

Far Enough East

ISSUE 6: IS LIVE!

Fractured — Dan Morey



Flies swarmed over blood smears on the deck. They buzzed in our ears and bit us all over. We shook them off, spun them off, danced them off. When we couldn't take it anymore, he fired up the motor and said, "Reel 'em in."

The propeller chewed the lake. Wind scoured the deck and the flies scattered.

Two bulbous capsules fell into his palm from an amber container. "What are those?" I said. "I had a tooth pulled," he said. "These are the big boppers." He tilted his head back and popped them into his mouth, raising the green bottle simultaneously. "I might have a toothache, too," I said.

I could see the sun stretched and wavered through the emerald glass. Hot foam frothed against my lips. When the bottle was empty I threw it in the hollow under the seat with the others. Then I went down in the cuddy, sprawled out on the cushions, and closed my eyes. Hazy scarlet spheres twirled and shimmied.

A man's voice crackled over the radio: "This is the boat. How about somebody out there giving me a radio check? Over." I put my beer down and picked up the mic. "What boat?" I said. "Over." "The Boat. Over." "You're telling me you named your boat The Boat? Over." "That's right. Over." I rested the mic on my knee, then raised it again. I said, "Did you ever notice that green bottles and sun make for rotten beer?"

The line of rods bobbed with each rolling swell. I pressed my thighs against the side of the boat and launched a thick stream of urine into the lake, splattering its surface with sallow effervescence. As I was zipping up, one of the rods dipped. I grabbed it and set the hook. "Got him," I said. "Walleye?" he said. The fish dove deep, stripping line. "No," I said.

I brought the fish up and scooped it into the net. Its mucous-hued belly was lustrous in the sun. "Sheephead," he said. I squeezed it tight and tore the hook from its mouth. Blood seeped between my fingers and splattered the deck. I hurled the fish at the sun. It came down. It floated.

We slapped a wave and spray moistened my face. He jerked the wheel toward shore, then straightened us out again. His eyes were squinty, his sparse hair blowing upright in the wind. He turned towards me, lifting both hands from the wheel, and held up a pink beer koozie. There was a blue sailboat emblazoned on the side. "I got this in Virginia Beach," he said. "But I hate it."

The blue sailboat whirled past me in a pink vortex. I fell hard and crashed into the cuddy door. Everything blurred and shifted perspective. The chair I'd been sitting in was up above me. Tackle and bottles and buckets slid across the deck as he frantically pulled the throttle back.

"Jesus," he said. "We were almost over. Are you sure you're all right?" I felt my ribs. "No blood," I said.

We ripped through the water and the cottages along the shore melted together. "Keep your eyes on the lake and your hands up on the wheel," he sang. "Goin' to the boathouse, gonna have a real good time." We bashed into a wave and the bottle clanked against my teeth. "You're not psychologically scarred or anything, are you?" he said. "I'll never step foot on a boat again," I said. He looked at me. I laughed. We both took a drink.

Dan Morey lives in Erie, Pennsylvania. He's worked as a book critic, nightlife columnist and outdoor journalist. His writing has appeared or is forthcoming in many publications, including *Giant Robot*, *Sein und Werden*, *Splitsider*, *Feathertale Review*, *The Eunoia Review*, *Lowestoft Chronicle*, *The Big Jewel*, *Roadside Fiction* and *Vagabond City*.

September 16, 2014