



SHOTGUN  
TORSO

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i. Shotgun Torso

I am sinking under dark liquid. Tobacco juice, oil spill, something coughed up from the lung. My feet don't touch the bottom; I'm not even sure if I have feet. Someone painted a barn the wrong color. Barns burn. I watched the fire blazing like a hole in the night. Pure darkness then the sucking out of no light, vibrant scaffolding of flame.

I held on to the ladder. It was a vertical conveyor belt. I wanted to find out what it would convey to me. The tunnels had open mouths which were compelled to swallow.

I was jealous of people with broken limbs, climbing out onto faulty tree branches. Millions of miles into the future. Time machines

need oil changes, parts and labor. A machine gives birth to poor babies. Oldest living man's last request was to fuck a newborn infant.

I plucked my eyes out, to be more homer. Sight impedes poetry. You think trees or trash blowing in the wind is the answer. You think, my god, naked women.

I climbed down that rung to where the water started. I watched it eat the soles of my feet. He wanted to submerge himself. The crying of animals = the crying of humans.

Decapitated clown head. Serrated smile.

I used to want a line, a string, a strand that was tied to my door leading out into the world, and I would wrap the rope around my wrist and feel it burn as it turned marking my passing. I

wanted to get to the end of that rope.

Empty trees carry nothing in their arms. Barren barons. Birds forced to fly always in the sky die of exhaustion. Wings beating, beaten, sprain.

Moles on bodies develop into cancer like old photographs.

Sidewalks contain in their souls a register of every footstep ever commemorated upon them. Every heart enshrines that which breaks it.

I can see your body stuffed inside my dryer folded on itself like prayer going around thumping your bones inside your skin.

I held my breath and penetrated the wall. Her eyeball was aghast with blood.

Room packed with unborn children. I don't want to wade through their skin, the skin of not-even ghosts haunted by unlived lives still in their mothers' chambers, still in their fathers' sperm. Still.

I eat them without tasting. Feasting.

The circular room, the ambulance. Crying miserable ugly body potato-shaped breast. Beasts with no backs, all rib flesh. Organic on a sesame seed bun. All enticing tying shoelaces. I want to drive a truck full of bread. Through a window. 13<sup>th</sup> floor. The smell of yeast, dough, collagen, clawing up the nostrils. Brainward.

Feet that walk at the bottom of bodies propelling forward toward ... something. Hell, skate, diving board, french, pleasant, please. Write with your left hand, sawn off. Blood, children;

beautiful children. Eat them.

The hollow mirror, the empty hat. It is day  
time, aliens race around preparing their star-  
craft. Sheets of camouflage drape across the  
manifold. I am drowning. I am holding a ham-  
mer in my hand and making with it a tiny  
tinny sound as I strike it against the surface.  
Rushing, surfacing. String of #s like pearls un-  
spurl.

Naked flesh of gears aluminum chrome shined  
to polish I see my reflection in love.

Horses disassembled.

I need to know if "annular" is a word but I  
have no way of finding out.

In the winter of '59, the cold exterior of a chev-

rolet, a bell sounded like an orchestra. In the soft downy churches, animals congregated around the fires that were started there. Great waxy effigies encapsulated past regimes. Exhausted. Carbon dating, speed dating.

He mounted the parallel plane, a geometric explanation of desire, something smooth, marilyn, and tried to get off. His limbs were tied with twine. Upside down ice cream cone.

In the morning he put his lips on the curling iron. I wanted all the necks to burst. Fire hydrant. Something coursing through my veins swelling corpuscles. He didn't trust himself with scissors. Noses.

Mold springs up. Beautiful transcendent. Touch the mold soft caress press it to your face, lips. Eat the mold. Mold is art. Photograph it,

frame it. It will break the frame. I am mold, no. I grow on trees and in darkness. I grow grow, want to. Spore, sporadically. The exponential increase as you observe it like atmospheric atomic chaos. Explosions breathed into birth. It entered me, I could feel it, liquid inside me, internal bleeding, planting its seed, impregnating. I harbored harvested the babe, a cellular implant in the soft organ parts, something hard crystalline obsidian growing along the synapses, spine, mine. Dead people. The stench of death, pallid stinky. Fetid children. I ate the afterbirth. It came out of me splotchy deathlike a bony hand claw, shred of skin, belittling, fingernailed. It walked out of me spouting latin sprouting horns. My baby, my baby, I love you baby, baby mine. I held it in my cradle arms which it had eaten, razor bladed fangs. My arms twitching on the floor spurting blue black blood pooling pool. Too soon to swim after

eating.

We go through the tunnel; there is something  
on the other side.

I wake up in the middle of the night on the  
floor of the forest. Trees purple accusingly at  
me. I clutch at my head, where is it? My neck is  
wet. I reach down into it.

There is no architecture. Digitized landscape.  
There are no nothings. There is a plane a flat  
screen of field of layer of expanse of terrain of  
dimension. Walk on it. Walk through it. Arrive.  
Skulls stretched out. I am clinging to some as-  
pect. Nothing comes true.

Trains across the universe. Millipedes.

She tears off his skin and licks what's under-

neath. Under his molecules, under everything  
that he is, under the paper he is printed on.

The entire human race. Every single person a  
person. Skin, flesh. A giant flag of cum and  
tears and blood and bile stirred like a stew you  
can't eat. Eat it. Take off your clothes and skin.  
Take off everything. Grind your bones into  
powder. Inhale your bones.

Guitars, one million guitars. I cry into the hole  
in your body. Your open wound that resounds  
the notes strummed. Naked shimmering sex  
act. Violence. Classical guitar plucked chords  
organ grinder. Minstrel monster administer  
soft sounds to placate my weeping. Fingers on  
the fret. Fingering my neck. I hate you; I hate  
the image of you.

I crawl out of your hole like a rat. I peek my

head out, lobbed off. Crumbs. Annular. She makes me lie down on dirty sheets the sweat of her body unlicked naked striations. The boils of her body lying like a picasso stretched nude unattractive, no body. Her whole body a hole through which to travel into other dimensions. I press my head into. And go through. Mouth-hole.

I lean her body against my temple and pull the trigger. One million guitars start thrumming.

## ii. Ugly Body

Breasts shaped like potatoes. Paring knife gripped in palm, thumb along thin ridge. Blade pressing into nipple, gouging. Potato pancakes, latkes, french fries.

The stomach folds, fat, where sweat collects, bulging over the belt.

Faces, masks. Clothes should be more concealing. No naked bodies. No nudity ever. Opening the thighs. Hair.

Bent-over bodies, coat hanger shoulders, animals, hyena posture. Hair grows in awful places. Fetid smells, body odor. Fake make-up perfume hair spray. Shave off all hair all body shave off lips. Shave the tongue.

Vomit into my mouth.

Apple breasts, pear, oranges, sizes of cancer, breast cancer, plum-shaped cyst growing out of chest, suck on carcinogen. Tumor erection. Dimples.

Ear wax, getting old dying, delasticity. Folds of wrinkled canvas bag. Valise.

Toe cleavage. Sucking on fingers, knuckle ridge, skin over bone. Teeth perforate.

Ankle, wrist, clavicle, breast bone, chicken wing. Earlobe vagina. Nasal passage massage. Hirsute. Discoloration. Miasma. Shoulder armpit. Crotch.

Mouths on folds, crevices. 2 parts of the body coming together, stitched. Jaw bone. Broken

facial features. Eyeballs. Slit eyelids. Gross misshapen deformed. Dwarfism, elephantitis. Huge tits. Amputated legs.

I run my hand over your knee where it curves in on itself closed up over bone. My hand goes through the place where your shin should be. You shiver. I run my hand up your thigh and there is nothing there either.

Arms distended behind the back trying to reach that spot hands can't grasp. On/off switch.

What the insides feel like your finger inside my mouth your fingernail under my teeth.

I hate noses. Wrong shape launching off the face. Asian noses are racially pure. I could eat them. Most noses should be broken.

I don't want anything to touch me.

Pipe cleaner.

Freckles, stubble, anal, germaphobe.

Fingers are stupid, hands, wrists, arm, shoulder, face. The face should be lifted off like a mask. Dotted line around the body. Razor blade.

Touching or being touched by another's skin is not the same as touching oneself. Elbows. Neck folds, trachea. Breathing through someone else's throat, soda straw. Touching hands touching, holding hands, kissing. 2 people pressing their lips against each other. Folding the lip back over the face and head like a hood, eating the person. Teeth clacking like horses' together. Taste.

Slapping, punching, hitting, fisting, smacking, pushing, pinching, tickling.

Wearing your body around, wearing clothes over it. Dressing, undressing, taking showers, eating, shitting, pissing, puking, fucking, walking, bending your knees. Riding a bicycle. Shooting a gun. Smoking a cigarette. Watching television.

Running my tongue along the body. Running my tongue all along the disgusting body. Holding my tongue in my hand and dragging it against the body.

Tennis match. Bone collection. Typewriter. Muscles. Sardine tin. Organ stop. Garbage can. Glass shatters. Fan blade. Gargle soap. Conclave of porn watchers. Compendium of voyeurs. Eyeball satiation. White tights on a leg.

Elastic cutting off circulation. Ribbon in hair.  
The hair of 60,000 people in a pile, all colors,  
braided together.

Asymmetrical. Unloved. Pay for sex. Pay for  
hot breath on private parts. Pay for hand to  
squeeze testicles until they pop. Pay for tor-  
ture. Pay for conversation. Pay for death. Sex  
with a corpse. Kiss a corpse cold. Kiss the  
corpse unmoving unresponsive, succumbed to  
disease, riddled with sores. Kiss open wound.  
Lick out the maggots. Eat the hair, fingernails.  
Eat the scrotum, cervix.

Touch my naked dead body. Touch my shriv-  
eled unused penis. Touch my staring eyes.  
Touch me touch me touch touch. Open shirt  
open chest. Heart eaten, heart attacked. Touch  
the dry insides desert winds hollowed empty.  
Touch brittle decaying bone. Touch the dead.

Love it.

### iii. Dead Ones

Morning falls through the window like a suicide.

I see my death projected before me like a drive-in cinema. I see it before I eat my cereal. It floats on top of the alphabets. I eat it along with my breakfast. I devour my own death.

The dead crowd my apartment dragging their feet waiting for me. They look at their wrist-watches as if I'm late. Naked corpses with their skin dragging along behind them like physical shadows.

I open the refrigerator and see the lights of oncoming cars. Blaring horns, I want to drive it into the pylon.

Grey cement barricade surges up. Neighbors are smiling. Cubicle booth forehead. Dead bloody crimson soccer cleat. The taste of it washes over the taste of meat. Waves crashing on the shore. Horses galloping.

I look at my wrist but there is nothing on it. Scars from prior deaths. No time. Scars open a door in my wrist. I walk through the bloody threshold. Plush curtains pulled back. I enter my wrist, white strands of epidermal layers. Gnawing at the bone. Wolves baying. Sirens, klaxons, neon bright lights.

Oceans. A vacation somewhere tropical. A place surrounded by water. No cars. No sharp or hard edges. No ledges. Cars. No cars. Walk out into traffic. Alarm clock plays news of my death. Dead people talk radio.

17 floors float past in slow motion. I can see each one in pristine detail. Someone is vacuuming a rug. Someone vomited on a stained rug. Rug vomit. Layers of vomit twisted into the twill of the carpet. Vomit on vomit on omit. I can hear the sound of the vacuum cleaner and the sound of the man or woman pushing it back and forth. I can hear the sound of skin rubbing against plastic of the vacuum cleaner. The vacuum makes a horrific sucking sound that is a mask that hides some truth.

I am lying on my broken back looking up at the sky which is exhaling its dying breath back at me. We give each other resuscitation recitation. Go through those motions. Clouds spell out my name and the word surrender. The word surrender surrenders.

An ocean spills out of my mouth, turns to

blood like a wedding miracle.

When I was born I was dead. Strangled in my mother's womb. A dead baby walking around doesn't cry. A dead baby grows up to become me. I saw all of the ways I would drown and be born.

Bullet through 3<sup>rd</sup> eye. I am alive. Bullet in my teeth. When I am buried I smell the dirt in my nostrils. Rich black dirt good for planting. I wanted to be cremated. My coffin is an office.

The crashing curve of torn metal. A twister crippling me. Storms haunt my memory of death. After they are over and nature is resetting, I wake up in a cold sweat that I have been saved.

The sun swelling like an inflammation. The sun

eating me. Sweat pulled from my core, yanked through every layer of me, my identity, sucked out and evaporated. The sun holds my dna, ready to make clones. An army of my replicas march on the surface of the sun. I am long dead but my legion lingers on.

Fire licks my skin. I see the one who holds the torch, who tied me to the stake. I am being judged for misdeeds. I can feel the licking of flames unsatiated all over my body. It is no longer a sensation.

I watch you lie on your bed, stop breathing. I watch you starve to death, your eye sockets hollow out, your rib bones define themselves as ribbons. I watch you drive a blade into your sternum. I watch you caress a shotgun self-reflexively.

You look in the mirror and tell me the date of my death. It is today.

Languishing in hospitals strapped to gurneys paying out the vein. Descending into hell collecting change. The dead don't go anywhere.

Ants crawling all over my body, slugs crawling out on my handshake. At the interview for a new job, my jawbone fell off as I was reconfiguring my weaknesses as strengths. The jaw clattered on the desk between me and my interviewer like half of wind-up chattering teeth. The dead wait in line to use the bathroom.

I see the way I will die in a filing cabinet. Claustrophobic between my permanent record and dental charts. In all of my previous lives I died in childbirth. In all of my previous lives I never made it out of the womb. The luckiest

person on planet earth. The most miserable.

When my great grandmother gave birth to her daughter, she didn't cut the umbilical cord and my grandmother kept my mother also attached so that they walked around connected to each other through the generations. When I was born a boy they were so disappointed that I had severed a great tradition that my great grandmother died and we had to pull her dead body along with us.

If everyone did that, humanity would just be one huge interconnected web of the dead and living. We would have to move across the surface of the earth as one entity and build one house that was large enough for our many parts. There would be no crime or violence because it would be crime or violence against the self. And we would cover the earth entirely

with our body and the earth would suffocate. The dead planet would wear our skin and become a new organism. The planet would give birth to a new planet and the umbilical cord would not be cut.

Brian Warfield writes shorts stories. You can find links to his stories at his website (<http://brianwarfield.weebly.com>). He also makes chapbooks through Turtleneck Press (<http://turtleneckpress.com>).