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Pivot: An Interdisciplinary Journal

*Four Poems*

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**A Stout Woman**

At the pool complex and off to the side of the large reception area is a doorway and a staircase going up higher than I can see and in pumpkins are growing, big pumpkins of all sizes and colours. The dirt is rich and dark and there is another door at the bottom of the stairs on the right. The owners come over and I say, “Excuse me,” and ask them how they got their pumpkins so big. “Do you grow them from seed and plant the seedlings?” “Yes seedlings.”

My friend is with me, and she wants to go swimming but I have a t-shirt and plaid shorts on and she says, “Just make up a name for the outfit and they’ll let you in.” We are meeting my boyfriend and his brother. I ask her, “Did you put your stuff in a locker? Did you put my backpack in?” “No.” “Then I can’t stay.” I go in search of my backpack. Looking at walls of hanging purses hanging bags hanging backpacks. I can’t find it.

I need to get on a bus back to Toronto. I’m sitting in a seat next to a stout woman in loud polyester. “Where does the bus go?” I ask the bus driver. I’m pushing the woman out of our seat. The driver tells me, “The bus stops at Grandin.” He indicates a large area using arm gestures.

There is a group of people at the front of the bus and two are signing to each other. There are others sitting in the front seats and there are plan chests at the front and artists’ books are on top including the book I’m working on. I open the drawers and there are books in each one. There is a loose cover sheet titled ‘books the titles of novels’ so I think it belongs to my book. I tape the loose sheet to the cover of the artist’s book thinking it is mine. I realize it is not. There are woodcut prints of black ink so I look for the cover page again so I can take it off. I can’t find it. I ask the woman in the front facing seat (who is working on her own artist’s book), “Whose book is that?” “His.”

“I’m sorry you’ll need to take that cover off. I didn’t want to do it because the ink was smudging. It’s very thick and still tacky.” Then the young woman and another older woman show me their books. The young woman is working on a book sculpture made from a huge phonebook and the other older woman shows me the book she has been working on. It is a huge stack of pages, and she says, “Then I discovered this.” She passes her hand over the top pages, and they begin to dance in all kinds of formations. The pages opening and closing and turning all different colours.

I am still travelling in the bus, approaching a town nestled in a valley with high rocky cliffs on all sides. The bus passes a cemetery as we go into town. Old headstones and crosses. Some crooked. Some resting on each other. The houses are stone and brick and others brightly painted blue bright blue. “This is not for me,” one of the passengers says. The bus is empty. I am the only one left with the artists’ books.

**Put a Thumb in**

I was in a schoolroom at a bookmaking course. The class was ending, and I still had to pay Edna an administration fee for last week’s class and this week’s class. Brenda and her mom were going to give me a ride and wait for me while I found Edna. I ran through halls lined with doors classrooms stairs and asked “Where’s Edna? I have to pay my fees.” “Edna’s in there.” I saw Edna sitting behind a large wooden desk. She had curly brown hair and wire glasses. “I have no money on me. I owe you for last week and this week. Can you give me an address to send a cheque to?” “Yes, Edna at the St. Albert Centre.” “I’d better write that down. Do you have a piece of scrap paper?” “Yes, on my desk.” But I couldn’t see any small pieces of paper. There was a big metal bowl and in it were tiny pieces of decorative metal, shaped in art nouveau swirls. “These would be good in a book,” I thought. There were little pieces of white foam core and then I saw a folded piece of paper. I unfolded it and it was something I had written. Where did Edna get it? I riffled wildly through the metal bowl and finally found a piece of paper to write Edna’s address. “Do you have a pen?” I found one. “Okay, now, how do you spell your name?” I didn’t know Edna’s last name. “E-D-N-A…” “No, it’s E-E-D-N-A…I was born on a special day so my name is unnamable. I am not real. I do not exist.” “Okay. I’ll send you the cheque.” I put the piece of paper in my pocket and went to find Brenda and her mom so I could get my ride to the bookmaking evening class. I ran through the school looking in all the classrooms and then ran outside. It was dark. It was like a farmyard, with yellow-coned lights shining triangles of light on the ground. People were walking around outside in the still dark. “Have you seen Brenda and her mom?” No one had. I ran toward a brightly lit doorway where a crowd of people were looking outside. “Have you seen Brenda and her mom?” I asked a woman in a camel-coloured trench coat. “Do you know what one woman said? You could pull your finger out and put a thumb in.” “So, they left?” “Yes,” the woman said. She looked a bit like Bonnie Franklin. “Are you going to St. Albert?” I asked. She opened the door and put her arm around my shoulder, drawing me toward her. “Yes, I am. I’ll give you a ride. C’mon.”

**Mean and Scary Bald Guy**

I was supposed to meet Yvonne to go bowling at 4:30 but it was looking like we wouldn’t make it. We were packing house everything into boxes and moving to the new house. We were staying in a hotel. Trying to drive to the new house but we’d travelled the road so many times, so I wanted to take John with me on a shortcut through this old building. I’d taken it before. Drove the blue Suzuki through the glass front door and over the old hardwood floor in the hallway. I had to take the car apart to get it through the next door though and maneuvered the front of the car around, so it faced the way we were going. But the last door to go through was too narrow and had a big padlock on it. “They must’ve replaced this. Too many people using it.” I lifted the padlock on the old door coated with so much paint. The wall beside it was gouged and plastered over sloppily. It looked like it was frayed. I looked back at the Suzuki. It had to be put back together. How was I going to do that? I had to turn the front of the car around again and face the back of the car with the back wheels around to meet the front. I was trying to put the front and back together, but I couldn’t do it. How was I going to make bowling at 4:30? An old woman in a light blue track suit and new white trainers with a scarf around her head. “I can do this,” she said. She bent over to put the two pieces of car to put them back together and collapsed. I thought she was dead. I rolled her over and sat her in a child’s car booster seat. “Wake up, wake up.” I kept saying shaking her gently. Then the mean and scary bald guy from the hotel suddenly showed up. He was holding a plastic handled tool with a red pom pom at the end. He shoved it into the old woman’s eyes and turned it. “This will wake her up,” he said. “Stop that!” I said. The old woman’s scarf had turned to a red fluffy faux fur hat. She opened her eyes. The scary bald guy disappeared. I felt relieved. The car was back together so I loaded in the old woman and drove to the new house. There were boxes all over the place. Another old woman had joined the group in the new house. A young woman I didn’t recognize was assembling a group of people to watch television. The old woman had replaced her scarf with an orange wig which she tugged on to try and keep on her head. There were women I didn’t recognize. As I walked away, I heard the group discussing what to watch. “Let’s watch the program on hairstyles and abortion.” “Abortion!” the old woman screamed. I was still trying to get to the bowling alley, but it was long past 4:30. I went to find my friend and she was in the shower, so I knocked on the door—there were two big barn doors with big black round doorknobs. Steam was coming out from underneath. “Do you still want to go? If Yvonne hadn’t booked the lane I wouldn’t go.”

**Push-ups**

I was digging into black soil that was teeming with ants and as I turned over the soil raisins and olives came to the surface. I did push-ups on the grass and then against a wall.