

Prose by Tom Holmes

Tom Holmes

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TOM HOLMES

Dad's Day at the Zoo

Dad's lips puckered. Before he passed, he requested his final pose to be presented as if kissing the world goodbye, or Mom, or someone. I don't recall who or what. His lips waved in the wind. He whistled "Oh What a Day" from *Nixon in China*. You see, Dad was not buried. He was laid out on the side of a hill by a zoo outside of San Francisco over a year ago. The zoo appeared in a tv show or a movie, like *Planet of the Apes* or a horror flick with Claude Raines, or some other film. Who knows with him? He wore his usual pajamas and robe, which were sliding off his withered skin, a skin loosely secured to his legs and arms and face by his curly black and gray hairs. His arms rose like he wanted to hug or to attack. Alfred Hitchcock taught me framing matters, but I had no frames, and my hands trembled enough that I couldn't form a hand-made frame to peer through and decide what he was up to. Besides, I was frozen as a still shot. He slowly spun like one of those flower clocks on the side of a hill outside a butterfly conservatory. He slid down the hill till his slippers met the tarmac. He stood. He walked, and he walked toward me. Arms outstretched and a dangling bathrobe belt. Atrophied legs stiffly shuffled. "The mummy walks," I thought aloud like a hysterical Bramwell Fletcher. I ran panicked looking over my left shoulder. He closed in. "Is he alive? . . . This is not the father I laid to rest." I faked left and cut right. He shuffled straight. "It's easy to shake the dead." He just kept walking straight toward the heart of San Francisco. His long-time secretary, who arrived from the back of the zoo or the parking lot or somewhere, said, "I loved your dad. He was so funny. Tell me more about your father." I replied, "My dad only gave me one piece of advice or wisdom or conspiracy. He said, 'The Nixon we sent to China never returned.' You see, I never knew my dad, and now he's waving to us from a trolley."

Birth Mother Journal Entry from December 13, 1967: The Hanford Projects Entry

Last week, I went beyond the sage bush fields to Site W. They placed me with the other Queen Marys, who were ready to go over. The figures with badges and pencils communicated through walkie talkies, and every evening they relinquished their pencils to the Mirror-Glasses and every morning they were given new ones. Sometimes a Pencil-Pusher would write with its pencil, and other times the Pencil-Pusher would slide it in my rectum, pull it out, study it, shake it, and hand it to the old, mustached nurse, who occasionally bathed me and fed me and once douched me with Lysol from the brown can. She said, "You are no cutie pie. You are not fresh enough. You are a Betty Snoop whore with a hot dog grill." She said it so professionally that I had no choice but to agree. Besides, Arthur disappeared months ago, and I had no mother or father. I was alone with no support. I was alone with the Queen Marys, and a new one arrived almost every day to replace the one who went over. My last day there, I overheard a Pencil-Pusher say, "The douche has failed. The douche has failed. Her Zeuto is compromised. It's time for the Big Sucker." They rolled me down the hall to a lowly lit room with three Milk Bottles who stared at me like I was a Friday paycheck – happy to have money but frustrated it wasn't more. One of them said, "Take this." "What is it?" I replied. "It is safe as mother's milk. Do not worry." Then a different Milk Bottle tied my hands to the side of the bed. I awoke back in my Site W room with a caved-in stomach. I asked, "Where's my stomach? What happened to my stomach?" The mustached nurse said matter-of-factly, "You surrendered a horizontal pig last night. It is natural for your stomach to collapse. It is also the natural time for you to pack and leave and to forget. Hurry up please. It is time." I was a dethroned Queen Mary, stranded in the bushes, looking for direction. On the horizon, I saw giant plumes of green fumes, an obvious sign to commence my green run to recover Arthur.

My First Memories

Blue and fluorescent lights. I was a back-row baby in a room of pink and blue cribs on wheels. I saw people staring, knocking on a window, melting their faces. I was a back-row blue who wanted a front-row view. I had the urge to wow. I placed my middle fingers to my temples. I dimmed the fluorescents. I commanded the cribs to part. I rolled my way through the rift to front-center window. Those people stepped back, panicked at each other, ran. The nurses came, then doctors, then fire fighters, the cops, the reporters, the town's psychics. I was a front-row blue who pushed and pulled. A psychic questioned my inner mind, "Who's your mommy? Where's your daddy? Can you bend spoons or shatter glass? Would you allow me to assume you? I can make you famous and pay your way, pay your mom and pop. Can you hear me? Baby Blue, can you hear?" I shoved my thumbs into my ears and wiggled my fingers. They smiled, laughed, and awwed. I turned my blue blanket pink, tied it round my neck, and kicked in the door. "Poof. Poof. Poof. Go. Go away." I conjured them displaced one by one. I traced the yellow, winding line on the floor to Administration, knocked over filing cabinets, and repossessed my paperwork. I was born, the certificate read, from Stacia J. Atlas and a black line. Another certificate read:

Ship Date: November 22, 1968.

Owners: Mr. & Mrs. Alex Gossin.

Discount: 15% for repeat customer.

I was born immaculate. An immaculate bastard on the loose with a cape, three names, and dispatch orders. I'd allow these Gossins to house me and live for them as they'd wish, while concealing my super-immaculate-natural-bastard-hero self until I turn eighteen. I'd learn to control my two selves. I'd learn to please and appease. Then look out world, this babe will fly in and out of place and time and disrupt the old lives and crimes.