

The girl laughing in the dictionary.

by Félix Saparelli

Leaves falling. Hitting the ground softly. Steps in the snow. The shallow chaotic prints of the children and the deep purposeful ones of the adults. The grey winter sky with numerous snow flakes gliding down. The blue and red and white flashes of the police cars' lights. The white and yellow of St John's. The unbearable stillness of my brother's mitten in my hand. The silence. Silence. The moving white cloudy breaths of the officers talking. The faces of people watching: pale drawn sad tearful tense pitied fearful. The unbearable stillness of my brother's mitten in my hand. The leaves falling and hitting the ground softly. The steps in the snow. The shallow chaotic prints of the children and the deep purposeful ones of the adults. The deeper straight-in-a-line terrible terrible footprints of the coat. The blood staining the snow all around me. The memories of the shots. The memories of the fear. The memories of my brother's mitten spasming in my hand. The memories of the silence. The memories of the noise. The memories of the coat turning and leaving and leaving me alive alone among the bodies bleeding torn holed cut pierced shot bleeding of the children on the snow.

An officer in blue and white taking my hand and pushing my fingers open and pulling me softly to my feet and walking me to the ambulance and sitting me up at the back legs dangling for a second and slowing stopping still my entire body still until someone in white covers me and rubs me to make me warm or make me alive and telling me it's alright but it's not it's not it's not alright because I am alive. *...and memories of the blood and of my brother's mitten in my hand and...* 'Hey, hey! Hey, are you alright?'

Silence.
Noise.
Shots.
Thunder.
Silence.
The coat turning.
White.
Dull.
Pain.
Pain.
Cries.
Silence.
Dark.
Light.

White grainy squares straight ahead no above me. One two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven and a round white smooth light on the twelfth. Voices near my feet. '...passed out... ...shock... ...hypothermia... ...snow...' '...when?... ...come home?...' '...wakes up... ...observation... ...few days... ...psychologist...' *Hy-po-ther-mi-a: The condition of having an abnormally low body temperature, typically one that is dangerously low.* And shock. And trauma. From my brother's — mitten in my hand — death; he was shot — memories of the noise memories of the cries — next to me — and the coat turning leaving leaving leaving me alive alone alive — and his mitten spasming in my hand — in my hand — spasming in my hand — still so so still — unbearably still in my hand. Hy-po-ther-mi-a. The bright blue dictionary at the top of the shelf and the same at home on the tall desk and me standing up whenever idle and walking to the dictionary bright blue heavy on the shelf on the tall desk and in my hands and my feet carrying us back to my chair my chair that creaks under our weight and the joyful thump of the tome on the desk and turning the pages and reading and nodding giggling smirking crying humming as the words on the left and the words on the right are complex funny lewd sad and are always taking me to new worlds

and places in my head far far far away from the stares of the others
staring watching looking at the girl laughing in the dictionary.

