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**joshua
bohnsack**

lazy eye

In fifth grade I told my mom I was giving up ice cream for Lent, but I promised myself I would also give up staring at Libby Truman's lazy eye. Every day at lunch, she was allowed to take her eye patch off for the remainder of the day. When she first started wearing it after Christmas break, Sam Miller asked her if she was going to be a pirate next Halloween and she cried so much that Ms. Gay, the school nurse, had to change her patch again when the adhesive wouldn't stick to her wet cheek.

I thought maybe I wanted to talk to Libby Truman the way Sam Miller talked to people. They paid attention to each word and laughed whether his joke was funny or not. He was good at baseball and everyone said he was the fastest kid in class. I wanted to be the fastest kid in class. I wanted to talk to Libby Truman, instead of her just staring at me.

From 11:00 a.m. until 1:30 p.m., our gymnasium became the lunchroom. We ate at two small lunch tables set up in the corner of the gym even though our class of nineteen could've easily fit into a smaller room. Libby Truman sat at the table directly across from me. I could look over Logan's shoulder and through her thick, purple, plastic-framed glasses. I'd see Libby

alan humason

silicon valley story

I loved PONG when it came out. I played it in one of the grungy arcades on the Santa Monica Pier in 1972, when no one gave a good-God-damn about the derelict pier and no one had discovered PONG yet. It seemed clear to me that a keen, concentrating intelligence had thrust itself upon the scene (I didn't know at the time that it was a couple of maniacs named Alcorn and Bushnell, at some company called Atari). The arcade hummed with furious activity: cannon blasts, race car screams, the loud tinny clatter and bang of pinball machines, merry-go-round music droning in the background. I kept losing money and having all kinds of fun. The arcade was a dive, but goddamn it did a thriving business.

I'm not nerd, though. I sell. And it bothers me that salespeople have such a lousy reputation. Just because I did something really wrong doesn't mean we're all a bunch of immoral, avaricious jerks, like low-rent politicians. Sure, what I did, I did for the money, but I didn't directly cost anyone his job, and I didn't sell out the damn country like Harper did, to the damn Poles for Christ's sake, or like Boyce, to the lousy Russians.

For the record, my name is Randy Ferris.

Selling's not an easy thing, really, for a lot of guys, I

nabbteeri



holes

Jake has died. His limbs and outer casing have become paper-thin in the final stages. The days stick together in drizzly clumps that are difficult to tell apart from each other afterwards. The graph for average temperatures in November in Helsinki and Sodankylä looks like the teeth of a predatory animal, dragging itself diagonally upwards in the direction of reading to the 2010s and onward towards the future. In Finnish, November is marraskuu. In Finnish, folklore, “marras” means one who is dead or dying.

After a short period of below-zero temperatures, the world stops, when the damp topsoil freezes for a while into an immobile carapace. Then there is a thaw again, and during the daylight hours, I dig holes in the garden. The ground is muddy only in the hollows, under the vegetation-covered bulges, the loamy soil is fragrant and crumbly, and the roots of the couch grass come loose easily in a black-and-white skein of dotted lines. Every now and then, the spade hits the tunnel of a water vole, in its winter storage there are at least some grains of intensively-farmed wheat from the birds' winter-feeding site, they have swollen in the damp and are about to sprout. Later, when it gets too dark to see, I wash the mud off my face in front of

**meridian
payseno**

clear-cut

I thought it would be a pretty good joke to turn the clear-cut into a flower explosion. My teacher handed out packs of sunflower seeds on the last day of school, which gave me the idea. There's nothing growing there and no buildings yet, even though they cut down the trees months ago.

We saw the clear-cut every day driving home. It looked like a bald patch in the forest, dusty yellow with lush green on the other side. It always gave me a bad feeling, like accidentally walking in on someone getting dressed: a flash of skin and a scream to get out.

One day we pulled over to see it up-close. 'Another development.' said mom, shaking her head. 'Pretty soon, there'll be no more trees.' Outside of the car I crouched to examine the dirt. I picked up a handful, it was dry with little bits of dead grass inside. It was hard to imagine anything ever grew here. You could still see the track marks from the bulldozer, long ribbons bandaging the wound.

Mom said it was the same size as Baker's Glen. I tried to imagine our entire complex fit into this piddly dirt patch: the apartments, the green, the laundry room. It reminded me of how small the empty rooms

john
sheirer

fever cabin

March 18, 2020, Day 1

This dinky little cabin is about thirty miles from Leadville, Colorado. That means it's about thirty miles from nowhere. And Leadville is another hundred miles from any other place that might look like somewhere if you squint. I got here around three in the morning after driving for hours in the pitch-black wilderness, following directions I had scribbled on the back of an envelope because there's no GPS out here, bumping my SUV down rutted, rocky side roads, thinking constantly that I must have taken a wrong turn. But when the cabin finally appeared out of nowhere in the light of my highbeams, sitting on a hillside and overlooking what seems to be a long, deep valley. I'm not sure because it's really freaking dark out here. Also, I've never heard so much deafening quiet in my whole life.

Yes, I'm isolated. That's the point.

I found out that I've been exposed to someone who was exposed to the Coronavirus. A few weeks ago, I didn't know what the hell Coronavirus was. No one knew. We all know now. Schools are closing. Sports leagues are suspending. Almost no one calls it a hoax anymore. They're talking about closing bars and restaurants and sending out the National Guard to

june 2019



june 2020

this issue marks the **first** anniversary of **first** page. we thank you all for your support. though the world is on the verge of crisis, we are determined to continue delivering something worthy of celebration. so, grab a cake, join us, and wish **first** page a very happy birthday.

stay safe and submit your **first** page for our september issue. submission period: 20 july - 16 august 2020

december 2019

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