

DEVIL CARD
(NIGHT AND THE BLUE CAR)

By
Jennifer Calkins

Beard of Bees
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i.

the car down the road began to peel itself open and out dropped three fingers

splayed

unbloodied

plain as glass

three fingers

with a cast of gold

and Sergeant D. A. Smith was not at the scene of the crime

so—

the car pulled away

these are the days that cracks open

*an odorless tasteless chemical in powder form, cumulative neurotoxin, absorbed
through the skin*

Mrs. R. Witherspoon turned the fingers in.

She had been walking from her apartment

to the corner store.

She was looking down at the sidewalk, for dropped pennies, for luck.

She saw thick worms.

She bent down and noticed the fingernails.

ii.

when the sergeant received the fingers
they had, of course, been printed, and a tissue sample had been taken of each for
DNA analysis

Smith held the fingers in a gloved hand, one by one he turned them over and over
if you fall through a crack

do you remember the fairy tale about the wicked girl who trod on a loaf?
she tortured little insects, am I right?

the blue car turns slowly
the blue car is very close, very close
it will stay there for as long as you need it to

iii.

I wouldn't go down there if I were you
that is where the belly of the land rises and falls
I don't recommend it

iv.

I have come to this place, alone, afraid
(who is driving the blue car)
the devil card—signifies entrapment, held, often by material objects

v.

two days later, after the fingers
had been stored and analysis had begun
Smith wondered

remember... no one really saw

the blue car at the used lot... .

ten weeks ago,

two men and a roll of dollars

what would you make of it?

I have knowledge at my

I have nothing to say about it... .

when I spill it I can feel it enter my skin

when I breathe I can feel it enter my head

I can see what I will be in ten, twenty, thirty

years, an old lady with the shakes.

once, a scientist died

the stuff pipetted into his coffee

odorless, tasteless

vi.

but Smith wasn't asking about acrylamide

and he wasn't at the used car lot

what you look for is *something* to tie

to *someone*

something more human than three fingers

vii.

once upon a time. . .

a call put through
and they went down
to the river's edge
to investigate that washed-up body
bloated, of course

and. . . I know how old it was
I may even know whose it
was whether it was in
the blue car that was driven slowly down. . .
the lights are images, the car can't take it
I have bad posture, I walk into car doors
I would not be very good with a gun

viii.

when you have a corpse
and some fingers, you
put them together there
was no evidence the fingers
were attached prior to drowning
and in fact, it appears they were
removed from the living victim
that fact discovered simultaneously to
the discovery of the corpse

ix.

I have been told to be wary of parking
near vans, to watch out for vehicles
without windows, if someone gives you
the creeps, avoid that person

(but what if I give myself the creeps?)

and what if I drive a custom revamped 1978 Ford van
windowless and blue

(not so fast. . . the fingers fell out of a *car* not a van
but why you ask then do I know all of this? it isn't that easy
there is a little thread of molecules
connecting me to the corpse there is a wave of dust I have
just inhaled made from that corpse's flaking skin)

this is what knowledge comes to

x.

once upon a time, a child
walked and while she was
stepping over a crack. . .

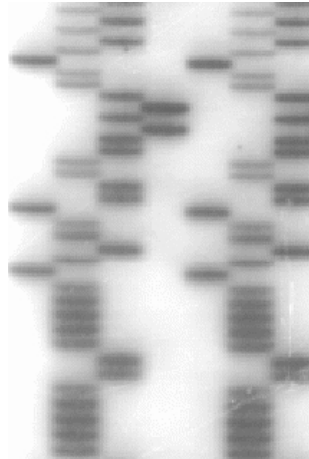
xi.

the body belonged to an adult male, Caucasian, he had drowned not more than 40
hours but not less than 24 hours before he was found. . . and he had
identification on him: in his pocket were pieces of an identification card,
enough to piece together, enough for me to make his name

“Leonard”

xii.

Sergeant D. A. Smith, walking outside the
office, sunlight glances off him like so many tiny sparks—
he is thinking
believing—there is an answer to this
point in time the blue car is rolling slowly down the street
one tire just missing a nail
the other gliding over a soda can
this is no endorsement
it is a stunningly sunny day—I can say that—and
you’ll believe me—even if you don’t believe in the fingers
but we have DNA fingerprints from the fingers
from the corpse and old-fashioned prints



xiii.

Sergeant. D. A. Smith writes words on his yellow
legal pad—he is back in his office—full coffee cup
as though it had been cleared of it all
are you wondering who this is?
who lost his fingers so many years ago?
why was it
Leonard, and who is this
Leonard. . . yes. . . look again
the DNA fingerprints match
the corpse and the fingers
Leonard and his hand

xiv.

Smith and the fingers
there is an assumption, when you
take a case—it has no real
bearing on you no connection

*once I spilled it
on my finger and could just
feel it just*

*moving to the head
the brain*

D. A. Smith receiving
a phone call from his
detective, I didn't
hear it (did you?) but
his face, can you imagine
his face

all over the world
little cracks little sunsets

flowers

and loaves of bread

trod and broken

tiny fingers, smaller than
Leonard's grow up
to the sky like blue
flowers delicate and

the car dammit

the blue car

Smith's face is pale

blood travels in a line
to the center

xv.

because there was
an eye witness, me

(what if I give myself
the creeps)

I never put
it in the coffee but
I spilled it on this hand

I was covered
in soil when they
found me my face gray

the car still
there, at the edge
of the corner
just turning

blue flesh in the sky

this is a private world

we never need to tell you our
secrets, Smith knew
from the beginning that
is why he had a tremor,
a slight trembling
buying the coffee and afraid

and Leonard's hand

and Smith's life,
Smith's home
Smith's wife

it all comes down to

xvi.

she won't cry about it

xvii.

stop it here,
I am not nor was I ever
Smith's wife, Smith's
home

she is over there
on a shelf over there

so where was
Leonard in all this

Leonard the corpse
the dead man
the big gut bag sitting
in his drawer

*acrylamide is not perverse
perfect in its capacity
to slip through—*

our clean clear skins

why are they
trying to get in
here why are the insects
outside trying
to get to my light

let me tell you
when that car
turned slowly
round the corner
she was in it
Smith's wife
in the back

(and I was under the tire)

Smith's hand was right there
in it all the time

and he didn't know

there's the beauty of it

suddenly we light a candle
and the drop of wax falls
gently on that person's face

xviii.

it's that little
squeal you think
is a car but
is from a crack
in the sidewalk
the mud was in
my mouth
and then I . . .

let me clarify for
you Smith does not
even get that drop of
wax—this case isn't
cracked by the
Smith

he goes home
every night, hoping she'll
be there when he walks in
hoping she'll be ready to eat
whatever he cooks, that she'll
be in the house, not out
he doesn't know where

xix.

this is a warning: proceed with
your nose may be out of
your eyes too big for your

XX.

Smith's wife we can call
her Mrs. Smith

her fingerprints too
in the blue car

she will never tell him, Smith
about the ride
through the city
picking big Leonard up
and the drive
and the noise

(and what about me? what about
my Sgt. Smith?)

But I came from the soil
from the dirt I was sprouting
when they dug me up)
and my fingers?
chewed down to bone

xxi.

does she know about
the sidewalk and the children?

it is a yes she does, it is
why she was in the car
with Leonard and then
with his corpse

why she watched
carefully as the fingers
dropped out onto
the sidewalk

I am not a responsible
party

I was under the
tires, yes, at that
moment and you
can believe I am still
with her, Mrs. Smith
sitting on the settee she...

xxii.

when you forget that
tonight is already in
the past, it is too late
then too late

xxiii.

Smith doesn't touch acrylamide

and there's a little hint for you
and that's your answer

for you tonight when
the blue car is pulling
off the freeway, ready to gas
up, thousands of miles away
from Mrs. Smith

at one coast or another

or in the center of the country

and the front left door
is swinging open slowly
deliberately a foot and then
a body covered dark

it is hot tonight, air rising
from sidewalks

xxiv.

that man, of course
you don't know him,
he turns his face to you
at that gas station
your station

and where am I?
I'm back under—
that's all you get

JENNIFER CALKINS is an evolutionary biologist living in Seattle with her husband, two children, three cats and four birds. She received her MFA from Antioch University, Los Angeles in 1999 and her Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from the University of California, Irvine in 2000.

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