

miniMAG

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with



The Eagle of the Desert

Ben Davies

The roof won't last the rainy season.

Eagle has been told this so many times by now that I'm not sure why Juan still bothers because you both know Eagle won't budge, he never does even on the most trivial of things which is exactly why I find myself having to call a forty-four year old white man with long greying hair, *Eagle*, instead of his actual name even though I hate myself for doing so, but I figure what's the point in fighting it, the man is as stubborn as they get and won't hear anything otherwise and why not give the man what he wants when I consider what it takes to do the kind of life transformation that he's done, because Eagle's name is actually Dwight Jackson from Lincoln, Nebraska but a spiritual leader called Dwight Jackson from Lincoln, Nebraska, with Republican parents and siblings in the military doesn't have the same ring to it, so Eagle it must be, not that he's told me any of his backstory of course, we've never delved together into his family history, it's just what I found out one morning as I went down rabbit hole upon rabbit hole

trying to work out how I had ended up at this rural yoga retreat in the Mexican desert working for a man called Eagle, riled up in a permanent state of restrained fury which is exactly the opposite of what I had set out to achieve and in fact was only making everything I'd been through worse than I ever could have imagined because I was actually there to escape, to try and get over something awful that happened on the beaches of Guatemala, so it all seemed kind of perfect when one morning I was scrolling my way through Insta and this opportunity flashed up, to work at a retreat offering *solace, restoration and peace in a place of ancient, natural beauty*, only I've got no solace, restoration or peace and the place might be ancient cause every spot of land on this earth is ancient but it certainly wasn't a natural beauty, in fact it's the opposite, just a harsh, dust-flamed desert that sparks up a whirlwind of coughing in me whenever it likes, impossible to escape unless you're in your bedroom which isn't in fact a place to *relax and unwind* like promised, but a ten-bed wooden bunker that offers no ventilation or respite from the heat, a heat that pounds down every minute of the day until the only thing one can do is break outside and go to Eagle's sprawling new yoga deck with its unstable roof that's completely unnecessary for the number of people who attend this retreat and a stupid waste of money that was only built as some kind of laughable statement towards the new yoga retreat that's opened ten minutes down the road, the one I wish I'd applied to or could move to but I can't because Eagle cannily signed me up for six months work before I arrived, a legal move that seems out of place from a self-proclaimed *free-thinking free-spirit* but I've accepted that Dwight from Nebraska always bubbles under the surface and as a result I'm stuck, a state of play that I regret more with every passing day leading me to want to break the contract, to rip it up and run across the desert to the local town screaming *let me in, let me in, I can't take this anymore, I can't take one more second of this, the embodied living and the divine power and the energy healing and the sensual liberation and the somatic healing* and god-knows what else because I don't even know what half those things mean, all I wanted was some downtime to get over what had happened on the beach, and well, because I liked yoga and had downloaded Headspace on my iPhone so thought this place made sense, but now I'd do anything to be in that local town with some cold beers and a game of pool and a jukebox blaring out some fresh tunes because of course none of those things are allowed in the *Yoga Oasis*, a name that annoys every time I have to say it out loud because according to the dictionary an oasis means *a fertile or green area in an arid region* and there is absolutely nothing that is fertile or green about this place and the only person who is truly blind to that is Eagle, a man too busy flapping his wings at the locals, telling them what to do

instead of listening to their words, people who have lived on this *ancient* land far longer than he so you'd think he might appreciate that they know a thing or two, but Eagle doesn't see it that way and nor do any of the other employees who, for reasons I can't begin to fathom, lick the mud-crusted toes and thick-soled heels of his hairy feet, feet that seem not to have ever seen sandals and smell worse by the day yet none of the other employees seem to mind, in fact most do the same while they do their embodied living or whatever made up thing is on the calendar for that day, often just two words put together that they say has meaning but I can't find it so instead I gravitate towards Juan and his crew, a more natural fit as with them I can have a laugh and sneak a beer whilst the others spend an hour every afternoon in meditation followed by an hour of chanting led by Eagle which I obviously can't bear to be near, all under the shade of the new yoga deck with its huge roof which opened two weeks ago to great fanfare and lots of social media purely to spite the yoga retreat down the road and naturally I was forced along to the opening party, the day that really cemented a hatred for Eagle, the first time I properly met Juan and his crew who had all brought some cans along because it was a



party though they didn't know what an Eagle-organised party was and as they were sitting there sipping their beers and sharing some laughs under the shade of the yoga deck roof, a roof that they themselves had constructed in the roaring heat, Eagle stormed over and reprimanded them all, shouted at them to keep it down and that they were ruining the party and some weird form of silent expressionist dancing that he was leading and I nearly said something there and then, I felt I should but I didn't because the last time I spoke up on the beach things went south quick and as far as I could see there was nothing I could really do about it and I wasn't in the mood to cause trouble as I had four more

months on the horizon, four months of Eagle and his unbearable, ego-driven ways and so I had kept quiet and accepted the telling off like I did the next day and the next for all the various supposedly awful things I had done wrong around the retreat, from bookings to cleanings to maintenance, wishing it all to end right until today, the day Juan had always said was coming which makes it all the more satisfying because Juan really had told Eagle again and again that this would happen, had warned him, pleaded with him, tried to make him see reason but that Icarus was soaring way, way too high, no ear for the common man, but if only he had, because now when the rain finally hits, slowly at first before building in density, in ferocity, in power, it knocks poor Eagle to the ground and when the winds follow, swirling and rolling their way across the desert until they join forces with the rain in a spectacular, beautiful cacophony of energy, down, down, down the roof of the yoga deck falls and while Dwight from Nebraska slumps to his knees in a puddle of salty mud and tears, I kick off my shoes and begin to dance under the spray of the rain, timidly at first until it all lets loose, wilder, crazier, without thought, without rhythm, without insecurity or shame, splashing my feet through the water as I twirl this way and that, bouncing and spinning and jumping and laughing and only then do I start to feel some sort of solace, some restoration and ultimately, some kind of peace in this ancient, natural beauty.



Dead before death

Abel Johnson Thundil

We sit here like buildings in Venice;
Colorful with dirty roofs,
Huddling together
To not let the water tickle our sides...
We sit here like buildings in Venice;
Bored on seeing
The canals,
The carnivals,
The boatman carrying people in hats,
Complaining about the sunlight...
We sit here and watch
As the plague returns through the water,
As our windows crack,
As our roofs cave in;
Being sat over by the giants of time...
Yet,
The canals flow,
The carnivals go on,
And the boatman goes his way...
Our roofs may cave,
But they'll never fall in...
For the water we admire
Will swallow us
Before that
One day...

What's a Monday Called

Danny D. Ford

wild mornings
drinking alone
on public benches
the people
stare in horror

as he opens
another
book





Ain't Bad

Jenny Olson

being an old lady ain't bad
the world is hers to be had
she can sit and sit and sit
no one around to have a fit

but as an old lady she sees
the world with many sets of eyes
all the ones over the years
she wore beyond her tears

being an old lady ain't bad
allows her to be done with mad
forward beyond being a widow
from her past she will go

for her it means a bit of mischief
with no need to call the sheriff
it means doing what the fuck she wants
it means life doesn't end as a rhyme

Don't Get Old

D. C. Nobes

for Dave from Twitter

“Don't get old” he said.
“Better than the alternative”
was my reply.
“Is it?” made me stop and think ...

My hips ache first thing
as I rise from my bed.
My body doesn't quite do
what I want it to
if indeed it does at all,
and things don't work as well
as they once did
if indeed they work at all.

But I can hear the music
I can watch sunrise and sunset
I can hear roosters crowing
dogs barking, children calling.
No I can't play like I did
I can't dance, never really could.
But I can watch others play and dance
and I can write
I can paint with words
and ponder how rich my life has been
and I don't have to forage
or beg for a pittance.

I could be trite, saccharine, mawkish
and say I was fortunate
that I was rich in everything
except money.
And while that's true
it lacks a depth
I would want to convey.

I have more than survived
I have had an adventure,
no ... adventures.
I have been lucky
as well as unlucky
but even my unluck
opened a trove that's barely touched,
releasing thoughts and emotions
unlocked by a simple “Is it?”



From the deep dusk of night the kitchen spews the refrigerator light.

A white sheet flits across its illuminated yawn
like a dervish in a dance.

The still meat mass at its centre,
buffalonic and smelling of bio oil,

breathes as though waiting for a nurse to stick his needle in,
makes its way up the ladder and retrieves,

from the middle cupboard,

a hundred little blue pills and a glass of water,
intent to kill.

Their box makes a small, grateful, rattle
as it's withdrawn.

So done with life, she thinks, tipping them out.
So not needing to perceive anymore, or be perceived.
What a gay thrill, what a hollow sigh, what a nameless relief death is.

But, in a terrible moment,
she feels her nightie caught under her slipper on the ladder.

The ladder trembles with her as she opens her dry and long-kissed mouth,
clutching her pills with the very same intensity:
I'm too afraid,
she says – shaking – to get down.

Cameron Smith

Joni and I Unstuck

Pixie Bruner

I am a sixty-five year old lady
Staring from behind a cigarette
With tombs in my eyes
Because we all know
All romantics meet the same fate some day,
Cynical and drunk and sobering up
boring someone
in some dark café.
The waitress tires of me exploiting
The original bottomless cup of coffee.

I vibrate from constantly testing
how deep hitting the bottom can be.
My caffeine-stream laced with nicotine
Hormone replacement therapy.
As long as she pours,
I'll take the mug in my claws
Assemble a pyramid of empty creamers
Sit as solidly as the Sphinx
With my original nose not blown off.

(I am screaming

Screaming silently

Silently exiled

No one listens

But all return the smiles
The smiles are the beginning
The beginning of our separation

Smiles are root of the separation of us)

I am a 34 year old woman
recently separated from her husband
and exploring my own sexuality.
I am dating women but finding it no different.

And those who are
Laughing in my laughter

It is just as she had sung to me
So many times
“Now it’s just another show
Leave them
Laughing when you go.”

And you know you will go.
I know I always go.
If wasn’t if we knew, we knew
It was simply when

Oh to cease the eternal craving for freedom
Freedom is my fuel.
Traveling traveling traveling

Go back to traveling
If I can find where I left
Down
Up
In circles
Backwards
Never forwards
Because I’m a blind traveler on this journey
This journey for freedom

And again the cry of her guitar
And her whispers
Oh, and the whispers
Reaching my detached mind

“There’s no comprehending
Just how
CLOSE
To the Bone
And the skin
And the eyes
And the lips
You can get and still feel so alone.”

Now I am in my world. I’m 51 and in
Another dark café, eating a slice

Of pumpkin swirl cheesecake
they underestimated the defrosting of
so it's crystalline and frozen mid-slice.

Only I can see this chaos
Joni and I,
It is only she who really understands
the changes of venue, the new façade
And the loneliness

My heart is blessed
With a terrible thirst through my twenties
As if I was a bottomless pot of coffee
With dry mouth.

So full, I was,
And still so hollow
Like a Cactus, a Joshua tree
All I wanted is to be free
I wanted to make you feel free.
It became other words for nothing left to lose.

"All good dreamers pass this way some day
Hidin' behind bottles in
Dark cafes
Dark cafes
Only a dark cocoon before I get my gorgeous wings
And fly away
Only a phase,
These
Dark
Café
Days"



The Bee-Life

Kushal Poddar

My daughter says to me,
"Bring your stripes to the party."

"What kind of party is it?"
"A bee one." She says. It makes sense.

The honey synthesizes the season,
ready for others to loot. Evening is
in the clouds. I close my eyes.

One generation of the workers will sleep.
The next gathers a swarm to carry
the askew memory of the life.



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“Dead before death” by Abel Johnson Thundil
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