

A swirling, damning, maddening dream caught hold of my cuffs and dragged me out of bed, across the be speckled, besmirched floor, splintering my shins, undercutting the chair where she once sat pondering. It catapulted my torso, leaving the rest of me grounded, glued to this place like a moth on flypaper, choked and suffocated in its soiled, yellow snot. Only to be struck, ball-to-bat, by a red pick-up truck careening ditch-to-ditch. The stench of slimy tobacco overpowering the smell of burnt gaskets and lost clutch plate. I was tangled in the shorted wires and crimped hoses that juggled its undercarriage. And I could feel my denim melt like a hot iron smoldering over a deflated birthday balloon. And I could hear the white blood cells shooting as they raced to the scene of the crime, speaking in code: Morrison, we have gentrification at Warhol's, and the jasmine is matriculating with the basil - oh how I lamented their inane, esoteric drivel, but they were helping me, they sent ambassadors I could understand who assured me of peace in our time. That the body and the mind would be one. No calf in the meal, no milk in the wool they'd add, only to remind me of my dependence, but I'd comply. Just like she used to, sitting on the chair, before the fire felt her and she danced backward, screwed into the earth like a phoenix in a negative perspective mirror. The mirrors set up in the halls, the halls set up on the walls, and phony ticker-tape holding the plaster together like egg-white fanfare for the viewing audience. Oh how I lamented those ambassadors too. Then the dream careened, going full-circle, like a boat full of stinking, sobbing, drunken, crying Russians, and I'd be driving that truck, and I couldn't find the road as I fought feverishly with the steering, running through flower beds and playgrounds, listening as the flowers screamed and the playgrounds silenced as that bloodthirsty truck, with me captured, imprisoned at its helm, ran point for the Russian contingent. And I'd see her in the rearview mirror pointing at things, whispering to no one, and laughing, or crying, I didn't have time to assess. Finally I'd jump from the truck, scraping and sliding down a never ending embankment, grabbing on to trees and bushes that would turn to liquid artifacts when I clutched them. And the sticky liquid would cling to my hands, coating my fingers with its paste, accumulating dust as I tumbled, bruised and contused, inside and out, and it would repeat, over and over, like a child practicing the trumpet, and the trumpet would groan and the trumpet would drone, on and on, and the notes would clash predictably like drunk Irish cops in an old silent film. By the time I impaled flat earth, detonating my lungs, bronchial branches at full mast, my hands would look like fan merchandise at a sporting event. As large as a pillow, as heavy as a bed. And they'd hurt, pain throbbing like three wrong keys on a piano. But immediately my sobbing would be enveloped by the tuba growl of a gray grizzly bear accompanied by the kettle drum beat of his thunder pads. And I'd run, I'd race, dragging my elephantitis hands across the gravelly ground like sacks of grain. The bear ever gaining until we hit the mighty current of lemmings, red lemmings, millions of them, scurrying shoulder-to-shoulder in the opposite direction. All politely excusing themselves in soprano voices while their tuning-fork torrent parted for me and my grotesque appendages, but did not part for the gray grizzly's fury. He'd get washed

away, routed by a wave of squeaky red lemmings, and I'd make it to the river where at least my hands would be floating, eliminating the strain and easing the pain. And I'd close my eyes and drift away, letting the cool water sedate me, letting my fleshy buoys support me, falling into a second sort of sleep. Then I'd think about her, and how she'd laugh, and how she'd cry, and how she'd shake it all off and dance her sorrows underground. Are you all right mate? Cheers? or chairs, or something, the Russians, who sounded British, but insisted they were Russian dragged me on board. They said we were traveling to Anastasia's Island and they just made me captain. Right, cheers, I said. To which no one seemed amused, so I said that's a way, pointing toward what looked like the inside of the outside of St. Basil's Cathedral since we were only obviously navigating about the inside of a giant bottle of vodka turned on its side. The Russians mostly reveled about their lost revolution. One Russian countered that the fact shouldn't be lost that theirs was the only true revolution. Another Russian was lost in revelry over how most only lose counterrevolutions chalked up as true. I quickly realized that the Russians weren't drunk but crazy. In fact they really thought it was water, not vodka. But I knew it was vodka as the fumes already had me intoxicated, and my mates cerebrally poisoned. So I started to drink, telling my puzzled crew that I was orally measuring distance from land, which contented them. Then I drank so much that the vodka tasted like land. It tasted like land and felt like sand at which point I realized I was inside an Egyptian pyramid choking on self-administered sand. It was dark, sparsely torch lit. And I heard music, beautiful music, melodies you'd trade teeth for, rhythms you'd dance on fire to feel their seductive motions. And I paid these fees, bleeding sockets and charred feet. There she was. Dancing in her fire. The same way she would, only 10,000 years prior. And she'd dance, and she'd laugh, and she'd smile. She still had her teeth, and didn't seem bothered by the fire. I convalesced, trance-like. And all my pain and all my worries drown. They drown in an envelope that was sealed and sent. Sent to Anastasia's Island. And I felt my pillow and smelled her hair. And I smiled and I slept in infant-like peace until the alarm clock struck me, ball-to-bat, like a red pick-up truck and it was morning.