

hands

by Brian Michael Barbeito

He cleaned off the pump with a steel brush. Then he took it out to the pressure washer. Out there was where a lady that looked like a witch used to move around and sit on the fences like a crow. The air was humid, and the men were dressed in heavy blue coveralls. The younger one was the plate painter, and his coveralls were splashed with red primer paint. The old and strange lady was not there today, and the dogs barked from car repair lots. The police had done a sweep and closed off the street a day or so before, so things were quieter than usual. The spray hit the pump and the water went into the air in bits like small clear and white firecrackers popping and then disappearing. The painter put the pump back on a dolly and then the repair man stood looking at the sky. The painter asked him, 'Who is your favorite?'

'Gotta say my man Shakespeare. And the Bible.'

'Shakespeare and the Bible, eh?'

The repair man was regal, and he was from St. Vincent, and his hands were long and beautiful. He turned around and went with the cart towards the darkness of the building, back to his repair bench. He grinded some debris that was left on the body of the pump. Then he took the casing off, and put the motor on the side of the bench. He tested its power. The whiteboard beyond him had black marker designs to show what tools went where when they were absent. There were industrial strength scissors, wire cutters, and many types of screwdrivers. The old window panes were thick with years of dirt, and dim light barely touched down where hundreds of bottles housed oil that once contained soda pop. The man started in on the pump, and looked at the seal, the impeller, and the o rings. His hands were always doing something, and he was a hand in a world of heads and hands, though nobody was completely one or the other.

Everyone knew the heads ruled the world.

Outside the sun blinked out and the clouds moved in. Maybe it was going to be pathetic fallacy, thought the painter, like in Shakespeare.

