

LANDSLIDE

It took forever to clean the city of glass. We could never look out through the smears and dirt, the sun bedazzled us as it refracted through the walls. Some stuck paper and blankets to the roofs and sides of their house, others etched softening textures into the glazing. When the mountain fell into our world we did not see it coming. Our world lay splintered and beautiful, green ice in the cold light that showed us how foolish we had been to build with beauty and clarity in mind.

We left the city and built another, with discarded stone and coal black pitch; learnt to live at night and look the other way.

BLACK CROW

The casement window was empty, the sky blank, the air, tepid, still and mouldy. Above, omen to no one but the stench of the void, Phillip J. Jackdaw, oligarch of a master race of black crows, is counting in preparation for his mid-air joust. Later, he will bait fish with breadcrumbs, plucking, smoothing, and bending twigs and grass stems to procure a variety of foodstuffs.

This was the era of post-apocalypse, the backwash of a pulverized eschatology empty of people. Phillip J. Jackdaw knew no people. His oligarchy wasn't a meld of Morrigan, Bran the Blessed, Huginn and Muninn and Chaldean.

A gunshot. Phillip J. Jackdaw was blown to bits. He was wrong.

LOOKING SOUTH

I have lost my sense of direction and am navigating by the way the leaves fall and the smell of rain in the air. A black feather is tucked in my hat; I have a stout branch as a kind of walking stick and weapon. I have no need for either: I am too poor to be robbed, too frail to start a fight.

In the past I would map out my route along with a tentative timetable, plan out my day's journey, its stops and starts, meal breaks and permissible breaks. Now I frog march myself across the border, in a ridiculous urgency, a haphazard attempt to get there before I do.

I want to travel into the future, and make sure I am dead. Walk over my grave and make myself shiver.

TIMESLIP

Malcolm Moll's yotta is the largest unit prefix, 10^{24} or a mere 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 or more precisely a septillion, as septillion bytes. He was born in 1991, the year septillion became a word. Malcolm's mother, Guinevere Moll, read him *The Cask of Amontillado* from the day he was born until his 21st birthday, when Malcolm vanished on December 3rd, 2012.

The Federal Bureau of Missing Persons kept their daily investigations for Malcolm open through November 2013, when they decided to gradually taper back to weekly. It is expected that Malcolm's case will soon grow cold and be subject to archive.

In the night sky, an active galactic nucleus emits infrared, ultra-violet and gamma ray wavebands. It's a host galaxy, bleeding light. It blinks.

DREAM TICKET

A one in a zillionth chance turned out to be something that happened to me. As wealth moved nearer to me the colours of my life changed and I became happy. A large house, several dogs and some sports cars later it still seems like a dream, though sometimes out of the corner of my eye I see a servant girl running down the corridor or disappearing into a door.

We hardly ever go upstairs. We don't need the room and there is something unloved and unloving about the second floor rooms and landing. The stairs creak out a broken lament for something unnamed, there is a damp patch that cannot be dried out or painted over. Who in time does not detect shadows and echoes, wires of time under tension, an archive of the senses?

SAFETY ZONE

There is none. Not here. Everyone scurries about in half-hysteria waiting for the next one of them to implode. Streets are oblique. Suspicion looms. Not everyone's human.

Alive, certainly, like the stench of rotting flesh, but human? Doubts remain. Was Roxanne still human? Roxanne, that ectomorph with the possum nose, the one they called Gidget-the-Broom, was she still one of us? Who are we?

We are the ones that run Morphine with Midazolam added in syringe pumps; 50mgs Morphine made up to 50mls using Normal Saline (1mg/ml). We titrate and purge prognosis. We give Fentanyl and add it to the drip chamber. We use a PCA machine on an epidural machine. We stop sedation at 8am.

LAMENT

The early morning mist always softens the day and mood, makes me remember other places where the sun rose late or early, or the city was so hot we never got to sleep. Late night coffee on the hotel roof, walks under moonlight, that campsite in France where it always rained. I miss everything, know I will miss this when I am over it. I am very much looking forward to looking back.

SIDETRACKED

Wince. Just me? It's all quaint recidivism. How the winter fog suffocates the genetically treated Big Olive Trees. How I love those healing creams, lubricants and cork cambiums. What track are you on? I'll meet you at the station, the one with petals and apparitions. How will I recognize you? Either, a) I'll be the one breaking the pentameter or b) I'll be the one whose ears are the size of a grown man's shoe. Excuse me, I just forgot the choices.

THE ISLAND

I prefer to be on my own but never am. Time crowds in and I know there is a history for each and every event, all the moments I try to make my own.

Over on the island there is room for one tent above the high water line, as well as a casual hearth for an open fire. You can choose to maroon yourself between tides and pretend you are alone.

The island is actually part of mining channels built up to divert the rivers, now partially washed away. More silt than earth, the landscape has already shifted and changed in the few years we've lived here.

The mist clings to the hills, the dew clings to the grass. Waders call across the creek.

PRESENT TENSE

Up on this refracted now the next upward back topped parlour as big as a hand. In this instant, damn Girolamo Francesco Maria Mazzola, Parmigianino, and his convex mirror.

Today is January 11, 1524. My sleeve is a distorted corset, mimicking the curve. Where the hell is the *Kunsthistorisches* Museum?

It's only 24.4 centimetres in diameter for Pope Clement. Pure oil. Pure canvas. I'm a young man of sixteen. I am sneering behind this opal-sheened smile.