Dear Credit Card Thief

by Ulrica Hume

Dear Credit Card Thief,

I think of you—hunched, green cast, a zombie of the ephemeral, greedily parsing code, stealth hands like a lover's over my plastic doppelgänger, wafer of identity, your key to the internet of things, to me.

Did you have a pleasant crossing on the ferry? And the clothes—were they the right color and size? The Netflix subscription automatically renewed itself, so don't worry, take your time deciding what to watch.

My banker's desk is hard and glossy, with a day calendar of trivia on it. He is a goldfish from the fair, his suffocating existence here a coin toss, on the phone he says, “I concur.” Soon he will disappear on holiday to Germany. There is a Medieval Crime Museum in Rothenburg that he wants to see. A baker whose loaf was bad, too small or light, would have been strapped to a chair and dunked in the river! There are wooden racks for stretching truth, and spiked iron collars, slightly rusted, for the witches, ghosts of gossips in their scold's bridles.

What does not thrive in this world is destroyed, though it may happen too slowly to notice and sometimes all rules are broken. I cut up the first credit card, a sentimental cleaving. The second one also. The third card is soulless.

Yet our connection persists. Insomnia informs me that it all comes down to zeroes and ones, a waft, a twitch, a predatory numerology, mutable will to deceive. Stars in their dark slots fade.

I dream of speeding golf carts, driven by no one. Of salad bars and costume jewelry.

A postcard arrives of a Mask of Shame, or Schandmaske, with slits for eyes, a Pinocchio's nose, no mouth. *I am enjoying the beer gardens*, the banker writes.

That night, I chase you down a hill into an underground warehouse. Your small hands darting over the keyboard sound like

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mice in a pillory cage. When I ask who you are you say you are me. A breath passes between us, clouding the screen.

Have you ever been to Rothenburg?