MARINE PARK

stories

MARK CHIUSANO

"Startling and affecting . . . impeccable."
—Amy Hempel

PENGUIN BOOKS

MARINE PARK

MARK CHIUSANO is a graduate of Harvard University, where he was the recipient of a Hoopes Prize for outstanding undergraduate fiction. His stories have appeared in *Guernica*, *Narrative*, *Harvard Review* and online at *Tin House* and *The Paris Review Daily*. He was born and raised in Brooklyn.

Praise for Mark Chiusano's *Marine Park: Stories*

"In clean, honed prose, Mark Chiusano gives us an intimate tour of a neighborhood of Brooklyn not offered up in fiction before. His explorations of loyalty within a family, and the breach of it, are startling and affecting—his sense of story is impeccable. *Marine Park* is a debut worth a reader's close attention."

—Amy Hempel, author of *The Collected Stories of Amy Hempel*

"The stories in *Marine Park* are funny and touching and elliptical, and all about coming of age at the edge of the city and on the margins of the good life, with some moving forward and others left behin Mark Chiusano is wonderful on how our minds can be elsewhere even when we wish to be wholly present, and on the oblique ways in which we therefore often have to signal our indispensability to or another."

—Jim Shepard, author of *You Think That's Bad*

"One of the most subtle, tender, emotionally powerful books that I've read in a long time. Set mostly in Brooklyn, but its subject is the whole of America. If you've never been to Marine Park before, by the end of this collection you'll feel like you'd lived there your whole life. This is a stunning debut."

—Saïd Sayrafiezadeh, author of *When Skateboards Will Be Free* and *Brief Encounters with the Enemy*

"Here's the spirit of dear Sherwood Anderson in Mark Chiusano's *Marine Park*, another village brimming with all of the odd drama of families and loners. There is something a little old and wise i this talented writer's debut. At times the stories read like the news, letters from a friend, and at times the tales seem elegiac glimpses of a lost world. Mr. Chiusano is writing family from the inside out a he makes this world an aching bittersweet pleasure. Here is the kind of affectionate particularity which marks a fine writer."

—Ron Carlson, author of *Return to Oakpine*

"In *Marine Park*, Mark Chiusano shines a light on lives that are too often left in the dark. He shows us, with humor and deep-hearted compassion, the complexities of growing up and growing old in the blue-collar shadows, and he gives us, story after story, the chance to see ourselves in his longing, hopeful characters. This is a wise and affecting collection, and it marks the arrival of a voice we've not heard until now, one that will carry through the streets and alleys of contemporary literature for years to come."

—Bret Anthony Johnston, author of *Remember Me Like This*

MARINE PARK

Stories

MARK CHIUSANO

PENGUIN BOOKS

PENGUIN BOOKS
Published by the Penguin Group
Penguin Group (USA) LLC
375 Hudson Street
New York, New York 10014

USA | Canada | UK | Ireland | Australia New Zealand | India | South Africa | China
penguin.com
A Penguin Random House Company

First published in Penguin Books 2014

Copyright © 2014 by Mark Chiusano
Penguin supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin to continue to publish books for every reader.

The following magazines published earlier versions of several stories in this collection: *The Bad Version* ("Vampire Deer on Jekyll Island"), *Blip* ("Why Don't You"), *The Harvard Advocate* ("Air-Conditioning," "Car Parked on Quentin, Being Washed," and "We Were Supposed"), *The Harvard Crimson* ("The Tree"), *Harvard Review* ("To Live in the Present Moment Is a Miracle"), *Narrative* ("Heavy Lifting"), and *The Utopian* ("Shatter the Trees and Blow Them Away").

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA
Chiusano, Mark.
Marine Park : stories / Mark Chiusano.
pages cm
eBook ISBN 978-1-101-63203-1
1. Marine Park (New York, N.Y.)—Fiction. I. Title.
PS3603.H5745M37 2014
813'.6—dc23
2014006051

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Version_1

For my mother and father, and for Scott

CONTENTS

About the Author

Praise for Marine Park: Stories

Title Page

Copyright

Dedication

HEAVY LIFTING

AIR-CONDITIONING

OPEN YOUR EYES

VINCENT AND AURORA

WHY DON'T YOU

VAMPIRE DEER ON JEKYLL ISLAND

TO LIVE IN THE PRESENT MOMENT IS A MIRACLE

CLEAN

SHATTER THE TREES AND BLOW THEM AWAY

FOR YOU

HAIRCUT

ED MONAHAN'S GAME

WE WERE SUPPOSED

PALMS

ATTACHED

CAR PARKED ON QUENTIN, BEING WASHED

THE TREE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HEAVY LIFTING

Lorris turned the key in the garage door lock, and I pulled the door up. Look, said Lorris. Icicles, h said. They were hanging from the metal runner on the bottom.

There were three shovels in the back of the garage and Lorris picked two, grasping each at its center to test the weight. He handed me the longer one, the slightly heavier one, for breaking up ice patches. He was too small for that. Then we closed the garage door.

Outside, on Avenue R, the snowdrifts went up as high as the information boxes on the bus stop poles. The fire hydrants were completely buried. We tried to put our boots in the few footsteps in the middle of the street. If we dug down we'd be walking on the double yellow line. The plows weren't out this early. I carried the shovel on my shoulder, blade up. Lorris dragged his behind him. Every once in a while he'd pick it up to knock off the snow sticking to the end.

At the first house, Lorris waited at the bottom of the stairs. You go, he said. I took off my glove t ring the bell. Shovel your walk? I asked the old woman who answered. Kenneth, she yelled behind he before she disappeared into the warmth. A man appeared in his undershirt. Move along now, he said.

We only went to houses with driveways, for the possibility of extra work. Ones with cars in front, to say that someone was home. Often the windows with no Christmas decorations, because non-Christians paid better for this kind of thing. The rest of them shoveled little pathways down their ow steps on the way to mass. Lorris was good at spotting mezuzahs nailed to the wooden frames.

At the third house a little girl answered the door. She was even younger than Lorris. She still had her pajamas on. Is your mom home? I said. Lorris looked up from the bottom of the stairs. A beautif lady came up behind the girl, wrapped in a wool blanket. Is something wrong? she asked. Do you nee some shoveling? I said. I pointed at my shovel with my bare hand.

The lady looked behind her, into the house. What're you charging? she said.

Twenty bucks, I answered. I could hear Lorris suck in his breath.

I'll give you ten, she said.

I need fifteen, I told her. She played with the hair on top of the girl's head. Clean our driveway o too? she asked.

We were always good shovelers, Lorris and I. I think we came out of the womb doing it. Lorris used the small one for finesse work—the stairs, the edges under railings, the wheel paths of cars. He did the salt, if people had it for us, though he made me carry the bags from their doorsteps to strateg central locations. I didn't like my gloves getting blue from the chemicals. I was the heavy lifting ma could carry three times my shovel's maximum load.

At the corner of Quentin, off Marine Park, a Jeep was stuck in the crosswalk. There were other crews of kids carrying their shovels on their shoulders. A big-chested man rolled down the passenge side window and shouted into the cold: Twenty-five bucks if you get us moving. Two crews raced across the street to get there first, and because they made it at the same time, they both just started digging. A couple of early drinkers came out of the Mariners Inn without coats on, trailing steam behind them, to watch. Lorris pulled on my sleeve and said, I think Red Jacket's the best. We leaned on our shovels while the Jeep's wheels spun and shrieked, the gray slush shooting up into the shovelers' faces. One kid was jamming the shovel blade right into the rubber of the tire, and the passenger-side window rolled down again, and the man said, Hey, knock that off.

Once the Jeep lurched forward a little, a twenty-dollar bill came flying out the window and landed in t~~he snow. Two kids dove on top of it. One of them had a Hurricanes football sweatshirt on. O~~n the back it said, GIVE ’EM HELL. The Jeep screamed away, toward Avenue U and the Belt Parkway. Come on, Lorris, I said.

It was twelve o’clock when we finished our usual streets. Someone with a snowplow was revving his engine on Thirty-Sixth, ruining our business. A group of three men, in heavy blue sweatshirts, jogged by us with shovels. The one in the front had hair on his face. ’Ta boys, he said. Can we go home now? Lorris whined, hitting my back with his shovel handle. Almost, I said. He unwrapped the Rice Krispies bar he kept in his pocket for emergencies.

The house didn’t have a doorbell. You could have told that even before you were on the stoop. Par of the front window had cardboard over it. Come inside, the man said when he opened the door. We’r not supposed to, Lorris called from the bottom of the unshoveled stairs. Shut up, I told him. He followed my boot prints up.

Get the snow off your feet, the man said. I don’t want water bugs in my house, he said. We stamped our feet on the rubber mat. We followed his wide back through the dark, into the kitchen. Here, he said, and put two mugs in our hands.

We sat at the kitchen table. Lorris looked at the man, and the man glowered down at him. His che was sweaty and his firehouse T-shirt stuck to it, bleeding black through the blue. His crucifix chain hung over his shirt. I need you to do my backyard, he said.

Out the screen door, we surveyed the job. Deep, thick drifts, nowhere for good foot purchase. Fences too high to throw the snow over. A hundred dollars for the whole thing, he said.

We waded into the middle. Lorris and I started back to back. The man had put a windbreaker on and was sitting in a foldout chair with his feet up, watching us. That’s it, he said. That’s right. Our shovels hit the ground. We pushed off from each other, Lorris shoveling his snow to my side, where I snared it and tossed it off under the high porch. That’s it, the man said.

It got so hot that we took off our jackets. The sun was higher and higher. The sweat was dripping from the blue beanies our mother made us wear. When I looked up at the man sitting there his mouth was slightly open, like he was waiting for something to happen, like he didn’t think that we would finish. But we got all the snow off. We shoveled that yard until just the bare garden was showing beneath it, the soil hard as concrete that when we reached made our shovels ring.

AIR-CONDITIONING

For a while there was only one air conditioner in our house. It was in the living room, and we put
on during birthdays or the Fourth of July. It covered the heat in the kitchen from my mother burning things, like the half-sausages, the hot ones, which had a black crust on the bottom from wher
they touched the pan for too long.

Lorris slept in my room during the summer, even though he had his own room, because mine had
ceiling fan. It had wooden slats with small holes at the edges so that in the winter we could hang our model planes and cars off the ends. After our mother had dusted the top of the slats, we would set the fan going on a low frequency and the planes and race cars would spin around, getting higher and higher with the centripetal acceleration, until the Lego ones started to break apart and Lorris ran shouting from the room.

Our parents had been arguing in the living room, with the air conditioner masking the noise a littl
and we were building Lego cars in my room, when finally I came and sat on the stairs and started reading a poem I’d written the week before about how cold the pancakes were that morning.

The pancakes, I said, were cold this morning. I was sitting with my knees together on the top step
and Lorris was lying on his stomach clutching the two-by-two Lego piece I had asked him to find. I started over: The pancakes were cold this morning.

That’s enough of that, said my father.

I’m just trying to help, I said.

Jamison’s just trying to help, said Lorris.

It’s none of your *business*, my father said. This is an adult *conversation*. From downstairs we coul
hear the kitchen cabinets being slammed shut. *Conversation*, he repeated.

• • •

One day my father came home carrying a second air conditioner. He was carrying it the way you carr
birthday presents, as if someone was about to stack more boxes on top. He had to put the air conditioner down to ring the doorbell, even though Lorris and I had seen him through the upstairs window, and our mother went to answer it, us behind her, her shoulder and neck cradling the portable phone. She put a hand over the receiver to say, I don’t even want to know.

My father was a driving instructor. He worked at the place on Kings Highway under the train tracks, where the storefronts grow on top of each other until one of them covers the other. The office for the Kings Highway Driving School was on the second floor, and they were ignoring Department o
Health requests to make it handicap accessible. They posted a sign that said, FOR HANDICAPPED, PLEAS
CALL UP. WILL COME DOWN AND GET YOU. So far they’d never had to do it.

I was thirteen at the time, and taking any seconds in the car I could get. Technically I was too young, but if we went in the practice car and lit up the sign on top that said STUDENT DRIVER, no one said anything. Everyone in our neighborhood was a cop, and they knew me and my father pretty well,
so we always drove out toward the sanitation plant on Gerritsen, the shit factory, where you could make the widest turns. Sometimes we let Lorris in the back, because he always begged to come, and he took his favorite Hot Wheel, the red one with the white stripe down the middle. It was always the

fastest on our yellow racetrack. He held it in both hands, mimicking the turns and motions I made while I drove.

My mother didn't like the idea of me driving, especially with my father, because she said that someday we would get caught and it would go on my permanent transcript. That was the kind of thin she was always ragging about, things on my permanent school transcript. Even though I was about to graduate, and Madison doesn't turn people away. She thought that those kinds of things ride on your bumper forever, and maybe they do, but I try to ask as few questions as possible. She wasn't around when we drove anyway, because she worked eight to six as a school secretary.

My father lounged around most mornings, doing his shifts in the office three days a week, but other than that he stayed at home until four, when the first lessons were usually scheduled. Sometime he'd paint the basement just for something to do, or sweep the stoop. I got off the cheese bus from school around three, which left almost an hour for driving. Some days, if Lorris was late at an after-school program, we'd go pick him up. Our mother liked that the least. How could we explain ourselv picking a nine-year-old kid up at school and say this is still a lesson? She was mainly just unhappy because she thought our father wasn't a good driver, and that it was terrifying that he was teaching th whole borough below Fulton Street. Technically she might have been better, but he was confident about it, and didn't worry about hitting the brakes too hard or conserving gas. She was always stopping at yellows.

When he brought the second air conditioner home it was April, but one of those hot Aprils that remind you what summer's like, before it rains again. In Brooklyn we waited for thunderstorms. Onc our father left for work and before our mother got home, I'd get the key for the garage and open the heavy door slowly, hand over hand. Lorris would be drumming on the metal as it went up. We'd pull our bikes out, his fire-yellow, mine blue and white, and race down the side streets to Marine Park by the water. There were trees on the outside of the park, basketball courts near the street. In the middle a wide paved oval studded by baseball fields, their backstops open, facing each other across the grass At that point in the afternoon you could feel the heat through the handlebars. We'd make it one lap around the oval, 0.84 miles, before we heard the first thunder, and then Lorris would yell and dart ahead even though he'd just gotten his training wheels off. The rain came down all at once then, and all of a sudden it would be cold, and this was the best part, when I pulled over by the water fountain and Lorris circled back to me. I pulled the two red and blue windbreakers out of my bike basket and we put them on, invincible. We rode two more laps in the storm until racing each other home.

• • •

Dad put the second air conditioner in his and Mom's room. It was just the bathroom and a closet between their room and mine, and if we had the fan on low Lorris and I could hear the air conditione clearing its throat all night. That's what it sounded like—like it was constantly hacking something up from deep down in its throat. Sometimes if I was awake after going to the bathroom in the early a.m. could hear our mother wake up and walk over to it, and turn it down a few settings. It took them a lo time to get the hang of how high they wanted it to be. It would be too warm when they went to bed, b then freezing by morning, unless Mom got up to fix it. We could tell when she hadn't gotten up, because when we went in before school to say good-bye to Dad, on the days he was sleeping there, he'd have the white sheets all wrapped around his head from the middle of the night.

A few weeks after we got the second air conditioner it was so hot they started putting out weather advisories over 1010 WINS in the morning. Stay inside unless absolutely necessary. Mom took this t

heart, and tried to get Lorris and me to do it too, though we didn't. School was winding down, ~~especially for eighth-graders, so we didn't have homework anymore, even from Regents math.~~ My math teacher, Mr. Pebson, had taken to sitting in the back of the classroom and spraying Lysol at anyone if they sneezed too close to him. This was in independent math, where we worked at our own pace. We took the tests when we got to the ends of chapters. At this point, everyone seemed to still have a few pages before being ready for their tests. Mr. Pebson didn't mind. He was concentrating on staying ahead of the sickness wave that always happened the first time the weather changed like this.

It got so hot that the cheese buses broke down, and we had to walk home from school. Dad would have picked us up if we told him, and he did pick Lorris up, but I convinced him that we'd gotten some special buses shipped in from upstate, where the kids biked to school all the time because it wa so safe. My friend Hayden and I walked toward our neighborhood together, taking everything in.

One of those days, Hayden told me that I couldn't walk straight. I told him he was being ridiculou but it turned out he was right. I'd step with my left foot and fall two or three inches off my forward motion, and then readjust with my right foot, but four or five inches too far. Then I'd have to fix it with my left, but that came off the line a little too. I didn't know it was happening. Somehow I got wherever I was going, but Hayden showed me how, if he was standing pretty close to my shoulder, I kept knocking him, on every third or fourth step.

We were walking down Thirty-Third, which comes off Kings Highway at a curve, and suddenly I wasn't sure I'd be able to make it all the way home. The more I thought about my feet the more inche I diverged right and left. Hayden held my right arm and tried to force me forward, but I started breathing heavy and told him I needed a break. That's when the station wagon pulled over, and someone rolled down the window.

It was a high school kid, with a Madison football sweatshirt and the chinstrap beard that everyone who could was wearing that year. Hayden was pretending that the white tuft on his chin counted. The driver also had a Madison sweatshirt on, and I saw him use his right hand to put the car into park.

Don't you live on Quentin? the guy in the passenger seat said to us. You coming down from Hudde?

Hayden said yes.

Jump in, he said. We'll drop you off—it's too hot to walk. He leaned his arm out the window and reached behind to open the back door.

Once we were in the car the Madison kid in the passenger seat turned the music up, and it wasn't that it was louder than in our car but it was thumping more in my chest. You like Z100? he said, smiling, leaning his left hand behind the headrest.

I was watching the driver while Hayden answered for us. He was driving with two fingers, his index and middle ones on one hand, his other arm out the window. Somehow we were going just as fast as my dad always goes on side streets, but we were getting the soft stops that only my mom, at fifteen miles per hour, was able to get. At the stop sign on Avenue P, he jolted out to look twice, in exact time with the music. His friend was drumming on the dashboard with both hands.

Dad was sitting on the stoop when they dropped us off, and he stood up once he recognized me getting out of the car. The car waved away. I was able to walk again, the zigzag curse gone. Hayden said, Hi, Mr. Favero, and then turned to me. That car was disgusting, huh? he said. I was looking at m dad's face. When I got up to him, he grabbed me under the armpit and dragged me up the stoop. Hayden didn't look away. We were inside with the air-conditioning on when he flat-palmed me in th stomach.

Are you serious? he said. Are you serious?

• • •

When Dad came home with the third air conditioner, it was still blistering out. There were tornadoes in Texas, more than they'd ever seen before, and in earth science Ms. Donatelli said it was what we had to look forward to: global warming in America. Someone in the back asked if this meant no more snow days, and she said, Maybe no snow, period.

He had the air conditioner in the trunk of the driving instructor car. You don't notice until you're close to it, but those cars are a little skinnier than regular ones. Dad says it helps the kids who have a bad sense of hand-eye coordination. There's more wiggle room when you're trying to squeeze through tight spaces. He says that the first thing he asks a student when they get in the car is whether they played sports when they were younger, or if they still do now. If not, he'd know it was going to be a long day. You can't imagine how crappy those kids are, especially the Hasidic Jews.

Why's that, Daddy? asked Lorris.

Because they didn't play sports as a kid, he answered, wiping his mouth with his napkin. I had set the table, and we used the white ones with blue borders that I liked.

This is how you raise your kids, Mom said. She was twirling her fork in her fingers. She'd gotten home late and he was back early.

My kids, yeah? He shrugged. It's just true.

The new air conditioner was bigger than the others, mostly because it had extendable plastic wings on the side that were supposed to be for fitting in a window. That afternoon before Mom got back from work, he put it in the kitchen, balancing it above the heater and extending the wings so it sat snug. He got some blocks of wood out of the garage and pushed them underneath.

When she came back she had immediate problems. They had a session up in their bedroom where we couldn't really hear what they were yelling. When they came down, she was pointing at the kitchen window. How am I supposed to hang the clothes out now? she said. I guess Dad hadn't thought about that. The clothesline comes out the kitchen window. He moved it one window over.

That was the spring of people breaking their wrists. I had three friends who did, and at least two more from school. Everyone was walking around with casts on their arms and permanent markers in their back pockets to ask you to sign. It happened to our next-door neighbor first—he was playing basketball at the courts by Marine Park, and when he went up for a rebound someone kneed him the wrong way. He fell full on his knuckles. I wasn't there, but Lorris had been riding his bike and said he saw him waiting for the ambulance, his hand doubled over and fingers touching forearm.

The one wrist I did get to see was right by our house. Behind the house there's an alley for the sanitation trucks to get the garbage. This way they don't clog up the avenues in the mornings. Hayden was over and Dad was showing Lorris how to skateboard. The alley has a little hill on each end and dips down in the middle. Dad had him getting speed down the hill and then showed him how to glide. Hayden and I were on our Razor scooters, trying to do grind tricks off the concrete sides of the alley. Then, after Lorris beat his own glide record and Dad was giving him a high five, Hayden decided to come down the hill backward.

Dad wasn't watching. He was pretending to shadowbox with Lorris, who was saying, I'm the greatest, I'm the greatest.

Don't do it, man, I said. They don't even try that on Tony Hawk.

It's gonna be sick, he said, and gave it a little hop to get his speed up.

He made it all the way down before falling. I have to give him credit for that. But then he swerved toward the wall and got scared and fell. He wasn't even going that fast. All I heard was a squelch, like

the sound the black dried-up shark eggs make when we squish them on the beach at Coney Island. It was the same sound. His wrist looked bent sideways. He jumped up and was screaming, My wrist, my wrist, and my dad came running over, Lorris right behind, and that's when the third air conditioner fe out the window, crashing and breaking into pieces, and my mom yelling from the kitchen, Goddamni you're an asshole. Dad and I drove Hayden to the hospital first, but when we got back we swept up al the pieces.

• • •

It wasn't long after that until it was my birthday, and to celebrate Dad took me out driving with him. was the weekend, so we had plenty of time. Mom was home with Lorris playing Legos, because in a recent school art project his portrait of the family had her smaller than the rest of us, off in the corne She'd been at work a lot. I don't think Lorris meant anything about it. He was always a terrible artist But you could tell she was upset.

When we weren't rushed, Dad liked to pull out all the stops in the driving. First he drove us to the parking lot in Marine Park, and let me drive around there for a few minutes. We pulled into and out o vertical spaces. Everybody learned how to drive in the Marine Park parking lot, and the cops didn't mind as long as you were being safe. I've heard they're much more careful now—they jumped all ov the two underage kids last week who ran their mother's car into a hydrant—but this was a while ago. We were particularly safe, of course, because we were in Dad's driving instructor car. It had a problem with the wheel so that it lilted a little to the left if you didn't correct it, but it was perfect an I loved it.

From there we pulled onto Quentin, rode that all the way down to Flatbush, which was heavy six-lane traffic. Dad took the wheel again at that point. I was still getting used to cars on both sides of me He exaggerated all his driving motions here, the point being for me to observe. Hit the left blinker. Make sure you're keeping up with traffic. Always check all three mirrors.

If you stay on Flatbush and keep going you hit the water, Rockaway and the Atlantic, twenty blocks from our house, but that's getting onto the highway, and I didn't want to deal with that yet. W made a right onto U, and Dad stayed in the right lane the whole way. Then, after passing the public library and the salt marsh where the water mill used to be, where you can still see the foundation coming out of the surface, we were in Gerritsen. Dad ceremonially pulled into an open spot and put the car in park and pulled the keys out and handed them to me when we passed each other going around the hood.

This was my favorite moment, using the key, the throat-grumbling the engine makes when it comes on, how if you do it wrong it kick-starts like someone laughing hysterically. Then the way the wheel shakes a little in your hand, your foot on the brake, everything ready to move.

I pulled out and Dad said, Good, good, keep it easy, and I imagined the fake line in the middle of the road like he told me to, keeping a little to the left of it. I hit my right blinker and we were on a one-way street, and my turn came perfectly into the center. I accelerated a little and tried to ease off and onto the break at the red light, completely smooth. I navigated around a double-parked car witho my dad saying a word.

When we were little, the only activity that Lorris and I wanted every night was wrestling with Dad He didn't like to hit us; Mom was the one we were afraid of, her slaps more damaging than any neighborhood scrape. Scarier too because she'd cry after, holding ice to our cheeks, even though we told her it was OK and we didn't need the ice. But wrestling was something that Dad knew how to do

He’d lie down in our living room on his back, and one or the other of us would run down the hallway and ~~take a running leap and jump on top of him. Then the other would come from behind his head~~ an try to cover his eyes or hold his legs. When we jumped, he made an *oof* sound, like we had knocked the air out, but he always caught us, in midair, no matter what part of him we tried to jump on top of. He’d keep us suspended there for a few seconds, turning us back and forth like a steering wheel, and then pull us back down and wrap our arms in a pretzel. Mom liked to watch this from the kitchen, where she’d be cleaning the dishes, usually Dad’s job but she let him off the hook when he was wrestling with us.

Coming down a one-way street like that was the same feeling of being suspended in midair, the windows open, the radio off so I could concentrate, the car on a track, almost, so it felt impossible to deviate. I could close my eyes or shut off the driving part of my brain and the car would keep going forward, where I was willing it to go.

It was the corner, the one with two traffic lights, the one with the old storage warehouse on one side, and the Burger King, where teenagers go after the movies to sky the drink machines and not pay with the shit factory on the other side, the green fence shaped like a wave on the top that goes on and on forever. There’s a gate in the fence with an entrance to the recycling dump. When Dad saw it, it was like he woke up from being asleep with his eyes open. He leaned forward and said, Make a right here, go into there. We’ve got to pick something up. Then the red Chevy came screaming up from behind us and crunched into the passenger side.

I sat in the driver’s seat. There were doors being opened and slammed shut. I think I heard the sirens immediately. Police cars were never far away. The Chevy driver went right over to Dad’s side and pulled him out and Dad lay on the ground, breathing heavy, on his back, looking up.

I was in the car. I was out of the car. I was sitting on the side of the curb. My dad lay on his back and groaned quietly, talking to himself. There were people all around him. He kept pushing the air in front of him, up and away. My mom got there. My dad was sitting up. She was screaming the whole time. Another fucking air conditioner, she said. Driving with your fucking underage son. You’ve got some fucking lot of nerve. Dad was sitting up and laughing. He was shaking his head, I remember tha He’d just gotten a haircut, and you could see red skin beneath the gray. I remember when Dad came t say good night to us, later, he said, Your mother and I love each other very much. He had his hands o the side of the mattress. Don’t take things so seriously, he said.

It was hot that night, and Lorris was in my room again. Mom pulled out the trundle bed. She smoothed the sheets. She kept her hand on his cheek, her other hand on my arm, her feet between the two beds, until Lorris told her that he wanted to turn on the other side. She went downstairs, and she put the television on, but we could hear her and Dad arguing. They were quiet. We only heard the sounds of their voices. It stopped soon and they turned the television off. Lorris got out of the pullou bed and stood in front of mine. He put his hand on the side, and I lifted up the sheet. I faced one way, and he faced the other, because I didn’t like it when our breaths hit, but he kept his foot next to mine until four in the morning. Then he got up to go to the bathroom, and I had the bed and the sheets and the quiet room to myself.

OPEN YOUR EYES

Sitting on the bus on the way home from Kings Highway train station with our shopping bags at our feet, Lorris pointed at the man sitting across from us. It was the years when we fought. Look Lorris said. When the man reached down to scratch his lower leg his jeans rode up a little, and you could see his gun, just the holster and the leather strap. He's a policeman, I told Lorris. Lorris nodded I feel safe, he said.

• • •

We fought all the time. We threw punches. We kneed each other in the chest. We knocked each other down, waited until the other one got up, knocked him down again. We got angry. We squeezed each other's fingers so hard they got jammed, or what looked like jammed, in the way that we jammed our fingers while playing basketball. We scratched pimples into our legs and called them mosquito bites.

When fights were over, when Lorris was knocked down, when I had my whole weight on top of him, I gave what was our cruelest punishment of all—the kiss of death—the bone of my chin jammed into his cheek, pushed down between his gums until he screamed, hard enough that they'd stay raw, and the orthodontist, when Lorris went to one a few years later, told Lorris he needed braces. But whe I pulled my chin away, he gave me the same look, his eyes disdainful, as if he knew there was nothin else I could do. And, surprised, I'd let him up.

Then we'd lean against the wall together, breathing hard. It stopped us being angry. We could be regular human beings then, so much that by the time our father came running up the stairs, shouting, What's going on? we'd be laughing, or doing something else, my glasses crooked but back on my face.

• • •

Every year we went shopping at Christmastime, by ourselves, near Kings Highway. There were stores for everything. Rainbow for clothing, KB Toys, a small bookstore, jewelry shops. Once I went by myself but came back ten minutes later than I'd said I would, and my mother had been sitting next to the door, on a dining room chair. My father was pacing the room. Lorris was watching out the windo and it was him who opened the door.

You're fucked, he said, quietly, happily, the emphasis too much on the second word. With his bod blocking my parents' view, he punched me above the knee, and backed quickly away, so I had to hobble into the house. From then on Lorris and I went together, even though it wasn't clear what goo Lorris would do. Two's better than one, our father said, and left it at that.

One winter, not long after that—on our first stop we got clothes. A turtleneck for our mother, who was trying to start running even with the snow, and a sweatshirt for our father, because he said he looked good in them. Then we went to the bookstore under the train tracks.

Morning, we said, as we entered the shop. The bell had rung over our heads. The man grunted. Good morning, Lorris said, stamping on the welcome mat in front of the door, with pictures of snowflakes on its edges. The man looked up but didn't grunt. We spread out around the store, openin

books and looking at their inside covers. Here, Lorris said, and handed me a small red one: *Walking Tours of Brooklyn*. Perfect, I said. One more. Mister, I said, do you have any suggestions for a gift fo our father.

The owner of the bookstore looked at us. He was reading the paper. The headline rustled into the subheadline while the owner shuffled. Is he still married? the owner asked. I said yes. The shop owne kept reading his paper.

In between two rows of books, Lorris put a hand on my shoul- der and pointed at the ground. Lool he said. I looked down. Then he reached up and slapped my ear, and it started ringing. He danced awa before I could grab him, but I threw the book I was holding at his neck. He shifted and it hit his shoulder, and the pages flapped to the ground. Hey, the shop owner said, but Lorris was already laughing. He dodged out of the store, and the bell clanged over his head. I found a book of best travel destinations with a pretty woman on the cover and bought that. Lorris was standing outside, and I pushed him against a car. The sound of his body hitting the front made a satisfying thud, and then we were better. The week-old snow had left streaks of dirt and frost on the car's window, and Lorris's body left a print.

I wanted to get Lorris a pair of sneakers with wheels in them that you could pop out, instant rollerblades. So we went into Payless, me leading and pulling Lorris behind, his eyes closed. When I asked the salesman where to look, I did so in a whisper, so that Lorris couldn't hear. Once I'd paid, I led him outside, and stood him there, and just looked at him for a second. He was small against the Payless window, his head only coming up a little above the display shelf of shoes. Breathing in and out, he had his hands flattened, calmly, against his side. People walking by were starting to look at us Ready, I said.

Then Lorris said, Now it's my turn. While I closed my eyes he turned me around, around, and around again, his head coming up only to my chin. The sounds of the world came at me, the gray sno on the sidewalk receding into nothing.

• • •

Eyes closed, I could hear my breath more rapidly. It came on alternate beats with my footsteps, the crunch on the salted cement. Lorris's hand, never touching me, pulled at my jacket sleeve, and I stumbled forward. I could hear people shouting, though I wasn't sure why. A truck beeped near us, ar there was the slide that comes when a car pulls into a spot, just missing the curb. The tires hugged th ground. Lorris, I said. He didn't answer. I smelled the tang of lemon, from the falafel restaurant, the burning of the legs of meat I remembered must be turning, slowly, in the window.

What happened then, I can only describe it as a vision. It appeared in my eyelids like a movie, wi surround sound, circling my head. In the vision, Lorris and I were in a car, and he was driving. He didn't feel older, he was just driving, as if he knew how and it was natural. It was an old car, the dashboard dusty and streaked with fingerprints. I was in the passenger seat, leaning back. Maybe I wa teaching him—though I didn't know how, though it felt like I did. Lorris made turn after turn. I didn' recognize where we were, but it was a one-way street. Ahead of us, there was a speed bump, and on top of the speed bump, something small wrapped in blankets. We got closer, and I saw the blankets shift. There was the sound of the tires on the unevenly paved street, the hum. The echo of the blinker click as it shut off. Lorris was looking straight ahead. When we went over the speed bump, there was another sound. Was that—, Lorris said. No, I lied. I told him no. You're fine. It was nothing. Lorris looked at me, pleading. The car stopped at the end of the street. He put it into park. He put his hands

back on the wheel. Other cars passed us, slowed down, sped up, there were those sounds—but he wouldn't look away. Then the vision ended, and the real Lorris was saying, in the real world, Open your eyes.

• • •

We waited for the bus for fifteen minutes. Lorris had his bags arranged on the sidewalk around him. He showed me his palms, where the stretched plastic had cut into them, leaving a deep red trench. He held them up to me and I wouldn't answer him at first. Rub them, I said.

A pregnant woman smiled at us from two people ahead in the line. I looked down at the ground. Happy holidays, she said. I nodded. How old is he? she asked. Old enough, I said. Lorris was kneeling down, checking with one hand in each bag that everything from his packages was still there. How lon is your bus ride? she asked. Five and a half minutes, Lorris said, his eyes still on his bags on the ground.

It felt wrong going up the bus steps, watching Lorris, ahead of me, using his MetroCard next to th driver. The bus felt too heavy, Lorris too close to the wheel. I closed my eyes and tried to listen. The bus engine coughed. People muttered in the front seats. I opened my eyes, and reached up toward Lorris one step above me. Let's walk, I said. Or take the next one. Please. Lorris looked down the steps. He gave me the scathing look again, like he did when I hit him, like there was no way he could hurt. Then he turned and got on the bus. I watched him go. You coming? the bus driver asked.

The avenues began to pass by. We sat next to each other, not talking. I leaned back. The bus engin coughed and coughed. The man with the jeans reached down to scratch his leg, showed the gun. Safe, Lorris said.

• • •

This all happened and we got to the house and in half an hour both our parents would be home, havin left to walk to the mall on the other side of Avenue R to buy presents for us, not holding hands but with their hands almost touching, swinging side by side. But there was no way for us to know that then, standing at the front door leaning on the bell. We could hear the sound of it echoing. The windows were all closed. The echo came back to us, like laughing. A tall man on a too-small bike came riding slowly down the sidewalk. He was careening side to side. He looked at us, kept watching us until he was all the way on the other end of the block, and then he stopped, and looked back. Let's go, Lorris, I said.

Walking quickly, we went around through the alley to the back of the house, opened the red gate. reached around in the plastic case over the barbecue, found the key I hid there, went to open the back door. The locks clicked. Hello? I asked the house. The basement was damp and smelled like summer. Nothing answered. I locked the door behind us.

I turned to Lorris and put one finger to my lips, and we walked up the creaking stairs. The house was quiet. One open window, off the kitchen, let some air in, and the curtain fluttered. I turned on the light, which hissed. Hello? I said again.

The bottom of the curtain was dancing. It was a dark curtain, I don't know why we had dark curtains. It seemed heavier than it should be. I couldn't see behind it. The curtain kept dancing. Slow we walked toward it. I could hear everything from outside, the scrape of a door, the sound of people running, a horn beeping, twice. I raised my hands, I felt my knuckles pop. And suddenly there was a hand grabbing my arm and I turned around and swung.

It was Lorris, laughing, who ducked the punch, and ran shrieking into the living room, but I followed him, running, threw him down on the floor and hit him with both hands. His stomach, so the wind got knocked out, his shoulders, his face with my palms. He was shouting, scratching at me, my face, my mouth, my eyes. The packages were strewn around us. I pinned him, so he couldn't move anything, and leaned my head down close to his. Close your eyes, I said. No, he said, get off me. But then I hit him again and he did. I did too. I could hear the creaking of the walls, the rush of the bus going by outside the windows. There were no leaves for the wind to rustle on the dead trees. Lorris whispered, What are you going to do?

VINCENT AND AURORA

They had lived alone together for many years, since their sons moved out to get married. It was a house on Madoc Avenue, where the backyard opened onto the water, and a wooden dock extende from the porch out into Dead Horse Bay. In the summers they left their motorboat there, the *Napoli*, and they'd take it up and down the canal, past the salt marsh, its high grass and swampy inlets, sometimes all the way out to Rockaway, under the Marine Parkway Bridge.

They weren't rich and they weren't poor, although when Vincent turned sixty-five their children, Tommy and Salvy, threw him a surprise party and sent a check for five hundred dollars. Aurora wanted to rip it up. Vincent collected Social Security and she had always saved her earnings, from working at the voting polls at PS 222 for decades. Democrat or Republican? she'd ask, and hand then a white sheet or blue sheet. This year it was Bush and Clinton. Vincent had had his candy store, but then he'd sold it to the Benduccis. At Christmas, they always had a live tree.

The house was painted white, with little flecks where tree branches had kicked off color during storms, and a flat roof that the kids liked to go onto when they were teenagers. Once Vincent found cans of PBR in the gutter when he was cleaning out the leaves, and he sat his sons down to talk to them more about their indiscretion than anything else. It surprised them, his sudden sharpness, all the more so when they found that he wasn't angry about the beer. Who hadn't tried to get away from thei parents on a summer night, the breeze coming off the water, the sky clear to Manhattan, Vincent had put it. He understood. But where he was raised, in Carroll Gardens, with the Irish cops, you had to be more careful—and he wanted them to understand this, to take a certain amount of care. He didn't tell Aurora about the beer.

It was a row house, connected to other houses on the side, differentiated from a suburb, though you'd be hard-pressed for what to call it. Marine Park was the part of the city, Aurora often said, leas served by the train and bus system. If the oceans rose like people said they would, this part of Brooklyn would be the first to go. It was an hour with the walk to the Q train and the ride into the city to see a Broadway play, or to go to the Museum of Natural History, which meant lower real estate prices and a bit of sleepiness. One neighbor was a drug addict, supported by unknown funds. There was the neighborhood drunk, who was in and out of the house. Across the street the eldest son of a large family—who marked his adolescent growth year after year with new tattoos, sprouting in strang places across his body, reported one after another by a gleeful Tommy, who knew him from school—was gone one day after the Fourth of July: two years in jail. Their true neighbor, just to the left, shoveled snow for them if they woke up too late in the morning. He lived alone, and needed neither conversation nor pleasantries. He'd taken in their mail when they went to Canada for a week, years before. They stayed in Montreal, and then a few days in a cabin next to Lake Oromocto, where Vince had gone fishing in the mornings and Aurora spent a small amount of time depressed on the back porch, then getting better in the afternoons, making penne vodka and a salad. When the children were born they did not travel.

When they were younger Vincent spent most of the day at the candy shop. Aurora stayed home. Besides the poll work, she mended clothes and tailored suits. For Halloween season she made the kid costumes from scratch. Salvy especially had liked to watch her sew, and for a while she got him interested in it, sewing his own moccasins like the Lenni Lenape Indians—who had lived right where

sample content of Marine Park: Stories

- Embedded System Design: Embedded Systems Foundations of Cyber-Physical Systems pdf
- download Druids: A Very Short Introduction
- read Big Green Egg Cookbook: Celebrating the World's Best Smoker and Grill
- American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland pdf, azw (kindle), epub, doc, mobi

- http://crackingscience.org/?library/Embedded-System-Design--Embedded-Systems-Foundations-of-Cyber-Physical-Systems.pdf
- http://aneventshop.com/ebooks/True-Wealth--How-and-Why-Millions-of-Americans-Are-Creating-a-Time-Rich--Ecologically-Light--Small-Scale--High-S
- http://thewun.org/?library/Big-Green-Egg-Cookbook--Celebrating-the-World-s-Best-Smoker-and-Grill.pdf
- http://nautickim.es/books/The-Classical-Archaeology-of-Greece--Experiences-of-the-Discipline--Experiences-of-Archaeology-.pdf