

lunch

by Alex M. Pruteanu

strange days
i'm having lunch with the baby
and we're talking about people-watching
and old souls and coffee and twizzlers
it's a weird conversation but she's my baby
so something about some apple not falling far from the tree
would best fit in here
but anyway
i feel like i'm talking with an old friend
maybe from another century
not my three-year-old daughter
it's quite bizarre
and then she stops and stares at me and says
"dad...what would happen if you had burgundy eyes?"
what an odd thing to ask
i'm not sure baby
i think everything would look a little redder
she ponders that a bit and then:
"red? like hot? like down in the earth where there is fire?"
i'm not sure if she's making a biblical reference
although she hasn't been taught any of that nonsense
or is just geologically inclined
"maybe...maybe everything would look a little hotter"
i've got her turning wheels now but really it's the other way around
i cannot imagine looking at someone through burgundy pupils
but i see that she can
she's staring me down
and then she sighs
"dad...it would not work"
it wouldn't?
"dad...no. you could not have burgundy eyes"
why?

"because you would get the hiccups all the time
and then people would look at you weird."
she may be right about the hiccups
who knows
next to our table, a young couple with a five-year-old girl
says nothing
they eat like that for close to half an hour
and no one says anything to one another
another weird dimension it seems
not sure why they're here
they all seem miserable eating their burgers and fries
and drinking their cokes
mostly i feel for the little girl
who's being ignored by her parents
who look like they loathe one another
they loathe their lives
fast-food eating zombies
in an anonymous food court at an anonymous mall
in an anonymous suburb
and that's it
no time for anything more
i have to get back to explaining why i speak a different language
with my mother
her grandma
and how i learned this different language
and how old i was when i learned it
and how i had blonde hair when i was a little boy
and why did it change to dark
and how does a beard grow
and why do i stand up when i go to the washroom
instead of sitting down like everyone she knows
et cetera et cetera et cetera

