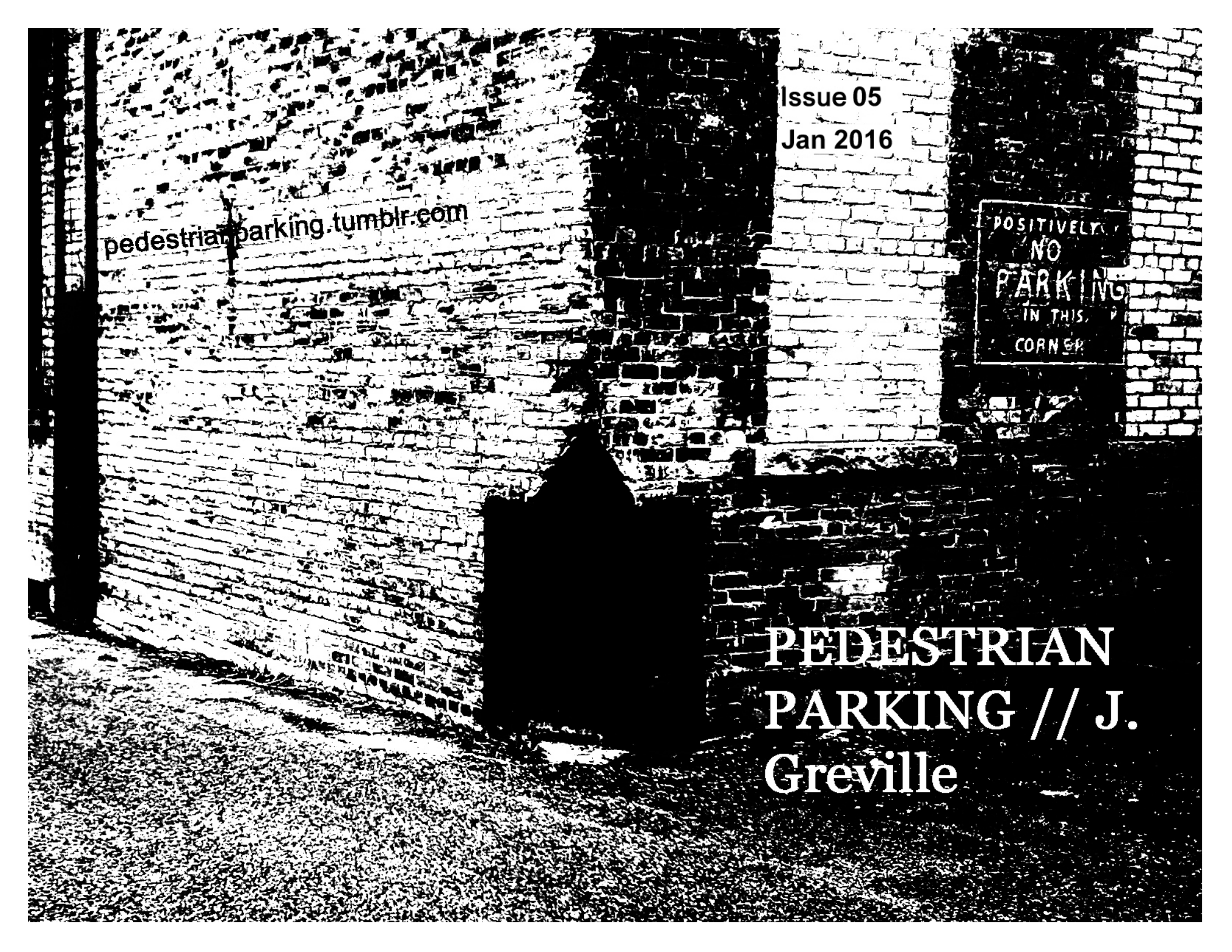




Issue 05

Jan 2016

pedestrianparking.tumblr.com

POSITIVELY
NO
PARKING
IN THIS
CORNER

PEDESTRIAN PARKING // J. Greville

A NOTE ON THE BRIDGE

I thought she was there to jump, at first. Most people did. It was the way she leaned against the steel and concrete rail of the Oxford Street bridge that made us all think that way. She would've snapped her ankles before she killed herself, at that height, but I guess it's no use trying to tell that to someone on the edge. Ankles or neckbone, if you're gonna fall, you're gonna fall. Guess that's why nobody stopped to help.

But she wasn't there to jump, not at all.

She simply stood by the edge of the bridge and stared. Across the narrow slice of river, there was an old iron truss bridge meant for the train that ran through town. It emerged from the woods and cut across the gentle river, like a scar on a child's face. Eventually, it started to shake, and a low rumble could be heard in the distance. She reached into the small leather satchel at her side and pulled out a piece of paper with some writing on it. She folded the page into an elegant paper airplane, and threw it toward the oncoming locomotive. The wind from the train sent the paper plane careening wild, away from the truss bridge and into the river.

I craned my neck as the train passed overhead. I looked down to see if she had retrieved her plane, but she was gone.

I made my way down to the river to pick up the plane. Couldn't help myself, really. I unfolded the river-soaked page under the roar of the freight above, and read it.



Someday, on a stairway stretching from darkness into blinding light, you'll meet your doppelganger, a being that looks exactly like you, except for its eyes.

Except for its teeth.

You'll get to the stairs in the usual way,
by moving forward in time
moment by moment.

You'll always end up there.

You can't stop.

You lack the ability.

Run anywhere you want, but you have no control over how you travel through time. Despite everything, you're dragged forward to a single point. Every step and every moment brings you closer to your future.

Your doppelganger is the opposite. It licks its lips as it stalks throughout time, but lacks the ability to move freely throughout space. Instead, like you, it's dragged in a single direction, toward a single point.

You're dragged through time to the stairway. It's dragged throughout space, toward you.

You can't stop.

It can't stop.

And it's the only one of you that doesn't want to.

The audience erupted with murmurs and hushed concern, but the children continued undaunted. Eliza did triple duty with a sock puppet on each hand as herself and her two siblings, while Walter pretended to leave, just as his father had. Shannon told Eliza fantastic stories that Walter acted out on the other side of the stage. Each subsequent tale made their father more of a hero, and as the first act came to a close, both parents were having trouble hiding their tears.

The second act began with Walter on one end of a phone call, and Eliza, as all of the children, answering. Shannon narrated from off-stage as Walter acted out his father moving to a city on the other side of the world. Eliza crossed to the other side of the stage, replacing her sock puppets with one of her mother, and one of a man. Shannon continued to narrate as Walter pretended to fall in love with the sock puppet man, and Eliza tried very hard to not to giggle as her brother made sweeping romantic gestures to her fingers. Finally, Shannon emerged back on stage, and narrated, directly to the audience, how Walter's character loved his family, but was afraid to tell them the truth. The play ended with Eliza, as the three children once more, hugging Shannon and Walter, and telling them it was okay.

She wiped the tears from her face as even more came down, and turned to her husband, who was doing the same. She smiled to him, and he said he was sorry. She lied, and told him that it was okay, then stopped, and told him the truth, that it was going to be.



"Dear Daisy," it said.

"It's been too damned long, and I've been too damned tired. You told me we were going to be okay, but I wasn't. You made your plans to leave, but I couldn't. You jumped from the bridge and survived, but I didn't. I don't know where you are, and I'm starting not to care, and that scares me, Daisy. I'm scared of myself without you. You promised that you'd always watch over me.

"Where are you?"

"-Beth."

I kneeled for a moment, and waited for the iron bridge to stop shaking. Took me a moment more to realize it wasn't the bridge.

She told me it was gonna be over, but I guess there's no use trying to tell that to someone on the edge. I had to jump, to see if I could. If you're gonna fall, you're gonna fall. I survived but I couldn't go back. I don't think she expected me to be there, and to find the note that she left. I don't expect her to find this one either.

Beth, I'm sorry. But I kept my promise.

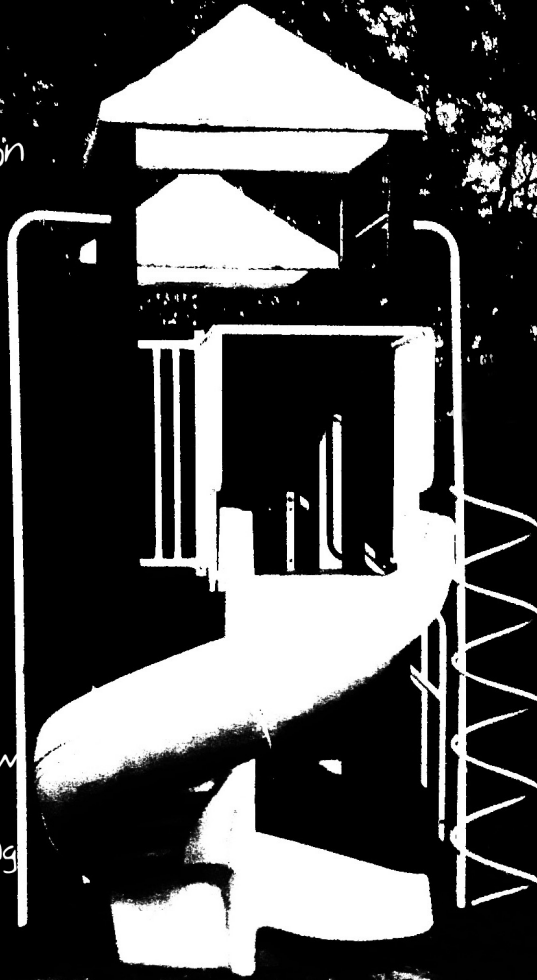
-Daisy

*- Found on the Norman A Bradford Bridge.
North Side. Nov, 2015*



At night, if
you're quiet,
you can hear
the whispers on
the wind. This
is a place
where dark
rituals have
occured, and
where old evil
lingers.

No children
ever play in
the soil,
because even
the young know
that there's
something wrong
with how it
feels.



On the corner of Cummings Avenue and
Napier Street, there is *Blackfriars Park* --

She wasn't ready, just as she expected.

He stood disheveled in the doorway, his hair two inches longer, and his clothes two sizes too big. His eyes went wide and wet at the sight of her, and new wrinkles and creases came to life around them as he smiled. She wanted to smile back but she couldn't. He nodded as if he understood.

She welcomed him in and took his coat, then motioned to the parlour as she did with the other guests. He looked around the large house like a man studying a dream, not sure if each step would be met with solid ground. She followed close behind him, and as they took their seats at the edge of the front row, her mother loudly and cordially shouted to the kids that the audience was finally ready.

Eliza shouted back, and everyone laughed. The curtains parted, and the show began.

As her children took their places upon the stage, which, to their credit, looked nothing like the other side of the parlour to which she was accustomed, she felt a familiar hand brush tentatively against her own. She didn't want to, but she took it anyway. Her husband's palm felt coarser than she remembered, yet his grip, which trembled with an unfamiliar strength, was surprisingly tender.

The lights came up, and she felt her heart sink inside her chest. There on the stage, were Shannon and Walter, dressed just as she and her husband were on the day that he left.



The separation was only the most recent development in what had been an ongoing situation. Their therapist, the third they had seen in as many years, and the fourth that she had seen on her own, assured them that it would be for the best. They both hoped that space would alleviate, in some way, the lingering threat of divorce.

He was gone a week later. She told the kids that he was on a long trip. It was the first thing she could think of, since he didn't say goodbye. She thought it callous at first, especially for the children, but eventually she forgave him. He wasn't fond of farewells. She secretly hoped that it was his way of promising a return.

As their time apart continued, so did the trip she told the children he was on. When she stopped receiving word of his whereabouts, she started making up new adventures for him. For every scraped knee the children received, she gave them a father who tended to the sick. For every failed test and broken, youthful ambition, she gave them a father who found meaning in kindness. For every woman she feared he fell into the arms of, she gave them a father who loved them more than anything. The longer he was gone, the more she made of him, until his history in their eyes was entirely her doing.

Another guest knocked at the entrance. She snuffed the tip of her cigarette in the soil of the philodendron, and opened the door.



The dew on the grass stinks of stale
glistening sweat, and the nearby woods cast
corpse shadows upon the ground.

Death seeps through the earth.

The round patch of dirt that makes up the
playground is a witch's circle, used on full
moons. They use it still, when they can, as a
portal to hell.

Those who live near enough to hear the
screams and laughter at night spend their lives
trying to forget it.

Those who fail, go mad.

No
matter
the day, the soil is
always wet to
the
touch.

The children prepared behind the brown cloth curtain they had
temporarily salvaged from the den and hung, with thumb tacks, from
the parlour ceiling. The curtain divided the room in two halves, and
opposite the side where the children rehearsed, there were arranged
three rows of black folding chairs, borrowed from their aunt's weekly
garden luncheon.

The guests slowly filled the seats like granules falling into place at
the bottom of a sandglass. They nodded to each other, and they hugged,
and they talked, and they laughed about those that weren't present, or
weren't invited. A family is nothing if not divided.

She paced the length of the foyer, smoking a series of hidden
cigarettes and welcoming family as they arrived, directing them to the
darkened parlour with a wave of her hand. When each new arrival
knocked on the door she quickly snuffed her cigarette in the soil of the
philodendron by the entrance. When they were out of view she lit
another.

She hadn't smoked in years, for the kids.

Her mother stepped into the foyer and motioned for her to join the
audience in the parlour, but she shook her head, and continued pacing.
Self-consciously, she took the cigarette from her mouth and held it at
her side, away from her mother. Despite her age, she still wasn't
comfortable smoking in front of the woman. Her mother nodded, then
smiled gently and returned to parlour.

She didn't know if she was ready to see him if he came. She wasn't
sure if she was ready to take it if he didn't.

The Children's Play

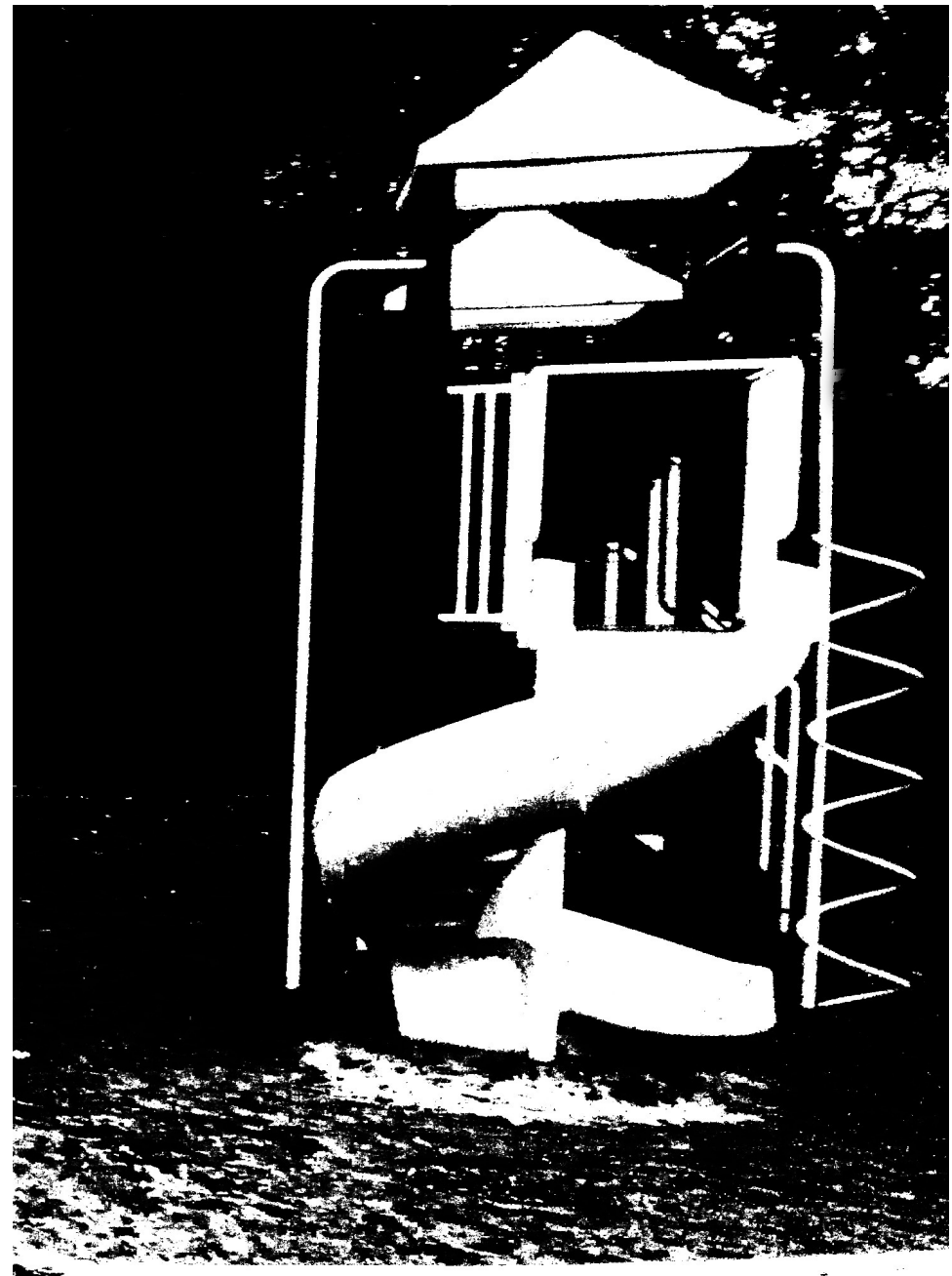
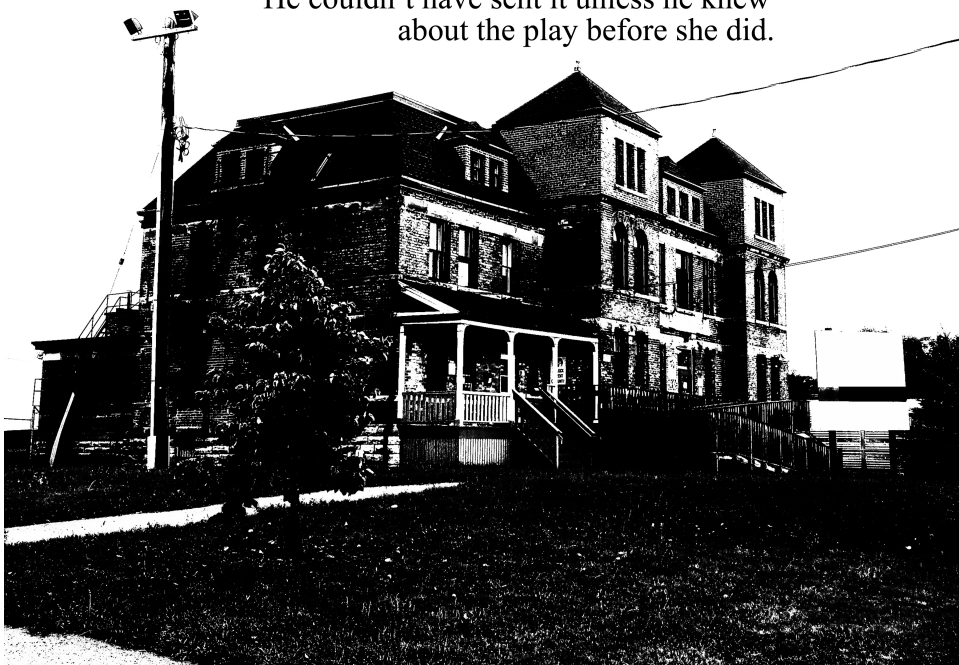
She hadn't seen him in fourteen months. Their three children, Eliza, Shannon, and Walter, were eight, eleven, and nine years old respectively. Over those fourteen months she had often wondered where he was, and what he was doing. Invariably, she wondered what she had done wrong.

The letter had arrived two weeks previous. She had never known him to send correspondence, and was at a loss for words when she saw his familiar signature hastily scrawled upon the bottom of the crumpled, wet note. It browned where the rain and the muck had made the ink bleed through. The return address was indecipherable, and she suspected, unpronounceable. In it, he promised to see his children on stage.

Their play was already a bit of a family affair, and they were excited to perform it for their aunts and cousins. She had only known of the play for a month, and couldn't imagine how long they must have kept their work a secret. Family was soon invited over the phone, and a date was set that worked for most.

She wasn't sure how her husband knew of the performance, or how such a thing could be possible. The postmark and the date on the letter indicated that it took two weeks to arrive, two weeks before the show.

He couldn't have sent it unless he knew
about the play before she did.



Still soaked through
with the sins
of the past.

In the summer, the equipment burns your hands. In the winter, it freezes your skin. When it rains or snows, it's too slippery to use. On temperate days, when the weather is fine, it shudders and creaks, hungry for small children.

There exists no record of the young people lost. Some believe it due to the grim nature of such information.

Most know it's because the park eats the history of its victims. It devours their memory, along with their souls.

All that remains is the feeling that
something has been lost
or taken.





Their faces sometimes appear in the rain
or the snow, when it falls upon the slide.

Only to dissappear a moment later,
washed away and forgotten again.

The few that still honour
the ancient evils defend
the park from those who
would expose it, or worse,
rid the city of its presence.

They line the corner of the street, clasping
each others' hands, chanting. When the old ways
fail, they still have steel and spade, money and
guns.

The unholy ground begs to be fed, and
rewards those who feed it their brethren. Evil
demands its morsel; a sacrifice or betrayal.
Family and friends are always the tastiest.

Be wary of those who frequent this place.

And if you should
find yourself facing
the whispers in the
night?





**IF THESE WALLS COULD SPEAK,
THEY'D SCREAM**

