



*Les fleurs bleu de ferrier*

*TyBALT MAXWELL*

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In dedication to Seprakarius Delore

Fester  
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Et Cetera  
The End

*And the blue flowers of February would blossom in the snow.*

## Fester

She is standing alone with her toes tucked into the tide line, feeling the bitter cold nipping at her ankles.

She is draped in a thin one-piece which lets the ocean's breath caress her sickly figure.

She is looking out at the sea with the most resolute face she can muster, hoping against hope.

She is waiting like a maiden ghost for her love to come sailing back to her.

She is suffering.

The beach stretches on forever to both sides of her, gray sand flecked with thick pebbles of obsidian that shine in the weak light.

The spray on her face is his breath, his promise to return.

Docilely, she rubs at her flat stomach.

The baby will be here soon.

She knows because she can hear its whisper. Once it would come only at night when she could be dreaming, but instead would fret within starched folds. Now it was no longer exclusive to that safe veil, a soft voice in the back of her mind that pleaded with her.

Please don't let them destroy me mummy. Please keep me. I don't want to die.

The doctor's voice calls to her from the top of the hill, urging her to bed. With one last look she begins the steep incline. Promising quietly to herself that she will not abort.

She is suffering.

The infirmary is lit with the dying gray light of a sun choked by cloud.

The nurse is sanguine and polite, did you enjoy the fresh air?

"Yes."

Have you decided to go through with the treatment yet?

"No."

When the nurse disappears she wanders. The doctor keeps a small aquarium in the lobby, where she stares for hours on end. Books can't hold her attention anymore; she sits and tries to read but the whispering befuddles. Words cannot trap her in a thrall like they used to, but these fish. The red ones have such pretty scales.

The doctor comes to sit beside, watching with her the fish. Today is the day: If you do not consent to treatment today, you are not guaranteed to live.

"No". Eyes following the fleeting crimson.

The coming months will be painful as the disease eats at your body, destroying you from the inside. It will feed.

“No”.

But why?

“No”.

We can save you. Why do you resist?

“No”.

And then he's gone, head hung.

Don't worry my baby, I will protect you.

The sting of alcohol is strong in the air.

Craning her neck, a gentle creak as the joint pops, hair tumbled onto her face.

The window shows the cliff, and then the sea.



Always she is tired. Tired every day, but sleep is so difficult. His whisper is like static: jolting, heavy and demanding.

She hopes that the birth will go smoothly.

She wants to have a baby, a smiling baby to love.

She wants to show that even a barren woman like her can provide a child for him.

She stands alone beside the sea, feeling the spray. Thinking of times when she would stare into his eyes and see this very view.

She is suffering.

# Squabble

It can be plainly said that Carolyn leads a very arduous life.

This morning, she wakes up at 7:30. The alarm clock radio is set between stations, and it blares white noise at her. She reminds herself to change the settings eventually (every morning the same dream).

Without really waking up, she bathes. First her hair: lather, rinse, repeat. Then her body. She wants so badly to relax in the warmth but she cannot allow her skin to prune and wrinkle.

On this day her sister died and was buried but five days before.

Ten minutes with the moisturizing mask. Anti wrinkle cream. Foundation, blush and eyeliner. And then the thick paint that sticks to her fingers in globs. Every morning. Smudges of colour that turn her lips red, eyes blue.

By nine, brunch for two is in the oven and she can paint her fingers; thick red goo sliding from the brush and onto her perfectly cut nails.

At ten there is a knock.

Good morning with a tired sigh, letting her friend inside.

They sit together in the parlor, as they do every day, treating each other to gossip while Carolyn serves brunch. The other is named Gladys. Gladys is an older lady, holding her purse to her chest and her hat indoors, never quite gesturing correctly.

How are you feeling, she says. Waiting primly for Carolyn to serve biscuits and tea.

I'm fine thank you, and yourself? Serving buttered scones flecked with bits of strawberry red. That was her favourite colour. Everything red reminds these days, but she cannot allow herself to cry. It wouldn't be kosher.

Oh I'm fine thank you, these scones are very nice.

Never a complaint against Carolyn's baking. She was trained very strictly to bake all the essentials. Biscuits, Scones, Cakes with cream cheese icing, Loaf (flavoured with lemon and textured with poppy-seeds), Apple crumble (made with local \_\_\_\_\_ apples).

The guest is making a cursory glance at the family photo, propped so primly on the side table above a fake aloe, her mouth curved like a fish hook.

It's such a shame what happened to her.

Yes, yes it is.

I could never understand why she never took the medicine, it must have been painful. Did she look in pain when you went to visit her?

No.

(She looked happy, happier than she had ever been.)

Instead: Did you hear what happened with the blacks?  
I heard Edgar finally kicked the bucket.

Yes dear, I did. Bound to happen after being  
bedridden so long. It's a shame, but at least he lived a nice  
full life. I do think he fancied me a little though. He was always  
making eyes at me when I would visit. She ends this statement  
with pressed lips, holding her tea with a limp wrist.

I wouldn't doubt it, Gladys.

Clearly Carolyn leads a very arduous life.

That evening she visits the grave alone, still under her  
mask of pigment.

The stone is plain and serviceable, a dull block of  
granite lightly engraved with name and years. She dolls it up  
with flowers before retreating to a bench opposite.

It's hours before she leaves, and when she does it's  
dripping down her face. She hides her melt in her fingers as  
she hurries home.

Her mother picks up the phone on the second ring.

Hello Carolyn.

Hello mother.

What is it?

I wanted to call you, to see how you were. We haven't talked since the burial. I'm sorry.

Oh.

I mean, I thought it would be best that we talked about it.

We don't need to talk about it.

Why not?

Goodbye Carolyn.

She stands there holding the phone, lost in the dial tone.

Mother.

A dream about her sister:

It is her fifth visit that month. They are sitting together on the bed, Carolyn proud and erect while her sister slumps and giggles like a child. There was a joke, but she can't remember what it was. She is the only colour in the room, as if her makeup had absorbed all the pigment from the gray light.

You know, I've always admired you.

Really?

You never gave in to her. Ever. I thought she was going to kill you when you admitted your love for that foreign man. I could never be that brave.

Oh? Her eyes are full of light. Her fingers innocently playing with her hair, bare feet padding against the tile floor.

I just did what I felt was right, Lyn. I'm not that brave. She giggles and then it's as if the gray has breached her psyche. For but a scant moment her eyes lose their light, her

smile fades and she becomes this melancholy thing that idly rubs at itself.

Before her sister can come back, she awakens.

I can see why, Carolyn. Your mother never really did like her. Gladys flourishes this line with a dismissive wave of her hand. It's common knowledge of course.

She was her daughter, Gladys!

Neither can believe the tone the other just took. Taken aback, the guest explains herself.

She refused to be a proper lady. Couldn't even give your mother grandkids.

Gladys!

Under the mask of chemicals she is livid, an angry mass of skin fighting to show its red.

What.



Gladys, this is my sister we are talking about. Show some respect.

Alright then, dear. Fluttering lashes, smoky blue irises rolling within their whites, that punctuated sip of tea.

I'm sorry.

The cup beckons her sight, swirling on her lap with unmixed milk, a choking cloud that envelopes the brown within and turns it to its own ends. How could she have shouted at her friend?

The silence is only broken when Gladys, with a sigh, mentions old Roger from up the hill. He fell off his ladder, didn't you know.

That night she is dabbing her eyes with a tissue, stopping the tears before they can ruin the perfect black lines drawn on her lash.

The phone rings. She stares, stifling a sniffle at the receiver before cutting it off midway through the second ring. She holds her head in her hand and asks hello.

“Why are you crying.”

Because I'm upset, mother.

“Why are you upset.”

My sister just died.

“Forget about her, she's dead.”

Mother?

“Listen to me Carolyn, I haven't much time. Retrieve your children for me.”

Why?

“Would you disobey your mother.”

...No mother.

“Remove them from school for a week. Tell the administrators that their grandmother wishes to see them. If you begin driving now, you will arrive by nine.”

Yes mother.

She tosses her box of tissues onto the side table, nudging the picture of a happy family.

The tissue in her hand is smeared red and blue. Her face is smudged. She needs to wash and put it back on.

Her eyes go wide at the sight of an empty cabinet.

The clerk is just about to leave when Carolyn begins to tap the glass.

The door opens, jingling the chime. The young man's foot keeps it propped as he looks upon her.

I'm uh, sorry ma'am. We closed half an hour ago.

I just need to make a quick purchase. I can't see my kids without my face.

I'm sorry miss, but I'm not authorized to sell merchandise after hours.

Hands tense like claws latching onto the boy's shoulders, shaking.

"Give me my face. I can't show myself without my face."

He struggles in her grip.

"Give me my face! I can't show myself without my face!"

He cries out for help as the sharp nails dig into his shoulders through his thin tee, a slight trickle of red.

"Give me my face you little punk. Give me back my face you bastard. You little shit. Give me my face."

She smashes his head against the glass store front, and releases a shriek that seems to pierce the sky.

## Chapter 2.5

*(Continued from A1)* ... The assailant was arrested Friday morning at her place of residence. Charges are being laid despite the unwillingness of the victim to appear in court. The prosecution believes they have sufficient evidence for a conviction regardless.

"She looked quite flustered, but there were no grounds to withhold her children from her" said Arlene Harris, principal of St. Denis boarding school. There were traces of blood on her fingernails and on the steering wheel of her car.

"I don't understand why this happened", James Thamen, Manager of \_\_\_\_\_ Square General Goods. "She's a regular here, makes weekly visits to restock. She had just come in two days before, and she seemed fine. I have no idea what would motivate her to steal our entire stock."

And later, "He was such a good kid, so quiet but still very nice. I can't believe that anyone would do this to him, such a good kid".

Doctor Francis Kauf, Physician, had this to say: "I've been her family doctor for 25 years now and she's shown no signs of undue stress or dementia. The news came as a shock to myself and my associates."

A psychiatrist from St. Denis has come in to examine her for signs of latent mental illness. They've ruled out brain cancer, but there are tests that still need to be done. I will keep you posted as results come in.

I can't shake the feeling that there's something deeper here, something wrong. I'm planning on doing a bit more snooping around before letting this go. More next week as the case unfolds.

Reporting for the truth:  
Edward Detour.

# Headache

This newspaper is the last that Joel would ever read. It was dropped on his doorstep a week or so after he came home from the hospital, sprained and bruised and bandaged. This week's must be here by now, but he doesn't want to make the trip to the end of the hall.

Still his head resounds with that slow and painful throb, that hurt which embedded itself in his psyche. His right hand is cradling his wounds, fingertips splayed across the rough bandage. His left is holding the soft words in his lap, glossing over them as he reads and rereads the struggle to piece

together why he was attacked. He thinks: This man has no idea. No idea at all.

His room is sparsely decorated: There is the bed on which he sits now, bathed in a fluorescent light (the exposure has faded the sheets from a strong navy to a powdery blue), and there is the clock which rests high up on the wall opposite; simple black numbers stark against a plain of white.

That fucking clock.

Every moment brings with it an awful tick-

Tick.

-which buries itself in his mind. Like so many shards of glass the time makes itself violently known to him.

Tick.

That man has no idea at all.

He lets the paper fall from his limp hand, laying back and resting his pain on the pillow. The light above him slips through his irises and assaults his brain.



His sleep is sporadic. While his eyes are heavy he struggles to find that craved escape. His face is sagging under burden, darkening 'round the eyes.

His dreams are of her, that awful clown woman. How she grabbed his head by the hair and slammed it into the glass over and over and over until the shards embedded in his forehead and he bled so much he couldn't see for the crimson and she screamed at him and-

Tick.

-then the black as she drops him.

He wakes panting from his nightmare, the image of her screaming face still fresh in his vision. His head hurts the most with waking, a splintering feeling deep inside that Tylenol does little to degrade.

Five in the morning. He slips into the kitchen and makes himself some toast. He has been out of butter for two days.

When the man came he spoke with him through the crack of the opened door, restraining the reporter's entry with the pull chain; one eye wide and fearful stared out into the hallway, a tiny pupil in a sea of white. A reflection in the iris of strong fluorescent lights that do so little to push and claw at the shade of black that coats every surface, every hidden nook and cranny

Tick.

in the hall.

Now he is laying in the throes of ennui. What to do, what to do? Joel has spent days staring at this clock in complete anti-complacency.

I wish he knew I wish he knew.

He has no idea at all why couldn't I tell him?

Tick.

Go outside.

The clock is teasing him, daring him to leave. He has spent far too long indoors. His tongue longs for new tastes, his ears for new sound, but he must not leave.

Go on outside. Leave this place.

His eyes for new sights.

Tick.

You can't make me leave. I'm not leaving.

And your legs, do you not feel how they long for movement? That itch in your muscles stems from disuse.

Tick.

Atrophy.

"I've been through enough! You can't tell me I have to endure more!"

Tick.

"No!"

But the whisper persists in the back of his mind,  
pleading with him, begging.

Kick up a stir, have a mess, make them pay for what  
they did to you.

He clutches his head in both hands now, breathing  
deep, heart pounding, skin paling, eyes so wide

Tick.

Breath staggered.

No. I'll not go outside. My fear of them will not pervert  
to hate. You are trying to drive me mad, to break into  
hysterics and destroy myself. You wish to send me outside,  
completely imbalanced, so that I might assault as I have  
been assaulted.

No.

But you're already crazy, I already have you. What can you lose?

Tick.

You're talking to your clock.

Tick.

But it's alright. The world has ignored you. Iona would speak to his horse out of desperation.

Tick.

You're not like the horse though. You're making everything worse!

Ripped from the wall, clutching it in both of his stiff hands and throwing it to the ground, panting.

Tick.

Shut up!

Wide eyes spit frothing on his lips kicking at the glass and the twisted metal frame.

“You're making everything worse!”

Shards of glass refract in the carpet. The metal bends and little pieces jingle out. The plate tears and numbers tumble left and right. His face hits his pillow as he clutches his sheets, seeking catharsis from the broken heap through heavy breaths. Inhale, exhale, inhale, until he feels light.

Slumping down, he slips into his first full sleep in days.

The day is sleepy, clouds forming a blanket of bright gray above the quiet village. It is one of his first days working in the general store.

A customer has just left, and the manager is berating him on keeping social. You always do this, Joel. You always make the customer feel like you don't want to speak with them. You are so bad for business.

If not for his mother's relationship with this man, he would not be working here. He would not have a job at all.

They want service with a smile. You can't just act like you don't want to be here. What would your mother think if she was told about how antisocial you are. You should grow up and learn to be less afraid of people.

The phone rings and he goes to the back. You can pack up your stuff for today. It is twenty five minutes after closing. Yeah, he's alright, he's just leaving now. No no, he's been no trouble. Alright I'll see you tonight. I love you too.

That clown's face is in his and he can't move. The image is static but the pain builds. He feels his skull cracking under such huge pressure, decrepit spider fingers wrapped onto his face, each freakish knuckle bulging out of taught skin and that long awful shriek and-

-he wakes up. His breath is heavy. No escape. There is no escape.

I need to get help. I need to see a therapist. I can't live like this. Help me please, I need an escape".

He lurches to the door and, with shaking fingers brings himself to undo the draw chain.

The apartment hallway is a deep sea landscape. Immediately beyond his threshold lays a black ocean, a deep sea trench filled with kelp and fish and corpses.

Slam.

“There is no escape”.

There is no escape.

He is crying. His brain is pounding at its prison of bone.

“No escape at all.”

No escape at all.

Tick.

Go on outside. The whisper is so strong, harsh and close to his ear. Join me in the deep. Help me to make them pay for the sins they have inflicted on you. Why should you allow them to live so happily? You never liked them. They teased you at school for being so shy, they hurt you and brought you to tears. Why weep for them now?

And new things to learn.



Tick.

Join me.

New emotions to feel.

Tick.

And new dreams to dream. Does your brain not crave new experience? New feeling? Do you not feel the stagnation that courses through you? Come outside.

No.

I'll not let myself succumb.

Silence.

"I'll not let myself succumb!"

He hits his head against the wall. There is a soft crack as drywall plaster caves under his might, leaving behind a crater flecked with red.

"I'll not let myself fall to you!"

Again.

"You'll never take me."

Open the door and leave.

Again.

White bits plastered to his forehead.

Again.

Again.

Joel experiences pain like he has never felt before.

# Ink

I don't have much time. It's not safe for me here, not now.

I'm on my last ink ribbon; they won't give me anymore.

This is Edward Detour reporting for the final time.

There's something in this village. Something bad, something wrong. My boss is in on it, I can tell. There's something in the way he stares at me through the office window from behind the blinds. My co-workers here too, they keep trying to peek at what I write, keep peering over my shoulder asking "what are you writing, let me see". I've turned my desk from the opening, I just need 15 minutes to type this letter and then I can run, run away.

Just keep typing, I have to keep typing. Keep a consistent rhythm so I don't appear to be thinking too much. If I take the roads I fear they'll find me. I advise you to avoid them too.

I paid a visit to the police station, asking about the status of Carolyn (the assailant in the attack two weeks ago). She wasn't listed in their records. All of them were adamant that no such incident took place, and no such woman existed.

Her house is gone. It's just gone. There's no house number between 114 and 116. 115, which I had been inside myself, just does not exist. I checked up and down the street. Most of the other numbers are there. 104 is missing as well.

Everyone, even her children, believe she never existed. They all stood rank and file with that old crone behind them, arms draped over shoulders and a thin smile that looked like it could tear her face open.

"She is our mother" they all claimed. All together: "She is our mother and we love her. We're home".

I need to get out of here, I need to run.

Their visits are more frequent. Pester pester pester pester. Yes, I'm working on the sports column, of course I'll do that piece on the mayor's speech. No, I'm npt off-tasking.

I went to the victim's apartment again. He was dead, body sprawled out on his bed. There were large dents in the wall by the door, and a red smear on the floor. Someone had dragged his body through the apartment.

Black spots on the bed.

The phone cord was cut. I had to leave to call the police. On my way down the hall I ran into the manager, Mr. Thamen. I don't know why I didn't warn him, I guess I was afraid. He ignored me as I hurried by, fighting to keep the bile down.

He stood across the hall from the boy's apartment, staring at the door. He didn't move at all, just stared fixated at the room.

I got the hell out of there and called the cops. By the time they got there, the room didn't exist.

I'm getting out of here. Everything has gone to shit. I don't understand anything and I don't care anymore.

Fuck justice, all is lost. We're done unless we get the hell out of Dodge.

I'm leaving this on your doorstep in the hope that I can trust you, and that maybe I can save you. Whatever is happening, it's affecting people in this town only. I hope.

I was not allowed to publish my findings on this, but 25 years ago the government released a dangerous chemical codenamed "INK". My friend inside claims this was a standard "guinea pig" test, to see what the effects on humans and the wildlife would be. They theorized that it would act as a powerful pesticide, which would have no effect on people.

A week later they issued a formal apology, supposedly written by the prime minister himself, explaining the test and the product. Any harm to the villagers of \_\_\_\_ was a mistake, and they are so sorry. None of this "harm" was ever listed. What had this chemical done? Not even my friend knew.

I think this is the cause of everything. Somehow, 25 years later this chemical is finally taking its toll. The longer we are in this village the more it will get into our brain. We need to get out of here, we need to leave.

There's no way we can stop it

I'm running out of ink, I have to go

Goodbye. I hope someday I will see you again. Stay safe, stay strong, and know that if you leave this place you will survive.

## Et Cetera

His name is Piere Leblanc. On his easel is his masterpiece.

His hands are shaking, the fingers scratch at his body as if to end some infernal itch.

Tears glisten in his eyes, sweat stinging at his sore wounds. Red marks up his forearms, on his neck, face.

The monster stares back at him through layers of acrylic paint.

Breathing deeply. The fumes sting his eyes and leave this awful taste, but he must pant regardless.

Behind him his fire roars in its house, but he finds himself in fits of shivers (regardless).

The border is made up of so many thorns, large barbs digging out of writhing tentacles, wrapped about a large, dark, body.

Just off centre is this huge eye, a brilliant white in contrast to the caliginous body and surroundings. Above the eye which dominates the focus, four smaller and squinting. The rest is Goya smudged shades of black.

The paint sticks to his palms as he grips the easel in both hands.

"I hate you."

"Get out of my life, get out!"

He throws the piece into the fire, watching the black smoke billow from it.



"Gone. Gone forever", scratching at his wrist.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

He can't take it anymore;

It has been two weeks since Adrian was last put under.

He lays on his bed, craving the pendulum.

Two weeks of sleepless rest.

He's grown so accustomed to nightly sessions, he cannot relax without it, the commanding voice which keeps him from toss-turning in the folds. Every night, staring at the grainy ceiling and fighting the sheets with fingers bent, wishing sleep would take over until finally slipping into some dark vision for short hours.

After the nightmares his eyes stand wide in their seats, peering in the thin light that marks the sun's arrival. Black drool escapes him, he cries it. It creeps down his face and splatters his sheets and pillow.

Stains his lips. Teeth.

Hour upon hour as MP3 compression crackles in the back of his skull. Lines blur in darkness. Little square pixels coagulating in the corners.

When he dreams it is dark. The beast is staring into his eyes, unseen save the bright white sheen of his 5.

The boy knows his captor: "Daque". The name is from the sound it makes, clicking its long tongue against its beak. "Daque" he repeats, louder. Get away get away get away.

He's held fast in its grip, writhing against thorns which cut so deep in his skin. Rip and shred.

Its brutal beak is broken open, long slender tongue poking from the side and probing the implacable darkness around. A struggle as he's pulled towards't, goopy black saliva slathering as he's pressed into that pulsating mass. His fingers slip to hold, clawing against wet muscle as pleads to escape the creature's maw.

But inward. The tide pulls him back, diving face first into a scream.

The descent is a choke. Every breath a battle, stinging his lungs with acrid gasses as tight flesh walls encroach to squeeze it out of him. So many pulses beating around him.

A light shines ahead, a brightness that flickers gently, an end that slowly approaches with this squelching sound.

His eyes go wide as he witnesses the beast's stomach, and what lies within.

In the waking world he suffocates on black goo.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

That man has no idea. No idea at all.

William Detour throws the letter onto the table, hands shaking as fingers use his hair to floss.

Chemicals, conspiracy, the government. The problem isn't human, but überhuman. He has no idea at all.

There is no verboten so severe as the disgrace of ancestors. He is transgressing his duty. Did they not slave for the coat which drapes their mantel?

Behind a red man is a flowing field of wheat. His arm is raised, brandishing a sword of brilliant white as he encroaches on a great boar, crimson with fury.

In the background, a tall tower stretching into the sky.

In the closet is a chest, hidden behind a thick layer of clothing, old coats and dusty boots. Inside is a red folded cloth, wrapped about a sword of glorious sheen. A long blade, white without tarnish, glowing in the fire light with an aura of anger. This is a blade forged to bring wrath upon the wicked.

I have to find him. I have to put right what has gone so wrong. We must end the dreams that plague us.

He stumbles from the threshold, his frail form a blot against the blinding sun. The woods are dense and thickly taught. The naked blade drags 'gainst the air as he weaves between clawing branches that fight for grip on his skin.

And then the base of this mountain, where his mirror is waiting for him.

Brother.

Yes?

You've forgotten.

It's not a monster, William.

Then why are you here?

They stand together and face the darkness, gazes turned inward to the gaping maw.

I felt myself drawn.

The brothers hold hands, one with a torch and the other with a blade, together crawling down that rough throat, and leaving the midday sun.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

One dial counts the time (1:25).

Another counts his height. Engine temperature. Cockpit temperature. Speed. Balance. Gas.

And twenty others which clog the area below the glass.  
Cluttered with knobs and whistles and levers and switches.

Below his plane the land is smooth and gray, all details  
choked by distance. Above him is this thick, impenetrable  
curtain of clouds, ominous in its stance.

In front is the only stand-out: A single mountain that  
erupts from the earth.

His name is Igor Rastivään.

When it called, he hesitated. No. No no no. But then  
slowly louder. The dust gathering on his plane, the plush of his  
seat. Fly, Igor. Fly for me. Do you not love to fly?

Pleading, with sharp thorns wrapped about, forcing his  
hand,

(His name is Igor Rastivään)

and as hard as he fights, that mountain is still in the  
corsairs.

(1:27)

He's going to die. He's going to be eaten by the beast.  
Every thought that runs through his head. The beast calls in  
desperation.

(His name)

And he fidgets in his seat, what little he can as if to  
loosen the tight grip,

(Is Igor Rastivään).

to fight the sound in his ear. That awful tick.

Daque Daque Daque Daque Daque

Ringling in his ears.

Until he accepts. He lays back, arms still adjusting dials  
and clutching the wheel. Closing his eyes, holding his breath.  
Everything becomes gray, and then he's out, arms still guiding.

The glass above is a bed sheet. The folds, heated. He  
sleeps until (1:31) his vessel shakes that black mountain. Debris  
splattering the side as solid rock breaks and crumbles.

Miniature explosions speaking up as if to mimic their  
better, fissures forming in spider-web lines along the peak.

Molten rock streams down the sides

And coats his bed.



# The End

In a dark room

In a dark place

A boy sits at his computer.

The sun fights in vain 'gainst a pink curtain cloth, worn from years.

On his monitor is a trending video, 25 million views so far.

The description reads: Video taken on the day of the tragedy in \_\_\_\_\_. An hour before the eruption, a deranged man runs down the street while another films.

In the video, he sprints without any clothes on. He's shouting: "Don't let them tell what I am that!"

In the background, a weasely looking man rushes out of his house, leaving the door wide open and running with a sword drawn in the other direction. The camera follows the naked man, panning as he runs by. He's stopped when he collides with an older woman, knocking a bucket of apples from its perch on her head.

While they fly in every which way, a voice behind the camera comments: "This is live from \_\_\_\_\_. Tune in after the break for more footage from the best reporter ever. This is channel five, reporting out."

He begins to fumble the camera, but then a loud crash startles him. Falling over, we see an old car speeding away, up the street towards the woods.

Muted screams. Slow grating as he crawls towards the camera, a bloody finger rubbing the screen before it cuts to black.

The boy scrolls down, legs crossed, left hand to his face, and types:

"Lol, why did that guy have a sword??"

Special thanks goes out to Seprakarius Delore, a great friend and the focus of this book. Talat Kazim for his seemingly endless praises, and for being my biggest fan. Ley La Phoebus for her wonderful art. Mr. Fetter for encouraging me past the first two pieces. Andrew Stacey for making sure I'm not alone. Mike Sands, for the piece "A Blue Whale's Heart Beats 5 Times a Minute". A thank you to my family, for your varying levels of support.

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