

# **ELEPHANT ENGINE HIGH DIVE REVIVAL**

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## JUNKYARD GHOST REVIVAL

It was October, and New England was stupid with beauty. Anis obsessively took out-of-focus photos of it streaming by our van window, all blurry red-gold-orange. The four of us—me, Anis, Buddy, and Derrick—were old enough not to lose our shit when Anis left the cash box in a hotel room in Amherst, but still young enough to be shameless suckers for roadside stands and ambitiously pretty waitresses.

I always thought on tours like this, I'd blow out my voice by the third day, but I was wrong. I was right, however, about bringing Presidential flash cards, lots of warm socks and extra toothpaste. I was the only one in the van not nursing a broken heart, and consequently, I made the worst DJ.

The world's largest and smallest hamburgers can be found at the same diner in Pennsylvania in a town which also claims to have a haunted corn maze and the state's best Shoofly pie. We had to keep driving, though. The one day we had off was spent in Maine: first, at an antiques shop selling dusty books and tiny pewter birds we later learned were salt shakers; and after, at a lobster shack so close to the ocean, the wind dried the butter to our chins before the napkins had a chance. Every other night, we stomped on the hardwood, pulled books out of boxes, then stuffed them right back in, we'd flopped down on a series of different empty beds. But sometimes in between, we'd marvel at the sky from the parking lot: the moon doing its usual magic, the stars poking through the clouds, the air fresh and slick and hopeful; tomorrow, not slowing down for a second.

## BE PREPARED

When the black plague hit the Saxon army in the 1340's, they didn't let this stop them. Instead they catapulted the diseased corpses of their fellow soldiers directly into the enemy camp. It worked. Within a year, half of Scotland was dead. Half the Saxons were dead too, but at least, they knew how to put their dead to work.

In the 1930's, in the middle of legendary circus tent fire which would swallow almost two hundred people, a little boy with a club foot remembered his boy scout pen knife and sliced a hole through the tent large enough for him and three hundred other strangers to fit through. He thought this would make people see past his disability. The next day, the headline read: *Boy with Club Foot Saves Hundreds.*

In 2008, the U.S. National Parks Service reported a significant uptick in suicides within their parks. *I guess they want to die someplace beautiful*, said the parks spokesman, but this is not the answer. The Grand Canyon claims the most suicides by far and park rangers are now instructed to look out for signs: notes taped to steering wheels; weeping; the lone person staring too long into the abyss.

In 2009, I stare into the abyss of another poem, struggling hard not to include you. Obviously,

it fails when, in the last stanza, you appear,  
out of nowhere, mute, nodding your woolly head.  
Look, I have no dead Saxon to throw at you,  
no knife to slice through your lingering everything.  
I only have this poem, the one I am taping  
to the steering wheel of page, swearing to you  
I'm not lonely, that I don't miss you at all, that  
I was grateful when silence enveloped us both,  
happy that if the "us" we became had to die,  
at least it would be someplace beautiful.

## DRUNK BOYFRIEND AT THE POETRY READING

Fidgeting at the bar, he groans,  
*This is more boring than church, and  
I'm allowed to drink margaritas here.*

At the same time, the poet on stage tells us  
that his hands aren't hands; that his hands  
are, in fact, the echoes of child's silent tears.

Furthermore, the poet on stage tells us,  
his tongue isn't a tongue; it's a road even  
the Aztec warriors are afraid to tread.

Meanwhile, my drunk partner at the bar  
tells me that his balls aren't balls, but  
are actually bear's feet surgically

attached to his dick to look like balls,  
and oh yeah, his dick is a highway, and  
people want to ride it all night long.

I give the bartender a sign meaning  
*cut him off*, while he gives a sign meaning  
*two more shots*. Guess who wins?

At home, I make him eat a sandwich  
and drink two tall tumblers of water while

I try to get some writing done. *I think*

*we are so great*, he says, *I'm serious.*

I know, I answer. *Hey, hey*, he whispers.  
*I'm sorry I didn't have a better time*

*at the reading.* That's okay, I say,  
maybe next time. *Hey, hey*, he whispers.  
*What did I say my balls were again?*

Bear paws, I reply. *Oh man, that's*  
*priceless. It's funny because it's true!*  
*Write that down. Stop what you're*

*doing and write that down. It's gold.*  
*And if you don't use it in a poem,*  
*let me know, cause if you don't, I will.*

## **NOT AS SMART AS I THINK I AM**

I know that the “57” in Heinz 57 refers to the number of pickles that the company used to sell, and that graham crackers and corn flakes were originally created to prevent masturbation, but I can’t tell you the difference between a seal and sea lion. Or the difference between an alligator and a crocodile, though I think it has to do something with the shape of their snouts. Pumas and leopards are the same cats with different colored coats, and something called “the wingless fly” lives in Antarctica, but I only know this because I saw it on a PBS kid’s show once, and also, I had to google the spelling of Antarctica because my computer dictionary told me I wasn’t even close. You know, they say that there is a part of the human chest that if you strike it hard enough, it makes the person’s heart explode. This sounds like such a lie that I have to believe it’s the truth. If I were science, I’d never tell anyone where this place is. If I were science, I’d have named this place after you.