

Structures

By Jackson Hyland-Lipski

Section I

Time Through

The House (entrance)

It was the house where he lived where he had lived. It never seemed home to him nor to his mother and younger brother who both lived there without him now, they both remained. The walls were lacking, of pictures, of new paint, hardly any paint at all, of any perfection, lacking the qualities of a home, solely a house. He looked at the ground, trying to avoid looking up, for if he did he would notice the ceiling, imagine the beyonds and know that his little brother was lying in bed or sitting in his chair waiting to hear the door close and waiting for the older brother's departure. The screen door in back, which he would leave out of, out of embarrassment, out of guilt, could no longer be called a screen door, now it was more of an open window. The screen had worn through and was only actual around the edges, and since nobody ever used the back door except for him, nobody fixed it. The front door stood open, an echo of his entrance. Light poured through this opening and floated on the dust slowly crawling through the air. He looked up at his mother, when she looked down at the floor, upset and disappointed. "I live in Morristown..." he suspects, "I have to take a train back? That's how I go?" There is no answer as he looks up at the ceiling in silence, hoping to hear his brother's movements, missing his brother's excitement towards him, and he could see out of the bottom of his eyes the blurry image of his mother looking into the whites of his eyes. Hers were filled with worries and what the hell and what am I going to do, and she didn't know. Her eyebrows a thin stern line, sloping up above her nose, almost symmetrical though one seemed a little higher than the other, almost crooked, but not quite. The bottoms of her eyes cradled a crescent of tears which did not trickle down, building, stayed, just made her expression that much more of a blow to her son.

He asked because he was not sure, but he could tell it was true. That was how he got there and how he gets home. He figured it out by himself, yet kept his face in a curious and asking expression, waiting for her reply, to see if he needed to leave, or if he could stay this time, could he stay.

White noise chafes the walls, rustles and disturbs the room, stains the hard wood floor.

He stands but she has to sit, the years without him, the many hours spent staring at his absence, trying to erase his identity from her mind, but the struggle just makes him more of a reality. He is always there, and now he is there. The hat he wears helps her a little, keeps his emotions hidden behind a smooth curved shadow reflected from the hat's brim that slides up and down his face whilst he anxiously awaits a movement from his brother. "He doesn't want to see you, and even if he does you should know better than to see him," she notices his angst, while she stands up with enough strength to speak, close the front door quietly, and sit down again. The curve at the end of the shadow hits his neck and covers his entire face as his head falls towards the floor with dark cracks leading to the pantry in back, never used. The cracks that had no depths, no bottoms, went down forever, as it seemed. He agreed in despair.

As he looked down he only thought of what lay above him. His room had not altered, but has changed so much. It feels that he is gone, the non-visible layer of dust can be felt in his room, can be smelled, the smell of no use. There is no use. When he left, the day after in fact, she made his bed, folded that plaid button-down shirt on the chair at his desk.

This was the day he left, and nobody had entered his room since, Nobody made that bed again, Nobody needed to, Nobody could. His room was upstairs, across from the brother's, who sat in his own room, hands on ears, calmly, routinely, thinking I want it to end, staring blankly at the crevice underneath the door which was the only place his eyes could fall where his mind couldn't block away thoughts of his older brother's room. The first time his brother returned, his presence left snot on the young boy's sleeve, left the boy's room a mess and left the boy's eyes red, the fire truck which was thrown against the wall, only six years old then. The dent, now hidden by a bookshelf, he could read now, and he read a lot, all the time in fact, already surpassing his older brother, downstairs.

Downstairs.

He knows he cannot. He hoped, but he knew. He sits down, elbows on knees, hands holding his jaw, clenching his cheeks, keeping his head from collapsing. After a long blind gaze at the knots in the scratched dry chalky wood floor, he constricts his eyelids, escaping, what to do.

The telephone rings, breaking the otherwise awkward silence that is drowning his hope and abrading the sanity of his mother. Infinite ringing, one too many, the haltering cut-off of the penetrating noise breaks the tension, while the muted words of the brother upstairs answering the phone can be heard. When it stops, when his little brother is done talking and the hanging up can be heard, and is anticipated, the oldest brother stands up shaking

off this momentarily frozenly calm distraction and paces, frustrated, so many thoughts clouding his mind and his judgment to the point where no thoughts are thoughts, just barriers from clarity. Carriers from bleariness. He clenches his face and tears the situation apart. Another has taken his place.

The house next door is on fire, it leads to the backyard, to their back yard, blankets the dried brown grass. It snakes through the hole in the screen door, sinuously hovers down to the dried hardwood floor. Thin flames branch through the halls in the creases of the wood, spiraling up to then dissipate in the notches. The jagged cracks of dirtied white paint on the walls are outlined with an orange wisp, which quickly engulfs the whole of each flake, the walls are flames. The stairs obstacle the destruction, but a sheet of fire is able to skate up the banister to the second floor, to the brother's room.

Red paint cleanly leaves the fire truck and forms a pool. A ghostly truck remains - all paint all color and vibrancy falls off like a snake shedding its skin - for only moments, and then adds to the red absorbing into the rug. It begins to become the pool. The pages of the books on the shelves are weathered, withering. They were already decomposing before the fire. The pages succumbed before their protective binding, the books blazing interiorly. The frayed hardcovers light up as well, disappear into a furry flame.

Where is his mother, where is his little brother, but he doesn't notice they are missing. Seeing everything and understanding nothing, present in god knows wherever. He watches the chaos, pacing, mumbling, pacing, impassive, only able to see what is visible through the cracks between his fingers.

Scraps of wood still cling to the steel foundation of the house, everything else in pumice mounds, all of his memories uniformed in ashes on the floor. The structure maintains its heat, the steel glows autumn, he is encapsulated in an outlined cube of solid flame, pacing. He knocks over a mound with the front side of one foot in his myopic tempo'd march. This specific pile was shaped where the couch once lay, where his mother had been sitting. Was she in this mound, was she part of this, he did not ask, he did not know to ask. Conversationally mumbling, "I took the train here? Yeah, Yeah I did didn't I, didn't I. I took the train here..."

"You took the train here, you take it back. Take it back" she abruptly interrupts. His eyes clenched so hard that it gave him a painful grin, his upper and lower teeth forcing against each other, his whine, his discomfort. Clarity again. Everything is back. The structure, the wooden floor, the banister, the flakey walls, his mother, the couch.

"Go back."

There is someone knocking at the front door. She is sitting so she expects him to answer it, but he is oblivious and focused on others. It slams open.

"Suzie are you okay?" The man exclaims, not seeing anything but the mother. "I saw him coming down from the train."

"We're fine he's done here" she says moving the faded green irises of her eyes towards her eldest son, making the man aware of *his* presence in the room.

“Oh. Well, I’ll be home all day, you know you can call if, well, you know, just if, well just call if ya need me.”

“We’re just fine thanks again Jough.”

The door quietly closes with Jough outside and almost simultaneously the boy comes down from the second floor, the door closing triggering regret in his mind for not seeing his older brother, no matter how much hate and negativity has built up around his image. However, when he sees his older brother still standing in his house, pacing, oblivious, out of control, he quickly regrets his feelings of lament. Now, away from the sanctity of his own room, his brother is real to him, his past is reality, the depths of their relationship evident in his mind. The boy limply stands on the third-to-bottom step of the stairs, holding on to the banister with his right hand seemingly keeping himself from collapsing due to the bristly nest of thoughts scratching against the inside of his head. Footsteps grow faint up the stairs as an imprinted hand is left from the boy’s sweat on the banister. The eldest son remains oblivious to all, yet mutters to himself, “come back brother, my little brother, come back I want to see you, let me get a good look at you”, his mother now holding her head in her hands the same as her son, but unlike her oldest boy, does so because she understands too well what is.

Catalyst (cooling)

White blinds mask the sunrise from a hospital room on November 2nd, thin bands of light falling on the woman whose green eyes had not yet faded, still vibrant and juvenile, reflected her sight, her newborn son, her second son.

The father closes the shades and all light leaves the room so that his wife and newborn son could sleep. The eldest son, then a child, then thirteen, sits in a far chair, a stranger.

He sits there, watching what looks to him to be a new family. While they expect him to participate, welcoming and accepting, which he cannot be. Which he isn't. He is an independent entity, stationary, frozen in time, a time when he was their son, their one, but they have progressed. Moved. On. He, on the other hand, has moved off. He is off. Off of their cycling lives, off of their reality even. Odd. Thirteen in fact.

He never reintegrated - back into their system - and rather furthered himself from them and everything else. However, he remained closely dependant on their care and home. Family, friends, people close to him and them found this an upsetting reality, but accepted it, didn't ask questions, he was fine, just sad, just jealous. They would never know him, ice created from the core, from his marrow, slowly manipulating its way through his body, sheeting his bones, coursing through his circulatory system, crisping the sinewy tissue of his muscles, and patiently making its way up his spinal cord and is now routed up approaching his brain stem, making him colder every day. Interiorly freezing any left empathy, any left relativity to others. Crack.

The House (de-shelled snail)

He understands nothing still, comprehends no situation nor what has happened, what he has done, that he has done anything. However, he feels he must leave. Opening the screen door in back to the outside, walking to the front by way of the narrow path on the side of

the house where the solitary tin garbage can lays filled to the brim, the lid cannot stay on it, has fallen off, he feels nothing, no regret, he doesn't know that he should have this emotion, does not miss them, does not think of *missing* anything. Nothing. Walking down the four concrete steps in the front of the small alleyway that cut into the aged browned grass slope – a wine red 1997 Ford Taurus coming down the street seemingly driverless - that leads to MacArthur Street on which they lived. Lived. It's a funny idea, to live somewhere. While we are all literally alive, we all live here, and there, and many places, leaving residues of liveliness as a slug's mucous discharge. When we don't live anywhere, we become those shriveled used-to-be-slugs you see every once in a while on the sidewalk burned up from the sun. However, there are those times between liveliness and nothing, a shell de-shelled stripped of any safety it may have, limbo between anything and vacancy, those close calls.

Life Imprisoned (eyes shut awake)

beep beep beep beep beep beep

My eyes open, at least I think. I feel the consciousness, yet lack my sight nonetheless. Recollections other than common sense escape me as I try to imagine what is happening. The adrenaline clouds my mind as I first awaken but then I realize that my lack of sight goes deeper than I could have real-ized. Not just no sight. No black, as if the nerves connecting the red fleshy suction cups on the back of my eyes to my brain are dead. It's difficult to fathom if you are not in this situation. How can I explain...you are watching your television, sitting just a foot from the screen so that it is basically all you can see other than your peripherals. As the pixels act as my vision, I turn the TV off. Then. Right

in that second is the reality of my reality. That moment where the entire image that was displayed is sucked into the center of the screen, gets smaller and closer to becoming one pixel. Now, seeing as the human eye is comprised of a much higher quality of pixilation than a TV, that shrinking image is seemingly non-existent. All of my sight, is non-existent. Unattached to my brain at least. All that is visible is from memories, from everything that already was. What happened to me? How did I get here, here in this completely metaphysical place within my thoughts?

beep beep beep beep beep beep

I can see my house, however not see, it's a different sense altogether than sight. My *sight* is gone. A new sense replaces it, more of an imagination, or, a memory. I can picture my house, as if it is more of a feeling than a clear image. I know you can't understand, but just know that you can't understand. Go inside your house, close your eyes. You cannot see it, but there is still some distinctiveness to it. You ARE there. And you may be able to create that sense elsewhere. Your house is comfort, and even without the sense of vision, you can feel the comfort.

So, I am in my house. I am here from memory not reality, I can tell, nothing is real except my inner ideas of it. I miss them. Her, him. That was why I left, the only reason I ever left, I had to. Yet again, as when my baby brother was born and dropped in my place in that family, they have traveled and I have not. Or rather I have but branched in a different direction, a slower direction. I stay at home, I write, I stare and seclude. Separated.

I leave my house, Morristown, that's where I live. Spontaneous impulse lets me abandon my created bubble of a life, always scared to leave, hardly ever could.

My house, my life imprisoned, my new safety, used to be the train stop in Morristown. Its horrible location relative to the main street resulted in its abandonment. An odd place to live, one large room, a couple small rooms on the edges with windows that had metal bars on the inside so that even if someone punched through the glass they couldn't get in.

The noise of the train a ritual. I hear the slow ringing of the crossing gate come down over the road four fifths-a-mile down. This happens sixteen times a day, twenty on Saturdays. The new stop is right before the railroad crossing, and it takes about a minute for it to get to my house. What a rush, thank god I have nothing valuable or anything other than large furniture for that matter in my house, because it would all break in a second, that train rattling, grinding the tracks as if scraping away at the steel. I never really liked buying things anyway, especially things that broke easily. I took the R8, or R7, I forget, something close to that, definitely R something, the R stood for Regional. I got on that R, and took it to the one place I still knew to be. My home. I guess I mean my mother's and my brother's home now, not really mine anymore is it, yeah I guess not, I mean I do live alone, I am independent, an adult, a man. Then why does the night sky still not impress me?

beep beep beep beep beep beep

The House (otherhood)

It took her eleven seconds to even mentally react to the unfamiliar scream outside simultaneous to a screeching halt of tires and metal, which doesn't sound like a lot of time, but count to eleven and imagine non-reflexivity for that long after hearing such a damaging sound. Running to the door clumsily, her legs flinging quickly but the rest moving slowly due to the heavy gelatinous fears seeping through the wrinkles and folds of her brain, weighing her down, *the sap oozing down the pine, ignorant to the base of the tree, of the ground, unaware of what lies ahead in its path. Reaching the bottom of the tree the sap discovers the brim of a hat, where a darker sap has replaced what had been a portion of a man's face, him self being fifteen feet down the road and his self much further away.*

That hat did not hide him from her any longer, for he was no longer underneath it. She just stared at that hat for moments, deciding if she could, could she even try, see what has happened, if anything. Everything has happened. Even with all of her odium and attempt to rid herself of the burden which was her first son, it was her first son. The crescents beneath her eyes which had maintained a fixed amount of tear for so long gently burst at the bottom with a stream connecting to the spit building up around her saddened open mouth, a single thread of saliva from her fourth-to-left top tooth to the relative tooth on the bottom. If she wore makeup it would be running down her face but she didn't, she never did, there was no need, of course the occasional marooned lipstick when she could find a babysitter for her little boy, but nothing more than that, not as long as she had been widowed.

She felt her neighbor watching from his front step, “Jough call an ambulance”.

Life Imprisoned (cycle)

That R something took me a few blocks away from the house, so I walked the streets I used to walk so well. It’s not even like I needed to know them anymore, their curves and sites so innately programmed into my mind. Those houses, ah those houses and trees and front lawns, those street signs and crosswalks give me so many feelings, and it’s not even that I have specific memories of these things these objects, but they were all part of these memories, they all created what was my home, my real home.

beep beep beep beep beep beep

When I walked up that street, MacArthur Street, I was already imagining the insides of that house, oh how they all must have missed me. Wherever I am now, inside myself, I am clear, skewed by none of the denial and false idea that I implanted within my real to be my real. They did not miss me. My family. They were not all of them now, only Timothy and our mother. *He* is not alive now.

I made it to the front steps which crookeded up the short hill, and knocked on the door. My worn knuckles, thudding proudly and ignorantly, awakened the attention of our old neighbor Jough through the side window of his study across the fence, he knew us when we were an us. Surprised look on his face, mouth open bottom lip drooping I remember, bushy grey eyebrows upright with strands falling over his circular reading glasses, an

unfinished frightened glance just as my mother opened the door as the wind and anticipation for who it may be passed by me and never entered that house again.

She swung the door to close weakly and went back inside without looking to see if it had closed and if I was behind her, hoping for the best, which would not be the case for her. Our eyes never met in these instances, although my eyes never kept trying, never stopped penetrating and burning through the side of her head, the small veins on the sides of her eyes knew it, hard to withstand, pulled at the whites, moving them towards my figure. “Timothy get upstairs”, her voice with nothing in it. Pregnant silence filled this living room as my eyes tried and tried to make her love me.

“I live in Morristown...” He suspects, “I have to take a train back? That’s how I go?”

(Re-read all above)

Section II

A Wakening

Life Imprisoned (planetarium)

beep beep beep beep beep beep

I guess it all really happened, those happenings which keep intruding my mind and evoking false and past senses within myself. Yet this ringing, this cold manufactured echo of a beep, it is somewhere else entirely. Too much that hasn't occurred is resonating in my thoughts, it is not a dream, I can't control anything, just think, just hear myself within, a planetarium, seems so large so infinite, yet surrounded by such a restricted and predetermined space which one can spend an entire lifetime finding new stars, new ideas, new depths, all created on a curved surface, forged, constrictive. I remember going to the science museum with my family when I was younger, before my little brother was a life. It was a frustrating place, it teased me, showed me that there was more, an endless more, trying to make me believe that it was possible for us, for me, to go there. I know now that I can't. It was just walls, walls and images, images which showed depths, depths that I didn't even have the energy or will to believe in. My family then, we were a triangle, which is architecturally much stronger than a square.

This is no afterdeath, no god exists here, nothing exists here except my formations and recollections. This is nothing new, this is solely my mind. I hear these noises and have images inside, but they all used to be.

beep beep beep beep beep beep There it is again that sound, I have heard it in my life, it makes me feel but I don't know why or what. It is a memory in itself. A distant one at that. It reminds me of my father.

(move backwards young man)

Why wasn't he in my memory? He was there when my brother was born, he was there when I was a child. He was not home that day. I can picture him though, tubes branching over his body, roots crawling down, reaching for these mechanisms keeping him a life.

A constant beeping, a rasping forced breath. Fading, further and further, until they are overshadowed by the sounds of the cleansed white hospital, busy and indifferent.

Catalyst

The ice had reached their first son's brain, covered it inside and out, veins of disease stemming through his capillaries. He was fourteen, but acted much younger, at least acted. Acted in the sense of acting as an actor acts, not solely his actions, but what was behind them. There was very much behind them, he was actually quite intelligent, however oblivious he was to the fact. He read with enthusiasm, but you wouldn't know it from the way he behaved, as if none of it stuck, none sank in to his mind. This was not the case, it sank in, it sank too far, it was buried within his subconscious, not to be released, not to be presented. He didn't know it, but he knew a lot about life and his life and what was happening to his relationship with his family, especially his father. Someday he would know these thoughts he already had.

The first flake of white paint from their wall crumbles to the floor and shatters, like an eggshell in cracks, once part of something substantial, something whole.

To be whole,

Never again.

Mother

He was behind her, he was looking at her in a way that spoke, what do I do next mom?

She was done with this, she dealt with it for years. She couldn't speak to him, she knew that if she did, if she even looked at him, she would care for him. She couldn't let herself care.