

IF THIS WERE A MOVIE IT'D BE TITLED *Shoeprints in The Spring Snow*

By Matthew Boyer

WHY WE LIKE IT: *The line between CNF and fiction is sometimes a thin one and in this case it's easy to imagine you're reading a short story. We are in heartland America cinched by the rust belt—a part of the 'great nation' where the good life has unraveled and the dream of prosperity is ever more elusive. It's an updated 'Ash Can' school of journalism and the open collar honesty of the voice—the voice of our friend, our classmate, our neighbor, the guy down the street—what in literature we call 'everyman'—makes a strong connection with the reader.*

I couldn't stop thinking that maybe I'd be waiting in the car and then someone would come out with a gun and turn me into Luca Brasi and make me sleep with fishes.

Time, along with hope, is ebbing away and fleeting images of transience and impermanence resonate throughout. We had four submissions this issue about small town drug use—three of them fiction—and this is the one we took. Read it and you'll know why.

First time we met, we all went to Walmart because there is nothing else to do in Somerset than to go into Walmart and walk around like tiny adults, like we were people with money who could buy General Tso's chicken from the hot case and eat it, like we had places to be, like life was a dream we dreamt each day to be better than the last.

This dude can write.

If This Were a Movie, It'd Be Titled *Shoeprints in The Spring Snow*

I was driving in the snow and had the heat on so high John had to take his coat off, but my windows were clear.

I thought it'd be like the movies because I'd never bought weed before. John told me that he'd be in and out, and it'd be like that.

“You pack any heat?” I asked.

“Why would I do that?”

“In case, maybe. What kind of weed is it?” I asked.

“I don’t know, she said it’s the stuff she used to smoke, when she smoked.”

“She doesn’t smoke anymore?”

She was John’s ex-girlfriend who didn’t like me.

She didn’t like me because one time we had a party at John’s in his dad’s woodshop that used to be a gun store. The guns were still on the walls, but they put a flat-screen and couches in there.

Everyone else went home, but I stayed and sat on the couch opposite them while they cuddled.

They were basically fucking.

Instead of leaving and having them treat each other to another fleeting orgasm, I stayed on the couch and sang the first line to *Separate Ways* by Journey; *Here we stand, hearts broken in two*, over and over again, but we were sitting on couches, and I couldn’t remember the rest of the words, so I said, “The video is so ‘80s, like they’re standing on a boat dock playing air guitars,” which I basically said to myself because all of the blood left their brains and fled to their sex organs.

Here we stand.

She kept making these little noises, little grunts like: “Tell that fucking cock block to go home.”

John didn’t say anything.

‘Til he did, then I went home, then they probably fucked.

I was the one driving because John's car was making this slugging sound, like it was just scooting along the road, and he was afraid of getting stranded at his ex's house in the middle of winter with 50-dollars of weed.

Cars around here always break down, but there's always spare change to smoke.

"When'd she quit smoking?" I asked.

"I doubt she did," he said.

"She was really into it," I said.

"I think she said it's the kind that mellows you out," he said.

"Sativa?" I asked.

"Indica, I think?"

She didn't like me from the start, so I didn't like her either.

First time we met, we all went to Walmart because there is nothing else to do in Somerset than to go into Walmart and walk around like tiny adults, like we were people with money who could buy General Tso's chicken from the hot case and eat it, like we had places to be, like life was a dream we dreamt each day to be better than the last.

Walmart is a fever, each item a cold cloth only to be touched and put back on the shelf, in those days of having just enough for gas.

We were avoiding someone she knew from high school, so the three of us ducked down to the baby clothes.

"Look how cute and tiny," she said.

I said, "Just imagine, one day they'll all be dead."

And she didn't like that, and to be honest, I don't like it either.

So, I kept thinking while driving out to the middle of nowhere in Somerset, which is already out of the way, about how much this girl hated me for singing Journey while she was trying to give my best friend a hand job in his dad's wood shop that we watched movies in, sometimes.

The snow was coming down pretty well, like it was a movie, like we were drug dealers getting a big score, or like we were being set up in a big scheme.

Patsies.

I said, "Do you think she's setting us up? Like, if she's still mad about you dumping her and shit?"

"I sure as fuck hope not. I think she just wants to sell some pot."

"Probably." I said.

I couldn't stop thinking that maybe I'd be waiting in the car and then someone would come out with a gun and turn me into Luca Brasi and make me sleep with fishes.

"Do you think she hated me. Like, is she single?" I asked.

"She wasn't the biggest fan of you, and yeah, she's married now, I think."

"I guess she probably doesn't want my number then."

"You'll make the next right. Then there should be a silver Toyota in front of a green farmhouse."

John was reading directions off of his phone because his ex said, "People can never seem to find us even though we're in plain sight." But we went too far and had to turn around, because it was five P.M., and dark, and snowing, and NPR kept telling us the time, kept saying, "The time is 5:05, this is NPR," but in that gurgled way that radios out of tune do, so I was freaking

out because I didn't want to go to prison, but wanted to get high, so we pulled in behind the silver Toyota, and I told him I'd just wait.

I turned my car off. Turned my lights off. Turned the brightness on my phone down, pretended I wasn't in the car, like there was nothing to see. I scrolled Instagram and hoped it wouldn't be too long. Hoped that we could go in at least 30 minutes so we could get stoned.

It'd been a long time since I got high.

It was October. I was working on a paper about the American Dream in Sherwood Anderson's *The Egg*, and John was like, "Want to get high?"

I did.

We did.

His girlfriend at the time had a muscle disease that caused the meat in her body to pull from the bone. We got free weed because she had a card for the pain.

But they broke up and we didn't have a plug or a clinically ill friend anymore.

I saw a figure in the corner of the dark. I thought it was over, that the hammer would slam from the gun and I'd be killed helping my friend get weed, but it was just John.

He tried to get into the wrong car, because there were two silver cars, mine and another, and he pulled really hard on the wrong car door, so I thought we were in a hurry.

Then he opened my door calm as hell.

"That was quick," I said.

"Did you think it'd be a long time?"

"I figured it'd take at least ten minutes. Like, you'd sit down with them, check out the weed, smoke a little. I don't know, like the movies, or something."

NPR said: “The time is 5:09, this is NPR.”

John said: “She’s fuckin’ pregnant now, too. Can’t believe it.”

“Is she?”

“Yeah, she always was a little shorter and bigger, but I was like, ‘Guess she just got bigger,’ but then I realized that she was totally pregnant.”

“Maybe that’s why she doesn’t smoke weed anymore.”

“Shit. You’re totally right.”

“Well, she turned out all right then. Not hot boxing the little fella every day,” I said.

We drove back to his house, went to another friend’s house, and smoked, and drank, and retold this story to our friend, told him how she was pregnant, how it was weird that this person we never thought about kept living after we forgot.

I hope she has twins.

Triplets.

I hope they dream in the womb. Dreams of legal weed you can buy at 7-Eleven.

I hope her babies never die.

I hope they smoke as much weed, when their lungs are developed, and never feel pain.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: *I wanted to talk about the those the American Dream left behind. I’m from a really small area in Pennsylvania, and we’re still here even though we’re treated as if unneeded ‘til people in suits need votes. The American Dream is almost as unobtainable as it is fleeting, because life itself is fleeting. The title is a reference to all of that fleeting, as in we’re not in a movie, but we’re still fleeting. And the reference to movies throughout is just to try and drive home the American Dream, as Hollywood is a fixture of America, and the need for everyone to*

be famous and important is an American ideal and fleeting just the same. We're here 'til we're not, then the snow melts.

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Matthew Boyer is a writer for Western Pa. He is a student from the Creative and Professional Writing program at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. He is attending Chatham University in the fall to obtain his MFA in Creative Writing. He has been published in Cleaver Magazine, The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, and Line Rider Press.*