



*Paper Mill Press*

## Hair of the Dog

Merrick MacNeil

The graying-haired man with tobacco-stained teeth shuts the van door after me and circles around to the driver's door. As we drive away, I watch the morning sun creep over the distant country hills. Alone but for the driver, more passengers would come. But for now, I feel calm, private, luxury. It's early and the quiet dusty talk radio puts me fast to sleep. After some time, I feel the van stop and the driver open his door. The door alarm persists as I try to recall a dream. Out of grasp, but something of its flavour remained. It had the taste of last night's excitement. Drink after drink, my mind cloudy yet charged: a full-body rush. All friendship, joy, ecstasy magnified with every sweet drop. The driver opens the passenger door for an old woman, my eyes were still shut to shield from the flood of noonday light, but I can smell her: hand cream, expired floral perfume, and old, faded clothing. I'm so thirsty. The driver helps her in and shuts her door. I open my eyes—she is just as I thought. The old girl sits stiff, fingering her prayer beads as we drive away. I wish I had a hobby or even a good book. I have an eternity of time to kill.

At the next stop, we are joined by both a young girl dressed in black with an oversized hand bag and a poor-looking middle aged couple. The man sits beside me, his wife in the back with the girl. I thought they were all together, but when the driver asked their stops he made the same mistake and we were both corrected. She is so young and drunk. Her insistent cheeks flushed red, her eyes sagging, but her breath that left no doubt. She sloppily dug through her bag and pulled out a water bottle. It was full but missing its label; the plastic had been twisted and squeezed. She opens the top and chokes down a swallow. Her phlegmy exhale reeks of fresh vodka.

Memories of debauchery and pleasure overthrow my thoughts. The sun is at its peak; My hands won't be still. The woman in the front has not looked back. Come to think of it, neither have I. I am sweating; my heart is in frenzy booming against my

ribs. I th  
fingers c  
the bottl  
sixteen.

them too  
gatherin  
belt.

ping at h

holding  
about or

hand up

der with  
ear. I loo

driver to

girl her t





*Issue I.ii, Spring 2013*

ribs. I think if I turn around and see that young girl, with her weak fingers clasping her makeshift booze canteen, I will lose control, rip the bottle from her hands and take every drop. She couldn't be over sixteen.

Suddenly we were thrashed about—a gash in the road.

“Sorry about that, folks” says the driver.

The old woman broke her beads; she had been holding them too tight. She makes a quiet cry. The man beside me begins gathering the beads for her. The girl behind me undoes her seat belt.

“I think I found most'a yer beads lady” the man says, tapping at her shoulder.

“Thank you sir, could you put them in my bag for me?” holding her purse open, not looking back. The girl was feeling about on the floor.

“Di-anbody-see'mi-wor-ball?” she slurs out. She throws her hand up on my seat, and pulls herself to her knees.

“Eh, sir, d'you see my bottle?” she asks, touching my shoulder with her thin white fingers. I feel her hot reeking breath on my ear. I look down by my feet.

“Sorry, no.”

The vehicle slows down.

“You guys are getting out at the airport right?” asks the driver to the couple.

The man nods. As the woman gets out, the bottle drops.

“Oh here you go,” says the man's wife, handing the young girl her bottle. She leans over me, her brown hair brushes over my





*Paper Mill Press*

shoulder. Resting her weight on my seat with her neck outstretched she opens the top and pours the last of it down. I watch the lump in her throat bob as she drinks. I imagine her already rich blood get all the more toxic. The sun is beginning to set now.

“Hey, can I sit here?” I don’t reply but she navigates her way beside me all the same.

“I jus wan be by the door, my stops come’n up- I’m not weird or anything.”

I can taste her breath now. I fight myself trying not to look at her, I lose. She sprawls out her eyelids heavy. The seat that looked so small for the man, swallows her. Her red lips hang from her mouth. I watch here chest raise and lower, as she pants off to sleep. My knuckles and fingers white with tension, all my muscles in flex. I need a drink. I need a drink. The sky is dark as we come to her stop. I gently shake her knee. She lets out the faintest moan as she stirs. It is a hot night; she props herself up and pulls off her coat.

“Hey, thanks for waking me” she gathers her things and stumbles out.

“Far to go” asks the driver, as she pays him.

“A few miles’ walk, I’m fine” she insists.

“Where are you getting off?” he asks me.

“Here’s fine.”

I get out, knowing it was not my stop. Knowing what I want. The young girl smiles, “Hey, now we can walk together” she says.

“That’s right.” I reply.

I look back at the van and see the old women staring at

me, her l  
knows w

her up a  
set her a  
her wrist  
ment. I g  
could.

tongue c  
long as I  
her flesh

with eac  
in a pile.





*Issue I.ii, Spring 2013*

tretched  
lump  
lood get

me, her horrified expression confirming that she knows me. She knows what I am. The van leaves.

s her

Me and her alone, in the dark—no one for miles. I hold her up as we walk a little way to an abandoned building, not far. I set her against the wall, her head dangling from her neck. I squeeze her wrists, her drunken eyes glare up at me with fear and excitement. I grip her neck, not choking her, but letting her know I could.

t not

to look  
t looked  
er

She doesn't fight it. I tilt her white neck and run my tongue over her skin. I taste her sweat, I feel her pulse. I wait as long as I can, her warm breath on my neck, mine on hers. I bit into her flesh and drink, long and hard.

o sleep.

in flex.

o her

as she

coat.

My veins on fire with her blood. I feel her life drain and with each heart beat an explosion of ecstasy. I leave her cold corpse in a pile.

s and

hat I  
er" she

ig at