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Nip It In The Bud.

There is a car and it's moving along straight and very quickly. There are high walls lining the highway to protect nearby houses from all the noise. She's driving away from the city and has been for nearly an hour already and hasn't escaped anything yet because there are still people living everywhere. There are large green signs on arches that span all six lanes but she knows this part of the route well enough to ignore them.

The previous night was a tapestry of shallow dreams and disturbed wakefulness and when she woke in the light it was still partially covering her. Her bag was already packed and she left the place without eating anything. She drove to his house but she knew he wasn't there and that he'd left it in the hallway for her to collect. His roommate answered the door and she explained everything about coming and collecting. She waited in the doorway whilst he went and retrieved it for her even though she was used to walking in without even knocking. She'd never talked to the roommate properly and when he came back with the canvas they stood there whilst she held it in her two hands. He asked her a few questions about her departure and she was sure he already knew the answers to them. She said it all anyway then he bid her a safe journey and hopefully we'll run into each other again were his parting words.

She is driving and thinking over those last few days and how the city had behaved differently as in ceremoniously. She's having the feeling that maybe the places she knew well and navigated frequently had all turned out their most obvious features in order to suggest to her the way she should remember them. She'd spent the late afternoons sitting for him in the dusty studio with her back to the window. She is driving and thinking about the way that he spoke to her whilst he was painting. She's thinking about how they talked differently in there because she felt as if his attention was mostly on the painting and not as much on her. Sometimes she'd be sitting and want to turn and look out the window at the two wooden chairs with an ashtray placed on the one on the left. Sometimes she would picture the two chairs in her mind and then turn quickly to look at them just to confirm the image.

All of his words were mixed with his activity and passed through the canvas reaching her indirectly. He would ask her about the things that he knew she would usually avoid talking about because if she was ever going to be comfortable talking about them then now was the time. He would start asking her about the city and her place in it and she would tell him and then realize she was talking about her self and her place in it. She's thinking about when he was painting her and how she would say things as she was thinking them or be thinking new things through talking about them. She was worried about all sorts of things and it wasn't the place she lived in that was responsible because nothing external could be held responsible for her worrying anyway. She figured this out as she was saying it and then he told her that she needed to nip it in the bud. He told her that when you are living there are all of these buds growing and that things grow better when not all of the buds are allowed to grow at the same time. She was thinking about how he was telling her that she needed to nip it in the bud sometimes.

The car is moving along and inside it there's the sound of the radio. She's listening to the voice as if it speaks in another language. When she isn't thinking ahead or recalling things she's trying to follow the flow of words but isn't really grasping the meanings of sentences. She thinks about when he was painting her and how there would be those long silences. It was difficult to know for exactly how long the no talking lasted because of the motionlessness of her body.

She hadn't known him a long time but from the beginning when they met those silences were always permitted and she was comfortable in them. Then later on he would ask if he could paint her which yes he could and then she would visit his house in the late afternoons to sit for him.

Occasionally he would speak without taking his eyes from the brushwork and ask a question with pertinence that it really stirred her. She would think for a time and her reflections would turn inwards and feed back on themselves like black holes where space was also time because of the complete lack of urgency. That's what happened in all of the silences or some of them. Then she would begin her response with a slow string of words that sometimes petered out mid-sentence. She would restart with the same words again but this time more quickly moving over everything twice like a laser printer. This is how she reassured herself of her speaking - with short lapses and inconsistencies in the speed and in the progression. She is driving and thinking about the techniques she used to better transfer her thoughts into conversation. She is thinking about how in the studio the relationship was mostly with the painter and not as much with the person painting and how she was provided with the right voice for saying it all. She would state ideas then rework them in the next sentence and even contradict herself if she felt she needed to.

She starts to hear the car radio when the man is talking about a recall on Toyotas with faulty accelerator pedals. She hears that there have been some accidents and a lawsuit and she's thinking about what it would be like if she crashed her own car even though she knows it probably wouldn't happen on purpose. She is thinking that sometimes he would say something and it would make her laugh out loud without her really wanting to. He would have said something hilarious like about current events and even though she hadn't heard the news she would understand because he chose the events that might as well be timeless when someone recalled them as a story. He would tell her about how he was addicted to reading the stories in the business section of the newspaper - the stories about how this company announced that they might not sign the contract with that other company and how the scandal is described on paper. She would be laughing and maybe forget her body position for a moment and then he would tell her to keep still please. She's remembering when he'd had his concentration disturbed because she moved and how he stopped painting to light a cigarette. He wasn't irritated but she'd felt ill at ease anyway because without the painting she was a different kind of subject for him and he was perceiving her more directly. She knew the way he painted and she'd seen how things from the world appeared on his canvas. Everything was treated nearly equally and nothing was much more or less important than human subjects or everything was of the same importance as human subjects. He used the same kind of brush-strokes over the whole surface and so there was this coherence to everything he depicted that made her feel as if she understood more or as if he understood more. It would make her think that maybe he knew how to see all things in any one thing and then present it to us somehow as a picture. And then when he was painting her she was more comfortable because she felt as if he wasn't really interpreting her but just placing her as color and shape or arranging her surface. She is driving and looking at that part of the road where it's moving too quickly to see it clearly. The different grays of the asphalt are just one blurred image that's shifting like the picture does on a broken television. She's thinking about how soothing it was to be reduced to colors and shapes and to have her surface rearranged. She is thinking about how many colors he'd had and imagining being remade through infinite combinations.

She is in the car traveling between places. She's been looking ahead of her the whole time but it's all of a sudden she realizes that she's left the city and the road is narrower and there are no more walls along the sides. There aren't any more houses around but every so often there are signs or billboards. She is reading the advertisements as they come along and enjoying the whole thing. She's noticing how the distance between them is irregular and how there might be no signs for a long while and then a few all at once - or sometimes there will be one and then another quite regularly or every once in a while. She's thinking about how maybe it has something to do with the price of land and ownership and leases. This one is an ad for liquid laundry detergent with an abstract blue background that looks like an ocean of freshness. The letters are in orange and arranged at an angle and the composition is very well balanced. She is starting to look at the landscapes that she passes through between signs. She is weighing in her mind the percentage ratio of land : sky as it all goes by. Sometimes there's a lot of sky and a narrow strip of land and then other times there seems to be a whole lot more land and less of the sky. She wonders whether the ratios are actually there or whether she just perceives them that way in forgetting exactly. She is thinking about how she never really grasps the landscapes as landscapes when she sees them from the car and how it's more like just one shifting image that elapses between cities.

Another one is approaching that has a completely white background and blue lettering and a dolphin to advertise mobile phone contracts. Between the signs she is thinking about the landscapes and how they're like a painting that gradually changes whilst it is painted. She is thinking about how there are hills for a while and then later there will be no hills and how it all happens slowly without you really noticing. She is thinking about how he might paint the landscape and re-paint it constantly so that the mood is always different. She thinks about how even when she pays no attention to the landscapes between signs they are probably still affecting her mood in the same way that paintings do when they hang quietly in a room.

Another one passes by with the beach seen as if looking through half-full bottle of beer where the beer is meant to look like a golden sea at sunset. Then when it passes there's a new landscape appearing from nowhere as if she hadn't been paying attention but she had been.

The ratio is around one-third land : two-thirds sky and the color is this gradient from almost brown turning golden through blue and finally almost white.

She is feeling something physical like speechlessness but she hasn't even been talking and so she'll appease herself by turning off the radio to compensate. The voice is saying something about how this company is losing their money because of what that one did and when it's off she can hear the tires slapping the road and that muffled low humming of the engine that seems to loop over again and repeat itself about every ten seconds. Without the noise or with new noise she's wanting desperately to take off her shoes because the heel of it is pressing into her accelerator foot. The more she is thinking about it the more irritating it gets and so she starts to look for a place to pull over and stop the car. She is looking at the clock on the dashboard which is too fast but she knows by exactly how much and there's a thin film of dust over the LED screen. She is reading the time and calculating the correction automatically and associating it with late afternoon. The road still seems too major to make a stop on so she keeps going because there's a township coming up. There are houses along the road again as she approaches it and then in the center there's that main intersection that small towns all seem to have. There are low and wide buildings scattered around with large parking lots in front of them or to the side. Car dealership, bank, gas station, mechanic and the traffic signals are flashing orange and now she is looking at a sole policeman in the middle of the street who must be directing the traffic even though she's the only car. He motions for her to stop and his gesture actually touches her chest where she feels a patch of alarm inside because she isn't sure why for a few seconds until she sees another car of similar dimensions to her own in the cross-street and the policeman ushers it through first. The other car is making a smooth arc through the intersection and crossing her path to go in the direction she came from. There's a woman of about her age in the drivers' seat with a face and particularly the eyes that have a distracted expression. Then in the back seat she is seeing a young girl with her hands pressed to the glass as if they help her to see through it better. The child is turning its neck as the car sweeps past so as to keep her gaze fixed directly on us. She is feeling that unsettled patch in her chest again which is from being interiorised and unprepared and then being observed too directly. She's feeling burdened as if by her own identity and unnerved enough that her pupils dilate slightly and the orange flag in the hand of the policeman seems unreasonably bright. He's waving her through with broad movements of his arm and she can't look directly at him. She is feeling almost distressed because of the child and also because she doesn't know why there needs to be a policeman when there are no cars really anyway. She is thinking that she can't possibly stop in the town to take off her shoes because there's much too much there and it would be overwhelming to be a physical part of it all. She is driving away and just wanting to leave the place and then noticing a building like a community hall near the edge of it decorated with long colorful flag-banners. She is looking directly and the strings of color and they make her feel more at ease at first and after that almost ecstatic. The sensation lasts for the length of time that she's seeing it directly and then for about 200 meters down the road afterwards. For some reason when she is pleased she thinks of him and so now she is thinking of him and whether he would appreciate it if she photographed the flags in case he wanted to put them in painting.

There is a lot less light but still some light and she sees a shoulder where she can stop the car easily so she does. She is opening the door and realizing that the air inside is much warmer than the other air but she decides not to put on a coat. She is walking around the front of the car and sitting on the hood and feeling the heat of the engine through her jeans especially along the line where there's that crack for it to open. There are no other cars and she's hearing the sounds of taking off shoes. Her bare feet are touching the evening wetness on the narrow patch of grass. There's nothing outside of that feet sensation during a few seconds until she notices the openness around her which is much larger than the interior of the car and almost inconceivable. She has to regain herself somehow so she calls out into the space and her voice disperses into openness without an echo then scatters onto the ground like dust but she knows that really she isn't making any sound at all. She stands up and walks around to the side door for putting her shoes in and the moisture on her feet is making dark footprints in the dust. She sees the portrait resting across the back seat and her mind falls onto it when she places her shoes down. She is starting to wonder whether it is art when she is the subject and so she closes the door harder than usual in order to end the debate. She gets into the front again and the dust is sticking to the bottom of her wet feet but she likes it. She is noticing a dry throat and rheumy eyes and also noticing that the symptoms only belong to her body. Her emotions are either somewhere else and disconnected or maybe still there but sealed inside of images somehow. She is thinking the images and feeling the feelings but the emotions don't have bodily outcomes and then she notices that she isn't impatient any more. She is seated ready to drive again but her desires and impulses are receding like one of those shallow waves on the beach to reveal that she has a lot of time and space.



She is sitting leaning forward and bringing to mind the painting in the back without looking at it. She has a clear image but can't recognize herself beyond all the shape and color. She is turning her body around in the seat and now looking directly at it and there is color at first and then shape contour object space thinking. She is realizing that he hasn't just represented her in paint but also suggested her universally without identifying her. She sees the form as definitely herself but also as anyone else and is extremely disconcerted by this. She is turning back around again and the road is in front but she feels on hold somehow and there is so much time and so much space. She is wondering about whether he did any painting on it when she wasn't there sitting for him and does it make any difference anyway if she was there or not. She is noticing the clock again and feeling as if it is reproachful or disapproving of her somehow. It says 05:07 which she knows without really thinking means 05:03 or thereabouts. She is sitting and the car isn't moving and she knows without looking that there are the two wooden chairs with an ashtray placed on the one on the left.