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Bunny in a Box (and Other Objects)

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Cover Page Footnote

This piece was written in 18S. The prompt for this exercise: to write a short form piece inspired by a chosen image.

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Isabelle Blank

Collection Untitled

I listened to a podcast this winter, an episode on "This American Life," about a boy who finds an abandoned house one summer at sleep-away camp. This house is filled with discarded belongings and strange debris. This house and its contents haunt him throughout his life - its mystery founded on the strange streaks of feces on the mattress, a wedding picture left in a rotting wooden drawer, an orange baby cradle left to fester in an attic. Normal belongings from a normal family, made mysterious only because they were left behind. This man goes searching later in life for stories of the family who abandoned it. His search brings him to a small town where he listens to gossip shot through with glimmers of truth.

The revelation is that these people were good people, prominent in the area. They up and left, simply because that is what they did, that was who they were. The family's small-town normalcy, the banality of the objects they left behind, was the very source of the house's mystique. What can we tell from the things people left behind? Collections of abandonment rendered eclectic by their very utility.

A Dopp kit streaked with black and red. A hardly fondled, unloved stuffed bunny rabbit in sweet ticking-stripe overalls smushed face first into the Dopp Kit. Next object. Is it a scale? A waffle iron? Tilted at a precarious angle towards chewed up cardboard. Teal crayon markings along the side of the corrugated box on either end. Box purposefully discarded, haplessly thrown onto frost-ravaged New Hampshire earth? Regretfully forgotten amidst sticks and shriveled leaves? Collection rendered cryptic artifact of unrecognized ritual of unceremony. Inexplicable curation of objects made so by the very melancholic idea of abandoning something that once belonged to somebody.

Forgotten rabbit, no velour ear kissed by imaginary Child, its pink paw shoved into scratchy cardboard box. Cardboard box marred by Child's scribbles. Mother's dopp kit matched clicking red acrylic nails. Waffle iron burned batter on cold Northern Sunday mornings. Objects left, thrown, not scattered: belongings congealed on frozen ground behind clapboard houses.

Katherine Carithers

It was snowing in April and the bunny was outside. It was not a real bunny, that is to say it was *real* (or at least as real as anything can seem to be) but that it was not alive. Do not misunderstand me, the bunny was not dead either - in fact, it was neither alive nor dead, but instead stuffed, sewn, and made of cotton. Its ears had pink insides and were long and floppy as is pleasing to a child. The animal was dressed in a blue, polka dotted blouse and a gray-and-white striped apron which crisscrossed in the back and included a hole for its tail. The unprecedented cold for the season did not bother the bunny (most unreal bunnies are not bothered by such things), but the snowflakes were gathering upon the fabric which, if not properly dried, would become musty and mold. Perhaps it was this concern that caused Charles Wood to pause his

commute one Wednesday morning and stand in front of the neighbors' box of discarded things to peruse a once-loved plush rabbit.

It was not difficult to tell that the bunny had once been cared for. It was that single thought which Charles Wood immediately and intimately understood about the toy. Upon closer inspection, one could notice the sharp bend in a left whisker, the fraying of lace at the edge of a sleeve, or the stress on a seam. However, none of these details were important. It was the general semblance of wear and tear, a certain worn-outness about the thing through which man and animal reached an understanding of the history of carting and dragging in that messy, rough attachment-like-love of a child.

At this point, snowflakes had gathered into a fine dusting along Charles' coat collar. As the snow continued to fall and the seconds on his watch continued to tick, he became increasingly at risk of missing the bus. The risk was not of great concern mostly because it was not a usual concern. Usually, Charles Wood drove the car to the office and gave no thought to public transportation, but on account of his wife demanding the car he was obliged to take the bus which, in allowing him to leave a full fifteen minutes later given the exorbitant utility of bus lanes during traffic hour, left him with a keen sense of a lack of urgency. In fact, it was also this unusual weather at this unusual hour which caused Charles to take notice of anything unusual at all.

Kevin Donohue

The stuffed bunny was stitched in March of 2003. It was stitched bunny number 134, part of a new line of stuffed animals that included foxes, bears, etc. Eventually over 50,000 would be stitched by the time Cloth Toys Inc. went out of business in 2007, so 134 was, relatively speaking, one of the first.

She was stitched by Miranda Tubler, 43. After eleven years with CTI she had a skillful hands and careful fingers, but fingers that trembled and hands that creaked already in her forties. This was her 12th bunny of the day, 34th overall, and it was almost her lunch break. She finished the last stitch on the back of the head and took out her tuna sandwich she had packed the night before.

As she ate, she stared at the bunny, simply because there was nothing else to do. She had left her copy of *Jane Eyre* that she was rereading home that day, as she had stayed up reading it the night before, and when she had dozed off the book had fallen out of her hands and onto the floor, so that when she woke up late the next morning she hadn't grabbed it from her nightstand as usual when she ran out the door. Reminded of this fact and annoyed that she had lost her place, she trained her gaze on the bunny, as if saying to herself, good job, now this is all you have, this is your entertainment. It was then she noticed she had stitched the back of the head too hastily to get to her tuna. She pauses and her face shifts, releasing the eyebrows, the corners of the mouth. Her hands place down her sandwich. She takes up the needle, the needle of eleven years and the greater part of an adulthood spent so far, and takes the end of the thread and gets it back in the eye and fixes the damn stitch.