

SCRIPT

The Doorway Effect

Eamonn Eppinga-Neff

All Craig had ever wanted from life were the simple things. He hadn't searched out a life of mediocrity but he was pleased to be living one. Or rather, he had been pleased about it a few seconds ago. Craig was pleased when his pregnant wife, Sadie, kissed him before he joined his carpool this morning, he was happy when he was teaching algebra to 8th graders, and he was satisfied when he carpooled home. As soon as Craig crossed the threshold into his house he couldn't remember why he only wanted the simple things.

It seemed so foolish to have wanted nothing more than to rent the cookie cutter apartment he was in, to be complacent with a career as an 8th grade math teacher. "For Pete's sake," Craig thought, "I went through graduate school for what?" Looking around his living room, Craig realized for the first time how pathetically average it all was; from the light brown sofa that practically blended in with the tan walls to the pictures hanging on the walls. The pictures seemed to be unsuccessfully trying to distract guests' attention away from the placidity of the home. Craig noted that the front door opened directly into the living room and the kitchen could be

seen from the entrance as well, a layout that struck him as vulgar.

Craig had been inside for only a few seconds when he heard music coming from the bedroom. Sadie was listening to classical music in the hopes it would make her and Craig's future child smarter. Even though she was only two months along. She wouldn't have heard him come in, Craig realized. He quickly turned back to the door and stepped outside. He was suddenly aware that if he looked at his wife, his life would be over. If he saw her, Craig would know how average she was too, and until he saw her, she could still be exceptional. He jogged out to his grey 1999 Ford Escape and drove away from his apartment building as fast as he legally could, which was exactly 35 MPH. He turned on the radio to his favorite radio station and came in to the chorus of "Hit the Road Jack" which seemed like such good advice that Craig had to shut the radio off to avoid driving straight to Louisiana.

Instead of Louisiana, Craig drove to the hospital. He went in and went straight to

the maternity ward, without asking for directions. Craig found a chair in the hallway and watched attendants, nurses, and the occasional worried husband walk by. He couldn't envision himself as one of them. Eventually a janitor came and slowly mopped past Craig, then turned right and mopped down a side hall. Craig heard a man singing and looked down the hallway to see a man walking toward him holding a newborn child swaddled in a blanket being softly bounced up and down. The man continued to sing, a foreign song, in a language Craig couldn't identify.

As they approached Craig found himself getting eager to see the child's face, learn their sex, and every detail about their appearance. As the man, the father Craig presumed, approached, Craig braced himself to get out of his chair. Three feet from Craig's seat, the man was totally absorbed with the baby in his arms, he didn't even know Craig was there. Then, abruptly, the man's feet flew out from under him. Craig saw the man about to fall, losing control of the bundle in his arms, the terror in his eyes. He leapt up from his chair and grabbed the child out of the man's arms before he hit the ground. There was a thud and a brief groan as the man landed. Craig tucked the blanket that was wrapped around the child beneath its chin and saw that it was a girl. He looked into the girl's perfectly blue eyes and brushed her rosy fat cheeks with his finger. The joy of life rushed back into Craig, and he looked

down at the man on the floor with a new appreciation. The man stood up and Craig handed him the baby girl. "Thank you" the man said with a heavy accent as he took his daughter back. Craig thanked him in return, even though the man hadn't knowingly done anything for him, and walked down the hall to find the janitor. He let the janitor know what had happened, and the man promised Craig he would put up caution signs.

Craig breathed in deeply and let out a satisfied sigh. He left the hospital, got into his car and drove home. He was going to be a father. In just over half a year, he was going to cradle a baby of his own in his own hands. There could be nothing less average. Craig parked his Ford Escape in the tenant parking and went to his door. He didn't hesitate to open the door, he knew what he would see. And indeed, the inside of Craig's house had a beautiful glow around it. The couch looked comfortable, the walls merry, festooned with pictures of friends and family. Craig looked at his watch and saw it had only been two and a half hours since he got off work. He saw Sadie in the kitchen, and had never been so glad for an open view from one room to the next. She was stunning, the most beautiful woman Craig had ever seen. He crossed the threshold, put his briefcase on the couch, and without taking off his shoes, Craig went into the kitchen and kissed his wife.

OF THE PLACE I CALL HOME

Claire Strannigan

I am from long stretches of decay and sharpness.

I am from the death of giants and the failure of survival.

I am from beauty and strength.

I am from a long tradition of wrinkling your nose and squinting your eyes and smiling.

I have been a part of learning and then teaching the skill of sniffing the air and knowing if it is a high or low tide; knowing which rocks will always cut your feet, and the difference between being from somewhere and owning somewhere.

Because no matter how much we love the ocean, it will never be ours, and we must make peace with that. It is too wild, too strong, to ever fall into human ownership.

The beach acts as a record of what has died. Over the years there have been many carcasses- seals, boats, and unidentifiable skulls. Life reduced to garbage that we marvel at but never touch.

There is also life.

This is where we bring our nieces and nephews to scavenge for crabs, where the puppy learned to swim, and where my sister and I dunked ourselves beneath the icy waves for free soft serve. This is where my brother almost drowned while trying to take his girlfriend on a romantic date on the island across the Sound.

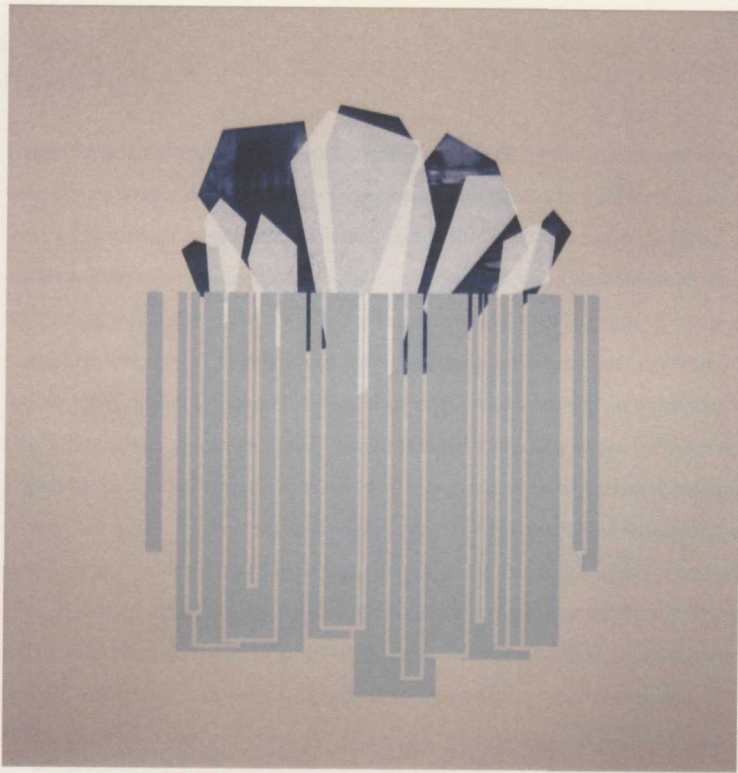
Hundreds of logs lay on the beach as a testament to the force of ocean storms.

They used to stand hundreds of feet tall, so proud. Now they lay restfully amid the barnacles and the bunches of grass, benches for my family when we eat dinner on the beach and watch the sky turn dark.

The water was what I wrote about when I learned the alphabet and the water was the setting when I wrote my first novel. The water is where and what I am from, it is like a parent that I need to make proud so I try again and again to capture its strength and its rage and its beauty and its peace.

It is constantly changing, the water always moving: I've seen the Sound tear down buildings and I've seen it mutilate boats and I've seen it spare my brother and treat cousin Serenity with gentleness. I have spent my life looking at the ocean. I have

ridden the surface of it and delved beneath it and breathed it in and I only hope that my efforts of admiration are enough to make it proud. Despite the constant remaking, each time I return the coastline is there, asking if I've tried writing about it again. And this glacial staple of my life will always beckon me, urging me to keep trying.



Collisions

Dalaney Goodyear

lips
one
hundred
times more
sensitive than tips
of fingers brush for an
instant. like collisions be
tween electrically charged particles
from the sun, they enter each other's atmo
sphere and together create an aurora borealis
their own. opposing magnetic poles give birth to
so strong they themselves become nothing more than
collisions. as Isis cries the river Nile, 4,135 miles of surging
the mountain that stands 29,029 feet tall. the naïve say the tears of
the Nile can never touch the
heights of Mt. Everest, yet I know pain and tears know no borders. The waves lapping, extending
watery hands impossibly high to the mountain peak. if only a traveler would hear my cry, "calm my
waters". they say the average person has 2.6 friends; yet I am a krummholz, the twisted wood no
longer beautiful standing alone on the mountainside. how I long for a collision as I am drifting
and tumbling through open air. a soul slamming against my own with such force that I have no
choice. I loosen my hold and let myself be lost, let myself be broken in
c o l l i s i o n .