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## The Beholder

The lights scream. I wonder if I have enough change for tonight's fares. My plans have curdled and soured like milk. Why can't anyone call a spade a spade? Your face looks as dull as mine reflected in the TV screen. The other one used to yank my curls.

I am remembering tying my bandana around her leg after she fell. I think of Desdemona's handkerchief.

I can only hear the sound of the ambulance. It is all sounds at once.

Half of us are hell-bent, and the other half are jealous. My eyes are swollen and my jaw is sore as I dump coffee silt from the filter. Neglect. Needing to be cleaned. Residue.

The DVD player says skipping over damaged area. You do not move. I want the wind between my eyes like Dylan spoke of. Some nights I belong in a field.

(Perhaps six feet down). Would you still wish to lie beside me then?

I remember the way the other one used to mull over my mangled hair. I never responded out of my own pride. She always looked radiant.

I still can find no reason for dolling myself up on a Monday. The plight of the intellectual is that everything seems so transparent.

The plight of the human race is that it's not. My cat is staring at me like he knows everything. His name is Albert.

Nightmares about teeth falling out haunt me even during the day. I have lost the ability to control my own sleep patterns. There are 72 hours of sleep I will never get back.

Stop looking at me.

The rain falls in a different manner today. In fact, it doesn't fall at all. It's just in the air. It never touches ground.

My face is wet and the bus is full to capacity. I am going to be late. Late for what I wonder.

My aching fingers trace the pattern in my sleeve as I walk. I feign a smile at a little girl. She doesn't return the courtesy.

I wanted to yank the fag out of your hand and burn you with its embers. Which of our gall is more vicious?

It doesn't matter. You are too indolent to even get off the sofa.

I am waiting to cross the street. I stand near a brown plant, breathing onto it, hoping my wasted CO<sub>2</sub> will prevent it from dying.

At the watering hole, one door opens in and the other opens out. I write a note on learning how to get people to leave at the end of a party.

I think about Flaubert's parrot. I think about protons colliding. I think about things that crumble. I name a few of my own inherent contradictions. I give them cute names like misanthropic co-dependency.

The lights are so bright in here I wish I had my sunglasses. Three girls walk out of a toilet stall, and I'm drunk.

I don't know where this joke ends.

A man calls me over on my way to the bar, but I pretend I do not hear him. I throw my straw on the floor. Some people say some girls look attractive drinking with a straw. I am not in either of these groups.

I hate when bartenders serve their gin with too much tonic. Or without a lime. Or with a lemon. With a lemon is worse than without a lime.

The tunes on the jukebox are well chosen. *Confusion in her eyes that says it all.*

I sit at the bar for too long. If I looked like I was meeting someone before, I don't anymore.

The bartender says last call.

In the alley there are no stars and half a streetlamp. A young man that looks old asks for spare change. I toss him a quid, though I don't have it to spare.

Two friends that could be brothers stumble past me. One is telling the other an anecdote from his day. He begins every sentence with, "So, basically..." I catch something about a girl passed out at their flat. The talkative one says "Basically, she's got to wake up sometime."

"You either wake up or you don't."

My cigarette is almost smoked up so I hail a cab and ask him to take me to Manor Top in my most sober sounding voice.

I cannot make my phone ring by looking at it. I slip it into my bag.

The radio plays a song about parties and Saturday night, and I feel sick for a moment but the feeling passes.

He gets to the top of the hill and he says five pound sixty and I can't find my money, but then finally I do and I hand it to him.

There is no light outside my flat and I try to find the first step, but I don't so I fall, bloodying my knees a little.

I do find my keys, but I cannot find the keyhole and opening the door is a struggle.

Inside, my cat blinks at me from where you were sitting when I left. He goes back to sleep.

I think about you up there in my bed and me down here on the settee. Something about artistic interpretation. Something about predetermination versus free will. Something about god. Something about nothing.

Within the pile of leaflets shoved through the door I find a pamphlet that says *Stop the war in Afghanistan*. I think nothing of it, but leave it among the other leaflets in the pile for someone else to find.

I throw my shoes in the closet on top of the pile of bones.

Lying down to sleep, I think about this old man that sits in the pub every night until it closes and reads the paper and talks to no one and shuffles slowly back and forth to the bar to replenish his whiskey.

I think he sits there because he doesn't want to die alone.

My cat curls up in the crook of my shoulder and I wish I had remembered to get a glass of water, but I don't want him to move, so I don't get up. I can see his eyes glow green in the darkness.

What are you looking at?