

## Drippings of the Land

The fogs that roll through take with them more than one can realize, or see, particularly within the moment one tries to hold on. Memories are the quickest to go - but if you're clever - you can find ways to hold them longer. The fogs that roll through do more than mystify, but the clever one will use this to their advantage.

After the fogs, all John can remember about last night's events is the clapping of his flip flops as he hastily trekked through pools of mud and countless challenges of terrain to get back to the boat. *Flip and flop/Clip and clap/How will I/Cover my tracks?* Hums fade out as his attention reverses back to hopping into the boat and floating the pond to safety. He struggles to maintain his balance as his dampened feet slip, slide, and squeak against his favorite, but far from sensible shoes.

Falling in full-on, John scrambles to ensure his collection of new belongings hasn't full-on fallen in. The water races over John's fingers with intent to release his grasp on a generic black duffel bag, its contents far too valuable for John to let go of. He musters what he can from his aged muscles to pull himself and the bag fumblingly into the boat. He curses at his clumsiness, a constant error he seems to face in his work.

Catching up to his breathing, John's leathered skin stretches to a smile, as he admires his equally weathered laundering duffel. He sees it as a bonus for a job well-done; "celebration money" for completing yet another successful mission. John crosses off an impressive three names from his list,

just before the sun can kiss his cold and dirty cheeks to remind him he doesn't have much time to make his way across the lake. He hurries to undo his knotted handiwork and push off towards the Mainland. It doesn't take many waves before John is distracted by yet another seemingly meaningless occurrence, which to John could mean so much, and was usually meant to.

He watches as the last specs of yellow sink, gravitated by the body of a Volkswagen Beetle, joining the clumps of dirt that give the water its distinct terracotta undertone. John wonders about the senescence of this once mobile object. He wonders if the object would, or could, miss its previous owners. How did it make it here? Had it ever seen anything like the night's happenings before? He then giggles to himself, noting that "this bug is like a daisy without petals."

*Fellow pedals/Yellow petals/Dancing on the dash*

*Yellow petals/Fellow pedals/Waiting on the crash*

John comes to realize that he doesn't have time to contemplate the romantic drowning of an ominous vehicle, rather deciding to focus on the leveling of his own moving mechanism. He increases his rowing speed in order to beat the influx of elderly women who insist on laundering at the butt-crack of dawn, much like himself. This coincidence causes more of John's giggles to bubble over, his oars creating an arrhythmic clapping. *How will I/Cover my tracks?*

As he nears the completion of the water's body, he remembers to look at his new things to see if there's anything worth salvaging amongst the paradoxical costumes. John entertains himself with a joke about a lawyer, a dentist, and a clown walking into a bar. While flipping through the silky

polka dots and colorful makeup, he accidentally flings something into Adam's ale. John then bursts into a cackle, as the lake now holds a bobbing red nose, a fresh new buoy among contaminated waters. John murmurs through chortles, "As long as the shoe fits," and continues to bounce in accordance with the cadence of the lake.

He sees the beginnings of the Mainland. The deteriorating laundromat looks like a heaven to John, a clean escape from last night's events and just steps away from Mrs. White and her famous biscuits and gravy recipe - that he swears he can smell, even from here. John hurries to reverse what he's undone in order to secure his "scapeboat" and make another trip through the mud, flipping and flopping it everywhere, racing to make it in time. He grabs his duffle full of cash and new Halloween costumes and begins clapping his way to the Mainland. As he marches, he is startled by a familiar, yet slightly disturbing noise occurring somewhere near him. John scans the perimeter for the bane of his existence and his light through the fogs, Porky.

John is joined by the screech of a cluck that is Porky's primary call of attention. The one-eyed chicken skips around John's being, as if he were playing a game, screaming and losing feathers in the process. John shoos Porky away and begs for silence, as Porky continues to play. The cock's eye widens, with the excitement of his friend's return. John scoops Porky up and tries to keep him still and quiet, at one point even sealing his beak together with his fingers, but only succeeding for the time it takes to cluck.

The brothers eventually make it up the incline of muds and grasses to find they've still made decent time. Porky stops screaming just as John unlocks the Mainland, revealing a simple and unsuspecting laundromat that is visited daily and beloved by its townspeople. John loves it too, but

for different reasons. In addition to housing his wife and himself for over 30 years, the Mainland also serves a great purpose to John and his true work outside of it. He tosses his new clothes into one of the washing machines and proceeds to open up shop.

As the fogs roll out and the elderly start to file in, John notices something off about the situation. *All I'm missing is a wife!* Quickly, he places a sign on the main desk that reads,

**“Upstairs. If you need something, touch Porky.”**

He makes his way up the flight that leads to home. John smiles, recognizing the comforting squeak of each step matched with the applause of his shoes and the look of his bare, frozen toes. As he extends his hand towards the knob, he realizes he doesn't hear the twang of the radio, Jane's oldest friend. John begins to grow concern, watering it with paranoid thoughts of what shock could exist behind such a familiar opening.

Much to his surprise, John is presented with the image of his sweet and caring wife, preparing the gravy for her famous breakfast buffet. He scoops her into his arms while singing, *“I dont bear your music, lover/Did you lose it in the butter?”* Jane reds her cheeks with a stuttering laugh, scooping John's own cheeks into her floured hands.

“It's in my mind today, like yours, darling. Won't you sing for me going down the stairs?”

John folds to the request and kisses her forehead, taking in the smell of the meat drippings and flour on the counter next to them. *Drippings of the land*, he thinks as he tells Jane that he loves her.

With perfect timing, Porky screams, signaling that a customer is in need of assistance. Singing of romantic drownings, John flips and flops back downstairs and Jane returns to the cooking.

As soon as John's clapping ceases, Jane releases the sigh she's been hiding in her chasm and wipes away the beads of sweat that just barely hid from sight beneath her tired, aging hairs. *Not so plain now, huh?* Jane giggles at her complexity and the timing of her secret accomplishments. She smiles at the success her roux will be, how much John will love it, and the things she did to obtain such fine trimmings of meat.

Her smile slowly turns into a menacing laugh, similar to her husband's, as she rejoices in the many different recipes that today's harvest will bring. She quickly halts her chuckling, remembering that not everyone can get away with screeching like Porky. She finishes her gravy and makes her way down the stairs, only letting herself laugh internally at how quiet her claps are compared to John's.