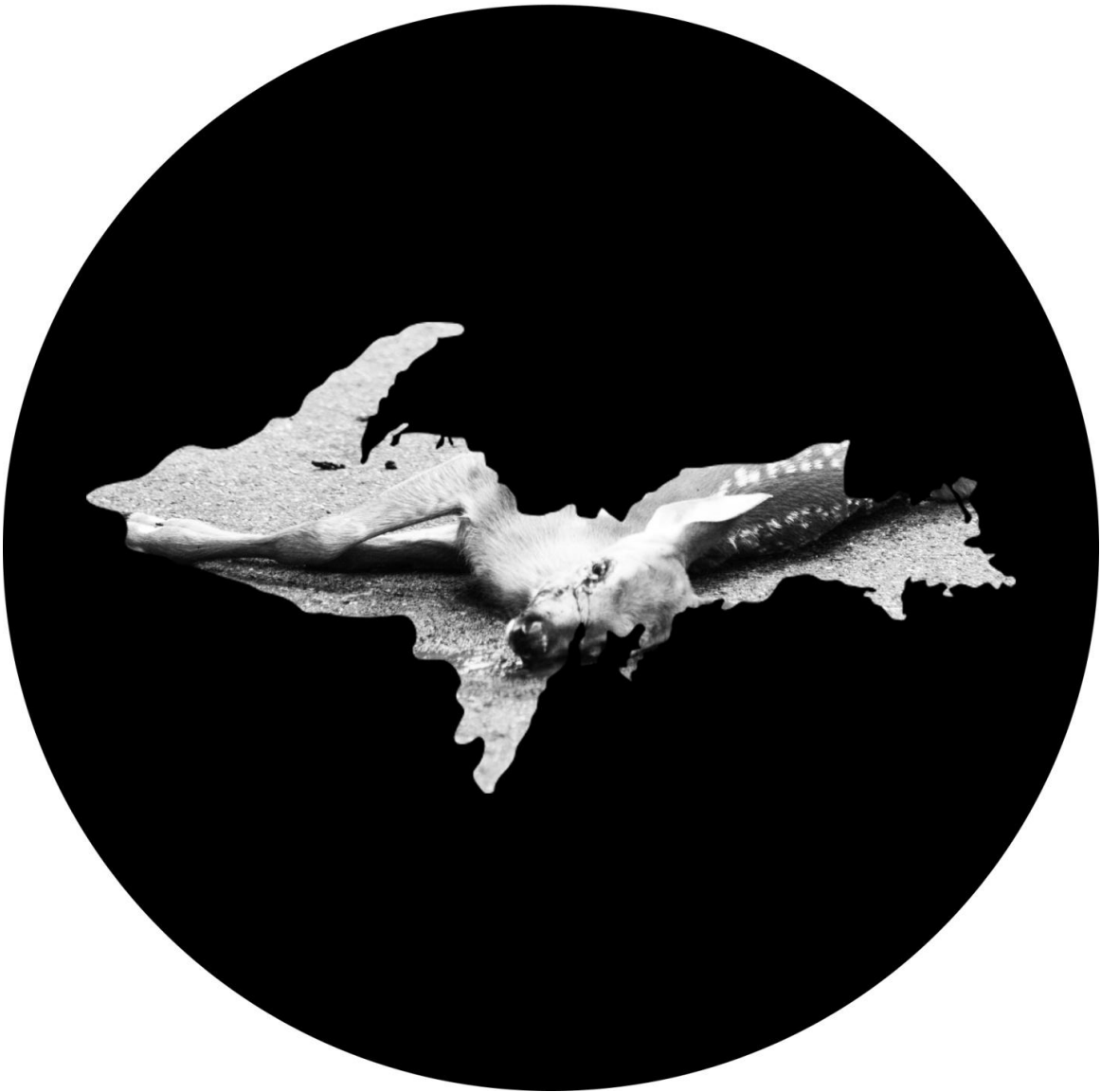


Upperpeninsula

by August Smith



Upper Peninsula Shit Kid

-

Give me an IV drip of
Mountain Dew and
let it be cosmic bowling
for eternity
I want to play video poker at
the bowling alley—
next to the slim jims
and the guy with blood
on his cheek—
while smirking at the irony
of one day being
a very tall pine tree.

Usually Not This Sad

-

It is 1:30 a.m. and I am alone and smiling:
my empty house is full of thirsty phlegmy silence that I quell
by drunkenly adding photogenic strangers
on Facebook-
“social networking.”

Amanda Moran of Brisbane, Australia- Add as Friend.

A youtube video:
golden eagles clutch goat spines and drop them off cliff faces.
the goats, silent and in free-fall, maybe thinking: “what.”
the eagles, possibly smirking,
pierce the broken goats’ stomachs like rotten plum flesh,
the cliff faces frown with brow-sweat of mammal blood.

Now I’m on the ice-slick porch
I tell myself I’m not a smoker
but jesus christ, who am I kidding
I just bought cigarettes with scholarship money,
and by the way,
Amanda Moran of Brisbane, Australia rejected my friend request.

The UP Suffers from Population Decline

-

but a consistent increase in camouflage t-shirt sales.
Less people want to be seen less, essentially.

There are two more things I want to tell you.

First:

A gas station can technically be a town, I've seen it.
This means that if you destroy this gas station
you've destroyed a very small town.
Which is on some level tempting.
It is probably the cheapest way
to destroy a town.

Second:

A collection of very small things can also be called a beach.
This is true for most things.
If you destroy a beach, it is no longer a beach.
This is also true for most things, like towns or
words, and the collections of each.

Blood-White Noise

-

The modern shrug of static above the night highway,
the trees hiding trees to the satellite's dismay,
the skin scarred carefully by dead Cornish miners
while a man carries logs past iron mountain diners.

A false-bottom briefcase for smuggling fireworks
across the rigid borders marred with snow,
a Finnish deer god with marble antlers,
and a hidden missile grain-silo.

The dead dogs and the sarcastic tongues
devour the young with the bar-radio's hum.
The well-armed priests hunt the unarmed birds
with eyes on the quickest and their blinds undisturbed.

So the buck stops here 'cause it was hit by a van,
the body stops sliding where the ice lets it land,
and whose blood is this- fortnight of a smear-
the gambling young teenager sipping cheap beer?

No, come here, crouch close, and see this red line:
Whose blood is this?
Whose blood is this, so close to the pines?

Burnouts at the Ski Jump

-

If the UP was
written by me
it would have
insane amounts
of ice dragons;
our mountaintops
do tend toward evilness.
For example, this one time
I sued the sky
for snowing
on cemeteries.
“Smith vs.
the Sky”
sounded wicked
and biblical,
but in reality
the sky
got really wasted
off car-factory wine
and forgot about
the court date.
Later, we smoked cigars
down to our fingers
and then I went
and played Counter Strike 1.6
with my friends, kind of hoping
she would pick up
the legal fees, which she didn’t.

DNR

-

The deer have gone kill-crazy. The deer,
they are gifted leavers, always leaving
by waiting on the road in the hazy and
cold fog of morning family road trips,
and they are master grievors always grieving
on dusty paths where their brother's bones break;

shit, dude, their faces are half-weaponized,
give them a good season and we'll be
the ones learning to leave,
standing dumbly on the slickened streets.

Dreams of the Northern Condition

-

Fireworks and escapades
throttled by a deep malaise,
nonchalant and maybe
treating me like an old harp.
“Did you fix your problems?” it asks. “I haven’t any.”

Scoffing without arrogance,
it fluxed but shrugged in deference.
It sang me straight speechless,
and lent me a love of gallows humor.
“Did you fix your problems?”

Ghosts hold guns to my head and speak,
you’re not quite right-
just a few steps removed
from normal thoughts and regular nights.
“Did you fix your problems?” “Not yet.”

Another Dream

-

We were travelling across the top
of a reflective glacier.

We were going to a cathedral.

Your voice resonated like a violin
and cupped my ears like warm palms,
which, ironically, makes it hard to hear.

We were going to be late and
ghosts can get frostbitten and
Chicago was frozen beneath us.

I tried to elevate
my voice, the thrust
of which broke the mirror underneath
and we fell with renewed distance.

“Something Like a Family Myth, I Guess”

—

*and I reckon it's the right thing to do, to call in the priest and
get it over with quickly, her suffering calls the wrong comparisons.*

*and hats are removed when someone dies, out of respect. 'cause
I reckon that nobody dies with a hat on, that hats fall off right quick.*

and so she died: sick, blue-faced and in a barn, the sun high-fiving the sky,
the afternoon hummin' and kickin' rocks, the surrounding nature warm as a smile.

and like in everything I write, there is a deep paranoia of these bisecting forces:
the time, the trees, the cheat codes of our youth, the buckshot, the barn, the truth.

and now, hereditary quirks, and the noons that ended a long time ago, when Michigan
was the same, and my ancestors knew way more about guns than I do now.

and *I* reckon a retconn is in order, the removal of the last reload the lady ever heard,
the whirr of mechanics I'm unsure of, as meaningless and sonorous as the birds I can't identify.

Like the gun, I'm trying desperately
to end this properly.

END

ABOUT

August Smith is a student and an amateur poet, currently living in Kalamazoo, MI. He was born and raised in Iron Mountain, MI.

“Upperpeninsula” contains poems mostly written within the past month, with a couple of them having been written two years ago.

Thank you to Marcus Khoury for being an extremely helpful editor and friend.

Thanks to Steven for the design assistance and the URL.

twitter.com/augustsmith

augustsmith@gmail.com



photo by Steven Michael Holmes

*Other artists that inspired this thing/
should be checked out (not all of them “yoopers”):*

torches

Cait Spera

Gregory Sherl

Matt Bell

PANK Magazine

Steve Roggenbuck

My housemate, John