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ABSYNTHE

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MELCHIOR DUDLEY

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To whom it may concern,

I am interested in the Lead Dishwasher position advertised for your company on Seek.co.nz. Given my related experience and capabilities, I would appreciate your consideration for this job opening.

From a young age, I have washed my own dishes: thoroughly, and with great enthusiasm. It is true that fourteen years of my life passed before I ever saw a dishwashing machine in person, though I had dreamt of such an invention for many moons.

My story begins five years ago, when I travelled to B.C. for the summer to vacation and live with my sisters. To accumulate some savings for my university degree (B.A. in English Literature and Psychology), I worked in a local restaurant for the season, washing dishes between 50-60 hours a week. My coworkers often remarked upon the vim and vigour (pun intended!) that I brought to work each day, and how I was uniquely able to---with the help of steel wool--scrub oil stains off pans that had been burnt and crusted by extreme heat for the last 20 years. People often said that cooking utensils gleam with pride wherever I go. Such praise caused me to double-down my work efforts, and I was often seen smiling as I finished my 11-hour shifts at midnight, walking out the door drenched in greasy water and half-digested food particles.

That summer was a memorable experience indeed, and every summer since, I have found myself in a fortunate position: my only successful employment applications have returned as dishwashing job offers; dishwashing obviously demands a skilled worker like me, with my superlative command of the English Language, and my complex understanding of the human psyche. These traits prove themselves invaluable for such a prestigious position, and I am grateful that the last four years and thirty-five thousand dollars I have spent on tuition alone have not gone to waste; for they have secured my future in the booming dishwashing industry.

Recently I have used my critical thinking skills to evaluate the way in which the exponentially expanding artificial intelligence industry will affect the demand for workers of my skill set, and I am grateful to conclude that there is no way in which human dishwashers will ever be deemed useless for the successful operation of a restaurant, and certainly the technology does not exist already.

I have thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my dishwashing vocation, and would be delighted to contribute to the successful cleaning of your restaurant's dirty dishes. Thank you again for your consideration. I look forward to speaking to you soon.

Sincerely,
Melchior Dudley

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF KEVIN DOLINGER

Melchior Dudley

“What do you see, Kevin?”

Kevin studied the clouds, watching as the giant white dust bunnies swirled over a canvas of baby blue that stretched on forever. Kevin reached his chubby little hand up and followed the path of a puffball that somersaulted hypnotically away from him.

“You see that one, Dad? That one looks like a fireball.”

“Which one?”

“That one. You see me pointing?”

Henry glanced over at Kevin, smiling. Then he fixed his hat to shade his eyes better and looked up to the sky, following Kevin’s finger.

“Oh, I see it. It’s got the line coming out the top.”

“What? No. But I see what you see. It’s the one beside it.”

“Ohh, yeah, the one on the right, running away like a roly-polly.”

Kevin giggled. “No, dad,” he insisted, scooting over to get closer to Henry. “It’s the one right there.” Kevin brushed up against Henry’s side, and leaned his arm over so that Henry could follow it into the sky as if it was his own. “Here, follow my hand.”

Henry traced his eyes up past the little golden field of wheat on Kevin’s forearm, past the small hills and valleys of his knuckles, past the baby moons of his fingernails, up, up, up into the clouds of endless possibilities. Kevin’s hand drooped, suddenly shy.

A Day in the Life of Kevin Dolinger

"I see it, Kevin. I see the fireball."

"You do?"

"Of course. You don't believe me?"

Kevin scanned the sky, searching. "Where is it?"

Henry couldn't help but smile. "Don't you know?"

"No. I lost it."

"Oh." Henry paused, trying to find the cloud. He couldn't. "Well, that's alright," he said.

There was no answer from Kevin. Henry looked over and saw Kevin had his eyes closed. There wasn't a single crease on his face, just pure peace.

"Hey Kevin."

"Hey Dad."

"I found your book."

Kevin opened an eye. He turned over and grinned sheepishly at his dad.

"I'd like to read you a line," Henry continued, pulling out the small black book from beside him on the grass.

"Haha. You don't have to. Can I have it back? Please?"

"But you should be proud of your work. Always express yourself genuinely. Remember that."

"No, dad. It's okay."

"I insist. Ahem. This one's my favourite: 'You'll never make it as a bitch--'" Kevin turned away, cringing at the words, "--I'm a wolf, alpha of all time / Fuck with me / Say goodbye to your canines."

"That one wasn't really my words."

"Oh. How about this one." Henry adjusted his glasses down his nose. "My momma once told me the golden rule / You

A Day in the Life of Kevin Dolinger

don't sell drugs to kids in school.' Where did you get that?"

"Hmm. I channelled it from above," Kevin said, pointing vaguely past the clouds. "Like Michelangelo."

"Okay. So what do you call this work?"

"Poetry."

"Poetry? Please explain."

"The poetry of the streets. Did you know the word 'wolf' is 'flow' backwards?"

"What do you know about the streets, Kevin?"

"I walk on them."

Henry laughed and looked into the sky. "I was just surprised at the language," he said, taking out some licorice mints from his pocket. He munched one.

"Pretty advanced for my age, huh?"

"I'll say."

"Are you proud?"

Kevin smiled at Henry. Henry grinned back. Above, the clouds churned and whisked by.

"Damn right I am," Henry said, popping in another licorice. "Those could've been my wedding vows."

"Your breath smells funny when you eat those," Kevin said.

"I know."

"Can you stop?"

"Why, are you gonna kiss me?"

"No."

"Well, then no."

A Day in the Life of Kevin Dolinger

Kevin stood up. Henry couldn't help but admire the way Kevin was able to stand up without grunting or his joints cracking.

"Whatcha doing, Kevin?"

"I'm going to the river. Gonna sit on Turtle Rock."

"Okay, Kevin."

Kevin walked across the field, splashed through the marshy grasses, and climbed onto the boulder that stuck out into the river. He laid down on his belly and felt the rock was pleasantly warm, heated all day by the sunlight. He leaned forward and looked into the water. In the shade the rock cast into the river, he could see a school of minnows wiggling against the current. On a gravel bed below them, a crayfish moved slowly, claws up and opening and closing gently as if trying to hold the water. Kevin wondered how it must be like to live underwater, where the water is like air and almost everyone can fly.

What a world that would be.

"What are you looking at, Kevin?" Henry's shadow protruded into the river beside him.

"Poetry."

"Hmm. What swear words are you going to put in this poem?"

"I'm thinking 'fuck' and 'pussy.'"

Henry grinned. He was glad Kevin couldn't see him. "Interesting, but why don't you try being a real poet?"

"Hmm. Well, it's too hard. Too much foiy-de-doij, tum tum tum bull-puppies."

"You mean it seems too elevated?"

"Yeah," Kevin said, dragging a twig through the water. "Like it's not real."

The clouds swirled away at the thought.

THUMBELINA

Dylan Curran

SCENE 1

A redheaded woman in her mid-thirties named EVELYN sits on the landing of a spiralled staircase in downtown Montreal. Early winter morning, snow dusts the buildings and ground but the landing remains relatively bare. The camera focuses on the trees as their branches wrestle to keep the snow off. Steam rolls off the lip of EVELYN's coffee mug. EVELYN watches the cherry of her cigarette as it balances between her fingers. As EVELYN takes a drag and then exhales the camera focus shifts to the smoke. EVELYN watches it hovering before she gets interrupted.

EVELYN turns to see MARC as he steps out the front door of her apartment. MARC wears a toque that covers his hair and ears. His chin is dotted with stubble. EVELYN looks into his green eyes, tucked away behind thin wiry glasses.

EVELYN: You leaving?

MARC (*thick Québécois accent*): Yeah, I have to get back to the bookshop.

EVELYN turns her back to Marc as he is heard shutting the door and then zipping up his coat. EVELYN takes a sip of her coffee and the scene blurs. EVELYN's glasses have been fogged up from the steam.

MARC: T'as pas froid?

EVELYN: It's not so bad. A bit nippy maybe. *EVELYN pulls the sleeves of her jacket*

down over her hands and then wraps them back around her coffee mug.

MARC: I'll meet you for lunch?

EVELYN hears MARC start to walk past her and down the steps. The metal railing wobbles each time his boots hit a new step. He stops and turns to face EVELYN. He is standing at eye-level to her.

EVELYN: I'll be there (*beat*) I'm sorry about last night.

MARC takes a sip from his travel mug. He doesn't look at EVELYN.

EVELYN: Did you save me any?

MARC (*through a crooked smile*): Of course.

The couple leans in to kiss goodbye.

EVELYN (*anglophone accent*): Je t'aime.

MARC: Je t'aime aussi.

EVELYN watches MARC as he descends the last of the steps and begins walking down the street. As he rounds the corner she takes another drag of her cigarette.

EVELYN shivers and then throws the butt to the pavement. The wind picks up as EVELYN starts to stand back up and make her way towards the door. She

Thumbelina

pushes the welcome mat away from where she was sitting on the edge of the landing and back to the area in front of the door.

EVELYN stamps her feet on the mat as she turns the doorknob. She enters the apartment.

Warm light from the apartment contrasts the gloomier blue from outside. The camera focuses on EVELYN shaking the snow off of her coat. She shifts the mug from one hand to the other as she slips out of each arm. EVELYN kicks off her boots, not bothering to undo the laces. Her coffee sloshes over the sides of her mug as she walks down the hallway and

into the kitchen.

EVELYN: Fuck.

EVELYN licks at the drops that have spilled over her hands and then brings the mug to her lips and drains what is left of her coffee.

EVELYN: What the hell?!

Sitting among the dregs at the bottom of her coffee mug is a little girl, naked and curled in a fetal position. She is no bigger than a quarter. The camera begins to shake. GIRL lifts her head and opens her bright, green eyes.



SCENE 2

Transition to SCENE 2. Camera stays fixed on GIRL's green eyes. It is five years later.

GIRL: Did Daddy put me in your cup?

EVELYN: Oh, honey.

EVELYN and GIRL are together in the living room. The apartment is mostly unchanged. A few new picture frames hang on the walls. GIRL is perched on EVELYN's finger. EVELYN is laying down on the couch with both her hands clasped over-top her stomach.

GIRL: Margo says her Mommy spat up her brother. I don't believe her. She's always cheats at games, too.

EVELYN: I'll tell you the rest when you're bigger.

GIRL: Mommy, that's no fair.

EVELYN: When did your Dad say he's coming to pick you up?

GIRL: Did my Daddy always make the coffee?

Thumbelina



Thumbelina

EVELYN: I swear he said nine.

GIRL: Where is my cup now?

EVELYN: What? Um *(beat)* I think it might be at your Dad's shop. Not sure; it was a long, long time ago, honey.

GIRL frowns and crosses her tiny arms. She is wearing clothes meant for Barbie dolls. They hang loose despite the safety pin that fastens them tighter. EVELYN strokes her thumb over GIRL's bare legs.

EVELYN: He usually had the coffee ready by the time I was up. He was an early bird; just like you.

GIRL: I'm not a bird.

EVELYN: I know.

GIRL: I miss my cup. My cup was warm.

EVELYN: I can't put you back in the cup, you'll drown.

GIRL: Are all babies born like that?

EVELYN: No, not always.

GIRL: Why not?

EVELYN: I'm not sure, honey.

GIRL: Maybe 'cause some people like tea better.

EVELYN: That's a good guess *(EVELYN smiles but then just as quickly becomes serious again)*. I don't really know, I'm not the one that gets to decide.

GIRL: Did daddy decide?

EVELYN: Something like that.

GIRL: Did you ask him?

EVELYN: Ask him what?

GIRL: How he got me in the cup?

EVELYN: Your dad will be here any minute.

GIRL: What did it look like? I bet it was painted with flowers.

EVELYN shifts her hands to push back the glasses. GIRL stands, she is only three inches tall but looks like most six-year-olds. She shares EVELYN's red hair and MARC's green eyes. GIRL tugs at the neckline of her dress.

EVELYN: I'll tell you the rest once you're bigger.

GIRL *(frustrated)*: Mommy!

EVELYN: Inside voice, please.

GIRL *(huffing)*: Mommy, that's not fair.

There is a knock at the door. EVELYN stirs.

GIRL: I think they were purple flowers.

EVELYN *(smiling)*: You wouldn't remember, honey. You were only little.

GIRL *(giggling)*: Mommy, I'm still only little.

EVELYN edges in to tickle GIRL but there is another knock at the door that stops her. She straightens up on the couch. GIRL jumps into the palm of EVELYN's hand.

EVELYN: You better get going; your dad doesn't like to be kept waiting.

Thumbelina

SCENE 3

Jump ahead to MARC and GIRL in the bookshop. GIRL has used copies of The Little Prince and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to build a fort on her father's desk. MARC types away at the keys of his computer. He has a salt and pepper beard that he plays with as he scans the computer screen. He twirls the strands between his fingers and then goes to rub the sleep out of his eyes.

MARC: Coffee break?

MARC watches his tiny daughter poke her head out from in between the pages of Through the Looking Glass. She smiles intently as she steps out and into his open palm. The pair of them leave the front desk and head towards the staff lounge. MARC begins to brew a cup of coffee.

MARC: Are you hungry?

GIRL nods.

GIRL: Can I have a cookie?

MARC: It's a bit early for that.

GIRL: S'il te plaît?

MARC grins. GIRL is clearly pleased with herself as MARC opens the cupboard to reveal a box of Dad's cookies. MARC pulls one of the cookies from its wrapper and breaks it in half. GIRL jumps excitedly from one foot to the other. MARC rolls his eyes playfully as he hands her the piece.

MARC: Only because you asked nicely.

GIRL: Et en français.

MARC: Ah, tu me connais bien, ma fille.

GIRL (serious): Hey, dad?

MARC stirs milk and sugar into his mug. GIRL straightens up.

MARC: Yes, my Thumbelina?

GIRL: Where's my cup?

MARC (shakes his head): T'es trop p'tite.

GIRL: No, not to drink.

MARC looks confused. GIRL starts to nibble on the cookie. Crumbs fall around her and sprinkle her clothes.

GIRL: Mommy told me.

MARC raises his eyebrow.

GIRL: About how you used to make her coffee in the morning.

MARC: Ah, but that was a long, long time ago.

GIRL sighs and sits down on the counter. Her tiny legs swing off the edge. MARC hooks her with his index finger and sweeps GIRL into his palm. He cups her in his hand as if to comfort her like a hug.

GIRL: I'm not really like the other kids, am I?

MARC: No, (beat) but you are much better

BOTH: And pocket-sized.

Thumbelina

GIRL rolls her eyes. MARC chuckles. This is a familiar saying between them.

GIRL: Mommy says you kept the cup.

MARC: Yes, I did.

GIRL: Can I see it?

MARC (*purses his lips*): I don't see why not.

MARC walks down the hall with GIRL still

in his hand. He sets her down once they've reached a tall stack of cardboard boxes. MARC digs out his keys and runs the ridges along the tape that seals the folds over. This box is labeled "EVELYN" in chicken scratch handwriting. MARC pulls out a few photographs and sets them beside GIRL. Camera focuses on GIRL's wide-eyed gaze. See MARC's reflection in the green of her eyes as he pulls out the coffee cup from SCENE 1. It is painted with purple flowers.

THE END.



CHILDHOOD (RE)ORIENTED

Tyler Majer

Become a kid again
It's not a common slogan
But they try to sell it to you anyways

BA DA BA BA BA

I attempted it
But my 400 LB body
Wreaks havoc
When I elbow drop
A bed frame

Knees raw and bloodied
Red and ruined
By asphalt

Trauma is a life-fuck
For some people,
Reliving childhood
Is out of the question

Every night is cold
Every morning colder
Consciousness concedes
As the day breaks

I don't have the answers
All of them
Or any of them.
Scrawled in chalk
Squeaks from the whiteboard markers

Those things
You can at least erase

Lately, I don't do shit
I just spew shit out of my
Face and lungs
Until it sounds like it has a point
Lately I've been more of an
unsharpened pencil

All I know is that
We turn our backs on
The child within
We turn our backs on...

Imagination,
Openness
Curiosity
Hunger
Eagerness

Let's pour one out for
Genuine pain

The stings of childhood
Extend forward
But the curiosity stagnates
Festers
Like an open wound
Boiled up to the surface
With nothing left to say

I may not be a kid anymore
But I still wanna be a wrestler
Maybe the elbow drop isn't the best
move
But at least I'm fucking trying
At least,
I'm
Trying

INdeCISION

Warren Oliver

Part V



EMMA

Ten year old girl.

PETER

Late thirties.

KELLY

Late thirties.

MASON

Late thirties.

CALEB

Early thirties.

LEVI

Late twenties.

JAMES

Mid sixties.

1. INTERIOR: EMMA'S ROOM - DAYTIME

PETER and KELLY are sitting in chairs. EMMA is leaning on the window sill, looking out.

EMMA: Are all those people here for me?

KELLY: Emma, close the blinds.

EMMA: Why? It's cloudy out.

KELLY: Emma.

EMMA: Okay.

EMMA closes the blinds, but lingers at the window. After a brief moment of silence, KELLY's phone rings. She picks it up, looks to see who is calling, then puts it back down.

PETER: Them again?

KELLY: Yep.

PETER: Just turn it off.

KELLY: Maybe.

INDeCISION

PETER: Maybe? They're gonna keep calling.

KELLY: What if someone else calls. I can keep screening them.

EMMA: Where's Mason?

PETER: I don't know. Why?

EMMA: Just wondering.

EMMA goes back to her bed and lies down.

EMMA: When's my next test?

KELLY: Doctor Ito said it wasn't for a bit.

KELLY's phone rings again.

PETER: Kelly, turn it off.

EMMA: Who keeps calling?

PETER: They aren't going to stop.

EMMA: Who?

KELLY: Your Grandpa.

EMMA: Grandpa. I'll talk to him.

PETER: No.

EMMA: Why not?

PETER doesn't answer.

EMMA: If there's no reason then I wanna talk to him.

KELLY: Emma, stop it.

EMMA: Why can't I talk to him?

PETER: Leave it alone!

EMMA, visibly upset, sulks in her bed.

2. INTERIOR: EMMA'S ROOM - SOMETIME LATER

PETER, KELLY, and EMMA are all in the same position since they were last seen. MASON enters.

EMMA: Mason.

MASON: Hi, Emma.

EMMA: What are you here for?

MASON: It's about a visitor.

EMMA: Visitor?

PETER and KELLY both look at each other.

MASON: James Lemieux.

EMMA: Who?

PETER: Grandpa.

EMMA: Grandpa!

PETER: No.

EMMA: What?

PETER: I don't want him.

EMMA: Dad.

MASON: We could talk about this outside, if you'd prefer.

PETER: Let's.

INDeCISION

PETER and KELLY stand up.

KELLY: Emma, stay here.

EMMA: I wanna see Grandpa.

KELLY: We know.

MASON, PETER, and KELLY go out into the hallway. They see CALEB and LEVI stationed outside. They all nod at each other, but there is no real form of greeting. MASON, PETER, and KELLY continue further down the hall until they are far enough away from the room.

MASON: So you don't want him here?

PETER: Absolutely not.

MASON: Are you sure?

PETER: Yes.

MASON: Even if you think it would be good for Emma?

PETER: What's that supposed to mean?

MASON: I've just been noticing all three of you are becoming more and more agitated. A fresh face might help.

PETER: Not his face. Not his fucking attitude.

MASON: Can I say something?

KELLY: Sure.

MASON: The manner in which Mr. Lemieux contacted us; it wasn't easy. He put in quite the effort. If it's just an issue between you two and him, I don't see how that's any excuse to keep him away from Emma. She seems fond of him. He can

come to visit; you two can just step out.

PETER: And leave her alone with him?

MASON: My guys will be just outside, like they always are. If his security check clears, I doubt there will be any problems. Give it some thought at least.

MASON walks back into the room.

KELLY: He convinced you at all?

PETER shakes his head in amusement.

KELLY: Maybe we should. For her, at least.

PETER: He's gonna wanna see me.

KELLY: God knows he won't want to see me.

PETER: Should have turned off your phone.

KELLY: I know. At the very least, this will give us an excuse to just get away for a bit.

3. INTERIOR: EMMA'S ROOM - DAYS LATER

EMMA sits on the edge of her bed. MASON sits in the corner of the room.

EMMA: Do you know when he's supposed to get here?

MASON: He's supposed to be here soon. The visit was scheduled for one o'clock and it's almost that. You excited to him?

EMMA: Yes. I haven't seen him in such a long time. Every time I see him he calls me his little Queen.

MASON: Not Princess?

EMMA: No. I don't like Princess. Queen has more power.

MASON: True.

EMMA: What about your Grandpa? What's he like?

MASON: Stiff as a board.

EMMA: What?

MASON: He passed away.

EMMA: Oh.

MASON: I didn't mean to kill the mood. Emma, what's your favorite movie?

EMMA: Ratatouille.

MASON: The one with the rats.

EMMA: Yes! His name is Remy.

MASON: Why that one?

EMMA: I love rats.

MASON: You do?

EMMA: Yea. They're so fun.

MASON: Fun? How are those things fun?

EMMA: I don't know. If you let them run around on your shoulders they tickle. That's fun.

MASON: Never thought of it that way.

EMMA: You should get a rat for your kids.

MASON smiles.

EMMA: Do you have kids?

MASON: No.

LEVI sticks his head into the room.

LEVI: Mason, James is here.

MASON: Alright. Send him up.

LEVI exits.

MASON: You hear that?

EMMA: Yay!

MASON: Only a matter of time now.

JAMES enters the room.

JAMES: Emma. Hi.

EMMA: Grandpa!

JAMES: Hi, Dear. How are you?

INDeCISION

EMMA: Good. I'm happy you're here.

JAMES: It shows.

EMMA: Grandpa, have you met Mason?
He's really nice.

JAMES: Who? Oh, yes. I believed we spoke
on the phone.

*MASON stands up and offers his hand to
JAMES. JAMES reluctantly shakes it.*

MASON: Hi.

JAMES gives a quick nod.

JAMES: Well, if you're all done here, I'd like
to spend some time with my
granddaughter.

MASON: I'm sorry, but I have to remain
here until the visit is over.

JAMES: Why?

MASON: Protection.

JAMES: I'm her Grandfather.

MASON: I appreciate that. I do. But I can't
leave her alone with anyone other than
medical staff, or her immediate
guardians.

JAMES: That's ridiculous. I don't need you
sitting in on my visit.

MASON: Oh well.

JAMES: Where are Peter and Kelly?

MASON: Out.

JAMES: Out.

MASON: They're safe.

EMMA: Grandpa, it's okay. Mason's nice.

JAMES: Hmm. Emma, tell me what's been
going on.

EMMA: Okay, but first you have to call me
Queen.

JAMES: Maybe later.

EMMA: Oh, okay.

4. INTERIOR: EMMA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

*MASON sits in the same corner of the
room. JAMES sits on EMMA's bed. EMMA
sits beside him.*

JAMES: So what else is new? How are all
the tests going?

EMMA: Fine. Sometimes they hurt, but
they're really nice about it after.

JAMES: I bet. And your father, how is he?

EMMA: He's good. So is Mom.

JAMES: Right. Where is your father?

EMMA: He's...

MASON: He's out.

JAMES: Out?

MASON: Doctor Ito needed him.

JAMES: Doctor Ito. Alright.

EMMA: Yeah, Doctor Ito needed him.

INDeCISION

JAMES: And where is Kelly?

EMMA: Probably with Dad.

JAMES takes a quick glance at MASON, then turns his attention back to EMMA.

JAMES: *(Whispering)* Emma, this is not what you want.

EMMA: What?

JAMES: This is not what you should be doing.

EMMA: Why are you whispering?

JAMES: Listen, you need to rethink your decision.

EMMA: Why? Grandpa, what are you doing?

MASON: Is everything okay?

JAMES: Yes, yes. We're fine.

MASON: Why are you whispering to her?

JAMES: No reason. Just something we do.

EMMA: No it's not.

JAMES: Yes, it is, my Queen. You don't remember?

EMMA: I guess I do. But what were you talking about?

JAMES: Nothing, Emma.

EMMA: Rethink my choice.

JAMES: Emma.

MASON: You need to leave.

JAMES: You know I'm right.

MASON: Now!

JAMES: Right.

JAMES exits the room. MASON follows him. CALEB and LEVI stand when they see MASON.

MASON: Escort him out.

JAMES: I don't need an escort.

MASON: Oh well.

LEVI escorts JAMES away. MASON goes back into the room. EMMA is visibly upset over what happened.

EMMA: Why'd he say those things?

MASON: He's doing what he thinks is right.

EMMA: Mason, am I doing the right thing?

MASON: Listen, for you, I don't think that question will ever be answered. But I am happy you're here today, and I'll be happier if you're here tomorrow.

5. INTERIOR: HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

PETER and KELLY sit on by themselves in the hallway. Both look bored and agitated. PETER more so than KELLY.

PETER: How long is he going to be?

KELLY: As long as he wants. It's James were talking about.

PETER: Hmm.

KELLY: She'll be fine. Mason is with her.

PETER: Mason.

KELLY: I like him.

PETER: You do?

KELLY smiles and looks down.

KELLY: Emma likes him.

KELLY's phone vibrates. She looks at it.

KELLY: Oh no.

PETER: What?

KELLY: Something's happened.

PETER: What?

KELLY: I don't know. James just texted me to meet him by the elevators on the ground floor. He says something has happened.

PETER and KELLY both stand up and quickly make their way to the elevators.

6. INTERIOR: GROUND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

PETER and KELLY arrive on the ground floor and exit the elevator. They see JAMES standing by himself. They approach him.

PETER: What happened?

JAMES: Nothing happened. I just wanted a few words with my son.

KELLY: What the fuck?

JAMES: Don't ever avoid me again.

PETER: What is wrong with you?

JAMES: Me? You let a ten year old girl make a decision that's going to devastate

the world. You left the lives of all those people in her hands. And guess what she did: she threw them away like they were nothing. If you were any kind of man you'd make the choice yourself and let the doctors do what they need to do.

PETER: It's not that easy.

JAMES: Of course it's not. It's the hardest choice any parent will ever have to make. But you two took the easy way out. Weaseled your way out of taking responsibility. Do you know how many people are going to die because you can't face the possibility of having to make an actual choice in your fucking life? You're weak. And history is going to remember you like

INDeCISION

that. And that little girl, my granddaughter, is going to be a monster.

KELLY: You tried to convince her to change her mind, didn't you?

JAMES: I did. It's not safe out there, Peter. People are angry. And people are capable. Not to mention that cult.

PETER: Cult?

JAMES: Wake up. Stop being so

disassociated. Maybe you wouldn't be in this mess.

JAMES leaves the hospital. KELLY notices the large mass of people outside.

KELLY: Are all those people...

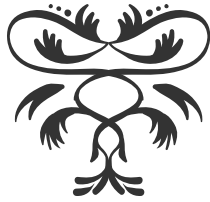
PETER: Kelly, let's go back up.

KELLY: All of them—

PETER: Kelly! Emma's waiting.

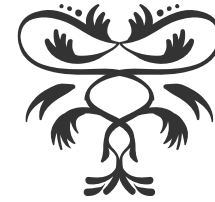
END OF PART FIVE





THE IDES

Zachary Barmania



The following is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar: Act II, Scene 2.' Dedicated to the students of Ontario, and their MPPs.

SCENE: SMITH RESIDENCE. Thunder and Lightning. Enter MR. SMITH in a bathrobe.

MR: Jesus Murphy! This storm has been screaming all night, just like my wife. LOL, seriously though. She woke up thrice in a cold sweat, crying: "Murder! Murder! My husband is dead!" Hey, Manservant?

Enter MANSERVANT.

MAN: My lord?

MR: Go out and buy one of those magic 8 ball things, and ask it how well today will go for me. I'm gonna get promoted; I can feel it.

MAN: Sir, I believe they only answer yes or no... Right away sir.

Exit MANSERVANT. Enter MRS. SMITH.

MRS: Do my ears deceive me? You're not seriously going to work today, are you? After my dreams last night? Nope, not happening. You aren't leaving this house today.

MR: Um, I think I will. Trust me, babe: one look at these shredded arms, and this gnarly mug, and nobody would dare step to me.

MRS: Right... You know I'm skeptical of omens, but not today. Didn't you see the news? A lioness gave birth in the zoo, only there are no lions in the zoo.

The three men I admire most: the father, son, and holy ghost. They caught the last train for the coast. A black cat crossed my path before walking under a ladder and breaking a mirror. I can't help these things, or that they frighten me. You cannot think that these things are normal.

MR: Well, shit happens. Whatever; even if all that's true, it's your average day for ol' Smith. Don't worry. I'm gonna do it, no matter what people tell me or what the signs for the future indicate. Who's to say these signs are for me, anyway?

MRS: You're in charge; you're a person with power. The signs are meant for you to follow. Only you can heed the warnings before it's too late.

MR: Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once. Why should I fear all of this if it's inevitable? YOLO, as Shakespeare would say.

Enter MANSERVANT.

MR: Oh, good. What does the 8-ball say about my success? Listen to this, wifey.

MAN: I wouldn't leave the house today if I were you, sir. I asked it if you would be successful today, and it gave me a... well, a strange answer.

MR: What answer?

MAN: It said: "A cut to OSAP would

The Ides

cause pain to the most vulnerable of Ontario students, and benefit nobody in particular. Not only students, but schools will have fewer resources to serve their communities. These decisions are being made without considering those affected, or the consequences this will have on the future of our province. It is a kneecapping of the future to serve the present. Education is an investment worth making; the future is an investment worth making." Or something like that.

MR: How did they fit all that into the ball? No matter. I'm badder than bad luck.

MRS: For my sake, please. Your confidence is blinding you. Please stay. Nobody wants you to go, and everyone is telling you to stay. Please, I'm your constituent... I mean wife.

Enter DECIUS, a co-worker.

D: Here's Mr. Smith, good day! I'm here to take you to work.

MR: You're just in time... to tell the guys I won't be coming in today. I can, but I won't. I'm not scared, but I still won't go. My dear wife tells me that there's a lot of bad signs around today. You know, the will of the people and that sort of

nonsense. She had a dream about, well, you tell him.

MRS: I saw a fish, but it was in a chicken's body, and we were all at the bus stop. It's the one with the shelter, but also different from that one. Then, everything was spinning really fast and the fish-chicken said something but I don't remember what.. Then I was a kid again, on the last question of the spelling bee in front of everyone. "How do you spell OSAP? How do you spell OSAP?" I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T KNOW, OKAY? Then my husband got stabbed.

D: Pish posh, dear. Isn't it obvious what those dreams meant? The fish-chicken represents a diversity of thought and the success of your husband. The bus is progress, zooming off towards the future! Isn't that exciting? You at the spelling bee can only represent your urge to be a dutiful wife and active member of your democracy. So you see, all signs say you must come in today.

MR: Bet you feel stupid. Come, let's away!

MRS: Aw fiddlesticks.

Exeunt.



WALKS IN NATURE

Keira Purdon

Part V: Robert Johnston Eco Forest Revisited

SUMMARY

Cost: Free!

Location: 15-20 minutes outside Peterborough, drive out Parkhill Road and then Division 5 Road

Naturality: 4 out of 5

Gear: Ice grippers, decent waterproof boots, and sunglasses!

Watch out for: Icy hills, uneven ground, slippery conditions.

Finding good walking trails in winter is tricky, especially if you don't want a long drive. That is why I chose to revisit the Robert Johnston Eco Forest. As I foresaw in the original article featuring this location, Part II, these trails have been a frequent destination for me. I thought comparing my late summer/early autumn visit with my more recent visit in January would be worthwhile, as well as some of the joys and challenges associated with winter excursions.

First and foremost, winter walking is definitely not for those nursing injuries or for those with mobility issues. It requires more gear, caution, and experience than beginners may have, but don't let me scare you! The Robert Johnston Trails are perfect for newbies at winter hiking or snowshoeing. The short, easy navigable loops are perfect for an introduction to the wintery outdoors.

Driving to the location was more arduous than the actual walking. Division

5 Road had sizable frozen areas and continuous washboards. My older car with 14 years and over 200,000 kms was not exactly thrilled. The parking lot, however, was nicely plowed. The trails themselves were not, but preceding visitors had trampled a path through snow. I say preceding because I didn't encounter anyone, which I always take a little pleasure in. The trails were packed but that doesn't mean they



Walks In Nature

were easy walking. They were pretty much completely snow-covered ice.



Knowing how icy and cold (it was -20 without the wind) it was, I used almost all of the tips in one of my previous articles on my top 10 tips for winter hiking. I dressed in layers, having a pair of long johns (long underwear) under my pants. I wore a neck tube, favourite hat, and my favourite thermal socks. And while the temperature was cold, I didn't require hot shots. However, I definitely needed my ice grippers this time. I got a cheap \$14 pair

from Canadian Tire and they certainly did their work. On the Tree Trail (all the labels are labeled as plants or animals), a grove of trees was flooded and frozen. I ventured off the trail to get some pictures.

On the parts of the trail the sun bounced directly off the snow and into my eyes. I ended up six eyeing it; wearing my regular glasses and sunglasses on top. It looked ridiculous and they did fog up, but it was better than straining my eyes. I especially needed them to watch my feet, and also to prevent snow blindness. Snow blindness is rare, but it can happen if you have to look at sunlit snow for long periods of time. I have bad enough eyes, so I need to protect what eyesight I have! And I strongly suggest you do the same! If you've ever been out on a sunny day after a fresh snowfall, you know what it's like!

The Deer Trail was a fair challenge in the summer. In the winter it felt like a never-ending staircase of ice! It is one to avoid if you aren't sure of your feet or aren't up to the cardiovascular challenge. If you do make it to the top of the hill, there is a lookout that gives a panoramic of the surrounding land.

Still on the Deer Trail, I noticed the shelter I came across previously was still standing, speaking to its construction. I was rather surprised to see it; I thought the weather or someone would have torn it down. Thankfully, it looked like it wasn't being used by any critter or human.

On my way back to the parking lot, by the pond, one of the little wooden bridges had a stream running under it. I guess despite the cold, the sunlight made it warm enough for the water to flow. I took a minute there to listen to the gentle gurgling. It was reminiscent of the hiking

Walks In Nature

trail to the kettles at Warsaw Caves. There the river ran under the rocks and you could hear it as you walked. I love little features like this. They really make you feel the whole excursion was worth it.

As the snow has accumulated since I was last at Robert Johnston Forest Trails, I think I may stop by Canadian Tire again and pick up some snowshoes. Even with them, doing the Deer Trail should be interesting. However, as the winter draws to a close, I cannot help but wonder how this place will look in spring and into summer.

Hiking in winter is generally more strenuous than hiking in the warmer months. You exert much more energy to go less distance. The snow will hold you up for a moment, then drop you however many inches. The cold also makes things difficult; sometimes you are too cold, like when you are walking into a headwind, other times you are too warm. But, I love revisiting places throughout the seasons. There are little changes you can see season to season and even day to day.

My point is, there's a lot to experience regardless of the weather! Get outside and happy trails!



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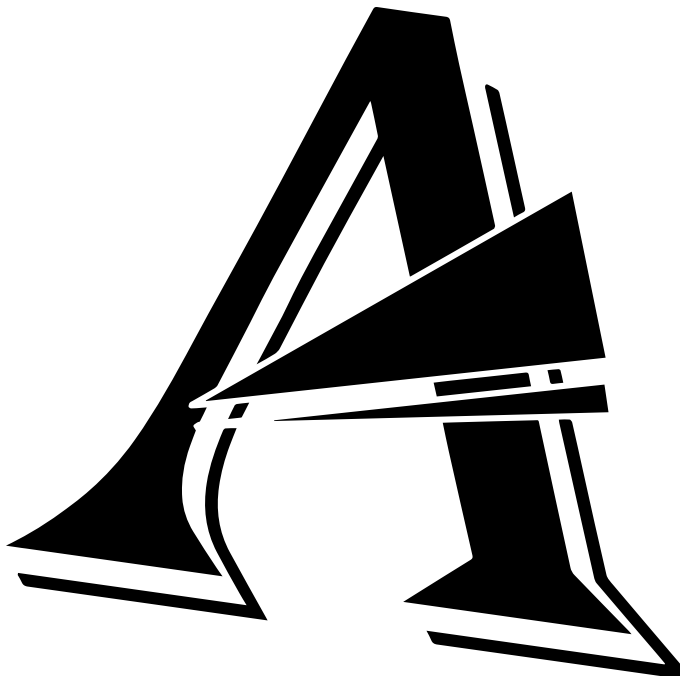
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