



# Bloodlist 14

# *The Wood in the Window*

Written by

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## *The Wood in the Window*

Years ago, my Dad had to put a plank of wood in my bedroom window. We lived on the bottom floor of a condo complex, which meant easy access. Eye level. Break-in-able.

I needed the wood in the window because of the phone-calls. Because when the phone-calls started, I couldn't sleep, imagining someone staring through the window, able to penetrate the room, even with the blinds closed.

That, instead of screaming into the phone, he would stand outside my bedroom window and make *the* noise.

Screaming just isn't the right word.

Guttural inhuman purging of an animalistic nature, like pain, like agony, but full of intention. Like with the sound itself he wanted to hurt you, terrorize you, invade your soul.

Now, after reading all of this, the wood seems silly, meaningless, childish, grasping. It wouldn't have stopped him. It didn't, actually.

Not the first time, and certainly not the second.

Let's start from the beginning ...

My Dad was a gregarious man, a storyteller, someone who others would listen to because he was funny, because he was sometimes crass, because he was, well loud. And, generally, pretty happy. And he liked a beer, and a pub, and a good story. He would befriend everyone, anyone who would listen. Later in life, when he and Mom moved to a small town, I realized *anyone* the first time I visited them: the town drunk, and Dad would buy the next round even though the guy's breath was fetid, and sour, and spittle would fly as he laughed, pickling his pain; the tattooed, green haired, young bartender who you could tell was running from something because she sure as shit didn't belong here, and there was a depth of sadness to her, a deep loss that would sometimes dissipate as my Dad shared yet another ironically funny war tale; the asshole running for Mayor of said town when he told Dad if he was looking for pussy, he was your guy, could set him up, even though the prick had met my mother.

I would have moved, curiously ignored, probably punched in the balls.

But, not my Dad. Like I said, a beer, a pub, a story. An audience. Sorry. I didn't actually start from the beginning. But who my Dad was, how others viewed him, how he could hang with anyone, is key to understanding why, understanding the phone-calls, and the abject terror, and, well, the wood.

When I started University, I still lived at home. That small condo on the ground floor I previously mentioned, just off of one of the most vibrant and busy avenues in our city. Theatres, restaurants, small shops full of tchotchkes, psychic readers, tattoo artists, funky music stores above vintage shops; just walk up the steep, dingy, skinny stairs and find a useless treasure. And, of course, pubs.

Irish pubs, English pubs, pubs full of drunken University students on Friday, and Saturday and, let's be honest, every night. Dark pubs that smelled faintly of rotting wood and urine, and then the quintessential local pub for those of the older set, the smokers, the men with impressive moustaches, the storytellers. Men like my Dad.

Dad would often walk down to [REDACTED] to grab a beer, relax with the other 'old farts' (his moniker), drink a few pints (*McNally's* dark ale was his beer of choice), and smoke (*Player's*, a pack and ½ a day), and chat. I knew one of the younger female bartenders through a friend of a friend, and I remember when she found out who my Dad was, her response was something to the effect of, "Ohhhhh, Bert!" followed by a big smile. She loved his stories too; said everyone did.

Everyone.

Then, the same year, the phone-calls started.

I will never forget the night of the first call.

I was 21, a phone next to my bed because I was, well, 21. It was just after 2:30am so the ring was more than startling, heart racing, causing panic, a need to pee. Wide awake, no groggy voice here, I answered, and the man on the other end of the receiver asked for Bert. Vibrating hand, vibrating everything, got out of bed, approached my parent's door, opened it, and quietly said, "Dad ... Dad!" Mumbling, Mom asking something, groaning. "Dad, the phone is for you."

Confusion, stumbling, swearing, heading to the living-room, expecting bad news, a tragedy, death. Not ... this.

Picks receiver up.  
That indescribable noise. Grating yowl.

I'm not even sure how to write it, but I'll try.

“AHHHOOOOWWWWWAHHHHWOOOOHAAAWOOO”

Doesn't translate.

Close your eyes and try to imagine it. Loud, crazed, evil. An invasion. It was as if the receiver were on my own ear.

“You're gonna be on the bus, Bert! You're gonna be on the bus!”

Stunned release of breath, heartbeats, followed by the noise again. Then, silence.

My Dad, not often at a loss for words, placed the receiver down, dropped to the orange ottoman, stared at me, asked what he said, asked what happened, like somehow I knew, like I could make sense of anything. Confusion. Wide awake. No sleep. Lots of, ‘What the Fuck's?’ I think I made tea.

The calls didn't stop.

At least once a week for weeks on end.

How long was it?

Same scene. I answer. Dad now runs for the phone, hearing his attacker, my heart out of my chest, Mom now peeking around the corner, horrified when she first hears ‘the noise’, the smell of Dad's pungent sweat as he yells for identification: “Who are you?!” But, the call was always the same:

“You're gonna be on the bus, Bert! You're gonna be on the bus!”

I couldn't sleep, couldn't focus, couldn't relax, even during the day. So, Dad put the wood in the window, assured me this stick would protect me from the evil that was now a parasite, attached to our mornings, our telephone, my head, my nightmares. Tried to convince me.

And, that's a lot to ask an inanimate wooden object to accomplish. And it was skinny, frail. I didn't trust it. Not against that voice. Not against that noise. Not an apparition. So, Dad found a bigger, sturdier piece. Same effect.

Eventually, at the behest of my mother, he called the police. Technology of the day was to answer the phone, let the trespasser speak, and then enter \*69 so that the police could try to trace the call. Now, if you haven't ever heard of dialing \*69 on a landline, here is the rundown: \*69 is known as "last call return", an 'old school' way to check what number was the last to call unless private or unknown. \*69 is, in other words, supposed to give you the ability to trace a prank caller.

Is that what this was?

Unfortunately, there are limitations to dialing \*69. In this situation, limitations and drawbacks meant we were fucked.

I remember the first time Dad tried this newfound power: the phone, these phrases, that noise, this caller - no longer helpless. He now had these three buttons. The phone rang, scene repeats, but this time, watching Dad push those three keys, shaking, pressing so hard into the receiver I thought his finger might break through the phone, threatening to drop it to the floor, and then the inhuman noise would reverberate throughout the entire room, echoing forever.

The police were able to trace the number we wrote down, or numbers I should say. Various payphones (also a thing of the past) around the whole goddamned city.

Helpful.

Now, this early part of this story requires some hard honesty, a look at things we sometimes don't want to acknowledge for various reasons. And, here it is.

That man I previously described to you, the gregarious one, the storyteller, moustache extraordinaire, could also be an asshole. A loud, opinionated, profane, prick. Someone you were sometimes embarrassed by, shamed by, shushing when racist shit spewed from underneath the perfectly manicured hair on his face, moments forgiven due to age, upbringing, mollifying phrases like, "Well, that's just Dad." Sometimes you were the brunt of his jokes, the protagonist of his cruel story that you didn't want to be a part of; humour filled meanness. At the heart of it, you knew he didn't mean it, but that's because you knew him. Had seen his softer side, his dying side, noticed him sometimes staring with a desire for whimsy out the window, his regrets manifesting themselves in those wistful stares, recreated on the windows by the moisture from his breath. Thought he might reach out to draw them in the fog. But, when you are not privy to someone's heart, or someone's hurt,

they are loud, and sometimes offensive, and belligerent, and sometimes bigoted.

And, maybe, this is why.

Realizing the imperfections. Admitting why the wood was in the window in the first place.

Because someone, somewhere, obviously didn't like him.

Not 'Everyone'.

And then, then there was the murder.

People were scared because it was so violent. Not that there isn't violence on the news, in the media, all around us. But not like this, not that I knew of, not in our city.

I remember the first time I saw a dead body. It was at a funeral. My friend brought me along for support when her grandfather died. I have seen a few of these carefully dressed and staged bodies since, but they, they were intact. Missing their souls, and dressed up like macabre dolls, but intact.

I've seen many a body in slasher and horror films, the remnants of a busty blonde who ends up hacked up by the serial killer at some camp, running, right before she conveniently loses her shirt, one nipple finding its way out of her bra. Fake. The blood looking like a syrupy sweet concoction that you could dip your finger in.

But, trying to imagine this crime, the body found under the [REDACTED] Bridge, walking distance from your home, headless, armless, legless, stuffed in a suitcase. The thing of nightmares and the scariest of movies, easier to imagine as unreal. Young women were nervous. People were shook, talking quietly under their breath in public spaces. Mom and Dad kept tabs on me. I'm told to stay home, have my boyfriend and friends come over instead of venturing out. A potential victim.

Before we even knew the truth. About him. About her. About the suitcase.

Here is what the papers had to say, only snippets of information because, now, at this moment, knowing there will be lights, unfinished business, it's all I have time for.

They say it takes a certain type of individual to take the life of another human being, but, dismembering ... that, *that* is a whole other level of crime, of sadism. To cut up a human body, well, that person has experimented on other creatures. Use your imagination. Actually, don't.

Because there actually *had* been two other dismemberment cases in the last four years, crimes I hadn't heard of, hadn't focused on because, well, because of the obvious. We are all self-centered fucks at the end of the day.

I should mention these crimes were blocks apart.

Bodies of **Misty Ward** and **David Wong**, slain in similar fashion, by people who knew them, briefly or otherwise. Strangled. Stabbed. Indignity.

Chilling crimes. Horrible possibilities linked to human kind. Grisly discoveries.

Ugly. Despicable. Reanimated because of this new horror.

We were people trying to understand that which, really, when you think about it, you never really will, and shouldn't. Extreme behaviour.

He strangled **Jo-Anne Dickson** at his apartment because she refused to have sex with him. A pickup, a moment, the ultimate in bad decisions. Just a random meeting between a man and a woman. A weekend, a night. He abused her, violated her, cut her up, disposed of her, dumped her pieces separately, meaningless to him. Discarded. Never found. If you want the details, the sordid story with more words and structure and the imagery you need, you will find it, online now. Just Google the names. Not sure why you would as I figure I have provided enough fodder for your imagination, for new nightmares.

You might want to consider these details before you search. She was a mother. She went missing a day before the suitcase was discovered. And, they believe he left his chosen tomb on the banks of the **Siskichewin** River so that it would be easily found.

No dressing up. No dignity.

No need to use \*69.

Children found the suitcase as they played by the river, skipping rocks, an innocent pastime turned into trauma, never to be the same again.

**Donald Smart** was convicted of her murder.

I always remember them using the word 'part' when referencing her. Not whole.

I met a guy in a bar once. Went home with him. Was lying on his couch in an apartment framed by brick walls. Inescapable. He was holding me, arms encasing me, uncomfortable. There was a makeshift fountain in the corner. A cabin, with a gurgling, babbling brook. I knew I had made a mistake.

I made it home. Unscathed. Whole.

The details, the murder, has since become part of a Ghost Tour in our city. The brochure exploits the grotesqueness of this crime, the notoriety. "The last stop on our tour is ..." They walk you past the pub. Talk about him. He was a dishwasher at **Rosie's Pub**, the place where the old farts used to hang out. Where my Dad used to tell tales, drink, and laugh.

The people organizing, those paying for this trip down our city's memory lane, had never heard *the* noise.

They never had to rely on a piece of wood.

So, this story was their whimsy.

What we found out from the police, after they discovered his identity, is that he was the voice, the invasion, the noise. The one connected to the bus. The one who had, in my mind, been outside my window. The need for the wood. He admitted to calling my Dad during his interview. That he hated my Father because people liked him, the attention he got because of his stories, his ability to charm through offense. His laugh, the sound of his voice, that *he* could hear from the kitchen as his hands washed dish after dish, piece of cutlery after piece of cutlery, glass after glass, glasses my Dad's lips may have touched. Endless monotony, with hands that were meant for something else.

Apparently, my Dad needed to be on the same bus.

And, it didn't end, because I would wake up, a noise outside, thinking I could hear her screams, her agony, that this is what he was imitating. The noise of his victims. Had there been more? Agony in the phone calls. In my memories and my nightmares. Sleepless nights.

He got 20 years.

For Dad, it was over. Seemed relieved. But I knew, I knew I still needed the wood in the window. Dad took away the plank, but I kept the smaller rod, under my bed so he wouldn't take it, so he wouldn't mock me. I didn't want to become a part of that joke, that laugh, that story that would help Dad entertain. Honestly, it gave me solace until I moved away; I placed it in my

window every night, forgetting, but not, often staring at the white venetian blinds waiting for a shadow, a breath. It wasn't over for me.

Partly because, strangely, we never talked about it. Avoidance. It was like a ghost story. There, but an apparition. A memory that will only be alive when acknowledged. Which only happened much, much later. And truly, only by me.

But that is not really how ghost stories work, because I once saw a ghost. I told the story at a backyard party around a fire one year, and I'm pretty sure it's why the host stays away from me now.

Here is that tale. Related. Believe me. Because stories, in any form, always are.

Seven years later.

My boyfriend at the time was housesitting at his Uncle's, almost a mansion, on a beautiful street overlooking the river valley and the ██████████ River. My friend came over to watch a movie, get take-out, hang out. I got restless, uncomfortable, couldn't explain it, and insisted on going home even though this house had at least four empty bedrooms. Lots of places to rest your weary head.

I convinced my girlfriend to leave with me. We'll watch another movie, chill, have a nice breakfast when we feel the need to crawl out of bed, because I have a cheap bottle of white wine chilling in the fridge. Temptation when we get there. Temptation for later. That was really all she needed. Found out years later she hid empty bottles around our shared apartment.

We all have dark stories. Sometimes they involve skeletons in the closet holding vodka. Sometimes they involve wood.

So, we drove to my place, common route, known roads, turns, and lights, no need to really focus on your surroundings, a journey taken a thousand times, nothing out of the ordinary.

Until we parked.

I had my workbag, a couple of things in the back. I turned, opened the door, grabbed. And there it was.

I heard it before I saw it.

The creak of the wheels, the chain, a contraption that had lain against a house or a rail long before *this* decided to ride.

*Creak. Creak.*

Slow motion coming down the street, producing no wind as it rode past me on an old bike, no more than a foot away. But the hair. The goddamn hair. Slowly sailed by me, and the hair that was attached to the face, the skeletal visage, it was flowing. In slow motion. Was sticking out straight behind in a wave of movement, yet the night was as still as a corpse in a coffin. I was transfixed in my terror. I stood, frozen as the apparition passed. Breathing heavy, heart racing, I needed to pee.

I know your response: Crazy! Impossible! You imagined it all.

No. Because, well, my witness saw it too. Was also transfixed and frozen. Because my slow turn toward her, our eyes meeting, was enough. At that moment, no words were needed.

We didn't even run, just quickly walked toward the door, entered the house, locked all possible locks and the back door, checked the windows and secured the broken one, with a piece of wood.

Then, only then, words were needed.

We had both seen it, described it in the same way, saw the slow motion. And, I will answer your next question. Yes, she described the peddling phantom before I did. Couldn't sleep. Drank tea instead of wine, and slept on the v-shaped couch, head to head. Wondering the whole time why I was drawn home.

I lost friends because of this story. Which is maybe why these moments are lost to time, to fear, to denial. Because you don't want to really admit it, that these things actually happened to you.

So, there's reality; there's reality that is embellished and becomes story, there's reality that you forget because it becomes too real and you figure you will just treat it as story, and then there is just 'hit you in the face' fucking reality. Full punch.

Brutal fucking reality.

I will just say this now. Dad is gone. A brain tumor, and not just any tumor; my Dad needed to be an overachiever even in this moment, getting the tumor

of all tumors growing in his head; a Glioblastoma Multiforme, nicknamed 'The Terminator'. Yeah, there were doctor visits, treatments, bells and whistles that didn't matter in the end.

No parties. No pubs. No great stories. Or, only those that end with broken hearts, and tears, and regret, and pain. The ones you don't tell.

Twenty years later.

Drives along icy twisting and turning unknown roads, plane rides, missing work, missing friends, missing lovers, sleeping but not. We were told maybe five years. He was gone three months to the day. I lived in a hospital room squished into a chair for six days watching his brain and body decay, smelled his flesh, his shit, saw the skin peel from his ears. I mean, how does one describe watching the person they knew, loved, hated, the one most full of life, die before them. Six days and poof. Gone. I tried to read a book, get random moments of sleep, neck twisted to an inhuman angle, and then he reached out to me. But, it wasn't him. Gurgling, foaming from the mouth, hounding nurses to come and relieve us of the sounds, the life, the inevitability. Which, they ultimately did. Again, use your imagination, but don't. They pitied us, and I am grateful. My Mom was useless, vacant, a dying wife. And I was a bitter, angry, unrecognizable child.

And, here's the part I left out.

I'm sure you saw it coming. If you were paying attention.

At one point, when family was visiting the hospital, I realized if I didn't flee from the inevitable fucking end I would kill them all and wind up in prison. I went running across a grassy knoll at the front of the [REDACTED] hospital like some banshee seeking solace; running, snotting, crying, trying desperately to oxygenate, looking for a doorway to escape, and I thought I heard *the* noise, stopping me in my desperate time traveler tracks. I looked around, couldn't quite place the feral sound, until it happened again. I fell to the wet ground, felt the coolness of the precipitation as it invaded my core. And, then, I figured ...

... that sound must have been me.

Abject pain and agony, recreated from that other knowledge and memory.

Is there a piece of wood handy? Something to try and save the day? Save us from this poorly written, utterly predictable fucking tragedy.

The simplicity of a belief in wood. In wood that never really worked. That, if you admit it, you never really believed in, yet you continue to put your faith in it.

Read that line again.

And yet, even another ghost story, the story of the mask, the radiation mask. I found it in the closet soon after he died, a mesh version of his identity, his face, but full of holes, just like what we fear will happen to the memories. What we maybe all fear that we ultimately become: an illusory object missing pieces.

We burned it in effigy.

It smelled. Smoked. Melted into a deformed object.

I lost friends because of this story as well. Pieces of it. I still haven't been able to string it all together. Especially the genesis of the noise.

People hate pain. And fear. And change. Even the most subtle moments of change in you that a story can produce turns people into objects that will melt from your candor. *You* become the deformed object, unrecognizable from what they used to know.

Twenty-five years later.

It takes about three years for me to feel like some semblance of myself, to be able to share a laugh about him, and a story, and to have a beer at a pub to celebrate his birthday. You try to join the living once again by dealing and burying at the same time.

Mom and I never talk about it. A part of the 'healing' I guess.

And, since we always loved Halloween, dress up, wear a mask, pretend, Mom and I head to [REDACTED] Park, the local historical site with buildings, and boats, and beaver pelts dating back more than 200 years.

Perfect setting for a frightful night.

Old ghosts.

We went to the local event at the [REDACTED] Hotel, still standing, a place where people of means used to stay, where you can now brunch and book a room, immerse yourself in nostalgia with a creaky bed, a metal washtub, the

television in the corner not really ruining the kitsch. But tonight, a site for ghosts and ghouls, stories of local hauntings and murders, dark hallways littered with detritus: leaves, garbage, old newspaper stories from the past. The air thick with days and moments dead and buried.

The performance begins with the mad host, dressed in a top hat and tails, a dirty t-shirt, and a cane, as he stands atop a table, tall, odd movement of gangly limbs, raspy. Sets the mood. Tells us we will be encountering, through these halls, the darkest of dark history of our city. Tales of murder, deception, burial, touted as a 'nightmarishly accurate depiction'. The group of visitors stand closely together, tittering, sweating, as we feel the shoulders and petticoats of the ghoulish characters walking around us on the outskirts, looking dead, disheveled, smelling the smell that only old stage makeup can emit. They will be our guides through this morbid historical reenactment. Mom is grasping my arm, my hand, nervous as one of the 'others' has taken a liking to her, sees her fear and heightened anticipation, knows she will be able to make her scream which will engage the rest of the mass. The point of the evening, of the \$35 ticket price. We begin, led up a curving staircase, squeezed, stifling, claustrophobic. Good strategy. Setting wins ... again. The earlier ghouls leading you down hallways to the next tale of terror: the first room an artistic rendition of a horse, a story of a woman thrown who now haunts the stables; a miner, the room full of dirt and bricks, telling the tale through curses in an Eastern accent, a large human in overalls overrun with flab revealing the horror of the men who died in an elevator accident, crushed; a wrinkled looking yet obviously young woman sitting in a corner revealing that a part of the hotel once burned down as she sucks on her slow burning cigarette, tapping the non-existent ashes into an ashtray as she turns slowly and reveals her melting flesh along with a wide-eyed scream. There were other stories that have become fuzzy, sketchy over the years.

Then, the final room. The one where we were directed toward a mattress that sank beneath us, probably heavy with the soul I would have to carry out.

The horror of this room, the palpable nature of the moment, will not translate here, but I'll try.

On the bed sinking, Mom next to me squeezing. The room packed, hot almost to the point of sweltering, foggy. Suddenly a wet, sputtering gasp, a body rising from the tub. Stunned faces, sucked in breaths. She is weeping, in pain, a pain I cannot fathom. Revealing her direst of decisions, her drunkenness, her lamentations, her regret; her last memories, her longing for her missing life, her missing limbs, her missing head. And, as she made that noise, as she writhed, and cried, and drowned, I knew this was *her*. His victim. Impossible, but happening. That the noise was *her*. Her cry in his

inflection. It had never been mine, that moment on the grassy knoll of pain. The explosion of sound from the phone, emitted from his throat, was originally from his victims, the one potentially before, and before, and from the tub that became her nightmarish end, the suitcase that became her shitty and tragic grave.

And, then, I saw him.

A man in the corner, staring. Smiling. Not at the scene that we paid for, but at me. Rejoicing in my discomfort. Relishing in my moment of horrified recognition.

I can't breathe. I look for a window.

I turned to Mom, transfixed in a moment she didn't quite understand, the memory looming in a farther off place. And the crowd was up, breathing with relief, discussing the unbelievable performance, approving of the money spent. And he was gone, closest to the door, a part of the murky hallway.

We exit, silent. I'm not sure what to say, to share. I start with my disbelief, how we never talked about this moment, why we never acknowledged our history. She nods, stares, still gripping my hand as we slowly meander down a dark roadway toward some old structures that used to house people no longer alive. We tour, gasp when one of the actors produces in us the desired jump-scare; we quicken our step. Then I see the familiar shape, and think I can read the expression; a shadow in the corner beside an old horse cart, elbow on the edge, relaxed, almost jovial, if a slouch can be read that way.

Watching. Amused.

We turn around, at the end of a walkable portion of this trip down macabre memory lane. Silent, uneasy, eyes darting among the costumes and laughter and fun screaming. And, then, the muted version of *the* cry, behind us, lower, but the familiarity is unmistakable; you pretend it could be an actor, part of the show, but you know it, feel it, skin crawling, breath stopped up in your throat, the scene in the living room coming back to you, full punch. Nostalgia truly taking over as you think you can even smell Dad's terrified sweat. Mom hears it too. I know because she asks to leave, shaken, too much of the past for one evening. Two other roads untraversed, but she's ready for the night to be over.

We got more than our money's worth.

But again, as stories go, just like my earlier experiences and examples, I don't tell her about the man in the corner. Silence somehow grounds one's place in the world when it comes to those things we don't speak of.

I don't know how long it was after our trip down memory lane that I mustered the courage to look up the old stories from years ago. But I did. Paid to visit the archives of the local paper. What I found was both surprising and not, but I needed to know, where he was, if he was out, who he was; the real reason for his hatred and intrusion.

He was bullied, beaten up, quiet. The picture I am looking at is that of a 'regular' dude, 80s haircut. His friend, sounds like his only one, talks about different ways, different lives, the person he knew that no one else did. He was a drinker, his insecurities washed down with rye, missing his grandmother who was his caretaker, lonely, had threatened suicide, a cutter. He was small, smelly, a loner, a candidate for his job of choice. A follower; he would sometimes be on the heels of other staff members when they went to local nightclubs near [REDACTED]. He loved Halloween, dressing up, immersing himself in the dark fantasy world he recreated for himself on at least that one night. A fingerprint on a plastic bag his ultimate downfall. The stink infested stain on the rug, the putrid odor wafting to other apartments – that might have had something to do with it too, along with a dark-haired sketch that was a close enough resemblance for those few connected to him to identify.

For me too. The digitized face is that face by the old-fashioned wheel, the wooden contraption.

The irony isn't lost on me.

Much of this felt like a drive for empathy, to find something good in the monstrousness.

I could find none.

The arrest? Uneventful. He didn't cry, emotionless, took them to the place where her limbs had long floated away, the ones she longed for, screeched for in the tub.

He got 20 years.

I cannot find any information about where he is now.

Me, I've moved to the country to try to escape my own pain, my own memories. The gift of solitude in a loud fucking world, with a loud fucking

head. I often wake at 2:22 in the morning, like clockwork, and check. Check to see if the wood is securely in the window, peek through the heavy curtains.

No more blinds for me.

What I have come to realize, in these last moments, is that sometimes hatred invades your soul, eats at your very existence, just like pain and memory, and you just can't let it go. At least, this is what I imagine. Take away from this story, as every story is connected, your own hatred, who you have hated, what you have felt, the lack of forgiveness and what that can do to someone's soul and psyche. Consider that it will, but shouldn't, ever equal this because you should never come to understand *this* depth of hatred, *this* depravity, the veritable obsession for someone you really didn't even know. Don't even try to imagine it.

You have only the outline, that you traced on a weekend, an afternoon, one that sat on a seat at the bar.

And now, in this very moment, the noise has returned, the hatred has reappeared outside my window, not in my dreams, not in my nightmares. I have been waking to it, not realizing it was living right outside the whole time.

Tonight, I know he is here for me instead. A replacement for the festering.

There is a bus parked down my isolated driveway, motor running, low rumbling in that way only this type of vehicle can.

I've called the police, but it will be too late.

I already hear him right outside my bedroom window, just like I'm sure I did from the very beginning.

The wood in the window won't be enough this time. It never was.

I'm gonna be on the bus, Dad.

And there's an empty suitcase waiting in the corner.