

ZAZEN

8—Lagerstätte

Credence called my having sex with Jimmy unscrupulous dabbling. Apparently, his time with her made him some kind of gender cowboy while mine just made me irresponsible. We got into an argument over which stance was more unenlightened, getting into bisexual relationships with lesbians (viewpoint Credence) or treating lesbians like incapable children who will automatically fall in love with you just because you are woman (viewpoint Della). But I admit it was lazy. Like dating your cousin because you already know all the same people.

I slept with Jimmy a third time. She asked me again about visiting her in Honduras. I said I would. She seemed relieved. It was the first time I realized how scared she was. Credence said Jimmy's feelings are going to be on my conscience. Annette didn't care, particularly. She just wanted to be the one to tell my parents.

"They'll be so proud," she grinned like a Dingo with the Bellyfish darting and snapping inside her.

"Isn't she going to Honduras soon?" asked Credence.

"It's not like we're getting a dog."

"Have you ever thought about leaving the country?"

I got up to leave.

"Never," I said.

"Good," he slapped my shoulder, "There's been enough of that."

Jail solidarity reconfirmed. Credence sets his coffee cup in the sink where it turns into a silk moth, flies into the to a light fixture and rains down in a cascade of ash.

As a form of protest, I went to the yoga studio and practiced telling people I was leaving:

Devadatta: Namaste!

Me: I'm leaving.

Devadatta: Oh well, we'll sure miss you here. Where are you going?

Me: Central America.

She unraveled a Guatemalan scarf from her hair. There were tiny people woven into in the pattern, each carrying a yellow cross-stitch crucifix.

Devadatta: I studied yoga in Costa Rica. That's where I got this scarf. She laid the scarf twisted and purplish like tangled seaweed on the counter between us.

Me: I like the little people. Are they slaves?

Devadatta: No! (horrified) They're indigenous.

Credence says leaving the country is like leaving the scene of a crime.

Later I practiced at the restaurant:

Me: I'm leaving.

Mr. Tofu Scramble: Well Della, you know in the end we're really only citizens of Gaia, aren't we?

Ed, Logic's Only Son: I'm a citizen of the United fucking States.

Mr. Tofu Scramble: I'd think about Southeast Asia.

Ed, Logic's Only Son: You should all go to Cuba and get shot by Fidel.

But no matter how many times I said I was leaving, I couldn't make it stick. Part of me was still arguing with the lavender-haired woman at the party. Glaring at her through the grid of the jungle gym waiting for the recess bell.

A week after the New Land Trust bombing a letter from UC Davis showed up at the house. It shouldn't have been there because I never give out my address. Even at school, I used the Office of the Secretary of State as my emergency contact. I felt it pretty much reflected my views on the situation. Since living with Credence and Annette, I'd had my mail forwarded to my PO Box. Nothing ever came to my parents; nothing ever came here.

I flipped the letter over. I knew what it was. It was a photocopy of a journal article, soon to be out in the next issue of *The Journal of Paleobiology*. My work. Years of academic torque folded in three and stuffed into an envelope. Origami swans? A fleet of paper airplanes?

I pulled Annette's Rice Krispies down off the refrigerator.

--Credence says Kelloggs is the personal handmaiden of Satan himself.

--Annette likes her Rice Krispies with lots of milk and sugar because it makes her feel like a kid to drink out of the bowl when the cereal's gone.

Turns out that the average letter is the same size as the base of a Super Saver Size cereal box. I jammed the letter in the box underneath the cereal bag and put it back on the refrigerator. It was my own personal *lägerstatte*. My quiet lake, silt-bottomed and still, to catch the falling things and press them like wildflowers into the earth. I didn't want to talk about geology with anyone.

Upstairs in my room, the mail tub named "the Head of John the Baptist" overflowed. Setting aside the *Paleobiology* article, I dumped the tub over on the carpet. I hadn't done Paper Mache since sixth grade. Like every geek, I built a volcano. That afternoon I made wheat paste and tore my mail into shreds. All the scraps of my education. All toward the greater glory of the Head of John the Baptist. I formed the skull out of academic accolades and the ears from peer review. The hair was shredded junk mail. I couldn't bring myself to destroy the *Paleobiology* article, but everything else got used. I wanted the Head of John the Baptist to be as big as the head of a Minotaur.

When I was done I set it on a table by my bedroom window. It was too good for the art walk. That's the problem with symbolic gestures; people never take them far enough. They don't see them as a system. They blow up something right in front of them, like the bathroom of the New Land Trust Building then caper around like monkeys. They might as well throw bananas at it. The woman at the party was wrong. The real war is generated elsewhere in a field of resonating objects. I fell asleep with paste and bits of paper stuck to my hands like barnacles.

Just before dawn in the imaginary territory of New Honduras, I had two dreams. In the first, I was out of control on a river filled with Nikes, bulk tampons in 20lb bags, and Indonesian patio furniture. In the second, I watched the Statue herself gather her gowns and step off the island. Hairpins falling like cluster bombs in the harbor and a bustle of chattering soundbites—she waded in. I considered them both dreams of exorcism.