

# 3 SHORTS

By William Blome

**WHY WE LIKE IT:** *Each of these shorts, especially the first, has the feeling of an improvisation- a 'tangential realism' if you will, that never quite completes itself. None of them align with our familiar trajectories because Blome's realities are slightly warped out of focus and fashioned into Carver-shaped literary constructs that parallel rather than replicate experience. Time is encapsulated in media res. The prose is beautiful architecture. Five stars. (Spacing is author's own).*

There was a brass soap dish I once lifted from the bathroom of a strip club—I phillips-headed that bad boy right off the wall—mere days before the club closed its doors forever. A keepsake of fiery nights and gooey hands, the soap dish now gets equal billing in my collection with all the more-correctly-defined finials, though it picked up a black mark, so to speak, when it sliced your toe, trusty sidekick, at the foot of my bed.

## CATTAILS II

From just the right distance you and I watched a tugboat chug and puff out of the shipping lane and into a bordering marsh. Within her windowed wheelhouse the tugboat captain stood out in the open, and maybe because she was a transvestite (or maybe because some might conclude she was aping a bold and teasing bride in this August month of ours), she steered her squat and stubby vessel into the very narrow, complex, and often-changing rivulets of the marsh in an obvious search for blinding and flashy garments to authenticate a career-in-action. However, we as onlookers had to believe the most evident chart she was likely following and imitating was the spot-to-spot, short flight-to-short flight mosaic created by redwing blackbirds as they darted from

one cattail to another to another and another before coming to recant their journeys en masse and then rising and returning as one into the surrounding sky.

## FINIALS

I imagine stealing finials has been a habit in Western civilization for several centuries, though how rare or common it's been worldwide, of course, I have no way of truly knowing. I can relate that if I'm at all a typical devotee—that is, if my enthusiasm for swiping finials is not extremely rare or outsized—then the entire world may someday come to know of the habit's allure. I'll share that I myself was introduced to the practice by Marshal MacMahon (that is, when I read a biography of the great French general). I disbelieved at first the author's claim of MacMahon's openly boasting that stealing finials bestowed on him recuperative and healthy benefits, and that his obsession with pilfering knobs and crests was what had truly saved his Irish-ancestored ass from suicide following the Battle of Sedan. But I've come to believe that once anyone commits to stealing finials, precious little in the world seems able to interrupt: not a suddenly-looming skyscraper in the shape of a shiny sickle; not a stereotypical cop on foot patrol with his flicking baton; not a virus invisibly eating at one's own skin; not the clauses of some contract; and not even your cork-like nipples brushing against or pushing in-between my lips.

I like stealing finials on the weekly Day of Rest. I like to case a house-for-sale that's furnished and Open-for-Inspection on a Sunday afternoon, a house with some green-as-grass, male real estate agent in attendance, and I like doing it with you on my arm, o busty sidekick; you, lovely-cohort-about-to-burst-open; you who can pin the agent down measuring for kitchen cabinets or probing under a breakfast nook for a dropped car key, or succumbing to many another distraction while I'm unscrewing like a bastard in the bedrooms.

The first finial I ever swiped was in a bedroom—my parents', as a matter of fact— and I did it the night before I left for college. 'Took a lovely spire off the top of their lowboy while the two

of them were under the covers asleep in one another's aging arms. Always a pitifully literal thinker, I thought it would be a potentially sticky situation (swiping the spire while both mom and dad were in the same room), and thus I had brought along some dark brown apple butter on a saucer: one uses this to cover one's tracks, to plug the open hole(s) left in a lowboy's dark mahogany.

There was a brass soap dish I once lifted from the bathroom of a strip club—I phillips-headed that bad boy right off the wall—mere days before the club closed its doors forever. A keepsake of fiery nights and gooey hands, the soap dish now gets equal billing in my collection with all the more-correctly-defined finials, though it picked up a black mark, so to speak, when it sliced your toe, trusty sidekick, at the foot of my bed. (I had had the dish out, polishing the metal mother to a fine yellow shine, when you came galumphing in on top of my ass and got your big toe cut in the bargain. You'll recall I then played the role of frustrated/horny hunter, sucking the poison out of your wound and cursing the soap dish's nasty sharpness, and then (all by myself) achieving a half-foot-long hard-on for my heroic efforts.)

But a lavender-hued day will surely someday dawn when I'll have to pull my hand out from beneath that butt of yours for the last time. Oh I'll continue to kiss your shoulder and underarms good morning, and still set about the task of properly storing the more-than-several finials that have overflowed my collection's first cookie-jar home. The immediate problem will be to decide if there should now be additional housing designated for these overflows (and for constantly-arriving new members, of course), or if the overflows and their incoming brethren should now be individually domiciled, so to speak, in a place or niche each can call its own domain. Continuing the group-home idea appears rather obviously easier to implement and maintain: I'd just get an

empty box, or an old top hat, or a dust bin—something of that ilk—and then position such a container near my bedroom door, where, any dusk I come tramping home from a good day's hunt, I can simply toss in my klatch of incoming finials. As I say, that approach sure seems the easier of the two to go with, but as I lay here pondering and stroking your thighs—your body within a body—I know I'm really going to go with option number two. Yes, from now on, one-to-one correspondences will rule our roost, sweetheart, and there'll be a separate location chartered somewhere for each finial. Oh, I can slap together a catalog later if things get too confusing, but let me inaugurate matters right now by addressing the smorgasbord of excitement you keep spreading in front of me and by watching you gradually comprehend how my using separately-housed finials brings forth the orderly pleasure deep within you that crafts a lasting welcome mat for me and each new pointy tenant I bring into our happy home.

## PRETTY PIPES

At first his escape was not successful, and you easily caught up with him just after the seat of his light blue pants got snagged on the wiry edge of the fence he was trying to vault over. I could squint and discern that he smiled big-time at you—his face grew downright moonlike as he beamed and conjured a bribe of cellophane-twisted bonbons for your help in boosting him up and over. Furthermore, you yourself came to admit you pledged to him you'd grow dumb as a dodo while he ran away through the parking lot.

Now it's certainly not out of the question you could have simply done nothing, 'just turned your back on him, never said boo, and paced off in the opposite direction. I have no problem whatsoever understanding such a contingency. But to me, clarity doesn't have to be abundant for there to be something unsettling here, let's not kid ourselves, pretty pipes. There's something illustrative in this event, though my domineering ass almost always prefers something reflective. You know me: I like reflection on the order—reflection of more or less the same magnitude—as what floats on the surface of an entirely-still storm pond during the gaudy sunset close of an uneventful day.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *The three selections featured here are all fictional sketches, with no pretense or aspiration whatsoever toward someday becoming "finished" or "polished" narratives. A fictional sketch should be capable of standing on its own feet as a worthy literary product. And okay, you want a stylistic source or inspiration for Cattails II and Pretty Pipes? Well, you could certainly do worse than to listen to a random selection of Debussy's Etudes played at somewhat low volume. But Finials is its own bad boy; I pompously like to dub it a surrealistic smudge of history.*

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** *William C. Blome writes short fiction and poetry. He lives in the 'States, wedged between Baltimore and Washington, DC, and he is a master's degree graduate of the Johns Hopkins University Writing Seminars. His work has*

*previously seen the light of day in such fine little mags as PRISM International, In Between Hangovers, Fiction Southeast, Roanoke Review, and The California Quarterly.*