us away

he has been such an unspeakable tourist himself



Mojave (Kamloops – Sept 05)

mid mourning in a late September sun a piece of white chocolate melting on a painted window ledge reminds him in glaring invisibility - and he likens it to his class privilege - and doesn't know what to do with this simile this misinformational moment of grotesque and unassuming beauty

so he lifts it gently - flies and small spiders woefully intact and walks slowly toward the kitchen sink thinking - having known for quite some time - that the garburetor was invented in order to conveniently dispose of indecent metaphor – figurative language – notions he has no cupboard space for

but as he draws closer to this site of linguistic waste he is drawn to an eastern light in another room - fireplaces back to back warning us of winters that have never come - and luckily he is wearing the long black muslin sleeper from the consignment shop on the wrong side of the tracks where some fey white men & women have carried cruise wear and other lingerie for re-sale in baskets made of reeds and man made memories of Moses and the Sphinx

midway between the kitchen and the dining area he is caught in refraction by a stained glass mirrored surface impersonating light and he lifts - with his free hand – the hem of his translucent darkness and passes that eastern light in order to begin a slow ceremonial walk to the fauvist garden and the cubist cliff that overlooks the impressionist northernmost tip of the same crust of land locals love to believe has been assigned to the southernmost stretches of the Mojave Desert

feeling ever so indecently exposed by a skewed proficiency with geography and the English language he trips and footfall becomes terror and his bludgeoned knees sink rapidly into dying plums along the edge of

David Bateman

a gravel soaked bed that comforts a lone fruit tree clinging to a trellis he has refused to paint for thirty odd years on eco-scientific principles alone

but when they find him he has slept himself through darkness into mythic shards of light reported by the dead and back again to lives set mid mourning in a late September sun where a piece of white chocolate melting on a painted window ledge reminds him in glaring invisibility - and he likens it to his class privilege - and doesn't know what to do with this simile this misinformational moment of grotesque and unassuming beauty

Goodbye

When I go away for the weekend I say goodbye to all of my possessions. This past weekend the first thing I remember saying goodbye to was my Tinkerbell beach towel hanging in the bathroom. I bought it at the Disney Store in the Eaton's Centre in Toronto last summer. I have an apartment very close to the Centre and sometimes, when I am feeling weary and disillusioned and I need a quick fix, I wander over to the Disney Store and just gaze at all of the animated characters. They comfort me.

A friend once said', "*one of the nicest things about being a gay man is that you can buy things for yourself that were meant for teenage girls.*"

Filled with so much uncomplicated life and colour, my favorite Disney characters are Tinkerbell and Pluto. I had a Tinkerbell china figurine for a few years but it was broken during a move. Her wings fell off. Years ago that sort of thing would have bothered me a great deal. My grandmother once sat and wept as she glued a broken lamp back together. I have inherited my strange love for objects from her.

I still have my apartment near the Disney Store but I live in the interior of B.C. now and I have moved so many times over the years that I am used to material and emotional loss and even welcome it on occasion. It can be cathartic. Like a good laxative.

I gave Tink a lovely burial and now I am fortunate to have her in unbreakable beach towel form adding life and colour to my bathroom and giving me great comfort every time I step out of the shower to greet a new day.

Don't get me wrong, I don't wander around the house an hour before departing saying goodbye to each and every possession I own. I make a general farewell to each room and its contents, and if an individual item takes my eye I look at it, smile, and say,

“Goodbye sweetheart. See you soon.”

I never say goodbye to the things I store in the basement. Unless I am doing a laundry and am down there just before the airport shuttle arrives. I do have a child mannequin standing on a work table beside the washer and dryer that I use in one of my performances. I never say goodbye to him but I often wish him love and worry about his future in such a troubled world and re-assure him silently, in my heart, that we will be on stage together again one day soon.



His name is Trouble and he plays the son of Cio-Cio San and Pinkerton in my one man comic response to Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*. Pinkerton is played by a seven foot fluorescent skeleton that I bought in a Shopper’s drug Mart at Halloween in Vancouver a year ago. He has been broken into many pieces from being moved across the country so many times. I store him in a bicycle box. I have no recollection of ever having said goodbye to him.

Some people find all of this very odd.

Someone asked me recently, during a dinner party, what I had been traumatized by as a child, why I insisted upon reiterating it in dark comic form in my work, and why I wasn’t over it even in middle age. I looked at them, remaining calm and sipping from a large glass of imported ice wine I had bought at the airport, duty free, and I said, quite dryly,

“I think it’s fair to say that people who embark upon – as teenagers - a thirteen year affair with their mother’s brother-in-law do not always come out of it refreshed and ready to party.”

And then I lifted my glass and pledged a toast.

“Here’s to trauma. A constant friend.”

How all of this relates to saying goodbye to inanimate objects before going away for the weekend may not be immediately obvious, but I think it will begin to come clear over the course of the next few pages. And if at this point you are feeling a little disturbed, bored, and unwilling to accompany me on the rest of my journey then just close your eyes and think of Minnie Mouse. She is also one of my favorites and I think that if you give her a chance she may be able to comfort you as well.

*

When my mother and I went to Disney World in Orlando in 1977, just a few months after my father was killed in a dreadful car accident, I bought

David Bateman

two lovely china figurines of Minnie Mouse and Mickey Mouse snow skiing. The tip of one of their ski poles broke during a move but I glued it back on and still have them. Gluing the wings back onto a china fairy seemed like such a sad cliché so I just wrapped her in tissue, sang her a farewell ditty, and tossed her into the garbage chute in my apartment corridor. Like material and emotional loss, I also find garbage chutes very cathartic – much more satisfying than lugging throwaways to a yard sale or crunching them into garbage bags and carting them out to the end of the driveway for pickup. But I am grateful to have saved Minnie and Mickey from the tempting clutch of middle class catharsis. The crack occurred near a join at the wrist of one of their china mittens so you can barely see the fault line, and they just look so sweet in their matching red and powder blue outfits and their precious little skis and toques and boots.

I gave M. and M. to my niece when she was a baby but took them back when she was transferred, at age five, from her family home in Calgary to a nearby group home for severely mentally and physically challenged children. She is 28 now and has never really functioned in any way that any of us who love her can identify as something we feel is cognizant of the things that surround her. At twenty-three they expected her to go blind. I haven't had the heart to ask if that has happened, and given her circumstances, I am not certain that the knowledge is something I need to possess. I see her once a year when I am in Calgary and I bring her fancy discount t-shirts and chat away to her in the only way I know how – incessantly.

I am trying to be politically correct as I describe the mental and physical state of my niece. Her name is Amy and I hope that I haven't failed her. I did replace the Disney figurines with a lovely little teddy bear dressed in a little white lace frock with powder blue ribbon trimming the hem. I sewed it myself and always feel such love whenever I visit Amy and see that little bear at her bedside.

I have just had an epiphany about Minnie and Mickey skiing as I write this. The car accident that took my father's life occurred on an icy road on the way home from skiing at a small resort by the name of Devil's Elbow near Peterborough Ontario – my birthplace and home for the first 20 years of my life. There seems to have been some concern over the years that my father may have been drinking before he left to pick me up at the resort. The car accident was 29 years ago and only now does it occur to me that subconsciously I must have been searching all over Disney World for a comforting memory of skiing in order to cushion the traumatic blow of having lost my father at twenty years of age after a pleasant day participating in a much loved winter sport. The possibility that he may have been drinking was only brought to my attention 12 years after the crash. I recently called a cousin whose son was in the car with us and

suffered minor eye injuries. She said she would have smelled liquor on my father's breath in intensive care had he been intoxicated. She always thought he was a very sweet man. As I approach fifty, and frequently experience mild emotional trauma regarding past tragedies, I find the memories and perceptions of others somewhat comforting.

*

I have had people express to me, in no uncertain terms, that they feel it was wrong of me to take back the gift I had given my niece. Some of them have even called me an "Indian Giver." Not only do I find their remark racist, I also feel that it is insensitive and unkind under the circumstances. My brother once called me an "Indian Giver" when I asked him if I could have some of the LPs back that I had given him a few years before. One of them included a recording by Canadian sixties heartthrob Bobby Curtola singing a song entitled *Indian Giver*.



When I confronted my brother on the racist nature of his remark he responded by saying,

"Well, you know, they're sneaky. Like in those old movies when they head the cowboys off at the pass. They sneak up on you and kill you, or steal things from you. Like your cows or your horses or your women."

Now don't get me wrong, I love my brother and these were not his exact words, but I think that dialogue looks very nice in a story when it is italicized and set apart from the more dense descriptive narrative sections. So I made it up, according to how I remember it, but what you see above is basically what he said. And despite claims made in a popular song lyric from a hit Streisand film, "memories may very well light the corners of my mind, but they are dark corners, and it is difficult to see everything clearly." The way we were and how we remember the past depends upon so many complex emotional strategies. There are times when I prefer to forget.

I didn't think to point out to my brother at the time that stealing things from people, in the context of a global colonialist enterprise where whole nations have been bickering and stealing and murdering amongst themselves for centuries, and that North America has come out on top over the past few hundred years, so it really isn't a good time historically to start talking about aboriginal peoples being sneaky and always taking things back. For the love of Christ, whenever I go skiing at Sun Peaks (or shopping in Manhattan for that matter) I am just heartsick about the ways in which we white people have treated native peoples in the past present and future. And I cannot for the life of me reconcile my immense desire to see a Broadway show, or to find comfort in skiing, with the fact that Sun

David Bateman

Peaks – the second largest ski resort in Canada after Whistler - is on native soil and that snow skiing is environmentally damaging.

But how, you might ask, did I get from a simple farewell to material possessions, to a tirade on colonialist enterprise and the genocidal/environmental implications of mountain resorts and downhill skiing? I have no easy answers, but I do know how to find temporary comfort in a permanently uncomfortable world.

*

When I said goodbye to Tinkerbelle today before taking the shuttle to a small airport just outside of Kamloops British Columbia I made sure that she was folded over the towel rack so that her face and eyes were looking directly toward the lovely yellow and blue stained glass window beside the bathtub. When I shower I make sure to pull down the plastic blind in order to protect the stained glass from a constant barrage of water that occurs every time someone decides to bathe standing up. But it seems such a shame to deprive myself of such beauty while I am showering – the sunlight sifting through the panes of coloured glass and darting in and out of little folds in the glistening mildewed shower curtain (I must wash it soon).

Pulling down the bathroom blind and denying ourselves a daily play of light and colour – a kind of impressionist hygiene - while showering can be counted as one of the more superficial pleasures we must give up for the sake of a greater good.

*

The sunlight in Kamloops is so bright and startling that it makes me wonder what impressionism would have looked like had it been invented by Midwestern cowboys. I have only been in Kamloops a month and have already fallen in love with the landscape and the desert valley light. I find myself writing emails to friends saying that living here is like being trapped in a perfect picture postcard awaiting airmail stamps that will set me free from this earthly paradise. But for the time being I am very happy here with the few possessions I have brought along on yet another move to another province and another adventure. I could stay here forever, admiring the gorgeous low lying brown mountains, sparsely covered with evergreens and loaded with sage and tumbleweeds.

Tumbleweeds are my favorite thing about Kamloops. They remind me of faintly despairing scenes in films set in the American Midwest where whole families are ripped apart by poverty and domestic strife and forced to flee from one another in used cars or greyhounds bound for some

unappealing destination. These scenarios remind me of all the things I should have done in my life but never seemed to get around to.

I come from a working class background and I thank God for white trash every day when I am reminded of how unfeeling and filled with upper middle class rage some wealthy people can be. Wealth is of course a relative term – my immediate family was poor but our relatives were rich.

I love to dine with rich people but sometimes find their conversations alienating. I don't mean to privilege my associations with the poor. I only want to give them their fair share.

If I ever have to say goodbye to Kamloops for a very long time – possibly forever - I think that I will visit the spots I love best and perform small farewell ceremonies in the nude with tumbleweeds attached to my limbs in an artistic fashion. I will walk to the top of small mountains in high heeled shoes (they make my legs look just wonderful), followed by a diligent and admiring videographer – past the great Canadian superstore and the Husky gasoline depot - and all of the restaurants advertising lunch specials complete with a panoramic view of this spectacular part of the world.

And when I get to the top of the mountain I will remember that I am only one person saying goodbye – a single glamour mongering entity that has failed the people and the land in so many small ways in a single lifetime.

Tears will stain my cheeks and I will yodel badly and gesticulate wildly and make all sorts of impossible promises to the passing wind.

I will pay ambivalent homage to a dead uncle who performed inappropriate acts through the gaze of a distorted form of love at a time when I should have been allowed to find love elsewhere but needed desperately to find it somewhere.

I will pledge allegiance to a form of materialism that never takes itself too seriously but always pays respect to a few ritualistic objects that comprise the ceremonial traditions of late capitalism.

And then I will think of Tinkerbell gazing mindlessly into the stained glass and I will call the airport shuttle and I will flyaway.



HIROMI GOTO

excerpt from a novel-in-progress

Late Blooming

Anata Y kneels on the kitchen tiles. Grit bites through her slacks, minute granules digging painfully through the thin cloth. The cold air from the open refrigerator turns the ache in her joints into a full-scale throbbing, but Anata continues with her labour. Grunting quietly with discomfort, she tries to support her weight by clutching the fridge door. Her head bobs with growing desperation.

There are four potatoes somewhere, large ones, and she needs them for her stew. She needs to get them into the pot soon or supper will not be ready on time and she will not be able to leave for her evening walk at precisely seven o'clock.

Anata empties the refrigerator, unstacking Tupperware, shifting murky jars and untying white plastic bags to stare at their contents. Futility washes over her in an unwelcome wave as the food items begin to fill the floor.

Agitated, Anata glances up at the clock that ticks smugly above the kitchen nook. 5:27 PM.

Biting her lip, she tugs open the vegetable crisper once more. As if the potatoes will magically appear the third time around.

“Ah!” Anata exclaims.

The potatoes are not there.

She has found four jars of the same brand of olives. They have all been opened, and the brine in each container in various stages of cloudiness. She has found three bottles of ketchup and a small brown pool of lettuce melt. She has found a sealed bag of mock turkey-loaf left over from Easter a month ago. She has found two heels of baguettes, a jar of seasoned kelp, a bag of dried salted sardines, three circles of faux brie, two opened 250 ml cartons of real cream, organic miso from the island, a three-year-old bin of Mogurt, a desiccated ring of Jell-O in a ceramic bowl, three cans of no name beer, a clear plastic cup half-full with bubble tea, a take-out Styrocorn container with ginger soya-chicken from two weekends past, a glass bottle of crystallized corn syrup, synthetic maple syrup, five pancakes from last Sunday, a head of hakusai, five carrots, seven apples, two navel oranges, one avocado, Romaine lettuce, four bottles of low-fat salad dressing, three jars of jam, last night's dumplings, a small dish of something brown and hard, two bruised pears, broccoli, red grapes, yellow onions, cholesterol-free eggs, one persimmon gone soft, a saucepan of white gravy, four heads of garlic, a joint of ginger, a piece of cheesecake, fish sauce, Worcestershire sauce, mirin, salsa, antipasto, fake lemon juice, Tilapia liver oil, herbal bitters and three litres of vanilla Soygene.

Several items remain unopened. Numerous mystery jars have created their own vacuum and are quite sealed and Anata is too fearful of the six lumps of “things” in tinfoil to unwrap them. She will wait until they are good and rotten, and then she won't feel guilty about being wasteful.

Hiro Goto

But she has not found the potatoes.

The chunk-porc simmers quietly on the stove with the tanginess of tomatoes and garlic. Now would be the time to add the potatoes. If she had any.

“Oh, Pill!” Anata Y exclaims. Her lower lip begins to wobble, but she bites down to still her distress. Anata shakes her head and begins shoving the items back into the fridge. The digital watch she purchased for forty-five percent off with a coupon from the back of her telephone bill begins to beep.

It’s too late. No potatoes and she can hear the first tap, tap, taps of raindrops against the window.

And it had started out as such a nice day!

Anata shoves the Romaine lettuce onto a shelf and knocks over one of the cartons of expired cream. The sour stink of curdled dairy fills the room. “Poop, poop,” Anata Y groans. Real cream! So expensive. Even curdled she could have used it for a special baking recipe.

What will she serve for supper? What? Without the potatoes she doesn’t have a stew. Without potatoes all she has is sauce. If it’d been mock ground she could have turned around and boiled spaghetti, but you can’t serve chunk-porc as a spaghetti sauce, it just can’t be done.

Anata wipes the wasted cream, pauses, and sniffs the air. It smells like the inside of Lesley’s office shoes. She returns all of the food back into the fridge, one item at a time. Perhaps she’ll have a martini even though it’s a Wednesday. Nothing wrong in a lady having a cocktail before dinner, she thinks. Anata retrieves the jar of olives that has the clearest brine and finally closes the fridge. She staggers to her feet, the flood of blood bringing an attack of pins and needles. She hobbles to the kitchen nook and sits on the soft seat, the air escaping the red cushion with an unpleasant hiss.

Anata unscrews the jar and reaches for an olive with her fingers. She pops the briny turgid fruit into her mouth. She chews methodically around the pit, staring out the window at the falling rain.

Rap! Rap!

Anata twitches and swallows the salty stone. She blinks with confusion, patting her hair absent-mindedly, as if an aged poodle is perched on her head. It’s only 5:46. Lesley doesn’t come home until 6:15 and who on earth would be making a social call so close to dinner? No one decent, that’s certain.

The doorbell echoes down the corridor and balloons into the kitchen.

“Coming,” Anata calls out doubtfully. She glances at her reflection in the kettle. Her face is flushed; her hair wild, and her bare lips look vaguely cruel.

Anata scurries to the closet and reaches for the nearest hat. She jams the wide-brimmed straw number on her head and, smiling, opens the door.

For a moment she does not understand who the middle-aged man could be. His thin hair is plastered against his fleshy head, raindrops sliding down to drip off his earlobes, his chin. Coatless, his thin wet t-shirt does little to hide his fatty chest and his large nipples.

Anata’s face falls. “Nap,” she says, taking in the two bulging suitcases.

“What’s for supper?” her son asks. His wet pasty face is expressionless.

Anata doesn't answer. When did her son turn into such a creature? Oh, she loves him, of course, and she would visit him in a prison if he ever killed somebody although she doesn't know what she'd do if he were a child molester...but he's so unkempt. So rude and awkward. He looks like someone who recently escaped from a communist country and arrived with all of his meager belongings.

A bright light expands inside Anata's mind. "Stroganoff!" she almost shouts. "I'm making stroganoff for dinner!"

Nap shuffles around his mother and sets the wet suitcases down in the foyer. "What's that?" he asks.

"It's like short fettuccini with a sauce. Communist people eat it," Anata says decidedly.

Nap grunts. "Is my bedroom still empty?" He starts plonking down the stairs before his mother answers.

"No," Anata says. "I mean, it's empty, this moment, but we've put up an ad for a tenant on AdTV...."

"So it's empty," Nap says, and closes his old bedroom door.

Anata stares at the dark faux wood.

Well. Well, then. Her oldest child is home for a visit. Just in time for dinner. It's a pleasant surprise.

"We'll be having dinner at 6:30," Anata calls out in a cheerful voice.

The bedroom door remains silent.

Anata trots back to the kitchen. She must toss a salad and boil the egg noodles she normally uses for her homemade soy-chicken noodle soup.

Stroganoff. Anata shakes her head. Brilliant! She had it, once, at a childhood friend's house. What had been her name? Dora? Something unattractive like that. They'd eaten egg noodles with tomato sauce and chunks of meat, real meat back then, with a dollop of sour cream on top. Anata chuckles. She can use some of the cream that's left. It's sour, after all.

Dinner would be on time and with an exotic entrée, no less.

Anata spots the olives on the kitchen table. Yes, she was going to have a martini: a nice way to celebrate her son's surprise visit. Anata stands on her tiptoes to reach her favourite glass in the top cupboard. She'd bought it as a present to herself on sixtieth her birthday.

Humming, Anata carefully tips two big spoonfuls of the brine into her glass. She adds one olive, and retrieves her bottle of gin and ice cubes from the freezer. She drops two ice cubes into her glass and pours the oily alcohol on top. She carefully stirs with the spoon. Oh, she knows she's supposed to shake it and take out the ice, but she can't be bothered and it's just as nice her way. Anata takes the first delicious sip of her dirty martini.

The icy alcohol punches the inside her mouth only to follow up with a salty warm glow that spreads slowly from her jaw line to her temples. A numbness expands to cushion her entire head and Anata smiles. She puts a large pot of water on the stove and fixes the salad as she waits for the water to come to a boil.

A banging breaks into Anata's bubble of gin. She tilts her head, confused.



Hiromi Goto

Oh, Nap. That's Nap. He's hammering something into the wall. Anata takes another sip from her martini. She gives the tomato sauce a quick stir before turning down the heat. The water is in a rolling boil and Anata dashes to the cupboard for the egg noodles. She finally finds them deep in the recesses of the dry goods bin. She hasn't used them for a long time, but dry goods are dry goods.

She pours the yellow noodles into the water and adds a drop of oil and a pinch of salt. Humming she takes another sip from her pre-dinner cocktail. Lesley would be home soon and dinner would be right on time. A satisfied smile spreads across Anata's face. She turns to the pot of egg noodles just as a dark speck tumbles around in the boiling water. Odd, she hadn't added any pepper.... She peers into the pot and sees several brownish specks swirling, and beginning to bob to the surface.

She doesn't even have cracked peppercorns.

Anata tilts her head and grabs a new ladle. Her eyesight isn't what it used to be although she's very proud that she still doesn't need glasses. Anata scoops out several of the mysterious bits and brings them closer.

Tiny ridged carapaces, translucent and hard....

Bile and saliva well from the bottom of Anata's mouth and bright light speckles in front of her eyes. The ladle drops from her nerveless hand and splashes back into the pot.

The noodles are full of bugs.

Anata starts shaking. Oh, awful. Awful!

What will she do? What can she do?

She hears Lesley at the front door. The scrape, scrape of his shoes on the mat, everyday, whether they are muddy or not.

There is no time to steam rice.

Oh, she should have just added curry powder to the stew and poured it over steamed rice, but no, she had to try and make something fancy like stroganoff!

Tears fill Anata's eyes as she stares helplessly at the mass of insects floating on the surface of the water.

Floating....

Anata scurries for the small sieve. She scoops out the bugs, skimming them from the pot with determined efficiency. In a matter of seconds the noodles look perfectly normal.

Anata pours out the pot, draining the water. She can hear Lesley in the washroom clearing the phlegm from his throat.

She dishes up the stroganoff and sets the kitchen nook table. Salad. Water. Salt and pepper.

What they don't know won't kill them, Anata thinks, and besides, she's still ethical because she's going to eat the noodles too. It would be different if she demurred, and said she was starting a diet, she'd only have the salad. But she is going to eat the stroganoff with full knowledge. This makes her stoically heroic.

Anata blinks rapidly, and takes the last sip of her martini. The ice has melted and her drink is mostly water.

Nap has silently come upstairs. She has never had to call him for dinner. Ever since he could walk. He's always at the table on time.

Lesley shuffles through the doorway as he rolls up his shirtsleeves. He seems unsurprised to see Nap at his place at the kitchen nook. "I thought those were your shoes," he mumbles.

Anata sighs. Lesley hasn't aged well. Not as well as she has, although genes has a lot to do with it. His red hair faded into a dirty shade of white and he felt compelled to dye it. But it always turns out a hideous shade of orange. She stares at his bony wrists and elbows. They look less like human joints than the armor of some obscure dinosaur.

"Gardening?" Lesley murmurs.

Anata sips a small impatient breath. Then smiles. "You want to garden this year? Is that what you mean? You want to go see the Gardens this weekend? Honey, can you speak in sentences?"

Nap snorts and jabs his fork at Anata's head. He digs into his stroganoff without waiting for everyone else.

Anata touches the top of her head. Instead of her soft white curls she feels the prickly weave of the gardening hat.

"Oh," Anata gasps. And begins to laugh. She laughs and laughs while Nap and Lesley tuck into their dinner. Wiping tears from her eyes, Anata returns the hat to the closet shelf.

"How many did you have?" Nap glances at Anata's empty martini glass, her flushed cheeks. There's a slight edge to his tone.

"Just the one if you must know!" Anata says indignantly. She stares at his almost-empty plate with a small measure of satisfaction. Sighs. She picks up her fork and begins shovelling the contaminated noodles quickly into her mouth. She chews and swallows, chews and swallows, washing everything down with large gulps of water.

Nap and Lesley stare at her uncharacteristic behaviour.

Anata gives a high-pitched laugh. "I don't want to be late for my walk," she chirps, stuffing another forkful into her mouth.

Lesley holds up his empty plate.

Nap sighs. "Why can't you get it yourself?" he asks testily.

Lesley doesn't answer. Anata butt-shuffles out of the nook seat and guiltily pours seconds for her husband. "Just a little, now," Anata says. "You have to watch your cholesterol and salt intake."

"You're just as bad for waiting on him," Nap complains. Sweat beads his upper lip although the room is hardly warm.

"Well, so you say," Anata says sternly, "but neither your father or I ever went back home to our parents by ourselves without each other." She thumps back into the cushioned bench and the seat hisses.

Lesley pauses, mid-chew, then starts chewing once more.

Nap stares at his mother with little-boy eyes. He looks away and reaches for the salad bowl. "That's a hurtful thing to say, Mama," Nap mutters.

Guilt bulges in Anata's chest but she quickly quells it. It's a parent's duty to say hard things, sometimes. She opens her mouth to defend herself, but stops.



Hiromi Goto

A good mother also knows when not to say anything at all. She scrapes the last of the stroganoff off her plate and drinks another glass of water. “Seven o’clock,” she chirps. “Time for my walk.”

Lesley and Nat do not reply. After supper Lesley will sit in front of the television and skim through the day’s news. Anata should tell him to get the room notice down from the Ad-station....

Anata burps. Her stomach roils and writhes. A cold sweat breaks out on her forehead. Is there such thing as insect poisoning? But if she is insect-poisoned Lesley and Nap should be too. She glances at her husband and son. They silently shovel food into their mouths. They look perfectly normal.

No, Anata shakes her head. It’s all in her mind. She feels ill because of the knowledge of the insects. She’d sieved them all out, after all. And, really, crustaceans are insects of the sea and she ate plenty of those when she had been a child....

Anata shrugs into her pale yellow cardigan and ties a pink and white polka dot scarf around her neck. She pauses, then, undoes the scarf draping it over her white curls, tying the ends beneath her chin.

“See you later, then!” Anata calls out.

No one answers.

“Bye, bye!” she calls out more loudly. Anata pinches her lips. She steps outside.

The air is cool and smells of mud and something sweetly chemical. Anata blinks, her nostrils flaring as she tries to track the source.

Across the street, beside the half-built and abandoned duplex, a small blue sign is posted on Mrs. Lee’s immaculate yard. “Another flawless lawn by Moregro!” it reads. Anata shakes her head. Oh, she’s always approved of keeping up appearances, of course, and the abandoned duplex is a complete disgrace, but really! To use Moregro after all of the bad publicity on LiveByte News! Didn’t Mrs. Lee keep up with world events? How could she have missed the constant streaming of gibbled children in that far-away country, Iran? Or was it Iraq? She always mixes up the two. Also, all of those countries that end with “-nia”....

Anata lifts the ends of her scarf to cover her nose. She breathes through the fabric as she scans Mrs. Lee’s lawn for mutations. After the Terror Wars had shifted to a new country, Moregro had gone in to re-build Iraq or Iran. They’d turned the desert into beautiful English lawns. The children, however, are no longer pretty....

The curtains in Mrs. Lee’s large front window twitch and Anata thinks she can see a vague silhouette. Anata smiles widely and waves with cheerful enthusiasm.

The curtains remain still.

Anata gives one more wave and turns away. Anata’s smile sinks into her modest jowls as she starts walking down the sidewalk. When will they ever finish or demolish that duplex? She’s sure the neighborhood has depreciated since it’d been abandoned over seven months ago. Well, she consoles herself, at least I live in a safe neighborhood.

“What’s your son doing home?” a rough voice booms.

Anata utters a small shriek, clamping her hand to her chest.

George Anducci, hairy arms dangling over the handle of his shovel, stares at Anata's left cheek.

Anata's slightly shrill laughs sounds overloud in the evening's quiet. George Anducci, she's sure, is mostly harmless, and he always brings over a box of delicious prune plums from his tree, but she cannot bear his shiftless eyes.

"Geez, Mama," Nap had sighed as a world-weary ten-year-old. "There's nothing bad about him as a person. He's got an eye problem. You're so prejudiced."

Perhaps Mr. Anducci *has* an eye problem, but that doesn't mean he's exempt from mistrust. People with eye-problems are just as capable of being criminals as people with normal eyes.

"Good evening, Mr. Anducci," Anata calls out gaily. "Do you think you'll have a nice harvest of plums this year? The spring is slow, isn't it?"

Mr. Anducci's eyes slowly roll toward Anata's right cheek. He nods grimly. "He's having wife problems, isn't he?"

Indignation swells inside Anata's chest. "Mr. Anducci," she says, "I--I've asked my son to help me redecorate the basement, if you must know."

"Oh, yah?" George slings his shovel over one shoulder. A clump of dirt falls off the blade with a heavy thunk.

Anata's cheeks burn with her lie. It's not a lie, she thinks. Nap was hammering something right before dinner, wasn't he?

Mr. Anducci shrugs and shuffles toward his garage.

Not wanting Hairy George to have the last word Anata clears her throat. "What have you planted, Mr. Anducci? Some spring flowers?"

"Oh, it's the wife," Mr. Anducci grumbles. "It's all her fault." He disappears into his garage.

Anata stares dubiously after him.

What does he mean?



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Excerpt from *A Little Distillery in Nowgong*

All good stories begin with a birth

Jamshed takes a deep breath and feels the unfamiliar substance fill his nostrils, wave down his breathing pipes, and settle gaseously in his wet lungs. Not in the least bit fluid, the substance must be expelled, immediately and predictably, and Jamshed does this with a noise that surprises even him, a cry that is at once too loud for the occasion and not quite loud enough for the offense. What a few moments ago would have emerged from his mouth as a burble comes forth fully sounded now, travelling at a wavelength that surpasses that which he has become used to. Exhaling, he realizes, with or without sound effects, will be much easier this way. Not the comfortable, easy equilibrium of gentle external pressure on his chest cavity gracefully letting the breath from him, but a surprisingly light movement performed from somewhere beneath his diaphragm that can veritably shoot his breath further from his body than he has ever experienced. Indeed, instead of his liquid exhalations cocooning around him, his gaseous expulsion is gone from his perimeter, nowhere to be felt. Instead, of course, is the feeling of death, clammy and rough, and it is as if the world itself, the world outside of the known world anyway, has breathed its worst back on Jamshed. There is no way he should have done this, no way at all. He was fine just a moment before, and he should have resisted that unfortunate impulse that led him to this ugly, cold, and unforgivingly bright space. All this Jamshed is experiencing, loathing the world, so he is genuinely surprised when his next breath, still harsh and bitter on his lungs, is not so shockingly painful as the first. Oh, yes, he still expels it in short order with the best little warrior cry his little lungs can muster, but this time he finds he can modulate the tone and timbre of his noises by shaping his mouth this way and that, and it is not a displeasing experience. From a world of full containment to a world of such choices, opportunity! Okay, so it comes with a load of discomfort, but what the hell. By the time little Jamshed inhales his third breath of air, he has almost forgotten what it was like to breathe fluid, and he has convinced himself that it was not inevitable that he arrived at this place (for he could have resisted, fought back, put down roots, decided to stay put), but an act of will. This will go down in history as Jamshed's first conscious act. To be born instead of being not born.

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He has a set of lungs that show his health, says the midwife, an elderly Parsi lady with flaring nostrils. A crying baby is a healthy baby, she says to the parents, neither of whom are listening to her.

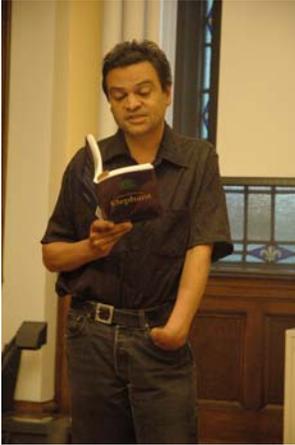
He will be a true leader, thinks his father, a source of purity and truth, a man among men who will lead his people from the darkness to the light. Look at his eyes, so clear, even as he wrinkles up his entire face to bellow and complain! Those eyes will see past any horizon, and the people will see his eyes and it will be like looking onto asha, the very purity of his people. This boy, this man, this son of mine will be a dastoori like me, no question about it, and the people will say the Khargat family are the spiritual centre of Surat.

He is finally out of me, thinks his mother, and about time. Nine months, two weeks, and three days, and this her first which everyone said would be coming quickly, yes, that's what they said when she came to her own mother, tearily, *I am with child and so early on in my marriage, why couldn't this wait?*

Don't worry, Soona, her mother had said, you are four months along and already you are showing like six (and besides, what's all this about early-in-married life, it's been five years hasn't it, or is it six?) Unless you're carrying twins, this one will be a bigheaded one who will pop out in eight months, mark my words, only another four months, that's sixteen weeks, and out he comes. Soona had not appeared on her mother's doorstep to complain; rather, she had come along with her husband for her *panchmasyu* ceremony, to commemorate the end of her fourth month of pregnancy. She dutifully accepted the attention paid to her, the ritualistic placing of vermilion paste on her forehead, the sprinkling of rose water and coconut, and Soona was actually feeling quite fine until she and her mother were sitting on the verandah together and Soona broke into tears. At first, her mother's dismissive comments actually gave Soona some comfort. At first. But at eight months to the day, she had gone to her mother and said, *what of this then, eight months you said, and here it is and the baby has not dropped as you said, there is no water breaking on the ground.*

Give it time, her mother had said, it will be a week more, maybe two, but make no doubt, this baby will be born before the month is out and we are already mid-month are we not? You will see – and we have not yet performed the agharni, that should have happened last month, or we can do that in the ninth month, but mark my words, you will not have a ninth month. Then again, at eight months and three weeks she returned to her

mother and said nothing, just pointed at her belly and then turned the same gesturing hand palm upward, a question mark in any language. *Well, her mother had said, a baby's natural path is almost nine months, you shouldn't complain, at nine months it will be big and healthy, just think of a the scrawny boy you would have birthed three weeks ago, you should be happy to keep him inside, even it means you need assistance to go from sitting to standing. And besides, we can do the agharni now, and we will all be pleased.* And then last week she had returned to her mother a final time. *The baby will not leave me. You must do something. You must give me something.*



Like what, her mother asked, do I look like a woman who gives medical advice? I studied maths at school and I keep your father's accounts, but look here, as soon as he gets the slightest belly ache, off I send him to the doctor. Do I try to treat him at home? Am I a nurse that I should do this? Go home, put your feet up, breathe deeply. Soona had looked at her mother and said simply, *the baby will not be born and by this time you said I'd be happily nursing away. I think I should not believe you in matters involving my family.* But the next week, finally, with a little funny sensation she thought was a result of the pickle she had eaten before bedtime, Soona awoke at three-twenty-three a.m., took a breath, and said to her husband, *yes, now it is ready.* In short order, the midwife had arrived and busied herself with midwifery type things, and the labour was easy at first, but that was because, she was to find out later, the labour had not begun in earnest. Not in the first two hours, not the first six. Only when the morning light was well upon them did the pains start, and did they last, all through the morning, the mid-day, well into the evening as the light faded. And into the night. It was fully two in the morning when the midwife told her that the baby would be born soon, although she was lying to keep her from asking when the baby would be born. It was not until three-twenty-nine (a full day and six minutes past the first warning signs) that Jamshed's crown appeared. All too late and about time.

And so Jamshed was born in the town of Surat on the west coast of India. Nine months, two weeks, and three days earlier a mid-40s Dastoor looked fondly at his wife of five years. Although very much in love, they did not make love all that often, not for any particular reason, just that it didn't occur to them to do so, neither of them being especially needy in that area of human interaction. But at that moment, the Dastoor looked at his wife and reached out to touch her cheek. She looked back at him with love, although with some alarm since it was early afternoon in the middle of the summer and surely too hot to do anything but laze about in the shade until the late afternoon when it cooled every so slightly and one could return to

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the work at hand – which was, of course, precisely the reason her husband was at home, waiting for the reduced heat of the evening when he could return to his duties. So it surprised even him that he reached out and stroked his wife’s cheek. And, as such things go, one thing led to another, and at the end of it all they lay side by side, perspiring far more profusely than might seem warranted under the circumstances. Jamshed’s mother-to-be lay on her side, her feet propped up on a pillow to keep her feet cool (who knows if that up-propping was enough to convince an overheated spermatozoa that it might as well continue on its journey since it was after all downhill, and without which effort an egg might not have been rudely awakened and little Jamshed, eventually, never born) and she thought of how this had been pleasant but would have been more so if this had happened when the sun wasn’t so hot in the sky. But they had been married for five years without so much as a thought of pregnancy, so there was no need to entertain such thoughts right now, was there, at least that’s what Soona thought at the time and continued to think for two months and then beyond that even though by then it had become obvious that either she was pregnant or something was seriously wrong, but even then. And then nine months, two weeks, and three days later Jamshed was born, and another nine months, two weeks, and three days later, after Jamshed’s birth, there was much celebrating in Surat as the townsfolk bid goodbye to 1899 and welcomed in the turn of the century, the turn into the twentieth century. And all this was to make a profound difference to the Khargat family.

After Jamshed was born, he and Soona were immediately sequestered in a tiny room toward the back of the house, a room normally reserved for having tea in the middle of a summer day’s heat. In one corner a divo was lit, and it was there that mother and child remained for six days, happily since it was the coolest room in the house and finally Soona was allowed some privacy. On the sixth evening, of course, her mother arrived to perform the chatthi, purifying both Soona and the room and bringing with her a set of new clothes that her grandson would wear to his first trip to the agiary.

And after Soona’s mother had left, Jamshed’s father proudly strutted into the room, produced a piece of fine writing paper, a quill he had borrowed from his friend Rustom (a customs official and thus a fine writer), and a pot of red ink. *When Vehmai arrives, pronounced Beramshah, he will find before him such a beautiful boy that he will write only the finest destiny for the child.* Then, declaring himself a man after all, and man enough to produce a male heir, *I have decided on his name,* said Beramshah Khargat.

Whose name? asked Soona, looking fondly at her newborn.

Whose name? Whose name? Why, his name, the little fellow here, my son. I have decided on his name.

Soona looked up disinterestedly, smiled monalisy, and said, *But he already has a name.*



Beramshah sputtered. *But I have not yet named him!*

Soona smiled in response. *Fine, then let us name him. We can decide on this together, can we not?*

But I have a name.

Indeed you do, and it is a fine name for a leader such as you, but our son should have a name that distinguishes himself.

That's not what I mean. I mean I have decided on a name for my boy.

Is it Ferozsha?

Ferozsha? Ferozsha! Certainly not. That is a girl's name, and my son is – he is my son and deserves a man's name.

Fine, fine, that he shall have then. A strong man's name. Aha. Sir John Malcolm, do you remember him? Governor of Bombay, a fine man and strong supporter to us Parsis. We shall call him Malcolm.

Malcolm? Malcolm! No, never, he should have a good Parsi name, a name that will recall his family's history, his legacy. This boy will grow to be an outstanding man, my dear, and he will follow in his father's footsteps. He will be a great Dastoor, mark my words, and his name should befit someone of this stature.

Sounds a bit conceited, does it not? Yes, he will be a fine young man, whatever path he chooses, but let's not give your heir airs before his time. Let us be careful in choosing a name.

But we are not choosing. I have chosen, is that not clear?

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Abundantly. But life is a compromise. You say potayto, I say potahto, that sort of thing. So I will agree to compromise as well. You had a name picked out did you say?

I have a name picked out, indeed.

And I have a name picked out too. Oh dear. With all the names around, it's unlikely that it's the same name, I suppose.

That doesn't matter! He has a name. I am his father and I have decreed.

Oh decrees and degrees, I'm tired of all that. What did we just say about compromise?

Compromise?

Indeed. Let us do our son justice. You throw out your name and I shall discard mine.

Discard a perfectly good name, one that my son was born into?

Yes, that's a sacrifice I, as only a mother can, will make.

You will make?

Yes, I discard my name for my son, you throw out your name for my son.

My son.

Indeed.

And?

And we shall choose an entirely new name for him.

Which is?

Jamshed.

Jamshed?

Yes, wonderful. See what good a compromise does a body?

But – but what was the name you had originally chosen?

Shush! Don't you see how bad luck it is to utter a name that was once chosen and is now no longer?

But –

But nothing. From this day forth, neither of us will utter our previously chosen names for little Jamshed ever again. Indeed, we must put those names out of mind entirely, for they can only come back to hurt him.

Hurt him?

Yes, you wouldn't want to do anything to harm a little hair on little Jamshed's head would you now?

No, no of course not.

Then it is settled.

But, Jamshed. Wasn't Jamshed your father's name?

Ah yes, happy coincidence. Who would have guessed. You see, compromises can bring good things to bear.

I suppose so.

Yes, indeed.



Excerpt from poetry manuscript

muerte por tres

On February 20 2006, Nancy and Domenic Ianiero, from Woodbridge, Ontario, were murdered while in Mexico to attend their daughter's wedding. They were staying at the posh Barcelo Maya Beach Resort, just south of Cancun. The murders are still under investigation by Mexican and Canadian authorities.

one

a certain latitude in shifting latitude seeking south while language follows round, can we or can't we cancan and everpresent sense of beach and how sand signifies (how it ever came to be other than beaten down rock)
staying current with currencies, dollars of american denom, pesos, the notion of exchange as if it was something for something and not nothing for nothing (cash, the value of paper and ink)
listening to psychothriller on a 'pod, *run run run away* while L points to expressions in a spanishenglish phrasebook how about this one all about pickups and comeons and the laugh and the lark
transgressing borders, all, political regional linguistic sexual, all of us cats leapt from a balcony pirouette and tangle but always feet down first
wheels up over the quays waiting flying wondering what when wheels down what blood runs out can come in cancan

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three

wandering for coffee through the land of touts and souvenirs and excess, come back to a note that the three are on the beach somewhere around the point, so a trudge past hotel bars and lounge chairs longing looking for, some, thing, finally, a trio in yogic positions, day in and out of emerald green, buoyant and buoyed, walk with E back to town and inquiries that first sussing through a stranger that first delight beyond mystery and then
finding live ethernet connections and a hookup to what only can be called home not the university or kamloops or vancouver or calgary but the network that allows me access across spaces, making plans with research assistants and writers and all those that will come and pass through physical spaces that we will cross in the near and distant future, all these plans from off the beach in Playa where the spanish headlines talk about funeral ceremonies for canadians 'executed' locally, that is, found dead in a hotel room with throats cut

teasings about work and not, the cross between being on and off the job and reflections mine of how this crosses over so seamlessly that i wonder if i'm ever off or never on and focus on the language across the screen flicker once and let slip to sand and laughter and hands across the water sweet talks of lipped reconnaissance and back to organizing an event in the loops

four

playing in playa hot sun and more flying with the three and comfort levels with dusk across the beach not hand in hand but side by side and referencing common and not so and familiar and not so and both wondering about the night and the day
sushi so unsatisfied and music blaring from all parts unknown and evening cool so this is what it might be like
nighttime holds nothing but hope and scent but carried on the breeze an odour of dissatisfy and disquiet all around and blown out by surf



five

white comes off on everything that leans upon or brushes against the washed walls and if not for the colour of snow would be blood the way the stain remains on contact
cappuccino also white and full milk the scalded surface floating liquidtosolid transubstantially altering in my mouth so thought-of milk goes thick could be wax in throat lit with a wick and fire breathing
touristas cameraing the colour and iguanas in catcages and storm troopers at bank doors and somewhere in a five-star not far there is a room shuttered in forensic and hygiene and somewhere else is a soul or two who knows with what pressure with what conviction to drag a blade across a soft underside of neck

seven

tulum to playa del carmen the halfway point the Barceló hotel where the murders happened... language across the internet about news suppression
one trip advisory blogger writes: "the Barceló hotel chain could also have considerable direct and indirect liability if its employees were involved or were negligent. So far, there seems to be no rumor -- much less evidence -- that Barceló withheld any evidence or access"

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and the news today that now four mexican hotel workers suspected, suddenly having disappeared from the hotel post murder and questions of race and nationality and class circle wind and wave, brings to mind not-too-distant memories of an uncle and aunt murdered at home in delhi and the suspicions ran deep to home servants, the glocal focus on class politics everywhere here and there and who can sink to commit these crimes the despair of poverty first to blame and how capital talks without listening (when their nephew was interviewed he was drunk in the middle of the day saying you cant prove anything but neither denying nor confirming complicity and everyone it seemed knew he did it, did it for the money or to cover his own fiduciary crimes, but still, still, in middle class living rooms the talk turned to the runaway servants and how is they ran and how is it they could not be involved and how is it the police wouldnt do something about this, this all an ocean and a world away)

eight

migratory patterns flyin flyout on the wings of a, this is the way we flutter borders it seems as if it is in our blood a viral load or heaviness of breath
blood left on the floor of the barcelo transmigrated to doorhandles and toilets some rooms away so the reports say, how far can blood travel on a wing and a, there are two sides to every story but each side genuflects to the other refracts the right light and through such bending makes two become three, and so here the incommensurability of blonde canadians and darkskinned mexicans, is it three or is it four, who is it so fast and unhesitating with that stiletto
first morning up well before dawn on this the parting day and the lateness of a saturday night blends uncomfortably with a sunday morning, our taxi driver herding us in as drunken youth herd past, first they use you and then they abuse you slurs the one and thoughts drift across darkened beaches to unwedding parties alone in a room first used then abused