

THE OVERCOAT

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

'Twas one evening it came rapping,
Then a gently tapping at our chamber door,
snapping,
Where is The Overcoat,
from beyond Robinsons' shore?
Quoth the Editorial Team:
'Tis here once more.

Thank you for opening this edition of The Overcoat: may each of its leaves be an autumn blessing to you. Alycia Hermawan strikes again with a wonderful cover: The Atonement of Rain. We think we have in this issue our very first epic poem: a blistering 'heap of images' and ruminations from Sean Feeney. After that, you'll find a story that trades judgement for friendship by Alexandria Cardona, and an avant gardener in Nylah Holbrook's 'Alice Killed the Veggies'. A floral quartet follows: Sarah Lough's weeping willow; Chryssa Pappas' lilies; Milla Flynn's hopeful tulip; and, a short but sweet rose from Lachlan Dean. Question your doppelgangers in the mirrors with Keeley Butcher, before a rough equilibrium is reached by Alvoli Anderson concerning animals. Last but not least, you can rove the countryside with 'The Drover', by Justin Keel. We hope you light upon a few wholesome carrots on the way...

Editors & Co.,

The Overcoat

THE OVERCOAT

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Earth Remembers Sleep

BY SEAN FEENEY

Slumbering factories,
Heartless cars speared on metal
In the bays of dealers by the highway;
Bought and sold, crashed and bent.
Towering electrical spires; wires higher
Than the treeline; supine stretch of sights.
The blanket of the Earth, tasselled, pulled up tight,
Embroidered in the mountain's sides and circuits,
Stretched wide, black spires lashing the sky,
Floating on air in the liquid rain.
Shifting sands of pre-ancient terrain; on asphalt,
The shattered clavicle of an angel still lights up the way.
Sacrificial place: the twisted hinges of electrical plants,
Flowering towers to gods of thunder,
Monuments to signals. Roadside signs of danger.
Garage doors mull, industrial fans ponder.
The scratchy sprinkle of litter hits the wheel,
Moves onto the next expanse: no weeds in the wetlands.
A shadowy figure in the mist is a log in disguise,
Watching the road with divine sight.
Incomprehensible stretch of history; roads of lights
Dug into the carapace. Signs of life: thrum of cars
Outside, psychedelic paradise of graffiti,
Discoloured barriers; some patches still shine.
Conveyor belt to the shoreline, past
Bleeding wounds, the fluorescent crews crawl out,
Their gritted weapons of destruction sleeping in lines.
A needle beneath the Earth; mid-lobotomy,
Spinning on its point, map of points to passers-by,
Spinning on its head in the timeless glow of night,
Sleeping, looking into the light.

Easy to see; hard to believe:
Distant blue hills double tacit reality:
What hides behind the next hill,
Behind the next century, is unforeseen
Hills and concealed cemeteries,
Roadside cows and forgotten vehicles,
Piles of rocks and piles of leaves.



Freezing cosmic rain, slowly frosted alpine stars
With frozen hearts, greying freckled parts and stubbly face.
A dose of radiation and a wave of solar rays. An aloof exterior
Gives way to a warm embrace. Wispy chimney smoke emanates
From the little brick building. Pastures of icy passengers
Picking at the clovers, preparing for paddock-washing light
To pull them into clouds; plants in sterile docks. Padlocked ports
Awash with dreams. Eyes wash clean sublime surreal, revealing what it is,
For what dreams they have of endless things, expanses too
Far-reaching to be real, even if hills double to beget another
Wonder. Chasing the middle of nowhere, it will always run away
Behind the blinds, the mind's eye, some just-beyond
And impenetrable place. No amount of junctions could impede it;
It follows down their proceedings;
It always recedes to the fringes:
To the terminator line;
I'll be back, it says.
Spinning on its head, the wisp of smoke pokes above the breath,
Frozen, hovering on air. The interior is warm, warmer still,
Breathing and blanketed, alone in a pearly wasteland.

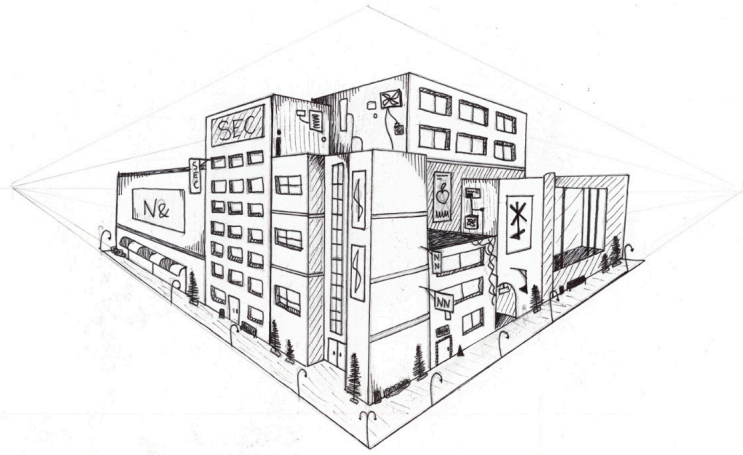
Finite and naked on the Earth,
An embarrassment that will kill you.
Did any former person unearth a frustration with obscurity
When the planet was sparsely populated,
When it stood still upon its axis,
With smoke signals in the positions of transatlantic wires,
Freshly painted with handprints, armed and unnamed.
Shapes in the grass, longer than kilometres,
Named but still impregnable, free all over but in chains.
Expanse cerebrally familiar, before seen in photographs,
But now profoundly unframed, only partly tamed,
And impartial toward trespassers on the trail,
Breathing nuance and mystery;
Breathing understanding and dismissal;
We never stray from the mission to misread eternity
To never become connoisseurs of more than we can see:
Existentially threatened by any mystery - it assures that we are seen.



An Unlikely Friendship

By ALEXANDRIA CARDONA

ARTWORK BY CIARA FEENEY



It was cold and early, the girl hadn't gotten up that early in a long time, and yet reluctantly got herself out of bed and ready for work. She watched the clock – wow, 6 minutes to get here. Very good. She stood before the store doors waiting for them to open. 7:01 - not exactly on time, but, "doesn't matter", she decided. This place: same as the last but different. The production had not started, as she was the first there. She looked around, grabbed a device and tried to log in.

"I don't think it will work". A man walked in, in uniform and an old backpack. She analysed his steel cap boots, baggy clothes and a lot of blonde hair. *This is who's in charge*, she then accepted. She tried the login again, 'Invalid user,' it said.

"Do you know how to fix it?" she asked.

"Of course I do," he replied. He took the device from her and started tinkering away. "Should work now," he stated, and handed it back to her. She briefly

thanked him and she went on with her work. As she worked, she overthought the interaction. What happened to *hi, how are you, I'm* - whatever his name was, and not just "it's not gonna work"? Then she stopped - all this thinking had led her to not be able to find a product, the stress came and she started a minor panic. She had hoped that this wouldn't have happened, and that she would be able to come in and start again as strong as she did last time. Out of nowhere, the man appeared, frightening her.

"It's right here," he explained, pulling the product out from underneath the shelf. It took her a minute to process what had happened. She had made a mistake, a dumb one, and worse, someone had seen it.

"Thanks?" she replied, and he walked off. *Great*, she thought, *the first day and I've already made mistakes*. The next thought was - how did he know? Her old store would never have known if she couldn't find something. She



thought about this, but then knew she had to quickly move on. The rest of the day was calm; she kept to herself, reluctantly communicating with people when she had to.

It was 10 o'clock. *2 more hours and then I'm out*, she thought. Then, out the door he came, face stressed, looking at his phone.

"Can you stay back?" he asked. She sighed, knowing she didn't have anything on after work. "Yeah how long?" she responded.

"Til 2?" he asked.

"Yes I can," she responded.

In two minutes she had turned a 5-hour shift into a 7-hour one, remembering it was all for money, and how much better her bank account would look after this. The day ended, he thanked her for her work, as all managers were obliged to, and she went home. 10 minutes to get home she thought, strange.

Thursday; the after-school rush. She had her things packed; the day had been organised so that this could run. From one work to another she changed uniform but remained the same person. She came in the car as a school girl, but walked out a worker and into the store. She entered the room. His head was down; the place looked like a mess. They exchanged greetings and carried on with work as usual, and when there was no more work they talked about Christmas. She talked about how she didn't know what Christmas was going to be this year, but she knew what presents she would receive. He then talked about his family; how his mother had to be the one that organised everything or there would be no Christmas, and how his brothers had lived very different lives, but they all came together on Boxing Day. The rest of the night was quiet and

pleasant. They learnt things about each other that were strange and new to the other, such that he drank milk with most meals, or that she had a dishwasher in her home but didn't use it. 7 pm. It was time for him to go home. He left and she looked around the room, strangely the playfulness and joy had left the room too it seemed.

As the months passed, interactions between the two increased as well as the banter and the pair had become just like brother and sister. They had been through highs and lows, lows she will never know about and highs he will not remember. However they supported one another nonetheless, and this was obvious to anyone in the room. They clicked and it was no more complicated than that, they just did.

She walked through the door, smiling at her store.

"Happy Birthday!" she proclaimed and proceeded to hand him over the blue bag that she had organised weeks in advance. He had continuously stated that she did not have to do this, but she of course felt that it was most definitely important that she did, and how could she not?

"Of course, I would get you something, you're my brother," she explained with a smile on her face. He smiled back, in little than over a year he went from a worker with no one truly close to him, to a manager with a little sister that he cared so much for. He didn't understand how this had all come to be, but she did, she knew how important it was to follow God's plan, and that this was meant to be because he made it so.



Alice Killed the Veggies

By NYLAH HOLBROOK

Thoma feared that Alice would rip the whole garden out from its box.

He had invited her over for some rest, relaxation, and different ways for her to breathe before she had to take her final exam. But instead, she was absolutely tearing carrots out of their beds in the most aggressive way possible, sending dirt flying and probably leaving the carrots incredibly afraid.

Thoma put a hand out. "Al, that's not--"

"HrrrrYAAH!"

Thoma looked at the poor vegetables thrown on the ground after being yanked away. Their leaves were crushed and broken, and their invisible faces were crying. They silently screamed as the most recent victim crashed.

"This is fun!" Alice grinned at him, makeup smudged and short hair stringy. "I should do this more often."

"I think the carrots would disagree," Thoma said, gathering the poor things into the basket. "You're meant to gently tug them out, not break their little bones."

"They're veggies."

"They're traumatized veggies, now."

Alice looked around.

"Alright, any other meditation tactics? Because if they're all like this one, then bring 'em on!"

"I mean, this was meant to make you relax for your exam, I didn't think I'd need a backup plan," Thoma sighed.

"I don't relax, my friend. I simply distract myself so I'm not stressed anymore," she said. "And this is actually quite effective! Do you have any more veggies I can rip out?"

Thoma longingly looked at his clean garden beds, wishing them good luck and goodbye before the tornado that was Alice was about to rip through.

Farewell, soldiers.

"Go nuts," he said, picking up the carrot basket and heading back inside.

"Woohoo! Thanks buddy!" she grinned.

"I'm gonna wash these in the kitchen," Thoma called.

"HrrrrYAAH!"

He knew what his biggest regret was, now. As he walked through the door and into the back kitchen, plopping the carrots next to the sink, he could see through the window directly into the garden. Sure enough, the otherwise peaceful area was now being absolutely ravaged by a five-foot tall hurricane.

Yeah, that would be a good six months of fixing.

Thoma gently washed the carrots, letting the dirt run off and place them peacefully on the side. When he next looked up, Alice had moved on to the cabbages. Thing was, she was grabbing them by the leaves instead of the core, simply tearing them apart and sending the tattered leaves flying while the cabbage itself just stayed in the soil.

He was considering just having a vegetable funeral, at this point.

Eventually he just pulled down the blinds, letting himself focus on the carrots and ignore the sounds of pure violence outside.

Ten minutes later, Alice walked inside, covered head to toe in dry soil.

"You washed the carrots, good job," she said, panting. "Those melons, woo! Tough ones to take out." She raised her hands with a smile, and he realized they were covered in squishy red watermelon juice.

"How did you break into them?" Thoma asked, mouth agape. They weren't even ripe yet.

"Just tried to take them out and accidentally punched through most of 'em."

Alice shrugged, wiping her mess on her white shirt. "Anyway, there's nothing left out there, so I think I'm just gonna head home. See ya!"

She gave him a wave, sending dirt flying through the air and did a little skip through the door before he could even process anything.

Thoma closed his eyes and sighed, mustering the courage to look at the garden. Slowly, he turned and verrry tentatively opened the blinds.

It was a warzone, fruit and veg of all kinds scattered across the ground. Beetroots were mourning the loss of their radish brethren, and even the usually stoic cucumbers were horrified at the chaos around them. Dirt and what could have been food were scattered, and he noticed that even one of the garden beds was broken.

"Oh, absolutely not," Thoma sighed, closing the blinds. His mum was right, choosing to grow veggies was a bad idea. He should've just been an iPad kid.

He opened his phone, going to his messages and clicking on Alice's contact. You are never coming over again.



The Weeping Willow

By SARAH LOUGH

Noiselessly branching over the pond, standing in peace and stillness, was the weeping willow. Walking past it every day were the children of the town, who all admired the stillness of the tree and how calm it must be to sit in such a place every hour of every day. It was like the Mona Lisa of the town: everyone admired it. It was visible to everyone, yet not so visible that people would get bored of the sight of it.

One arid morning, there was a little girl sitting under the tree, almost as if she was intertwined with the roots on the ground. She was fixed on the book in her lap, and she looked as if she wasn't fazed about anything, like she was living in her own world.

The next day, she was still there, sitting in the same spot again, with her head down, fixed in the book she was reading. Looking at how peaceful the surroundings were, it made sense for her to seek comfort in a place like this, overlooking the lake. It looked like a painting, something that you would see under a spotlight in an art gallery.

Again, the next day, there she was, under the weeping branches of the tree that almost looked as if it was sad, and a book sat on her legs. This time, she looked up and smiled, her features as beautiful as the scenery. Freckles scattered over her petite nose, eyes as green as grass, and a smile that could light up the whole world. Smiling back, I thought about how comforting it was to see her in this garden everyday, living her life so unconcernedly.

Walking along the cobblestone path that stretched past the garden, it was expected that the same young girl would be sitting in her spot under the tree again, but in her usual spot sat nobody. No book, no smile, no girl. Taking in this opportunity, I decided to veer off the path and into the garden where she sat. It was my turn to experience the calmness that she did. Stepping closer and closer to the tree, I noticed the book on the ground, and in front of it, a gravestone.



A Poem about Dying Flowers

BY MILLA FLYNN

A white tulip blooms in the dark,
A sunflower's bright yellow petals are slowly losing their hue.
A gladiolus grows strong,
A cactus grows stronger,
A rose bush refuses to flower,
And a lily of the valley was lost to time.

A bringer of joy and hope was cruelly taken away that day,
The truth lies behind closed petals that are slowly dying.
Those bright yellow petals were never the same,
As time goes on, gold becomes grey,
Bright green light chases the dark away,
Those dried up blooms finally turn to dust.
And as the sadness finally fades,
a white tulip blooms in the light.

The Rose

BY LACHLAN DEAN

A rose left for me on my table. I pick it up, smiling at the thought of the giver, the person who I love. My pointer finger is pierced by a thorn, and blood slowly drips down the stalk. I hold the rose fast, for I know that this love may be painful at times, may be hard work, but will be worth it in the end, for the smile on my lover's face is sweeter than any rose.



Mirrors

By KEELEY BUTCHER

Mirror, mirror on the wall
Why must I rhyme at your beck and call?
Can I not just say my piece
Why must I follow in the steps of your great masterpiece?
I will write with no reason or rhyme
If I must, I will even mime
One day I will break from your curse
Oh mirror, mirror, in my purse
One day I will cease endless rhyme
Alas now is not my time.



On Animals

By ALVOLI ANDERSON

Beautiful butterflies, and big blue baboons
With bubbly behinds and fluffy raccoons,
And ruffian red roos that fight to survive,
I love red roos, dead or alive,
And Ronald; my sweet, tender rendang;
My giddy goat of the Tasmanian range,
And salmon, and trout, and tuna along
The banks of my seafood soup billabong,
And bears and buffalos that come to feast;
The bears and buffalos I come to eat,
Chicken and pork and teriyaki beef,
All animals are equal,
All meat is meat.



The Drover

By JUSTIN KEEL

Oh, have you heard the tale
Of an Aussie drover bold
Who led ten dozen sheep
Across the desert's scorching hold

With his trusty dogs by his side
He braved the heat and sand
Guiding his flock with pride
Through a harsh and unforgiving land.

For days and nights, they travelled
Til they reached a waterhole
Where they rested and unravelled
And refreshed their tired souls

Then back on the trail they went
Through valleys and over hills
The drover's skill and patience spent
To keep his flock safe and still.

But as they neared their journey's end
A storm brewed on the horizon
The drover knew he had to tend
To his sheep and dogs with reason.

He found a sheltered spot
And hunkered down to wait
Til the storm passed and he could trot
His flock to their final gate

And so the drover and his dogs
Led their sheep through sun and rain
Their courage and loyalty logged
In the annals of the drover's reign.



A break away!

By Tom Roberts



NEXT ISSUE:
WINTER 2024



There is no more mystery.

SUBMIT YOUR WRITING/ARTWORK TO:
THEOVERCOATZINE@GMAIL.COM