

SOMETHING LIKE AN AUBADE

SEAN WHITE

Your lithe fingers made gentle music as they danced through the little circles of metal in the dish behind the stick shift. You ignored the fractured reflection of the city's skyline on the opposite side of the darkening lake. The sun could have crashed into the Earth instead of over the horizon and you still would have remained focused on the coins I had dropped into the console a few at a time.

A cloud of sweet intoxicating smoke fogged the car. It fogged our minds. You separated nickels, dimes, and quarters, and filled the molded slots above the radio, perfect for each type. Each coin reflected in the pools of your eyes as you studied it before it clinked together with its kin.

I studied you, amused and enamored, searching for the words to tell you how beautiful you looked in profile oblivious to me. The reduced visibility from the fog in my head slowed me. I stumbled around by feel.

You had finished with the bigger change and held a handful of pennies. The silence weighed on me and the weight pressed words from my mouth.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

You held a penny between your thumb and forefinger and stared at it.

"Holy shit!" you said.

"What? What is it?" I asked.

"I don't believe it," you said.

"What?" I asked again.

You pushed the red-brown profile of Lincoln in front of my face.

"Look at the date," you said.

"Nineteen forty-two. Why's that important?" I asked.

"It's worth like a hundred dollars maybe," you said. "I don't know."

You gave it to me and I buried it in my wallet.

A year later under another sunset I limped to the edge of the lake at that spot. I steeled myself to face the fate I had sown, wishing it were otherwise. The 1942 penny hit the water with a blump and that Lincoln drowned. That Lincoln drowned and the world remained unchanged.

The wallet fell back into my pocket like a coin into a vending machine and the engine grumbled to life. Motors whirred as my calloused fingers depressed buttons to clear the fog through open windows. The tires popped gravel until we pulled onto the highway. The odometer turned by tenths of a mile faster and faster until the car sprinted a mile a minute.

The snap of fingers. The shattering glass sounded a little like your fingers swimming through that pool of coins.

The paint on a car always has names like cherry red or rustic ecru. My car was thunderhead gray. I wondered how such a thing foreshadowed doom if I failed to think about it until after it happened.

We rode inside the body of a turtle on its back. Thunderhead gray scraped away and the alloy beneath screeched against the concrete. A balloon punched me in the nose. The turtle rolled to a stop but not before it vomited you out.

The sleepy sun put itself to bed. The silence weighed on me and the weight pressed blood from my mouth. Blood instead of your name.