

The broken

C	I
T	Y

The
Big
Chill

Winter 2014
ISSN 1916-3304

15

Funk

The broken



Winter 2014 Issue 15

The Broken City, ISSN 1916-3304, is published semiannually out of Toronto, Canada, appearing sporadically in print, but always at: www.thebrokencitymag.com. Rights to individual works published in *The Broken City* remain the property of the author and cannot be reproduced without their consent. All other materials © 2014. All rights reserved. All wrongs reversed.

On the Web:

www.thebrokencitymag.com

On mobile devices:

issuu.com/thebrokencity

Submission Guidelines:

www.thebrokencitymag.com/submissions.html

Correspondence:

thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com

Cover Art:

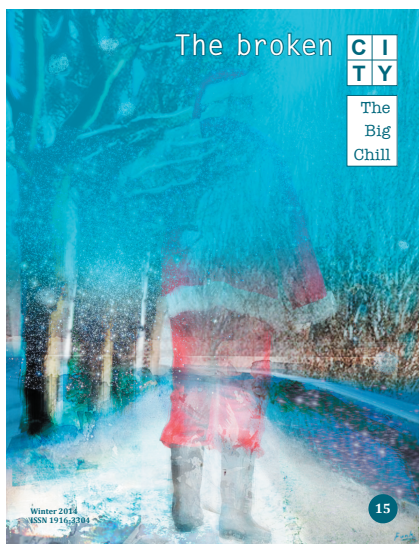
(Gouache, encre de chine, aquarelle, mixed technique)

Mia Funk (miafunk.com) won a Prix de Peinture - Salon d'Automne de Paris, has shown at the Grand Palais, was selected for Sky Television Portrait Artist of the Year and the Celeste Prize, and won a Thames & Hudson Prize. Her paintings have been highlighted on television and are held in several public collections, including the Dublin Writers Museum. Her fiction has been recognized by the Momaya Prize, the Hilary Mantel Short Story Prize and the Doris Gooderson Prize. See more of Mia's artwork on pages 6, 8.

Contents:

Poetry 3
The shark tank 6
Fiction 8, 13
Swedish jazz 11

In this issue:



Bundle up for *The Broken City's* frigid nod to all things winter.

Pull a stool up to the bar and watch the Flames play the Kings. We'll regale you with tales to make the spine shiver—from chilling homicides to chilly Sweden. Santa on trial! Toy

production outsourced! Will there be a Christmas?

The Broken City is currently accepting submissions for its summer 2015 edition: **The truth is out there.**

That's right, X-philies; the magazine is running a paranormal issue. Is your house haunted? Have you written an ode to the Loch Ness Monster? Need somewhere to send that short story about a Sasquatch that lives with a human family? Did you snap a photo of a blurry spot of light that could conceivably be a UFO? If it's weird, we want to see it.

Send your sightings, poetry, fiction, essays, comics, illustrations and photography to thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com.

Deadline is: June 1, 2015.

Xmas

Kevin Heaton

Today, I jogged past a church
with no cross and an artificial
Christmas tree from Bethlehem,
Pennsylvania.

Kevin Heaton lives and writes in South Carolina. His work has appeared in a number of publications, including: Guernica, Rattle, Raleigh Review, Beloit Poetry Journal and The Monarch Review. He is a Best of the Net, Best New Poet, and three-time Pushcart Prize nominee.
kevinheatonpoetry.webstarts.com/publications.html

The Secret Life of Snow

William Doeski

The secret life of snow unfolds
when I switch on floodlights and catch
the startled curvatures of drifts

lazing over the woodpiles. The dream
broke like a boil and exuded
images in varied pastels.

A girl-child kicking a football;
a drugstore's marble counter;
a cobbled street behind a factory;

a burnt brick smokestack coughing
gouts of purplish monoxide.
The secret life of snow excludes

these puzzle pieces but tucks
in its bosom the afternoons
we wasted hunting for mushrooms

you were afraid to cook and eat.
None bore that deadly expression
the most virulent amanitas

direct at the casual browser;
but you suspected the brown ones
of resentments deep enough to share.

Now as I watch the pre-dawn snow
rumple over the scene of the crime
you sleep as dramatically

as a heroine on the deathbed
of a nineteenth-century novel
and refuse to face the cunning

of a day too fresh to regret,
too monochrome to fully accept.
Still, I'm observing the blue

of dawn with innocence enough
to keep the stormy glow smiling—
the town plow gusting up the road

in a flash of orange and stammer
of metal on pavement inspiring
as the hacking of Achilles' sword.

William Doeski lives in New Hampshire and teaches at Keene State College. His most recent book of poetry is The Suburbs of Atlantis (2013). His essays, poetry, fiction and reviews have appeared in numerous journals. His current project is a series of ekphrastic poems. Blog at: wdoreski.blogspot.com; e-mail at: wdoreski@gmail.com.

What of the Moon?

Tom Montag

Li Po says
“moon the color of cold.”

I say
the broken darkness of sky,

the cracked greyness of ice,
loneliness in the deep woods.

What of the moon?
I look at his and think of

you looking at it too.

Tom Montag is most recently the author of In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013. Recent poems will be found in Stoneboat, Split Rock, Riding Light Review, The Chaffin Journal, Foliate Oak, and Hamilton Stone Review. He serves as the Managing Editor of the Lorine Niedecker Monograph Series, What Region?

Where is The Horse of a Different Color

Karen Neuberg

Cold drawing endless circles in the day. While I in urge to follow warmer routine, walk perimeters of slush. The hail comes down in pellets, stinging. There is no sign of color breaking through. So gray must make do...

Craving: jonquil. butternut. lavender. azure. cornflower blue, and more...

Winter is an island and it's lonely in its gray. Walker seeking sparkle of sun. My earmuffs green as hills, rising in spring's still-distant promise, somewhere a horse prancing in a field looking for a rider.

Thinking: cerulean. magenta. sparkle & glitter. glam of sun through leaves.

Where is the horse! To ride, ride along this gray day and into another color.

Karen Neuberg is the author of two chapbooks: Myself Taking Stage (Finishing Line Press, 2014) and Detailed Still (Poets Wear Prada, 2009). Recent poems appear or are forthcoming in Levure Littéraire, Paper Nautilus, The Vehicle, and Tinderbox. She's associate editor of the online journal, First Literary Review-East.

The Love of Winter

Sarah Brown Weitzman

George Bellows exhibit

It had to be the cobalt rising out of the whiteness
that Bellows loved working later in the warmth

of memory, that glint of sapphire and lapis lazuli
and not the zinc white of absence

and loss, nor the just-after blur and bleach
but the heaved-up snow of shoveled drifts

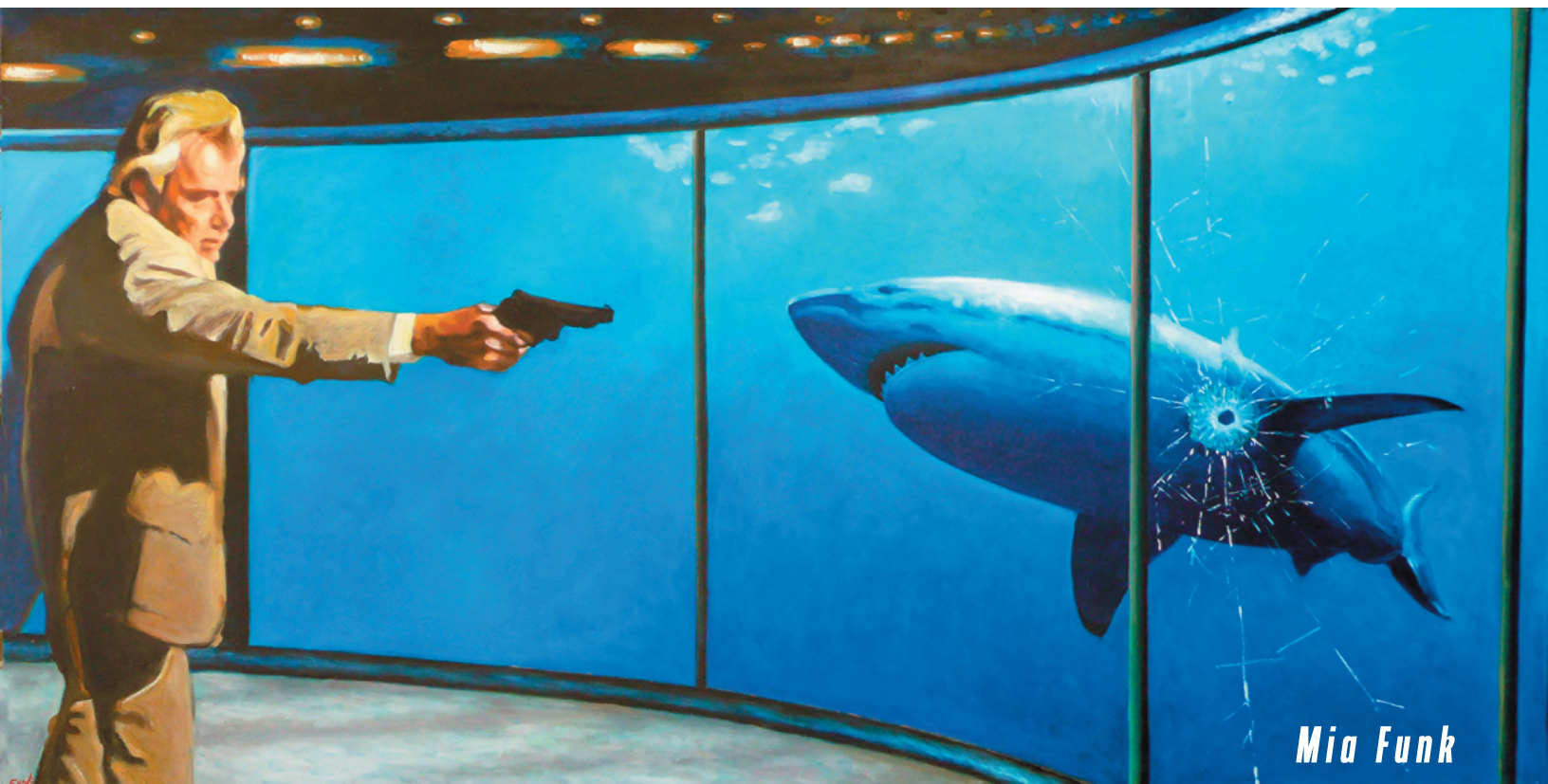
plastered on in a thick impasto. Bellows knew
the many whites of winter: river ice, frost

on the windows, grey melts, icicles like tallow
candles, train smoke, the gauze of falling flakes,

water rushing over stone, the brocade
of trod-upon snow and here and there the glistening

of you beside me like a sign of spring
beginning the thaw of love.

Sarah Brown Weitzman has been published in numerous journals, including Art Times, North American Review, Rattle, Mid-American Review, Ekphrasis, Abraxas, The Windless Orchard, Poet Lore, Potomac Review, and Poet & Critic. She received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Her latest book, Herman and the Ice Witch, is a children's novel published by Main Street Rag.



"Swimming with Sharks," oil on canvas

Michelle Disler

Miracles

When the bodies are too many to count when the crime is too grisly to name when the days on the crime scene, the years on the crime are too many to consider homicide laughs chuckles jokes feigns incredulity. When the crimes are too many to count, the bodies too grisly to name the days on the crime scene, the years on the crime are too many to consider homicide performs miracles only one day a week and today is not your day. When the days are too many to count when the years are too grisly to measure when the bodies on the scene, the years of bodies are too many to consider homicide asks do you want it done fast or do you want it done right. Count crime grisly today is not your miracle your right now your day.

Enough

Homicide stopped counting crime scenes long ago there are so many dead, so many scenes, so many crimes, pints of blood, square inches of violence, but homicide remembers every body to the last, the death, the evidence, the time of day, the light in the room. Homicide stopped counting the dead long ago there are so many scenes, so many crimes, numerous wounds, square feet of demise, but homicide remembers every wound to the last, the evidence, the time of day, the light in the room. Homicide stopped counting the crimes long ago there are so many dead, so many bodies, so many scenes, number of prints, square inches of death, but homicide remembers every scene to the last, the evidence, the time of day, the light in the room. There is death enough, violence enough to last a lifetime in the mind's eye of homicide, wounds, scenes, crimes enough to last a lifetime in the mind's eye of homicide, evidence, bodies, blood enough to last square inches, square feet of memory, so carefully measured.

[cont'd]

Luck

Bodies take up so much space in the mind's eye, felled one after another, day after wintry or summery day, scene after scene of the crime, in and outside of doors, morning and evening, every day of the week, every week of the year, until there is no rest for homicide, no room in the day or the brain for anything but the dead, the dead who come to homicide by accident, by stroke of bad luck, by fate, none of which makes a difference, really, when the outcome is all the same: homicide knows there will be questions. Homicide knows there will be fear. Homicide knows there will be fury. Homicide expects grief and no grief at all, bodies no longer whole by the sum of their parts, no concern for human life, only violence, violence in a violent world.

Justice

When the days are long, and the crimes are gruesome and many, and the evidence plays hard to get, there is nowhere else homicide would rather be, because flipping crime scenes like bodies, bodies like crime scenes, is too much fun. Gruesome is wildly enticing, tragic is the word of the day no matter how long before justice is served. When the crimes are long, and the days are gruesome and many, and justice plays hard to get, there is nowhere else homicide would rather be, because flipping justice plays flipping hard to get, tragic is wildly enticing and gruesome is the word of the day, no matter how long before the evidence is gathered, collected, uncovered. This is also when the source of all evil is "made," and the whole of humankind is the enemy of justice. This is also when gruesome and tragic and bodies and crime scenes are themselves together too much fun, and homicide is the word, the way of the day.

Memory

When bodies add up like memories in the mind of homicide, where is there room for anything else? When each body, each crime stays put in the mind of homicide, how is there room for anything else? When each victim, their name and their death, occupies a place in the mind of homicide, how can there be room for anything else? Where is there room in the mind of homicide to live a life free of bodies, and of crime, when these are the memories, the past that takes up so much space in the brain so that past becomes present, and present is past? Under what circumstances could homicide live a life of memory without bodies adding up, crimes adding up, the names of victims adding up, marking time in the present? What would that life be like, without the evils of men?

Michelle Disler has a Ph.D. in Nonfiction from Ohio University. Her writing has appeared in North Dakota Quarterly, The Massachusetts Review, Seneca Review and Hotel Amerika, among others. She is currently at work on a manuscript titled What the body knows, which follows her father's career as a homicide detective. Her first book, [BOND, JAMES]: alphabet, anatomy, [auto]biography (2012), was released by Counterpath Press.

Illustration Contributors

Mouki K. Butt (back cover) is an illustrator who likes to draw cute things and cute people. Since moving to the rainy West Coast in 2007, she has lost her Canadian winter cred. moukikbutt.com

Rose Poon (page 12) is a Chinese Canadian cartoonist from Vancouver, BC. Her cartoons have been regularly published in *The Networker* and have been exhibited at various galleries in Vancouver, Kelowna and Calgary. Rose's comic strips were awarded an Honourable Mention by L'Arche Vancouver in a 2014 art competition.

Mia Funk



"Beneath the Ice," oil on canvas

An Audience of One

Matt McGee

Dwayne liked to say, "When my last girlfriend left me, I decided she was gonna be just that—my *last*." A week after the break-up he started haunting Russell's, a little tavern trying to pass itself off as 'Calgary's ONLY Genuine Irish Pub.' The owners handed their waitresses Catholic school girl outfits, added shepherd's

pie to the menu and prayed a rosary for the best. Not having the NHL channel at home, Dwayne ignored the insincerity and adopted Russell's as his second livingroom.

He bought a Flames jersey and showed up right on time for games, minding every pass, move, every on-ice

stat. Molly, the bartender and the only genuinely Irish item in the place, took to Dwayne; it may not have been her career of choice, but Molly had been around long enough to know that men who tip well and are too busy watching hockey to mind your skirt are extremely rare. Molly memorized enough stats

from the ever-blaring ESPN to make conversation. Dwayne appreciated the effort but wrote it off as a bartender chatting him up for a tip.

One Tuesday night, the Flames were slated for a late game against the L.A. Kings. Dwayne sauntered in, jersey wobbling; Molly gave a little smile and poured his usual.

"I don't even need a Flames schedule. There you are, like clock-work."

Dwayne mounted the stool nearest the TV. "Here I am."

She set his beer down, aimed a remote at the screen and flipped on SNW. The anthem was over and the puck had dropped.

"You know, I've never asked. Did you play hockey?"

Dwayne sipped. "Same position I'm playing right now."

"Bench warmer?"

"Audience. You ever play a musical instrument?"

Inside every bartender, waitress and law clerk hides a prodigy. Rehearsed smiles and cheer are their armor, and hope keeps them starting taxis, grabbing trays and tying on aprons rather than tying a noose in their rafters. Molly had begun playing violin at age six and didn't look back until she was 22 and in a prime chair of the Calgary Philharmonic. Jilted by a boyfriend and unable to make ends meet until the next season started, here she was.

"I do play," she said.

"Well then, you understand my kind. I'm really good at sitting and watching someone else do something that I *know* they're better at. I'm an excellent audience."

"Do you ever go to the games?"

"Why? I like it here."

"Routine is the thief of time, Dwayne."

Dwayne shouted at a player

getting called for delay of game. "Huh?"

Molly quickly diverted her eyes to the TV. "Flames on the edge of making the playoffs, huh?"

"Yep. Gotta win this one, get the two points if we're gonna advance."

With a wave, Molly swept the ends of her hair, simultaneously brushing open the lapel of her pale blouse. A soft shadow presented itself when she leaned forward to see the television.

"What if we don't win tonight?"

"Then I need to find something to do in the off-season."

Molly wiped the already spotless bar top. "Guess then you'll have plenty of time to go play the field."

"Not really a baseball guy."

She gave his forearm a gentle whack. "I meant dating, you jerk! I'm sure there are plenty of girls waiting for you to call."

"Oh, I doubt that. Besides, after the breakup with Janine..."

Molly kept wiping the spotless wood grain. "Been a year, Dwayne."

Dwayne kept his eyes glued to the swirling motion on the TV. "You know, I actually don't care. I think I'll just stay celibate a while."

She snickered, kept swirling the towel, then stopped. "Wait. Seriously?"

Dwayne shrugged. "I prefer this," he pointed up. "Sure, we lose occasionally. Sometimes we lose big. But a team gives me something to root for *and* something to talk about with everyone. I can't remember once that anyone ever came up to me and said 'hey how's Janine?' But total strangers see this jersey and instantly start talking stats, players, what they think will happen next game..."

"Okay, fair enough. But not everyone's a hockey lover. I bet there's even some people hoping the Flames'll lose so you'll be able to give them more attention."

"Shoot!!" Dwayne rose off his stool. "Dammit, what's wrong with this line? Wide open lane! They play like they've got all day."

Molly shrugged and brushed her lapels a little closer.

By the third period a few more locals had gathered to watch, one with a Calgary hat, another with a third-layer Flames t-shirt. The game came down to a shootout; in order to break a tie, each team sends out lone players to go crashing in to the other team's goalie. Dwayne was off his stool, pacing, beer in hand.

"What's going on now?" Molly said idly.

"Scoreless tie. How can you go an entire game without scoring? At least the defense is working. Now we go to shootout and see who wins."

"I thought you said a tie was bad?"

"Well it kinda is, but if we win the shootout then we're still in it by our fingernails."

"Go Flames!" Molly shouted.

"Yeah," Dwayne seconded with pumped fist. A few behind him clinked glasses and talked about their goalie's chances of stopping the L.A. line, particularly Dustin Brown, who'd been on fire lately. One of the pack leaned forward and asked Molly for a refill.

"Molson?" she asked.

"Nothing but," said an Australian accent. As she poured a fresh one, the man's eyes traveled from her bare navel to the splitting lapel. "Big hockey fan?"

Molly poured until foam spilled. "Very into the game. Dwayne you want another?"

"Nah, I'm gonna finish this and slide home."

"Careful on the ice, it's got me twice this week."

Molly slid the guy's beer across

the bar top and added it to his tab. "And don't sound so down," she focused on Dwayne. "You make it sound like the fat lady's already singing."

Dwayne sucked his lips in and tilted his head. "It doesn't look good. We don't have our stuff tonight."

"Maybe that's good for some people."

"Who? L.A.? Like they really give a darn about hockey. Everyone is probably too busy taking... what... pictures of Cary Grant's star on the Walk of Fame or something. They don't care about hockey."

Molly shrugged and disappeared to the other end of the bar. As she did, the Australian leaned toward Dwayne.

"I don't think anyone in Hollywood cares who Cary Grant is anymore, mate."

Dwayne looked over his shoulder at the guy, then back up at the screen. "Fine. Russell Crowe then."

"Hasn't got a star yet. Not that we Aussies are holding a grudge." He looked at Molly for eye contact. "Nothing," he mumbled to himself. "Usually women can't resist the accent." He watched as Molly strode up and laid a slip of paper beside Dwayne's elbow.

"Since you're in such a hurry, Dwayne," she said.

Dwayne muttered "thanks" and kept his eyes on the game. The Aussie watched Molly turn away, enjoying her plaid skirt waving side to side. He turned back to Dwayne, who couldn't stop watching the Calgary goalkeeper skate around his crease.

"Hey mate, if you're not gonna take a run at that, how about letting one of the fellas have a go?"

Dwayne shifted his eyes quickly as though he'd been addressed in Hungarian. "What?"

"How do I say this in Cana-

dian?" the Aussie mumbled. "*That girl likes you.*"

Dwayne looked over at Molly, now at the other end of the bar, wiping down bottles with a clean rag. She cupped each bottle at the base then ran the rag around its tip.

"You're crazy."

"Look, I don't know everything about women, but every time I give that bird a run she turns her attention to you."

Dwayne shrugged. "Maybe she just doesn't like you."

"Well now, that's not a helpful thing to say. I know you don't mean that." The Aussie left a ten dollar bill on the bar. "Make sure she gets my tab. And good luck to your team." The Aussie patted Dwayne on the shoulder and, with one step toward the door, whispered: "You know, if you was paying half as much attention to her as you do to them bunch of skatin' geezers..."

Dwayne watched the Aussie leave. He turned back to see his wallet lying open on the bar top; behind his driver's license, a photo of Janine peeked out. He remembered the day trip they'd taken, heading north without any plan. On the ride home he told her he wanted to change careers from a steady cash job as a waiter to the more rewarding yet uncertain life of tutoring. They were passing a closed rest area, its streetlights flickering—he could still see them on the sloping hillside, and remembered how they half-lit Janine's eyes, sagging with worry. As he began making less money, she returned fewer of his calls. Then came the night with her favorite bartender.

Suddenly the crowd erupted with an "AWWWWW!" Dwayne swung back to see Brown celebrating and more Kings skating onto the ice to join him. A quick shot of Calgary's dejected goalie skating off, joining the Calgary bench as

they shuffled toward the lockers.

"That's it," said one of the locals, then someone said to someone else, "Well, at least it's still hunting season." Dwayne looked from the TV to the end of the bar; Molly rang open the till, counting receipts.

He laid down a twenty on his \$9.25 tab and moved for the door.

"See you, Dwayne?" Molly said toward his back.

"Yeah, soon. Thanks."

"Watch that ice!"

The door swung closed behind him. On his first step from the safety of the awning, snowflakes fell on his shoulders and caught in his hair. Then, for no good reason he could think of, Dwayne quickly ducked behind the brick façade of the doorway. He watched through a corner of the wide front window as Molly kept counting, alone; snow gathered in his hair and on his jacket as he watched her walk robotically down the bar, collecting all the tabs in her right hand. Then, he noticed, she took away his tab by itself in her left.

She looked at the ticket. She paused, then shook her head and clamped her lips. Her eyes closed a moment.

Snow continued to gather while Dwayne watched Molly, as she took a pencil from her apron and made a note on a tab. She did it again, then again on the next. His tab still lay off to one side. Dwayne, feeling the thud of a pulse in his neck and seeing the shrinking number of tickets before her, turned and started home.

With the deposit made in the safe, her tips secured and the front door locked behind her, Molly wrapped her coat tightly over her shoulders and began the brisk eight-block stroll home.

She kept a room above a shop on the west side. Rent was fair, but best of all the downstairs was deserted at

this time of night. There, she would set aside her night's distractions and open a heavy black case, remove a very old Guarneri and slide rosin onto its bow. Clad in old gray sweats and old shirt,

she'd begin a favorite piece, imagining that maybe just outside the window where another night of Calgary snow descended against the pane, an audience of one sat, entranced. It may only

be the shadows of bare branches waving, but the possibility, the thrill that it might not be, could be enough to get her through another winter.

Matt McGee plays goalie in a local hockey league and writes short fiction in the library until the staff makes him go home. "An Audience of One" is one of his favorite stories; it's made him want to spend more time in Canada... preferably after May. His recent collection, Leaving Rayette, is available on Amazon.

The Trio That Should Have Reshaped Jazz

Scott Archer Jones

2008. On the seafloor of the Stockholm archipelago near Ingarö, the tides swept a body not yet dead back and forth, in eddies of dust that tornadoed up into black, cold water. Jazz had missed its chance again.

Each decade, gifted people kick jazz down the road like a can—people like Joshua Redman, Nicholas Payton, Herbie Hancock, and the Brecker Brothers. These incredible musicians keep it alive and vibrant, but they don't change the rules, just commit little adulteries. They try flirtations with jam bands and dalliances with fusion, a visitation from funk, a drop-in from a pop singer, a cover of a U2 song. But for 15 years a change existed that could have remade Jazz: Esbjörn Svensson (piano), Dan Berglund (double bass) and Magnus Öström (drums)—together, the Esbjörn Svensson Trio (EST). They stitched together new forms of jazz for themselves and could have done it for jazz. Albums from *Winter in Venice* (1997) to *Leucocyte* (2008) laid out a new roadmap. Esbjörn Svensson possessed an intuition that bridged from Thelonius Monk to some future where the sound could be clear, complex, as far

away from trite as jazz should be. EST promised us a return to melody and tune, promised us rhythms as polysyllabic as the Tower of Babel, promised us jazz musicians could be rock gods. The new aspiration for the human musician rolled out not from America, but from Sweden.

EST arose out of Scandinavian weirdness, drenched in an alternative world view. Sure, the Scan's all knew the chords to "Rollin' on the River" and formed garage bands. But they also produced Iceland's Sigur Rós, and Norway's Annbjørg Lien, Kaizers Orchestra and Stian Carstensen's Farmers Market.

Esbjörn Svensson grew up in a house full of music, but wanted to play drums, not the piano that waited in the front room. He knew Zappa before Jarrett, "Bad Moon" before "Green Dolphin Street." The early me-too years of rock and roll bands popped a 16-year-old into music college and then into the Royal College of Music in Stockholm—kind of explains the Chopin accidentals, doesn't it? Gigs with trios and quartets in the Stockholm scene sucked Esbjörn out of classical music. By 1997, he didn't record covers anymore, and EST pounded off into a

new vision of what music could be. In 1999, the album *From Gagarin's Point of View* told the world they had arrived. And the world saw a true collaboration. Esbjörn had his name up front, but was nothing without Berglund and Öström.

How did we discover EST? The Scandinavians experienced the Trio as a deepening, a broadening, a journey into experimentation, because they bought the albums in chronological sequence. Outside of Europe, record companies made sporadic releases, out of order and unevenly—Sony killed an album release in the USA while hyping it tremendously in Japan. Many Americans thought EST had taken time off to make an homage album of Thelonius Monk standards (not true—an early release, late arriving to iTunes). Here in the USA, "Dodge the Dodo" splashed onto the Internet in five versions, clued us into the huge range of improvisation possible within a single rhythmic construct. I myself bought the *Susie Soho* album in Stavanger, Norway, then heard the earphone bleed of "Spam-Boo-Limbo" from the guy next to me on a flight into Amsterdam. And of course, the Bill Evans fans blew off

EST because the track names were too fanciful: "Definition of a Dog;" "Did They Ever Tell Cousteau?;" "When God Created the Coffee Break;" "Fading Maid Preludium;" "Mingle in the Mincing-Machine;" "Behind the Yashmak;" "Eighty-eight Days in My Veins;" "A Picture of Doris Traveling with Boris."

Here... you'll see. Watch them bust up genres and wow the crowds. We present a live performance of the lyrical "Seven Days of Falling," followed by "Elevation of Love," with shining drums, urgent and loving, while the double bass wails like nothing you've ever heard—not even Jimmy Page bowing his guitar. [see the video here:

youtube.com/watch?v=D7KXq6RJ0PA]

Now brace yourself for one of their instrumentals, as it flows by like a river, faster than you think, and hides the 5/4 beneath its barless structure. Listen to Magnus granting us few bass kicks, but a running syncopation on the high drums and rim shots like a marching band in overdrive. "Eight hundred Streets by Feet," live in Hamburg. [see the video here:

youtube.com/watch?v=QSue44uhWYE]

And they give you a ten-minute, lighthearted funk number named "Good Morning Susie Soho"—this a live version with incredible Berglund work. This cut belongs to Dan, but couldn't exist without the drums and piano. The damped piano brings John Cage in, but only as a need to build the right percussive sound. [see the video here:

youtube.com/watch?v=NOguZVbz41A]

How about melancholy Swedes in the dead night of winter, the piece that started it all for them? "From Gagarin's Point of View," the opening mournful, as only the Scandina-

vians can be. [see the video here:

youtube.com/watch?v=_CgYU8eNoM]

Want a rock band? The official *Leucocyte* album video, laying out how the album grew out of a series of jamming, improvisational recordings—two days at a hit, and a huge mine of empathy between the players. [see the video here:

youtube.com/watch?v=9Yt8GP04BgU]

Esbjörn Svensson died in 2008. As important as we understand Berglund and Öström to be, they haven't recreated the magic. A scuba accident at 44 created a permanent nightmare for his 14-year-old son—diving that day with his father—and a cultural myth for the rest of us. But it should create a rage. We don't need another Joplin or Hendrix or Lester Young—the music tells us that we needed a delivery on the promise. Frigid Swedish waters robbed us of the break-out years. We lost the spawning of bands and talent that should have started where these three began, shoving it farther out, closer to a horizon called Jazz.

How should we remember Esbjörn Svensson? Remember his shaved head and black t-shirt. Picture an arched, muscular man bent over the keyboard, crawling into the piano case to muffle the bass strings. Recollect how he drove a quartet that experimented with mechanical noise, hurtled right over the audience with Scots martial drumming and intricate trills of snare, buoyed up one of the strangest and most inspiring bassists in the world. Remember a shy man who didn't know how to be ordinary. Remember him as not caring what had defined jazz, only what the music could be.

"The Trio That Should Have Reshaped Jazz" was first published in the Prague Revue. Scott Archer Jones is currently living and working on his sixth novel in northern New Mexico. He's worked for a power company, grocers, a lumberyard, an energy company and a winery. Now he's on the masthead of the Prague Revue and has a novel out this year, Jupiter and Gilgamesh, a Novel of Sumeria and Texas. scottarcherjones.com



The Santa Suit

P.J. Sambeaux

I.

Plaintiff's Counsel: May we have your name for the record?

Hermey: Hermey.

Plaintiff's Counsel: Last name?

Hermey: I don't have a last name. Our race is typically used in place of what you'd call a surname.

Plaintiff's Counsel: So, you are Hermey...

Hermey: Hermey the elf. Yes, that's right.

Plaintiff's Counsel: When did you come to realize that you didn't have a last name?

Hermey: Oh, that was one of a long list of things that became immediately apparent once we were forced off the Christmasland property.

"Sometimes, I want to stick a knife in his jolly, tubby ass," Hermey said, checking himself from different angles in the full length mirror earlier that morning.

"He's not tubby anymore," Raj reminded him. "Tubby's out. Even if you're Santa."

"His toned, jolly ass, then."

Raj snickered. "I don't blame you," he said. "Not one little bit. I mean, he is sort of your father. Or the closest thing to a father that you have when you're harvested from magical Christmas trees. And he did betray you. Big time."

Hermey: I was employed first as a toymaker and then as an untrained dentist.

Plaintiff's Counsel: You say "untrained." When did you realize that you were "untrained?"

Hermey: When I realized that I was nearly illiterate. That I could only read lists of toys, written by little girls and boys. When I realized that in the real world, dentists have advanced education and training.

Plaintiff's Counsel: So your dream to be a dentist was crushed?

Hermey: It was.

Plaintiff's Counsel: And what is your life like now?

Hermey: I live with my partner Raj and wait tables at Santaland in Disney World.

Hermey sighed deeply. Raj put a reassuring hand on his shoulder, which Hermey squeezed appreciatively.

"Did you see that outfit Santa had on? What was that?" Raj said.

"Oh my god—right?" Hermey said, rolling his eyes. He turned around and looked lovingly at his partner. "Let's get sushi tonight," he suggested.

"Yesssssssss. You totally read my mind," Raj said, pretending to pinch Hermey's cheek in celebration of his cuteness.

Hermey put his arm around Raj and rubbed the small of his back. There is no small amount of joy to be found in spending time with the one you love.

II.

The final straw that split up Rudolph and Clarice for good involved an eight-ball of coke and Rudolph on the roof of their house with a bottle of Jack Daniels, screaming, "I am a rock star! You don't know me. I'm the one with the red nose, not you. They never wrote a song about you, Clarice." He chucked the bottle into the driveway, where it shattered into a thousand pieces. It was Christmas Eve. The police were called, and by the time Rudolph was released from jail, Clarice was already packed and gone.

He didn't blame her. He was a mess, and truth be told, at that point he was a mess who hadn't been able to fly in over two years. He didn't know why; he just couldn't seem to do it since they'd left Christmasland. He practiced every day, took a bunch of prescription drugs that were only available in Mexico, and had even gone to a plastic surgeon to see about getting wings grafted onto his back.

He was a real mess, and he'd only gotten messier by the next time he saw her. He wiped a tear from a mysteriously black eye with a dirty, ragged hoof. He played with the drawstrings of his worn blue sweatshirt, tightening and loosening the hood around his face. "You look good. Really good," he'd said.

Clarice wore a pained expression—fatigue mixed with genuine concern. “Rudolph, don’t,” she said gently. “Please don’t cry. Please.”

And that was before the mandatory 60-day stay in jail, followed by three months in rehab, six months in a halfway house and two years of parole. But he had done it. Against all odds, he had redirected the roller coaster to Hell back to a healthy, sane place. He was clean; he was finally getting his life together. He’d walked away from the mess that was Rudolph, and started over. He looked forward to letting Clarice see him like this.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: Your mother took the performance-enhancing drug Flybilify while she was pregnant with you?

Rudolph: Yeah. All the reindeer did.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: Was she aware at the time of the possible side effects, including paranoia, increased aggressiveness, and luminescent noses in fetuses?

Rudolph: She was not.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: It also makes the male reindeer extremely aggressive? Am I to understand that they wouldn’t let you play their reindeer games?

Rudolph: I don’t know if I would have even wanted to. They were extraordinarily violent. One time, Prancer’s adopted son, Bruce, ripped some guy’s back hoof off and punctured his lung with an antler that he’d sharpened into a shiv.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: Take us to that particular Christmas, Rudolph—the night of the terrible, terrible storm.

Rudolph: Um, that was when Santa basically offered me the job to guide the sleigh and I took it.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: Did Santa tell you how long your contract would be for, or what your pay rate would be?

Rudolph: No, but all the other reindeer were pretty much in for life, so I assumed that I would be too. They all earned a pretty penny. You should have seen some of the houses.

Defense Counsel: Objection, your honor. My client specifically stated in the oral contract that he was going to employ Rudolph to “guide his sleigh *tonight*.” There was no mention of continued employment. Payment was not discussed at that time.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: And what happened after that?

Rudolph: They all shouted—with glee— “Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer, you’ll go down in history.” And then some asshole yelled “like Columbus” and everybody laughed.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: And after that Christmas, all the reindeer loved you?

Rudolph: For about a week.

Plaintiff’s Counsel: And then the bullying and ostracism resumed when they no longer needed you?

Rudolph: Yeah, pretty much.

Rudolph spied Clarice through the crowd filing out of the courtroom. He pushed his way through and touched her on the shoulder with his antler. She turned around and looked genuinely happy to see him. That alone made his heart swell in his chest. They made their way out of the courthouse and over to the sidewalk.

“Rudolph,” she said, smiling. “You look great, Rudolph. Really you do.”

Rudolph pawed at the ground and then looked up at her, a tiny hint of mischief in his eyes. “You look good too. Am I allowed to say that?”

They both laughed.

“So, are you, uh, still seeing Courser?” he asked, trying to sound as casual as possible.

Clarice smiled to herself. “No, that relationship ran its course.”

Now it was Rudolph’s turn to smile. “Let’s uh... I mean, would you have coffee with me sometime?” he asked hopefully, trying not to sound the least bit desperate.

“That would be really nice,” Clarice replied, and she meant it.

They smiled and nodded to each other before she turned and made her way down the street. Rudolph watched her go. Mid way down the block she turned around, laughing, and gave him a little wave.

He laughed and waved back. It was just like her to know he was watching.

He made his way to the bus stop, feeling lighter on his hooves than he had in ages. When he looked down, there was a good inch of space between him and the pavement.

III.

Santa looked down at his hands, turning them over a couple of times and finding himself able to see right through them to the floor below.

Mrs. Claus had walked out on him that morning. There had been some words, but less of an argument than he would have thought could end their marriage. She'd called herself "nothing but your starter wife" before letting him know that she'd been having an affair with the Heat Miser.

He'd opened his mouth to say something, some clever thing that just didn't come to him, but then she was gone in a flurry of jingle bells and that was that. What was he going to say or do, anyway? She had been telling him for months that he was increasingly absent—both literally and metaphorically—and she was right.

When he had been on the talk show circuit, Oprah had said to him, "Santa, you are straight up see-through. Can you talk to us about that?"

Yesterday his doctor had poked him in the eye when he tried to put the tongue depressor in his mouth, unable to see his face clearly enough.

"I can come back though, right?" Santa had asked, trying to sound less fearful than he actually was.

His doctor just shook his head. He didn't have any answers for Santa. No one did.

"I mean, what about HGH?" Santa asked lamely, already knowing it was a stupid idea.

His doctor said it was "wait and see."

The only thing Santa could do now was continue with his PR team's aggressive branding campaign. The Santa brand could now be found in a weekly podcast, on Facebook and Twitter, and in pretty much any other place that would increase his visibility. They had even reached out to Jay-Z to write a new theme song, but hadn't heard back on that yet.

Yet somehow Santa knew, deep down in his heart, that none of that was going to help him, none of it was going to keep him from disappearing. The real issue, he thought somberly, was that no one believed in him anymore. They just *knew* he existed as a fact—a cold, boring, antiseptic fact. You can't make people *believe* in facts. Knowing you exist and believing in you are two completely separate things, and since no one believed in him anymore, he was simply fading away.

He turned from the window and walked to the door, his red leather pants squeaking the whole way, making him self-consciously feel his belly for the spare tire that a low-carb, high-protein diet had knocked off. He grabbed his flowing white scarf and goggles and made his way out the door.

Plaintiff's Counsel: Santa, didn't Christmasland have any obligation to its workers?

Santa: Everything we did was perfectly legal. We moved the Christmasland facilities to Mexico so we could compete in a global marketplace. It's simply more cost-effective in today's economy.

Plaintiff's Counsel: And am I to understand you are no longer delivering toys to poor children?

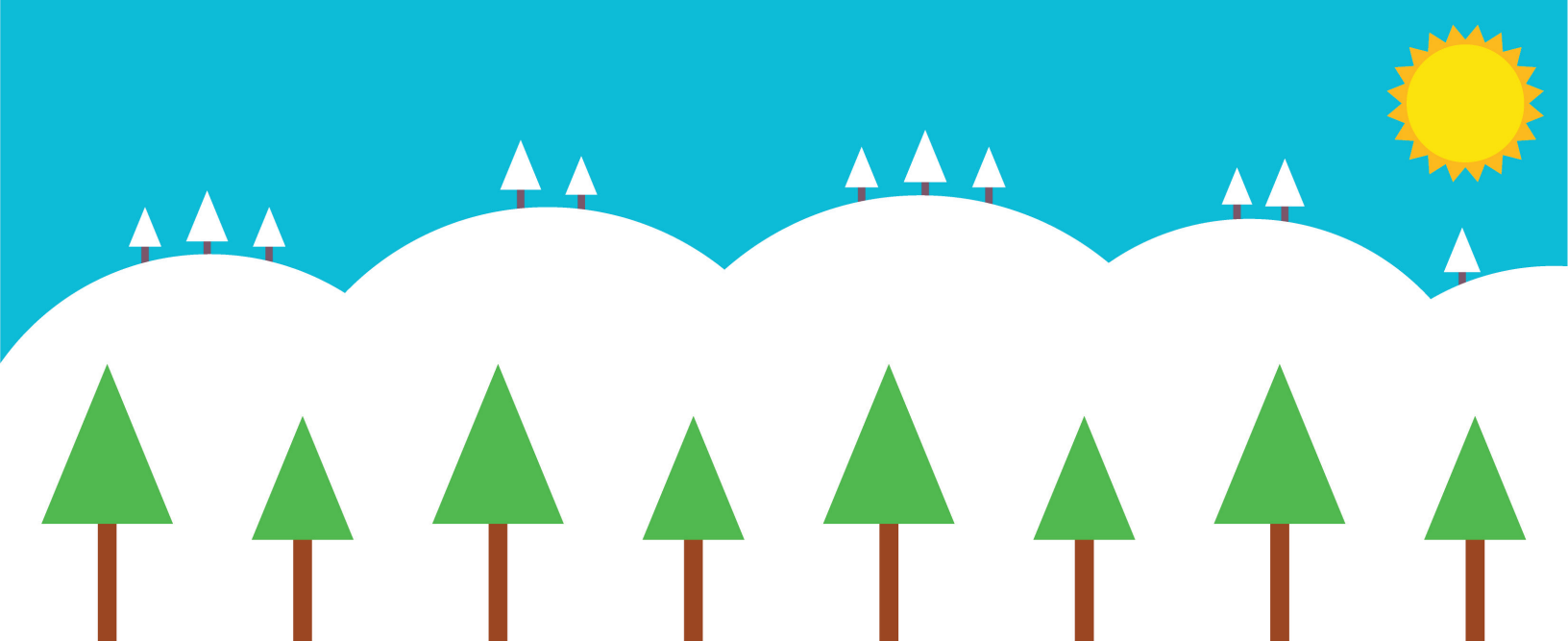
Santa: Why? Research shows that poor children are inherently naughty.

Plaintiff's Counsel: But what about plain old Christmas spirit?

Santa: Happily Cheerion—the pharmaceutical division of Christmasland—is currently busy with the FDA trials for a prescription Christmas spirit. Hopefully we can get that on the market by this holiday season.

The complete and utter lack of fanfare outside the courthouse was depressing. No kids—naughty or nice—showing Christmas lists in his face. No groupies. Not even one autograph seeker. The guy mopping the floor didn't even look up as he sloshed filthy water onto Santa's boots. Not one person passing him on the busy sidewalk spared him a single glance. He couldn't decide whether they couldn't see him or they just didn't care.

He started towards the parking lot, but then turned and headed down the street instead, not caring where he was going—just wanting to walk, to disappear into a crowd of people. The snow turned to cheerless slush under his boots.



The Broken City - Issue 15
www.thebrokencitymag.com
thebrokencitymag@yahoo.com

