

Drunk / Samurai / Verner Herzog

Drunk /

She had. She had long legs and a tattoo of a bearded man's face on her shoulder. She stayed for a while, not that we ever discussed it—it just seemed like something she wanted. I knew when she was home before she came inside because she always dropped her keys at the door, metallic splat. She had. She had visited Castello Sforzesco and even showed me a photo. I didn't understand it, her story of the castle. Every morning, she fed a fledgling magpie on the balcony, its wing and tail feathers daubed a dirty grey, not yet white.

When we saw each other, years later, we kissed hello then kissed again, as if it was the old days, but it wasn't the old days.

You can get drunk on the memory of things.

/ Samurai /

She is on the train and thinking about getting a tattoo. The tattoo will symbolise death. She is on the way to a party where she will probably only think about death, talk about death, ask the others what they think about the death tattoo. Someone on the train is crying. Or laughing. Funny, that they can sound so alike.

Her ex-boyfriend will be at the party. He reminds her of death, his skeleton smile.

She is taking champagne and caviar. Ironically, because they will all die soon, though she won't say that.

At the station she watches bats flying in the twilight, trying to manoeuvre against the wind. At the party, the champagne is shared around but she drinks most of it. The caviar is placed next to the dips and crackers. She ends up in the pool with everyone looking at her. She is reminded of the summer after high school. Her neighbour Imre had a house party and two of her classmates said they'd jump in the pool if they were paid enough. They undressed to their underwear, lowered themselves in, took the cash and left. She'd envied that, their scam. Now here she is. Her eyes meet her ex-boyfriend's; his skull grin is absent from his face.

Later, Imre claimed she'd sucked him off in the pokie room at The King's Arms. Somehow everyone heard about it and it is this, everyone hearing about it, that has

stayed with her, not whether she actually did or not.

Her dress and her underwear and her socks and shoes especially are damp all the way home. She thinks about champagne and caviar and their provenance. Not where they are from geographically, but their place as things—objects, concepts—in the universe.

She thinks of death every day, like a samurai.

/ Verner Herzog

The universe is recorded on a VHS tape playing in the basement of a pristine, empty apartment block in a Chinese ghost town the size of Birmingham. The town is serviced by one man. Instead of smoking strong tobacco all day under a tree in the middle of the widest boulevard, he is crippled by the size of his task. When he moved to the town, the serviceman brought a rainbow finch with him. One morning, the cage was empty. Sometimes he can hear the echo of the finch's whistling in the narrow alleyways between apartment blocks. The only shop in operation in the town is a liquor store run by a Russian woman in a leather jacket and with hair the colour of polar ice. The door chimes with an electronic cymbal clash when the serviceman enters and exits or when the woman steps out to get some fresh air. She thinks the easiest thing to do would be to burn the whole thing down but who could she tell? Who would listen? Also in the basement is a fragment of a meteorite and a Citroën 2CV that nobody has the key for. In one of the bedrooms in one of the apartments is a commission by Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Packs of stray dogs enter the town at dusk and speakers in all the public squares play The Rite of Spring on repeat. Werner Herzog is visiting soon but nobody knows when and the billboard advertising his visit spells his name "Verner".

Tristan Foster / 2017