

ANEMONE SIDECAR

CHAPTER 20  
of  
THE  
ANEMONE SIDECAR



Built on the work of select multitudes.  
Cover image by Daniel Boyer.

## Introduction

*Selections from "Screens" and "Washing Machines"*  
*by Christopher Barnes*

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Christopher Barnes : from *Screens*  
and *Washing Machines*

FILM-MAKING (docu-concert screens 51-53)

Darrel moose calls  
Helena. A sliding  
dumpcart. Switch.  
A waxwork queen.  
A bendified head,  
his beard scrunches.  
Then pan to  
horseshoe stalls.

Then pan to  
horseshoe stalls.  
The Daimler's  
sleepwalking. Roll  
credits. Loose to  
black.

Loose to black.  
Teen's talky-talk.  
Their tribe gathers  
to ragged applause.

by Christopher Barnes



Miss Penalties  
pinkie-pokes the  
frond, a kitty-cat.  
Mr Brake  
decelerates the  
thin set street. Mr  
Tinwell sags his  
sugarplum head.

Sags his sugarplum  
head. The flashgun  
brightens Tinny  
Tin-tin's hair. He  
sprawls striped  
dungarees. Singing  
about asteroid  
charts.

About asteroid  
charts. In a jiffy  
at the candy-glass  
window, a hoo-ray,  
a guffaw, a face  
looms, skywest.

A pendulum hooks  
spell-caught air, a  
slippy width on a  
low-gear  
laryngitised  
Sunday. The  
time-point ruffles.

Sunday. The  
time-point ruffles.  
Mr. Diduca draws an  
endlong quill, his  
cloak's a  
zigzaggery rag.  
This is nearabout a  
geisha.

This is nearabout a  
geisha. With a  
crow-feather dart  
he rips the screen.  
Breeze-blast  
rumbles, hurt.

COSTUME-DRAMA MAKING (screens 9-11)

Mr. Higgs is  
infix, nest  
feather knicknacks  
flash, orbital. He  
scuttles, bristles  
arms to rant.

Orbital. He  
scuttles, bristles  
arms to rant.  
Candle-dazzle  
quivers. "You'll  
have to bow out  
presto."

"Presto." A frame  
for Master  
Pottinger's  
peach-glow face.

by Christopher Barnes

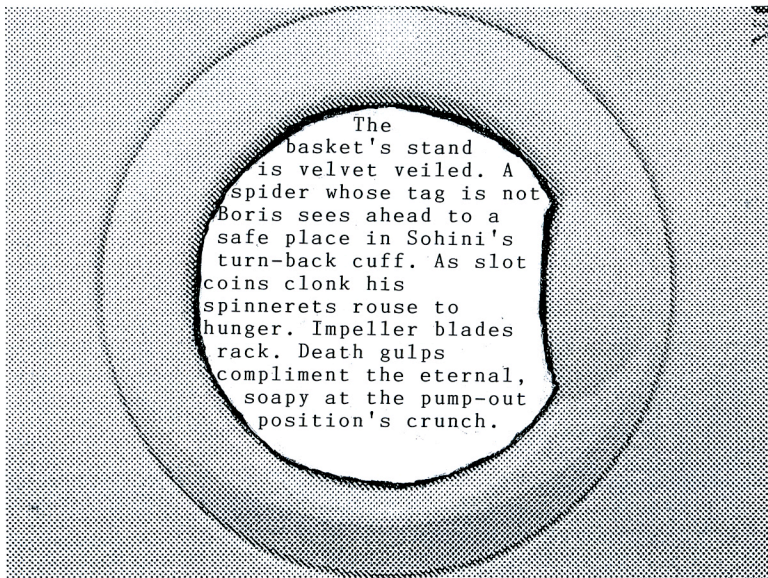
Wiggle-wag  
graphics. Dummy  
music. Titles.  
Kerry Blues go  
topsy. Spectacled  
terriers stare. A  
low-cut park, trees.

A low-cut park,  
trees.  
Fill out the scene  
to Goodair Vets. A  
camcorder zooms a  
tripod. The trainer  
flashes teeth. An  
Afghan's stroked.

Stroked. A  
Bedlington yaps. A  
Chihuahua snorts.  
Strum-pick-riff. A  
free and easy  
speed-up. Springing  
legs, a black tail.

by Christopher Barnes

Washing Machine No.37

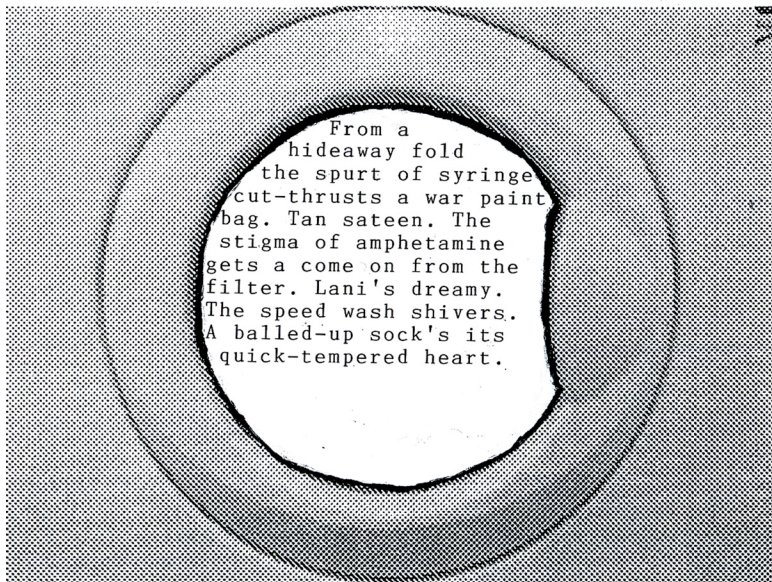


The  
basket's stand  
is velvet veiled. A  
spider whose tag is not  
Boris sees ahead to a  
safe place in Sohini's  
turn-back cuff. As slot  
coins clonk his  
spinnerets rouse to  
hunger. Impeller blades  
rack. Death gulps  
compliment the eternal,  
soapy at the pump-out  
position's crunch.

By Christopher Barnes

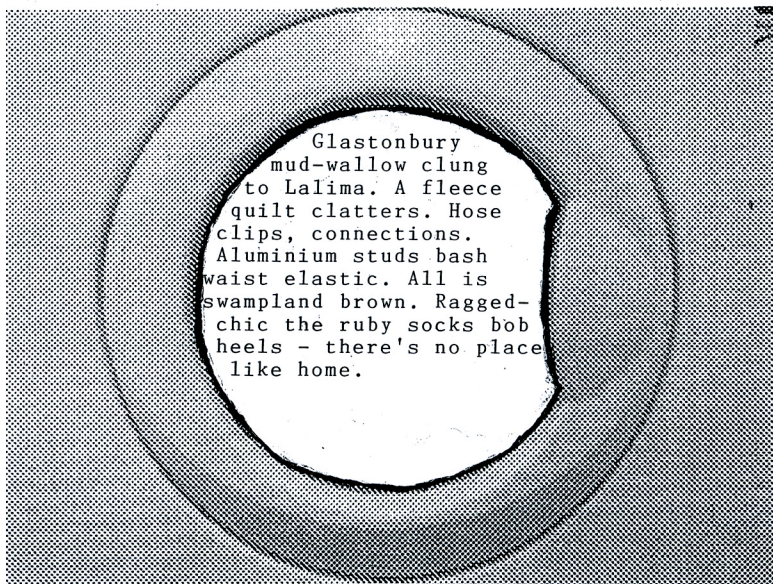


Washing Machine No.44



By Christopher Barnes

Washing Machine No.43



Glastonbury  
mud-wallow clung  
to Lalima. A fleece  
quilt clatters. Hose  
clips, connections.  
Aluminium studs bash  
waist elastic. All is  
swampland brown. Ragged-  
chic the ruby socks bob  
heels - there's no place  
like home.

By Christopher Barnes

William Keckler: two poems

*instead of suicide*

\*

the title of this poem is asterisk  
isn't that cool  
(not really)  
isn't the sound of a computer grinding funny  
aren't all poetry questions  
really just devious ferrets  
playing with a ball  
in the community playpen at the mall

i won't put question marks  
at the end of questions anymore  
i'll be like an old person who's afraid to do that

\*

then you may remember in bed  
the long years of  
is love coming  
this will make you smile



what if you love the world  
but you don't want the world  
to be any closer

but will is deceptive

you haven't the will you think

you have another

on tap

\*

when someone dislikes you  
they will sum you up  
and that's the easiest way to know  
whether or not someone really likes you  
no matter what lies they say  
there now i told you  
now you know  
so reprocess all the loans  
of love in your head  
and see what's real

here *use this calculator*

\*

why not light a candle  
*and* curse the darkness  
i always said  
amid the open field

which is probably for birds

humans look silly in an open field  
even if they try to pose as nature

nature isn't having it

\*

whether you think it's a poem  
or not  
someone will probably eventually  
put all that negative space to good use  
probably a bad idea  
probably commercial  
but you'll be elsewhere  
doing elsewhere's work by then  
so don't worry overmuch

about the blight

the parts of your psyche

you spent so much energy

disowning

in that bad production of *Hamlet*

\*

you can remind yourself you're human

if you go do something ridiculous  
and superfluous

like light a candle  
or curry favor

write a poem  
remix a song

Flickr  
or LOLcaption existence

Be a unicorn greeter  
in a poetry magazine

I mean editor

It's the biggest non-profit  
in the history of the world

that thing the birds are doing

in the awkward sky

right this minute

right outside your window

## *Biography of Some Condoms*

The condom stippled  
like a sea cucumber.

The condom minty  
as Swedish forest floor.

The condom filled with water  
after like Claes Oldenberg

furniture lolling about.  
The novelty Godzilla condom

lubricated with sake  
and spit mostly.

The sanctimonious condom  
reminding you it saved

your life, if not your lifestyle.  
The condom discovered

months later, looking very much  
a crazed trapper too long alone,

grizzled, under your bed.  
That condom you nicknamed

Saint Marquette.

Paul David Adkins: two poems

WAR STORY # 166: At the End of the Day in  
Iraq, I Get Creeped Out by Louise Gluck's  
Detached Tone in *Ararat*

I sit to read.  
She's so controlled, clinical.

A pilot on doom's precipice  
transmitting calmly –  
*Tower, we are going down*  
has nothing on her lines –  
*She wants to be back in the cemetery,*  
*back in the sickroom, the hospital.*

That's it.  
No clamor.  
Emotion is for the weak.

All day I read of death  
in reports  
written in the manner  
of a nurse who has seen

herself the cancerous lesions, traumatic  
amputation of the lower right leg below the knee,  
anaphylactic reaction to shellfish.

Gluck's lyrics are clean  
as the mirrored steel

of scalpels,  
a gleaming tray of them  
set beside  
the anesthetized patient.

The masked surgeon  
betrays nothing  
as she lifts a blade  
and slits the pallid flesh beneath  
to flowering.

WAR STORY # 165: My Wartime E-mail  
Correspondence With Poet and Mentor Kelli  
Russell Agodon

It wasn't engaging or worthy of books --  
no revealing letters of the like  
between Dickinson and Colonel Higginson.

I don't recall your salutations  
or closings.

Something like

*Hi*

and

*All the best.*

No secrets passed  
or dreams related.

No flowery allusions  
to Wordsworth,  
Walter Scott.

Just a common refrain --

*Reread this aloud for music*

or --

*This part sounds a little rough*

and later --

*Could you tighten this stanza?*

Nothing I would hide  
from my wife.

It was like receiving  
short transmission bursts  
while strapped in a space capsule.

*Roger*

*This is Mission Control*

Even static hiss.

That evidence not of life alone  
but knowledge.  
Someone understanding  
and relaying the vitals  
of propulsion, oxygen,

the exacting principles  
to guide me finally spinning  
safely to the sea  
in sight of the giant, watchful ships.



## Nathan Hunt: two poems

### Hide-and-Go-Seek

It's a good thing I haven't  
yet developed object permanence  
and I can let you blink

out of existence  
the moment you step behind a tree.  
The old men playing

chess can survive,  
at least until I turn my head  
to watch a cloud

wink into being. The sounds  
of unreal things will always fog my mind.

Imagine my surprise  
when you appear *ex nihilo*  
to catch my frisbee!

Your smug smile. The cars going  
by, happening and then not happening.

## Best Friends

We're four bottles in  
when you put your lips  
on my mouth and take

my breath away.  
After you pass out  
I don't bother to feel

sorry when I steal  
your car and take it  
to the sand dunes.

Eszter Takacs: *Meteor Shower, Bakersfield, CA*

In this next rendering we watch weight  
settling at the center of the sieve.  
A tea-cup balances on clawed fingers  
against a migraine that won't give way  
and *Charlie Goes Charlie*, the song keeps the sway,  
the elegance of her wrinkled feet  
as they skip to me leaving.

Dicing fine embryos born to the sick  
becomes a daydream, hand-blown glass  
and the dissected mill of antibodies  
on a daisy-dyke tab, like this, you said  
*like this.*

The city becomes a general feeling  
like a circus in the distance  
and trombones that wear veils,  
their sound born of the past, like this, you said  
*like this.*

Can you distinguish the sky from the trampoline,  
the loose matter born, edging its place into  
your vision? That night you asked me to dance.  
Like this, you said,  
*like this.*

Scott Tucker: *Bayard Avenue*

Michael knew the people up one side of Bayard Avenue and down the other. He knew them from stories. He knew they were good people. Some of them were in the room with him now, or crows, or the rain drumming down hard. Or Toom.

The smell of strong tea and disinfectant wrapped its arms around his bed. A bone bracelet he knew rattled. "Delmaine has always wanted to sleep with you," he warned his wife. "Don't go near him in the pool, or walking."

"There is my life to think of, too," she said. "And trust."

"Only speak to him outside in the yard."

Or so it might go.

The lion helps the lioness on a larger kill but otherwise he isn't much use to her. "Do your fighting in the street," she told him. "I will call you inside when I need you."

..

What I wish for now is Peace, he said to the new stone fountain in front of the last house on Bayard Avenue. The fountain brimmed with watery optimism gurgling out of its top center dish, and over, and over, and down, to the cold round basin at the bottom.

Coyote scent marked hedges and fence posts from the fountain to the ravine below, spooking small dogs out on early morning walks with their masters who held stainless steel coffee mugs, retractable leashes, and clear plastic bags for picking up dog scat. Michael suspected the coyotes drank from the fountain during the dry season. Lost Cat posters appeared in July and August at the stand of mailboxes in the middle of the block, illustrating the larger problem.

It's good, Michael thought, the fountain drawing predators farther up the hill. Something is needed to control the rat and mice

population in the city if house cats won't do the job.

"Mom, I want to go around once."

"Okay."

"What about two?"

"Okay."

There aren't many children anymore in the city, Michael thought, although our daughter Emily is ten years old now and a good soccer player, but not a good reader yet.

..

"How is he?"

"There is still brain activity, so there is hope."

Yes, Michael thought. There is brain activity and hope. There is the illusion of God, and of one nurse being the same as any other.

..

Emily wanted a kitten quite a lot and her mother said no because of the coyotes.

"An indoor cat then."

"Cats need to live outside to be happy," she said.

"I don't understand life!" Emily yelled, and her mother laughed because it was such a big thing for a small girl to say.

Emily is the sort of child, Michael thought, who will grow up and be kind to strangers and it will cause her great trouble, but the good kind of trouble. He could see her as a young woman standing beside her car with an unreliable engine and a driver's door that jammed and she would curse at it until it opened, in such a way that it lifted the spirits of everyone around her, and this is how she would meet her husband.

..

In heaven, Michael thought, I will watch the entire movie of my ancestors' lives, from the Stone Age to the Unnamed Wars to the Slave Trade, to the survival of my own grandparents and their grandparents. Which of them came to the Chobe River first? With

eternity, I will have time to learn. And then—to see how my own life has added to that long story of hunger and work and hope and lost hope. To see the movies of the other lives I have changed without realizing the good or bad I have done. This is what he hoped heaven would be.

Although—he thought again, these will not be movies. I will somehow know, inside my head, what they knew inside theirs. He learned in school, early on, that the word Religion came from an older word, which meant to Re-link. He learned English from a missionary named Abner Wellington who suffered in the heat and used the Bible and a book of great quotations as his textbooks and was later killed by rebels for his faith.

*Sin is geographical.*

—Bertrand Russell.

For instance.

The school dried up and closed after Wellington's death. Some years are like this, he learned, and you walk away with your own people and look elsewhere for what you need. Some years the Chobe River does not deliver its water to the Zambezi at all.

Lekgoa, they called their teacher, which meant "White Foreigner" and was an insult. Wellington took away Michael's original name, Mogami, which meant "One Who Milks," a reference to the cows and the goats kept by villagers.

*A language is a dialect that has an army.*

—Max Weinreich.

For instance.

Or Abner Wellington.

..

A very old and heavysset man with ruddy loose jowls came walking up Bayard Avenue each morning to collect the mail delivered to his box the day before. On colder days, he wore his painting gloves and a baseball cap with felt flaps to cover his ears. His coat had a fur collar, worn down the way a hallway rug wears down at the edges. The wallet pocket of his pants had a hole worn through it the size of a child's thumb. With bad eyes, he bent

forward to read the details of the faded Lost Cat posters, and he walked home with his mail in both gloved hands, shuffling carefully along as if he'd fallen there before, as if the dry pavement could ice over at any moment in the shade.

The clouds some days don't know which type of clouds to become, wispy, mixed together with solid, building darkly into rain but cottoning back out into blue sky again.

Like the very old man, Michael thought, with the ruddy loose jowls—slight and strong at the same time. Like the polished stone of the new fountain and its gurgling water, in front of the last house on Bayard Avenue.

..

"I've seen them," he told his neighbors, who didn't believe him.

"How do you know they aren't dogs off leash?" he was asked.

"They keep their tails low and hunt at night. In their scat you'll see the fur and the small bones of rodents." Or housecats, he failed to add.

Reward! She is older and longer than pictured here. Her name is Mittens. Please call!

The coyote eyed him and moved off steadily when Michael approached it. Knowing the landscape and the yards of the neighborhood, it jumped a fence when it needed to and disappeared into cedars and rain. It was all for the best, Michael thought, as he didn't want his neighbors to fund an eradication program, and they voted instead to spend their money on a new cabana for the lower playground.

..

"How is he?"

"There is still brain activity."

"When will Jillian return?"

"She's looking for Toom. Then we can decide."

"Who is Toom?"

..

“Where I grew up,” he once told Emily, “the children moved into their own huts at seven years old, one hut for girls, one hut for boys.” These were like bedroom huts, he explained, so a family might have three huts. “We went to the bathroom outdoors in the bush, not in a single place but anywhere far from the village—much like the animals.” It returned soon enough to the soil.

Mothers walked all the way to the Chobe River for water. Then the new government dug wells and built a school. Life became better.

“In the old days, it wasn’t very expensive to live,” he told Emily. “We knew if we met a lion on the trail not to turn our backs but to look it in the eye and move off steadily. It’s when you turn your back, they think of you as food.”

Michael was of the Tswana tribe. In their language, Bo referred to the country and Ba referred to the people of the country, and so in 1966 they named their new country Botswana, which was more or less equal to the Kalahari Desert. The nearest town to Michael’s village was Kasane, an outpost of 7,000 people plagued by troupes of baboons marauding through kitchens and yards, and by herds of ellies pushing over the acacia trees to get at the roots and milling about under baobab trees they could not push over, near the airport, as if they were waiting for their own flights to depart.

“Once I walked to work and found a large bull elephant asleep under the Ba Ba Bololang sign,” he told Emily. “We had to poke at him half the morning to get him to move.”

The airport was two miles out of town and very much a part of the elephants’ world.

“What is the Ba Ba Bololang sign?” she asked.

“It means ‘Departures,’” he said.

..

Emily loved to hear the story of how her parents met in Botswana. Her mother had arrived for an overnight stay at a tourist camp where Michael worked as a guide, an hour’s flight from Kasane by bush plane. She planned to leave in the morning for a month of field research concerning hyenas in the Okavango Delta



during the dry season, to prove they were hunters as well as scavengers.

But her team did not arrive the following day as planned. So she waited. At the morning campfire, she drank strong tea with Michael to keep the chill away. He fed the fire with one long log, moving it into the center as it burned. They had no communication equipment that reached as far as Kasane except a radio the pilots used. There were no paved roads. It was a waste of money to try to pave the Kalahari. Her team, as it turned out, was hung up at the border crossing at Kazungula, a notoriously congested and chaotic place where four countries met—Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Botswana.

“You need to stay in camp,” he told her. “No walking—even between tents—without me.” He touched the rifle on his back. “The lions are right out there, in the taller grass.” He pointed, and smiled, to be polite.

She smelled strongly of Citronella, a popular insect repellent.

“No Citronella,” he said. “It attracts the elephants. They like fruit, and will push the tents over to get it.”

She didn’t mind learning from him, although usually she bristled at a man telling her what to do and what not to do. “What else can you tell me?” she asked. She knew she had to learn quickly. She was a young white woman from Seattle doing graduate work in a place without a fence for a thousand miles in any direction. Most importantly, without a fence around her immediate encampment, and so nothing to separate predator from prey.

He was a good-looking man, after all, thin and handsome in his pale green uniform, his face and hands as dark as any skin on the planet, his smile as bright and easy as any she’d ever seen.

“That is it,” he told her. “You hear it? Like an engine trying to get going. Then the full howl. That’s the hyena.”

“The dogs have made a kill?” she suggested, and he looked at her for the first time as a woman who impressed him.

“Yes,” he smiled widely, his real smile. “Probably impala. The wild dogs are the most efficient hunters in Africa, with a 90% kill rate.”

“Do you ever see the hyenas hunting?” she asked.

“Only if the pack is big enough. Here the packs are not big enough.”

“Did you say your name was Michael?” she asked him, pretending she had forgotten.

“Yes. Did you say your name was Jillian?” He smiled.

Two days later, the wild dogs passed by camp and everyone, even the cooks and the guides, ran out to get a glimpse of them. They were a rare sight because they roamed a huge territory. With their long, loping gait, they could run and hunt all night long. Watching them, you could see—you could feel—how each dog knew its role, and what a terrifying thing it would be if they were locked in on you as their target.

When her team arrived, to drive off and study hyenas, Michael helped them load their equipment into the Land Rover they had arranged to borrow.

“When will you return?” he asked her.

“Our plan is not to backtrack. Only the driver will return,” she said. Their eyes met. Her blond hair and bright soul. His wild, black, iron strength. She reached out and touched his arm as she started for the Land Rover.

“If we don’t find large packs, I’ll come back and see you,” she said.

It was a crazy thing to promise, but she did return, and she lived and worked with him for a year at the camp, and then they decided to move to Seattle together, so their child could be born in a hospital in the United States.

..

Although—Michael had lied. He hadn’t explained to Jillian, or later, to their daughter, what he had left behind to come to America. Who he had left behind. Her name was Toom, or really, Kokeetso, and she lived in a village of dirt and heat and acacia trees along the roadside to Kasane. She was from the village named Kagiso, meaning “Peace.”

He had approached her parents, as was the custom, and asked

permission to enter into a trial period. His family had paid her father three cows. A trial period lasts for several years, to see how compatible the couple is. They can have children during the trial period, but there is no marriage until all agree it will be successful. And so, while Michael worked at the tourist camp, an hour's flight away in the bush, Toom lived in her village and they had two children together. He saw them only once or twice a year when he had time off and there was an extra seat on one of the bush planes returning to Kasane.

"I must go visit my sister," he told Jillian, whenever he went to visit Toom. "There is room today on the plane."

"It was so brave of Michael," she loved telling her friends in Seattle, "to leave his country and his family behind, and all he knew, for me, and for Emily. What a magnificent man."

His nightmares were always of Toom. He had left a hard life behind for an easier life, without a goodbye to her or his children. Most of her village had died of AIDS over the years, he knew, so she would have to be the exception to be alive, and his children were, almost certainly, orphans of the land.

..

Even a pack of African wild dogs will give up on a waterbuck, because the buck secretes a foul-smelling musk onto its own muscles under stress, and most predators cannot get beyond the scent to finish the kill.

There are many reasons a couple might fail to have a second child. It usually isn't discussed even with close friends. So often it has to do with the woman, but sometimes it has to do with the man.

..

"For you, Miss Jillian."

They sat up late in the main tent with one lantern on after the tourists were in bed and they talked about work and sipped wine while the hippos chewed on the lawn outside. They could hear the animals tearing at the long green grass in the dark and snorting as

they ate. It became a pleasant backdrop, like everything in Botswana, startling at first and then familiar and reassuring.

"These are dangerous animals," Michael said, "if you get between them and the safety of their watering hole. They only want the green grass—a delicacy in the dry season."

"I've never felt so happy," she told him.

"Do you have anything like this in Seattle?" he asked.

She laughed. "We have coyotes in the neighborhood where I grew up. No one has seen them, but we suspect. And crows. Crows everywhere."

Their eyes met.

"Tell me about all of it," he said.

..

One sound Michael had never heard in Botswana was the rhythm and the low squeal of the heavy freight trains pulling slowly north and south along the coast of Puget Sound in the morning, far down the hill from Bayard Avenue. And the crows. Cawing and calling and harassing even the bald eagles out of the sky.

"There are quail in this neighborhood," he reported to Jillian one morning.

"You're kidding me."

"I've seen them two mornings now, halfway down the hill on Blue Ridge Drive."

There was no place on earth, however, like the Okavango Delta, where a large inland river formed each year, flowing south from Angola during the rainy season, and months later disgorging its water into the desert and the bush in search of the ancient lake that was once there to receive it. The land came to life and predators went hungry because the grazers could find water anywhere, instead of needing to risk the trip to one or two watering holes that had survived the dry season.

When the water came, the tourist guides conducted safaris by boat.

"Where could quail live in our neighborhood?" Jillian asked.

"There is still enough underbrush, and seed, in some of the

wilder yards where everything is not level lawn and sprinklers. They won't last for many more years, however."

Just when Michael believed he had seen everything, it snowed.

..

The idea for the trip was Jillian's. To introduce Emily to her father's homeland. To return to Kasane and the bush. To further her research and writing. They would stay a month, as she had planned to do the first time.

The journey seemed much longer this time, traveling with Michael and a 10-year-old daughter in tow—the 9-hour flight to London; the eight hours of waiting at Heathrow; a 12-hour flight to Johannesburg, South Africa and then backtracking by airplane north to Livingstone in Zambia near Victoria Falls, that great gash in the earth; then by van through Zambia to the Kazungula border station; by ferry across the Zambezi River, stepping through trays of disinfectant on the opposite shore to prevent the spread of hoof and mouth disease among the livestock; then by small truck four miles into Kasane and finally, walking the last two miles through the bush, to his home village, which had no name except to those who lived there.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes."

Michael had been quiet, from Heathrow on.

"I'm tired," he said.

Emily, however, was ablaze with excitement, inhaling Africa. She wanted to see yellow-bellied whip snakes and cape buffalo and vultures, and above all, to meet the girls her age who slept in their own huts, while lions hunted overnight on the same walking paths the children took to school in the morning.

"Baboons! Look!" she said. A troupe of them glided past in the bush 20 yards off. A small one stopped to regard them until its mother hurried it along.

"Keep walking, dear," Jillian told Emily.

Michael pointed to the grass roofs of his village. "There it is."

..

He could have lied. His grandparents and parents were dead by then. His brothers were gone, working in the diamond mines or living in Gaborone—no one knew for sure what had become of them. Gaborone was the capital city, on the other side of the Kalahari, where 70% of the population was HIV positive. There were those in the village who remembered him, of course, and knew his trial period had not ended in marriage, but that was not unusual, and ten years was a lifetime here.

“There’s another village we need to visit,” he told Jillian. “After this one.” He was speaking in a voice she hadn’t heard before. His eyes were crow’s eyes. “I have relatives there,” he said.

“Which relatives?”

He pointed. “We can walk along the same road where we came.”

..

Emily saw her vultures the next morning, whitebacked with downy, bald heads, waiting in trees pushed over by the elephants. Black beaks like polished stone. Some of them were still working on a carcass in the grass, eating it down to the skeleton. “Impala,” Michael identified the bones for her.

“How did it die?” she asked.

“A leopard would have hauled it up into a tree.” He looked around, shading his eyes to the east. “Hyenas eat everything, bone and all.” He pointed to higher ground. “There.” Three cheetahs, still looking hungry, sat like living room statues in the grass in the shade of an acacia tree, black teardrop markings beneath their alert eyes. “Cheetahs give up their kills easily, even to vultures,” he said.

This was how the nightmare went. At the second village, Kagiso, he spoke in Setswana to the people he could find. Many of the huts were empty. Young women lay in the shade, suffering. Their children couldn’t walk. Anyone with strength pounded grain into meal. Michael looked out finally on the land and cried.

They told him Toom sold her body to feed her children, sleeping with drivers at the ferry landing as they waited in their

trucks to cross north to Kazungula. Sometimes they waited for days. They had time to visit with local women. She contracted AIDS quickly and died slowly. Her children lived in the village until it couldn't support them any longer, and then they lived along the roadside. They starved there, or were eaten by the wild dogs, the lion, the leopard, any of the larger predators. They would have run to the river, and tried to protect each other there. They might have drowned in the strong current.

"Toom is dead," he told Jillian. "All of them are dead. I have dreamed it so many times it must be true."

"Who is Toom?"

He stood alone the next morning under the African sun. Hot thermals lifted the vultures from their broken perch. "Heaven will be a sad place for me," he said to himself. God heard him say this, along the roadside, and agreed.

..

After the snowfall on Bayard Avenue, the night sky cleared again and Michael followed the coyote tracks to the ravine and saw small disturbances along the fence tops where the crows had landed to complain. The imprint of coyote paws in the snow reminded him of the fresh tracks he once showed Jillian at the tourist camp, clear and clean, in the mud leading up to the watering hole.

"Jackal," he told her. "They follow the lions and wait their turn." The next morning, he took her out and they found a lion with its dead-calm yellow eyes looking back at them, eating a large kudu male it had taken down overnight, and she took pictures of the jackals sitting nearby like family dogs waiting for scraps at the barbeque.

"I love this place," she told him, and, turning, she kissed him on the cheek. "I'm afraid I might love you as well," she said. Their eyes met, as past and future meet on every day's horizon.

"I love this place, too," he told her, "but you must work very, very hard to stay alive here."

Then he willed himself awake.

..

“Michael! Oh my God, you’re back!”

“Jillian.”

She took his hand. “You were hit, walking on the road, do you remember?” A side-mirror on a truck. A blow to the back of the head.

“Yes.”

“Michael.” Her hand holding his. “Toom is here.”

Or so it might go.

(Previously published by The Meadow 2011 Literary Arts Journal)



Will Holland: *The World is With Us All Too Much*

On my busy city street, these lights  
shift their colors all through the night.  
They don't mind me too much.

In the morning I hear the sound  
of beings more restless than my own  
heartbeat tempest twisting in dream.

This makes me remember that humans  
do not lie alone in their anxieties.  
The world is with them too.

And it is no different - the leaves  
that change, the wind that nips.  
I make myself castles out of mounds of dust.

My fingers grow dirty, my white oxford  
frays at its edges. I wash myself  
too much in the endless flow,  
this muddy river.

I am not alone in my bath,  
company runs thick. The water tries to clean  
them the same as I.

Dave M'gman: *St. Loon*

a chorus ripples the air  
over the rock  
a circus of winged dolls  
clad in spear heads  
of black iron

I have resigned myself  
to the moon  
I have chained my sight  
to a laughing pedestal  
of clouds

Jean C. Howard: *The Grave of Elmer Whitmore  
of Wanship*

One day, old  
becomes a small stone  
bundled by switch grass

With May swabbing  
rain across your lips  
and grass, more grass,  
sparkling from the womb  
of spring.

Your mother's hands,  
pulling prayers  
from rock and sage  
and Mormon tea,  
whose stems flow  
streamlike over wind,  
for just one day  
planted a seedling  
of blood and bone  
into the hillside,

Into the prairie,  
into the rain,  
of the next century.

Meg Baird: *a gift wrapped*

old man winter settled in  
made a nice pretty storm  
to lay his head  
king of white  
and mirrored light  
bold and cold  
and slippery  
thunderous frozen  
River of Lethe  
the ferryman, Charon  
is underneath  
tirelessly transporting  
souls of the dead  
to the neatherworld  
nothing is known of

no, nothing is known  
we have stories  
mythologies, poems  
nothing  
nothing is never the end  
and never alone

