



Demo Demises is All Bottled Up
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All bottled up with brows
that look like Picasso painted
the place where
the beach and the sea meet
on the Peloponnesus
but in black,
Demo Demises' eyes
stayed shaded
like an equator in an eclipse
as he entered into
his Great Aunt's old home
on a late afternoon
in Late May Two Thousand and Eight.
It should be noted
that Demo's two brows
curved to cover
a cursive birthmark
like inverted white out,
as "Best Used By [Blank]"
stayed hidden
as it split the difference
between his porous forehead
and concave sockets.
The door closed
as Demo completed his entrance.
He let his sole bag drop down
from his shoulder
and thud to
an autonomy's content.

Slouched on a couch,
a body laid awaiting
this entrance.
Jimmy Ends yawned
then said,
“Hey! Demo, you’re here!”

[02]

It was immediately clear
that Jimmy Ends
was afflicted with a similar
set of brows.
“So you’ve been bottled up,”
Jimmy said as he sat
down and Demo
interrupted his sip to say,
“What do you mean?”
To which Jimmy said,
“Well Dena said,”
to which Demo said,
“Dena.”

[03]

“Jimmy, can we come out
now?!” a voice bellowed
with the force of a flute
from another room
as a muscle bound
younger man

wearing his hair
pomaded into the shape
of an erection entered
the room.
“Hi Demo, I’m Never,”
the young man said,
“I’m the dreamy one of the group.”
Demo turned to Jimmy
as a taller, rectangular
younger man entered the room.
Heavily covered in tattoos
this man said,
“Hi Demo. I’m Now,
the badass of the group.”
Before Demo could sigh sternly
another young man entered,
consciously disheveled
from head to toe,
pot belly just barely visible,
he said, “Hi Demo,
I’m Whenever.
I’m the laid back,
laissez-faire one of the group.”
Jimmy said, “Dena,”
then another young man entered,
this one wearing wire-rimmed
glasses sans prescription
upon his bony face,
ceramic tight jeans
around his bony body,
he said, “Hi Demo,

what's going on?
I'm The Right Time,
I'm the smart, political one."
Demo said, "Well, I feel a little—"
before Whenever shouted,
"Bottled up!"
Demo pled his case
almost crying
but all Jimmy said was,
"Dena, Dena, Dena."
"Yeah, Dena sent us,"
Never said before a fifth young man
waddled rotund through the door.
This man, as opposed to the others,
barely fit through the doorway
from the kitchen,
which was at least five feet in width—
he dressed as if he wore one
t-shirt a week
and ate macaroni and cheese
for meals one through three
(then three through five)
and gasped,
"Demo," gasp, "hi," gasp,
"I'm Of Old Age," gasp,
"I'm the sloppy and uninteresting
one of the group."
Never said,
"We're The Expiration Dates!"

The Expiration Dates
stood there
and Jimmy remained
in his trademark
shrugged pose.
Demo picked up a paper weight
from the coffee table
and threw it,
smacking Of Old Age
in the face.
“Ouch!” he exclaimed
as the concrete
met his cheek,
while the others laughed
as a welt amassed.
Jimmy tried unsuccessfully
to console Demo,
saying, “Demo, c’mon,”
but Demo retorted by yelling,
“Well, who are they?!”
Because I’d like to know, now.”
To which Whenever said,
“Well, Never’s our spokesman,”
to which Jimmy agreed.
To which Demo said,
“Well, whoever,”
to which Whenever queried,
“Is he talking to me?”
to which The Right Time said,

“No, he said Whoever,”
to which Whenever
asked flustered,
“Well, who’s Whoever?”
to which Demo,
now recognizing
the root of the confusion,
screamed,
“No. Anyone of you!”
Jimmy said, “Dena sent them over, D,”
to which Never said,
“Dena’s a character isn’t she?”
like a middle class mother.
To which The Right Time said,
“But characters are
only foreground estimates,”
to which Of Old Age agreed,
still massaging his cheek.
Flummoxed, Demo shouted,
“Why are you here?!”
Oh, goddamnit!
I don’t think I can take this!”
and thrust his contorting face
into his sweating hands,
hunching over
as Of Old Age said,
“Hey, have you ever heard
of the man who never ever
cut his hair?”
To which Demo screamed,
“What does that have to

do with anything?!”
to which Of Old Age said,
“They told him if he never
cut his hair then
he could have the
longest hair ever.”
“So?!” “So, nowadays
people read his ponytail
like locks of hair,
understanding each strand
as a vanity
that gets sick
at the sight of itself.”
“What Of Old Age is trying to say,”
Never went on,
“is that we’re here
to drop bars on you,”
to which Demo said,
“Bars?” to which Never said,
“Codes.”
At this juncture,
the Right Time stepped up
to an equidistant position
between Demo and Never,
put one hand onto his hip
heterosexually and explicated,
“Bar codes.
You’re bottled up.
And the only logical response
known to us,
to this state of being bottled up,

is to drop bars onto parts.
“This code dropping
only concludes
when something successfully
scans and the state of being
condemned contaminated
is officially avoided.
Once and for all.”
“Well, then how
do you do it?” Demo said,
facing The Expiration Dates
with palm imprints on his cheeks,
to which Never said,
“How do we do what?”
to which Demo said,
“Drop bars.”
The Expiration Dates laughed,
moving amongst one another
as they had tendency to do,
and Demo looked like fizz.
“But I’m not even bottled up,”
he said,
and Of Old Age
bent into his belly
as he said,
“Pssh! You look like you should
have Pepsi-Cola tattooed
onto your lower back!”
Demo began to believe
Of Old Age had a point
as bars appeared upon

his temple before they all went to bed.

(Missing Poem)

[05]

The next morning
felt more like a fourth night
as Demo awoke upon
the two-by-four
Jenga boards
that acted as
back shattering mattresses.
Still half nude
he descended down
the stairs,
junk jostling
into the kitchen.
Jimmy Ends
and The Expiration Dates
sat at the dinner table
chuckling over coffee
as Jimmy spoke to the group,
remarkably louder than necessary.
“So then I said,
‘Well, you can’t survey the surface
area when you’re getting spun
around like Dreidels in Jerusalem!’”
“That’s so true!”
Of Old Age exclaimed,
laughing along with the others.

“Fuckin’ A!” Whenever squealed,
keeling over.

“What’s going on guys?”

Demo asked as he rounded
his way from the staircase
into the kitchen proper.

Jimmy turned around first,

“Oh, I was just telling Now,
Never and etcetera
about the first time

I mixed whiskey with weed.”

To which Demo said,

“Oh, the time you accidentally
peed on a girl in the middle
of her lap dance?”

To which Jimmy said,

“No, that was Nick Decomposes
when he took those fifteen shots
of One Fifty One.”

On a pause Jimmy went on,

“I also told them
about the time our
Great Aunt Dena
asked a waitress to,”

to which Demo said,

“Hold on. Our Great Aunt Dena?”

“Yeah, our Great Aunt Dena.”

“Dena isn’t our Great Aunt.”

“She’s not our Great Aunt Dena?”

“No, she’s my Great Aunt.”

“Dena? But can’t cousins

share a Great Aunt?”
“No, cousins always have
contrary Great Aunts.”
To which Jimmy said,
“I don’t think so,”
as The Dates sat silent,
“I think you’re confusing
Great Aunts with Standard Aunts.”
To which Demo said, “How so?”
to which Jimmy said,
“Cousins have to have contrary
Regular Aunts
because otherwise
they’d be siblings.
But these rules can’t be carried
from Regular to Great relatives.”
“Great relatives do tend to be
fictionalized to some degree.”
“Yet if we’re cousins
shouldn’t we share a
Grandmother?”
to which Demo said,
“Probably,”
to which Jimmy said,
“Well hold up just a second then,”
sipping deeply from his coffee,
“if Dena is a Great Aunt
and a Great Aunt
is a sister to a Grandmother,
and we share a Grandmother,
then Dena would have to be

a Great Aunt to either
both of us or neither one of us,
right?”
Demo considered
the hypothesis
as he too sat down
at the table.

[06]

“Not necessarily,” Demo replied
after a long pause.
He sat across from Jimmy
at the dinner table
in the kitchen
with The Expiration Dates
sat in a semi-circle to the side
like a sitcom set audience.
The Dates twitched nervously
and glanced at
one another in uncertainty
as Demo went on to say,
“You’re overlooking the fact
we both have
an exclusive Grandmother,
and that supposing Dena
were the sister
of our exclusive Grandmother,
that is, the Grandmother
we fail to share
through cousinhood,

then Dena would in fact
be a Great Aunt to one of us,
while remaining a
fictionalized relative
to the other.”
to which Jimmy said,
“How so?”
to which Demo said,
“Now, I have two Grandmothers, right?”
“Right.”
“Now, one of them
we share because
we’re cousins, right?”
“Right.”
“And I have another Grandmother,
a second Grandmother,
who is of no blood relation
to you, right?”
“Right.”
“Now, if Dena were
the latter Grandmother’s
sister she would be a legitimate
Great Aunt to me,
and, technically speaking,
a fictionalized relative to you.”
“Right?” Jimmy returned
to his cup of coffee
to take a longer sip
then said, “but I’m still
not following the fictionalized
relative component?”

to which Demo said,
“What do you mean?”
motioning Never
to grab him a cup of coffee.
“Well what do you mean
when you say ‘fictionalized’?
Like fictionalized like
Jerry Seinfeld fictionalized?”
Now moved to the counter
and stood with his hands out,
palms to his face,
looking back at the table,
disconcerted as to where
the coffee pot sat.
“In the corner behind
the microwave!” Demo shouted,
then turned back
to Jimmy and said,
“Well, no,
because Jerry Seinfeld
is a real person,
I’m referring to a person
who’s commonly thought
to be related to you,
but in reality isn’t
related to you,”
to which Jimmy said,
“But I was talking about
Jerry Seinfeld the TV character,
but go on.”
to which Demo squinted

his eyes as the hundred
ten temperature Jo
dripped through his lips
then said,
“Let’s say, for the sake
of argument,
Jerry Seinfeld is close friends
with your father.”
“We can forsake it.”
“Jerry Seinfeld is close friends
with your father.
And on every occasion
your father brings Jerry
around your relations
he has to indulge
in a long winded explanation:
‘Well, I met Jerry
in high school gym class
when we were playing
volleyball and Jerry spiked
the two pound medicine ball
we played with right
on the top of a
mentally challenged kid’s cranium
by accident of course,
but he actually cracked
the kid’s cranium.
And we’ve been friends
ever since.’ Are you following?”
“Yes.” “My Dad has
to explain

this whole thing
to hard of hearing relatives
every time he and Jerry
hang out around the house,”
Demo continued,
nodding and raising
one eyebrow up
and lowering the other
in simultaneity
as he sips his coffee.

[07]

“Now let’s say,”
Demo continued,
“for the sake of convenience
and sanity,
the family
starts referring to Jerry
Seinfeld as ‘Uncle Jerry’
at first, of course,
it’s recognized
by all the parties involved
that Jerry Seinfeld
isn’t an actual blood relative,
and that this is just
an arrangement of convenience.
But then, as the generations
shift and move,
as kids have kids
and the family tree

extends outward,
the tenuous aspect
of the relationship
is forgotten and Jerry Seinfeld
is actually thought of
as ‘Uncle Jerry’,
by kids who maybe
never heard the story
of how he cracked
a mentally challenged
kid’s cranium
in high school gym class.
And at that point
Jerry assumes the unfettered
role of ‘Uncle Jerry’
within your family,
and, in turn, becomes
a fictionalized relative.”
At this point Demo
took a deep breath,
clearly exhausted,
in fact both men felt
an unexpected fatigue
descend upon them,
despite it being just
Seven O’clock.
“Okay we’re clear,” Jimmy said,
“but we are talking about
Jerry Seinfeld the actual person
though, right?”
to which Demo said, “Correct.”

to which Jimmy said,
“But you do know
what we’re overlooking, don’t you?”
“What now?”
“What kind of cousins are we?”
“You mean like first or second?”
“Exactly.” Jimmy grasped at the
the last sips of his coffee
cup suction cup-like
and said, “Because
if we’re first cousins
like we’ve been assuming,
then I’m almost positive
everything we’ve said
about sharing Great Aunts
is impossible.”
to which Demo screamed,
“But how is that possible?!”
as he smashed his head
onto the kitchen table.
“Because,” Jimmy continued,
struck intermittently
by the wobbling table,
“shouldn’t the removals match up?
I mean, if the case is
we’re cousins twice removed,
then wouldn’t we share an
Aunt twice removed and vice versa?”
to which Demo said,
“I’m not sure we could
ever know for sure.”

“It just doesn’t make sense
that we could be first cousins
yet share an Aunt
that’s twice removed,”
Jimmy cried out,
motioning to all five Dates
for “Coffee! Coffee! Coffee!”
“There isn’t any left,”
Of Old Age replied cautiously.

[o8]

“Jesus Christ the coffee’s gone,
Jimmy,” Demo uttered in a guttural
intonation across the table.
“I know,” Jimmy said,
“but listen. My mother
and your father are siblings,
we know that,
and Dena is
my mother’s Aunt,
I know that,”
to which Demo said,
“Wait,” sprawled out
on a hardwood floor
for the second time
since returning,
“you’re telling me that
you knew this entire time
that Dena was your Great Aunt?”
“Well yeah,” Jimmy scoffed,

“I would think I would
know who my mother’s Aunt is.
My mother and your father
are siblings, and Dena
is my mother’s Aunt,
which makes her
my Great Aunt,
and a Great Aunt
is a sister to
a Grandmother,
so if we use simple division
there’s only one logical possibility.”
to which Demo said,
“What is it?!”
to which Jimmy said,
“Dena’s your Grandma.”
Jimmy’s arm was pressed
against the wall,
holding him up
like a horizontal crutch.
“That’s completely absurd,”
Demo gasped,
still lying on the floor,
spread eagle,
“but I guess you’re right.”
“It’s the only way
I see it making any sense,”
Jimmy said.
“It’s division,” Never added.
“It’s simple division
of related fractions,”

Whenever noted.
“It has to be right,”
Of Old Age contributed,
his hand by the hand
of his watch, glancing
down to his watch then noting,
“D, we have a set of bars
we’d like to drop.”
“Now?!” Demo exclaimed,
maimed like a main character
from an 2D Atari game.
“Me?!” Now began,
“No!” the other four retorted
in simultaneity.
Four of the five dates
held Demo down to the floor
he was already on.
Of Old Age hunched down
to reach up and pluck enough
brows for a brush.
Then the other four pulled
Demo’s pants westward
as Jimmy echoed,
“Oh, God!” as the brows
were crushed until
the black seeped
into his ass cheek.

(Lost Poem)

With his bars now dropped
Of Old Age wondered aloud
if any had stuck,
to which Demo replied,
“I don’t give a fuck”
from the floor,
to which The Expiration Dates
take as a No.
Standing beside
the coffee pot
where the caffeine
was whistling itself to liquid,
Jimmy said,
“Hey, are you guys gonna
get ready or what?”
to which Demo replied,
“Get ready for what?
You’re making more coffee,”
to which Jimmy said,
“I’m making another pot,
but we have to leave for Dean’s
and be in Boston
in about an hour,”
to which The Right Time asked,
“Well, how long does it take
to get to Boston?”
to which Jimmy said,
“Forty five minutes,”
now whistling in unison

with the soon-to-be-coffee.
Now spat out his coffee
and shrieked,
“Well, we’ll to have
to use the shower
like a goddamned sprinkler!”
“That’s why I showered
when I got up,” Jimmy said,
to which Demo said,
“Why are we going to Boston?”
“I thought I told you,
Dean wants you to work for him,”
Jimmy said.
“You didn’t tell me that,”
Demo said.
“I could have sworn I did.
When Dean heard about
the whole thing with Dena
he said he’d make you
his newest paper shredder.”
Demo paused then said,
“Paper shredder?”
“Yes, at The Mercurial Because
in South Boston.
Long story short,” Jimmy continued,
“I’ve actually been acting
in infomercials for Dean recently, and—”
“Hey, De Niro,” Now interrupted,
his voice ricocheting off the walls
like percussion,
“I already have to shower

in a seven second delay,
so, if you could, please,”
he motioned his palms around
and around like winding a movie reel.
“Now, Now,” Never said,
but Jimmy pointed to the VCR
as he refilled his coffee.
“I need to take a shower,”
Now said, to which Jimmy said,
“It’s okay, I’m the same way,”
consoling although cleansed,
and now with a
full cup of coffee in hand said,
“why don’t you guys watch this,
just quickly, because
it’ll explain a lot.
It’s an Infoduction to
The Mercurial Because,
the tape’s already in.”
Jimmy slurped the Jo
and turned to the twelve inch TV
on the kitchen counter
and pressed play
on the built in VCR.
Demo and The Expiration Dates
huddled around the screen
like six surgeons
around a colonoscopy
and viewed a young blonde
with the nose of a Nike Logo
enter into the screen,

followed by a Jimmy Ends
sporting a baby blue business suit
and a body language
that spoke in incomplete sentences.

[10]

“Jimmy?” the young blonde girl said.

“Yes, Cindy?” Jimmy replied.

“How come I can’t be anything?”

“I don’t know Cindy,
why can’t you be anything?”

“Well, my Dad says
I lack the talent, drive,
dedication, determination,
open-mindedness,
skill level, and genetic predisposition
to become what I want to be.”

“Well, what do you
want to be, Cindy?”

“I guess I just want to be something.”

“Well, that’s simple Cindy.
Your Dad is just an asshole.”

“That’s what I said!”

“Exactly, you did say that,
didn’t you? And even if
you didn’t say that,
you just did say that
right now, so, now, technically,
you did say that, didn’t you?”

“That’s what I said!”

“I agree, you see here
at The Mercurial Because
we recognize and remain
adamantly adaptable
to the manifold difficulties
of becoming anything today.
What people like your Dad
don’t seem to understand
is that being is a fiction
we’ve forgotten,
and that’s why becoming
is so gosh darned difficult.”

“Really Jimmy?”

“Yes, Cindy. And if being
is simply a misinterpretation
of multiple causes
improperly placed under
one umbrella,
then becoming is
antiquated as well.

In fact, at
The Mercurial Because,
we reject the entire notion
of becoming altogether.”

“Really Jimmy?”

“I just said it’s antiquated
Cindy, didn’t I?
After all, do we still
hunt for the food
we microwave for dinner?”

“Not unless we have

someone kill and cook it.”

“And do we still have
our grandmothers knit us
socks and scarves?”

“Not unless they’re Nikes
and our grandmothers are
Chinese wage slaves.”

“And do we still place faith
in meritocracy and professionals
supposedly trained
in specific fields of expertise?”

“Not unless they’re filing
a malpractice suit
on our behalf.”

“Exactly, so why should we
still subscribe to such
supercilious notions of becoming?”

“Uh,” “Don’t answer that,
because we shouldn’t.
You’re certainly not better
than me, and, for that matter,
I’m not better than me either.
And that’s because
becoming is a bunch of bullshit.”
“Wow Jimmy, that’s great!”

[11]

“You see Cindy,
in today’s world
causes and effects

are kind of like
husbands and wives.
Sure they can go together,
but they don't have to
if you don't want them to.”
“Really Jimmy?”
“Yes, really. You see,
causes are assholes,
just like your Dad.
While effects exist
to satisfy people's
most immediate needs
in the most expedient
fashion imaginable,
like whorehouses.
And causes never get
real results, Cindy.”
“They don't?”
“No, they work in sales
and marketing and
rot away slowly by way
of their own chimerical expectations.”
“Well, that is true.”
“It is. And with Reality Life's
The Mercurial Because
you, too, can avoid
that agonizingly life long
attrition of becoming and,
instead, Be something
Because you Are something.
And it's all made easy

by this simple formula:

**The [subject] is the [subject]
Because the [subject]
is the [subject].”**

“Jimmy, that sounds
too good to be true!
Tell me more!”

“Well Cindy,
are you familiar with
Greek Philosophy?”

“No Jimmy, I’m not.
Does it have to do with Jesus?”

“No Cindy, Greek Philosophy
was before even Jesus.”

“But Jimmy, nothing
was before Jesus!”

“It was during the time
of The Old Testament.”

“Oh, okay.”

“Cindy, not only
was Greek Philosophy
before Jesus,
but it even preceded
makeup kits
and cosmetic surgery.
Hence, it was an age
where women were
very ugly and hard to
get erections around.”

“Is that really true, Jimmy?”

“Cindy, if this were
twenty five hundred years ago,
I wouldn’t even be
talking to you.”

“Wow.”

“It was that bad.

It was so bad that
the men of Ancient Greece,
where the women wore
body hair like grizzly bears,
decided to stop
having sex with
women altogether
and, instead, just
have sex with themselves.

And since men never nag
each other about
diamond rings,
tile countertops
or the underlying intentions
of their actions,
the men of Ancient Greece
had an excess
of time to think.

So they invented
Greek Philosophy.”

“Well, everybody knows
gay guys are smart
but how does it relate
to TMB?”

“Well Cindy,
have you ever
heard of Socrates?”
“No Jimmy actually
I haven’t,
but he does
sound like an appetizer
I might order
at an Italian restaurant,
maybe something
with Calamari,
I love Calamari,
did he have sex
with guys like
the other Greeks?”
“Ha! Oh Cindy,
we’ll get to that
soon enough.
You see, Socrates
was the greatest philosopher
to ever live
and all credible scholars
agree on this.
That’s because Socrates
taught that the men
of Ancient Greece
should stop having sex
with themselves,
primarily because that was gay,
and, further,
that they should stop

having sex altogether
because marriage is hardly
worth the effort
if the sex is lackluster.”
“Wow,” Cindy exalted,
“this Socrates guy
was pretty smart, wasn’t he?”

[12]

“Yes he certainly was,
but that’s not all.
Socrates then went on
to invent the concepts
Justice and Injustice,
which are the very reasons
why pathetic failures
such as your father
can denigrate their
surroundings with such ease,
citing ‘unjust’ conditions
as they do.
Do you know
what Justice and Injustice
are, Cindy?”
“I think I might
with my Dad Jimmy,
but maybe you
should refresh
my memory.”
“Okay then,

in Plato's Republic—"
"Hold on, Jimmy?"
"What is it Cindy?"
"Why are we talking
about playdough?"
"No, it's Plato,
not play-dough."
"What is that,
like the kind you can eat?"
"No, Plato was
another philosopher
from Ancient Greece.
He was, well,
pretty much obsessed
with Socrates and
wrote a lot of books
about the things
he did and said."
"Oh, but I thought
Socrates wasn't gay."
"Jesus fuckin' Christ, Cindy.
Listen. Okay.
Brad Pitt has a
lot of gay guys
who like him, right?"
"Yeah, I guess."
"And that doesn't
make Brad Pitt gay,
now does it?"
"No, I guess not."
"Exactly. So, as I was saying,

in Plato's Republic
Socrates clearly states,
with regard to
Justice and Injustice,
that what is Just
originates from Just actions
and, conversely,
what is Unjust originates
from Unjust actions.
Now, Cindy, do you know
what that means?"
"That Justice and Injustice
are opposites, right?"
"Well, yes that too,
but what it means primarily
is exactly what we stated
at the beginning.
If Justice is Just
Because it is Just,
and Injustice is Unjust Because
it is Unjust,

**then the [subject]
is the [subject]
Because the [subject]
is the [subject].**

So, you can be something
Because you are something!"
"Jimmy, not only is that great,
not only is that a great relief,

but that is also great logic!
I love it! Now, how do I get it?!"
"Well, that's even more simplistic
than The Mercurial Because is.
For only seven nonchalant installments
of 49.99 you, too,
can economically obtain
The Mercurial Because today!
And the first 43,200 seconds,
or 30 days, are absolutely free!"
"Amazingly nonchalant!"
"And not only can you be
something Because you are
something, but now can also
look something Because
you look something!
It's all made possible
with Reality Life's
The Mercurial Because
Mercurial Mark-Up.
We use ink that's comprised
of your own pigment
to send a message
that a tattoo only drafts!
Because, after all,
do you really want
to say 'because'
with a lower case 'B'?"
"Not if I can capitalize!"

Jimmy begins to speak
with his chest stuck upward
and almost abutting
the counter,
“So what did you think?”
Demo and The Dates
exchanged glances.
Demo said, “What exactly
do you do with it?”
to which Jimmy said,
“Do with what?”
“With the thing.”
“With what thing?”
The Right Time
stood up and said,
“With the Because I think he means.”
to which Jimmy said,
“Oh,” exhaling,
“well, first you have to want
to be something,”
to which Demo said,
“I’m aware of that,
but how does it work
is what I’m asking,”
to which Jimmy said,
“Well, do you want
to be something?”
to which Demo said,
“I’m saying, assuming

I wanted to be something,
what are the methods
The Mercurial Because
employs to make me into what
I want to be.”
“Oh, assuming,” Jimmy affirmed
then said, “You snort it.”
“Snort what?” the group retorted,
to which Jimmy answered,
“The assertion.”
“How so?”
“You crush it up
after it’s printed out,
you take your Mercurial Because card
and, sniff sniffle,
crush it up, snort it up,
that’s that,”
Jimmy looked around
somewhat incredulous
at the surrounding expressions,
“Why? How did you think it worked?”
Demo and The Expiration Dates
were still huddled
around the TV
and exchanging manifold glances
when Demo said,
“I don’t know,
I guess
we were just wondering.”
“Yeah, Cindy’s hot,”
Of Old Age added.

“Her?” Whenever blurted out.
“What?” Of Old Age replied,
self-conscious.
“Well, we really need
to get going
if we’re going to get
to Boston,” Jimmy said.
“Nice,” an un-showered
Now said, “real nice!”
The seating arrangements
of the car ride into Boston
consisted of Jimmy
in the driver’s seat,
Demo in the passenger’s,
and the four Dates
squeezed into the half backseat
Of Old Age didn’t occupy.
Two exits into 95 North Never said,
“Demo,” “What?” “Bars.”
And Whenever and Never reached
around the seat
to hold the young man back
and subtracted
Jimmy’s rearview.
They plucked enough brows
for a brush
then passed it back.
The Right Time crushed
the brush of black brows
up against the back
of Demo’s neck until it read aloud:

(Missing Poem)

[14]

“Welcome to The Mercurial Because:
Because These Causes
Can’t Possibly Be!”
the billboard above the building
read as the seven men
pulled up into the
barbed-wired protected
employee parking lot
in South Boston.
It’s an early morning
in Late May
and the brusque gusts
of wind were something
to trudge through
as they made their way
across the street
and into the facility.
Interns inundated them
with captious comments
that were supposed to be
whispered, not heard:
“Ooh, I heard there’s
a new guy shredding papers.”
“I heard he’s Dean’s cousin.”
“No, he’s too young to be
Dean’s cousin.”

“Why do you have
to qualify everything I say, Pat.”

“I know, I’m sorry, I’m horrible.”

“By the way, did you notice
Justin took home the entire box
of leftover pizza from Joanna’s
party yesterday?”

“Oh, what a dick.”

“Not that I wanted any.”

“But it’s not his to take.”

Jimmy left Demo with Dean,
and Dean left The Expiration Dates
in the break room.

Dean took Demo out of the office
and led him into where
he would be working,
right at the mouth of The Mercurial Because.

In a factory of facts to be,
Dean Demises was jovial
from his face to his belly.

The hair on his head
looked like well-groomed
lamb’s wool,
the paces he plodded
on knew well-grilled lamb well,
and he showed Demo
to his shredder.

An Incessant Shredder
of Posthumous Reasons
and Deceased Integrities,
it sat on the boundary

of the factory,
an unwelcome interlocutor
between office and industry.
Dean placed his palm out
in front of his person
in a sullen “Voila,”
and Demo scanned the scenery.
For as far as he could see
the scene was a still-life
well-equipped with
extremity shredders,
remedial robots and a few
other factions of contraptions
with well-proven capacities
to decapitate.
The far off bodies
that fluttered around them
knew motion like dust
in an art museum.
His shredder lacked in fertility
as he looked back at it.
“So Demo, how did you like
being away?” Dean began
as a stop gap between stepping
into the factory
and introducing the factory.
“So, how does this work?”
Demo replied, aware of the
two fold function of the question,
but overcome with curiosity.
“Nobody knows how this thing works,”

Dean replied, glancing back
at the shredder,
“and don’t let anyone
tell you that they do.
This is the best shredder
on the market,
and yet it still breaks down
periodically for almost no reason at all.”
“I’ve heard that about these things,”
Demo said, attempting to maintain
a serious tone with mixed results.
“Well,” Dean sighed,
feeling the gap sufficiently plugged,
“in any case, this is where we go
about making our Mercurial Because.”
Both stood there for a moment,
hardhats giving their hairdos
hat-head makeovers,
the corners of their eyes
catching tiny men waddling away
in the background,
waltzing upon a mechanical horizon
that painted pensions as sunsets.

[15]

As Dean left Demo to shred
a man stepped from the office
into the factory.
The manila files he carried
were sunken into his skin tone

and he said, “Ha-hey, it’s Demo!”
then he noted that
he’s Dave From Accounts Receivable.
“I heard you’re all bottled up!”
he said, to which Demo replied,
“Oh,” followed by a hesitant chuckle.
Dave From Accounts Receivable
seemed to receive Demo’s response
as evidence of brick-headedness.
Demo seemed to receive
this seeming reception
as proof he was now brick-headed
in addition to bottled up
in the eyes of the office staff.
Briefly, Demo received a glimpse
of an entire economy
of social interactions
maimed and misinterpreted
for reasons just like these,
reasons that could have easily
been combated with just one
altered reply. “I’ll tell you kid,”
Dave went on,
“leaving everything else aside,
because everything else
is just like anything else,
I’ll tell you this:
I would’ve killed for eyebrows
like those growing up.
I love those eyebrows!”
Demo chuckled amicably

and Dave went on, saying,
“Those things are rich and black
enough to win an NAACP Image Award.”
Demo smiled at the risqué remark,
clearly proving that while
clearly brick-headed
he was at least astute enough
to take a joke,
to which Dave said,
“Your Uncle wants to see
you in his office.
I think he’s taking you to breakfast!”
then gave an avuncular wink
before he said,
“Anytime you’re ready, although,
I wouldn’t keep him waiting.
In fact, by his standards,
you’re already late.”

[16]

At first glance as
Demo entered into his office,
Dean Demises looked relaxed
enough, reclining up
and away from his desk.
Only upon further inspection
did the steam exhaling
from his ears enter into
a line of sight.
Demo considered

his possible tardiness
as cause as he approached—
it was a well known tidbit
that Dean's temper was minute.
In this way the two men
perhaps shared a similar disposition.
“Where are those Expiration Dates?”
Dean barked with just a twinge
of politeness left in his resonance.
“I think they're still in the break room.”
“Good. C'mon.
Let's go to breakfast.”
Dean rose and snatched his coat,
grunting, “Dena,” as they walked
out of the compound.
Dean and Demo
made their way to South Boston's
infamous Sully's Cannelloni's,
and once inside each man
placed two orders for
potato bread pizza bagels
along with the side of the day:
cauliflower pepperoni.
“So, Demo,” Dean began
as they sat down,
“have you heard about this
Stephen Hawking Junior
son of a cunt?”
“Um, I don't think so,”
Demo retorted with a mouth filled
with cauliflower and tomato sauce,

“What’s this son of a cunt doing anyway?”

“Well, listen first,” Dean went on,

“This Hawking Junior,

this son of a, he’s a

Chief Cultural Consultant

for our parent company, Reality Life,

he’s all over the headlines

around here.

I wondered if it was

the same where you were.”

“I don’t I’ve heard anything about it.”

“Well, he’s trying to get the word

Because removed from the English language.”

“Fuckin’ son of a cunt, right?”

“What’re you using

that type of language for?”

Dean said, an untouched

potato bread pizza bagel

on the paper plate

in front of him.

“I don’t know?”

“Well, knock it off.”

Demo apologized,

swallowing the last gulp of potato,

ziti, and tomato sauce.

There was a short lived silence

in the small pizzeria

until Dean reiterated,

“Now how the fuck am I

supposed to run a goddamned

business called The Mercurial Because

without the goddamned word Because?!
This son of a cunt!”
He reached laboriously
into his back pocket
and snatched a crumpled,
cut-out headline then
stamped it down
on the sticky table.
It read: Hawking Junior
to Further Address
Deleterious Adherence
to Linearity in New Book:
A Brief History of a Mercurial Because.

[17]

“Deleterious adherence to linearity?!”
Dean cried, “This son of a,
this piece of, this guy wants
to edit the English language
and he doesn’t even speak it!”
Demo chewed and Dean continued,
“Listen, Demo,” Dean bit into his bagel
for the first time,
“there’s a reason I want you up
here with me. Flowered language,
Demo, it’s for suckers.
Words shouldn’t stop to smell the roses.
You understand? Listen,
your Aunt Dena, your Aunt Dena,
she doesn’t know what

she's talking about with
these Expiration Dates.
She's totally out of line.
If a thing is bottled up
the last thing you do is send
it back to where it came from
to start sticking bars on it.
You understand?
All of this talk of coded bars is,"
Dean paused to chew,
"These coded bars,
when you need to make a point
you make. The. Goddamned. Point.
You understand? Now, I'm not
saying to give up on the other thing
completely. But what I am saying is
that when you're at that
shredder you should get to know
the posthumous reasons
and deceased integrities
you're shredding.
You should build up a slogan
for yourself, because that's the
only way you'll sell,
forget the barcode,
because those barcodes
won't do you any good
if you're never picked up.
You understand? All of this,
it's bigger than us, than we are,
I just don't want to see you left on a shelf."

Demo paused mid-chomp
to innocently ask Dean,
“What?” “What are you doing?”
“Agreeing with you?”
“Well, knock it off.
People depend on this business,
Demo. And so should you.
Nowadays, people are exhausted
when it comes to reasons.
They feel like by the time they
sift through all the shit
they need to sift through
they’ll be dead.
And what can you become then?”

[18]

Dean and Demo
left Sully’s to find
The Dates waiting outside.
With a re-wrapped tin can
of Folgers Black beside them
they were in the midst
of dropping bars for
South Boston’s loose change.
“There’s no more coffee!”
Never shouted as he saw
Dean emerge from the eatery.
“And Dave from Accounts Receivable
ate the last three fucking muffins!”
Of Old Age screamed.

Now glanced at his watch
and turned to the others,
“Hey look, it’s Demo!”
The four remaining Dates looked,
“Hey, it’s Demo!” Of Old Age screamed,
even louder now,
pulling a pair of pliers
from his pockets.
The five men came together
to hold Demo against Sully’s side wall,
Of Old Age plucking just enough
brows to make a brush,
then he went ahead and crushed bars
into his gut to read aloud:

(Missing Poem)

[19]

Dean generously but hesitantly
gave a ride back to Demo
and The Expiration Dates.
However, for the continued
well-being of his Cadillac’s leather
accoutrements three-fifths
of the five non-relatives
were forced to ride in the trunk.
For Of Old Age this arrangement
quickly became a near death experience.
When they returned,
Dean again generously

but hesitantly remunerated
the sorrowed, hollowed out
moans from the back
of his Cadillac with coffee
and muffins: undoing the damage
done by Dave From
Accounts Receivable.

The seven men
then re-entered
The Mercurial Because,
The Expiration Dates noshing
on coffee and muffins
while Demo shredded in silence.

Dean told Demo
“Be good,” as he exited
toward his office.

Demo heard what Dean says.
But then he heard what Jimmy said.
Then he surreptitiously snorted a
Because he was contracted to shred.
Then a young woman,
effervescent nearly to a fault,
swung through the door
from the office.

Her hair was drowned in light blue
and freely flowed down below
her shoulders until it curled up
along the curve of her lower back
like a waterfall
born at below freezing.
Her facial features shifted

on meteorological axioms
written out incorrectly,
and her eyes seemed hemp tinted.
“Hey Demo,” she said,
as the swinging door subsided.
It became apparent to Demo
this female knew his name—
an avalanche of blood
tumbled toward his penis.

[20]

The girl plucked a pack
of cigarettes from her front pocket
as Demo retorted, “Hi,”
over the drowning drum
of the shredder.
She sifted through the cigarettes,
playing favorites with
inanimate objects,
then casually introduced herself.
“I’m Philotimia.
I’m your Uncle’s,” she pauses,
“Dean is your Uncle, right?”
“Something to that effect.
Possibly a senior citizen cousin.”
“Well, I’m his secretary,”
she said, extending her right hand
before she lit her cigarette.
With a palm bathed in perspiration,
Demo shook the outstretched hand.

Philotimia took a second to glance
out at the factory as Demo adroitly
shifted his erection under his waistline.
“You know,” she said in an inhalation,
“we’re in trouble here.”
She blew out smoke.
With a mouth filled up with muffins,
Whenever had been watching
the interaction closely.
At this comment he
nonsensically reacted
with a loud laugh that flung muffin bits
into the atmosphere.
Philotimia looked puzzled
then giggled then said,
“No, the business is in trouble.”
“Oh, you mean Stephen Hawking Junior?”
“Yes, Stephen Hawking Junior
is a son of a bitch! No.
He’s actually a son of a cunt!”
“So I’ve heard.”
“So you’ve read his new book?”
“No, I just had breakfast with Dean.”
“It’s about here though,
he even named it
‘A Brief History Of A Mercurial Because’”
“I didn’t get the impression
Dean was all that enthused about the attention.”
“Oh, Dean hates Stephen Hawking Junior.
Last month—don’t tell anyone this,”
she exhaled another modicum of smoke,

“last month he spent almost
fifteen hundred dollars
to paint a portrait of
Stephen Hawking Junior’s face
on the bottom of
the toilet bowl in his office.”
Demo glanced back
at Whenever, whose chews
were still slightly audible.
“Granted, I don’t follow modern art
all that closely,
but I thought it was very well done.”
The flame met the filter
and she flicked the cigarette
onto the indoor pavement.
“I’ve actually got the book at my desk,”
she said, “why don’t you come by some time—”
Whenever’s loud laughter
could again be heard audibly
fifteen feet away, to which Philotimia
paused, then asked,
“Who’re they?” now glancing at the Dates.
“Oh, them?” Demo said,
scratching the left side of his neck
with his right hand,
“They’re The Expiration Dates.”
“Oh that’s right! Well, why don’t you
come with me, and I’ll give you the book?
Can you take a quick break?”

“We should make this
quick if we can,”
she said as she ascended
hurriedly up the stairs
through the office,
“Dean hates when I’m away
from my desk for
more than a minute,
that’s why I asked you
to come up with me now,
not that I have any issue
with you coming up
with me now,
it’s just if I came alone
I’d get the book
but might not be able
to make it back down
before the end of the day,
then tomorrow I’d forget,
about the book not you,
and then our entire exchange
would have been wasted.”
“How far up is your
desk anyway?”
“Just the second floor,”
she said. “Here,” she waved,
“this way,” and when they came
upon her desk they found it
enclosed by four walls,

a floor, and a ceiling
that could only be called paper-thin fish tanks.
“Where are all the fish?”
Demo asked, perhaps nonsensically.
“There aren’t any fish tanks,”
Philotimia said,
ruffling under her desk,
then re-entered the scene,
book in hand.
“Dean’s a very unique interior decorator,
everyone asks ‘where are the fish?’
as if the walls could be fish tanks,
and I guess they all,
you included,
have a point as they can
resemble fish tanks at times,
but then white walls and printer paper
do, too. But of course no fish
could ever make it more
than a day in these walls,
they’re too suffocating,
they’re too constricting,
it would be impossible
for them to stretch their fins or swim,
there’s just no space,
and then they’d get fat,
I mean, they can’t exercise,
and then they’d get stuck
between the two glass surfaces,
it’s a vicious cycle.
We actually had a goldfish

once and that's exactly
what happened,
it got fat and got stuck,
and that was that,
it was a complete mess,
and I think its spleen
was stained onto the right wall
there for almost three weeks,
and maybe that's more than
you need or want to know,
but it's not everyday
spleens are stained
onto secretaries' walls."
"No, no," Demo said,
now holding the book in his hand,
"I've never been offended by spleens."
He turned to look back at the wall
she's just referenced,
perhaps searching for fish spleen,
but as he did he led with his elbow,
which caused the tip of his triangular arm
to penetrate the East wall
of Philotimia's workspace.
Water flowed outward everywhere.

[22]

Philotimia says, "Oh God, Demo,
that's amazing!
Dean kept telling me
you were all bottled up,

but I just had a feeling
you were a waterfall waiting to happen!”
“Oh, geez,” Demo said,
“This is going to be a mess, isn’t it?”
A voice then emerged
that was neither his or hers,
which said, “Ayyyyy.”
Both Demo and Philotimia
turned toward the doorway
to trace the echo.
A janitor stood in a blank stance,
his eyeballs were like Rottweilers
on short leashes,
his mop was lined in chrome
and his uniform was pinstriped.
“Broh, you broke the shit
out of her wall, broh,” he said.
“You must be bottled up,”
The Janitor continued.
“Joey!” Philotimia shouted.
“Demo!” Dean shouted,
now entering Demo’s purview.
“Dean!” Philotimia exclaimed.
“Shit,” Demo muttered.
“Demo,” Dean begins,
standing outside the triangle of Demo,
Philotimia and the Janitor,
“are you aware that these walls,
that they can never be
remade the way they were?”
“He really didn’t mean to, Dean,”

Philotimia defended,
“I was talking about fish spleen,
and Demo just happened to swing
his elbow around, and,”
“Enough!” Dean shouted.
Dean began to walk out,
back to his office,
but before leaving
he turned back briefly
to say, “And, um, Philotimia,
I’m expecting a call from
Paul Finito,
you remember my second cousin
Paul Finito, don’t you?
Well, I’m expecting a call
from him this afternoon,
if you could just
make sure to forward it to my first line?”
“Sure thing, Dean!”
she said, as Dean
made his way back
to his office.
“Phew,” she said,
now turning back to Demo,
“that was a close one.”
Demo began to reply
but felt as though his feet
were being swept
from under him.
“Broh, I’m trying to clean up
your mess over here,”

The Janitor lamented.
“Well, I guess I should
be getting back
to the shredder then.”
Demo began to trudge
sneakers squishing
with the right words
left unsaid,
and Philotimia
stretched herself out across
her desk and said,
“Here! Don’t forget the book!”
Her outstretched hand held
‘A Brief History of a Mercurial Because’,
her slight fingers barely
maintaining the grasp.
Demo lifted it gently
from her palms and
said nothing
as he descended downstairs.

[23]

Demo left the book
in the break room.
He rounded the corner
on his way to the shredder
and found Whenever shouting,
“There he is!”
“The man of the
forty five minutes!”

Now screamed.
“Oh man, look,
his clothes are all wet!”
The Right Time exclaimed.
“That’s what she said,”
Of Old Age added.
“That’s not how you’re
supposed to use that,”
Whenever corrected.
“C’mon guys, leave him alone,”
Never said.
It became apparent
by the muffin crumbs
and coffee stains
mingling with the posthumous
reasons and outdated Because
that The Expiration Dates
had been using
Demo’s shredder
for a coffee table.
“So, hold on,” Now said,
gathering his thoughts carefully,
“don’t tell me she’s a squirter?”
“Wait, what’s a squirter?”
Of Old Age asked,
intensely curious.
“Guys, c’mon,” Demo said.
“I’d eat her ass after supper, D!”
Now shouted.
“So is she this wet?”
Never asked,

also intensely curious.
“That’s what she said,”
Of Old Age said.
“Oh, God!” Whenever said.
Disgusted, Demo turned
from the five and began
to use his forearm
to swipe away the crumbs
and usurp the stains,
then he turned the shredder back on.
Eventually, Of Old Age
stepped forward and said,
“Demo.” Demo didn’t reply,
but this hardly deterred the group.
In fact, it only inspired
the others to speak.
“Demo,” Whenever said.
“Demo,” The Right Time said.
“Demo,” Now said.
“Demo,” Never said.
“Demo,” Of Old Age said.
“Demo!” Never said.
“What?!” Demo exclaimed,
finally. “Demo, we have a few
more bars we’d like to—”
“I don’t want a set of bars
dropped right now thank you!”
“That’s it,” a fed up Never
said to the others,
“grab the head.”
At this point,

Demo was restrained
forcibly yet showed
no emotion at all.
Of Old Age justified
the force noting,
“This is our goddamned job!”

(Missing Poem)

[24]

Of Old Age was about
to battle the bathroom
as The Expiration Dates
made their way back
to the breakroom.
Two captious young men
approached Demo
in a convivial fashion.
Demo, attempting to feign deafness,
tucked his face away
and shoveled crushed
Because up both his nose holes.
“Do you think he heard us?”
the one whispered
to the other after a beat.
“I don’t think he did,
he didn’t answer.”
“Well, his head is up
that shredder.”
“Practically.”

“Practically.”

“Do you know what was rude of us?”

“What was rude of us?”

“We didn’t introduce
ourselves, did we?”

“We didn’t!”

“Oh God, he probably
doesn’t even know
who we are!”

“Demo!”

“Demo!”

“Oh, hey guys.

I didn’t see you there,” he said.

“Hey Demo, I’m Alex.”

“And I’m Pat!”

“We’re the interns!”

[25]

“Philotimia’s interns,”

one of them said

as they both giggled.

“We’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Is it true you’re Dean’s cousin.”

“He’s too young to be his cousin,
don’t you remember anything?”

“Oh, that’s right,
you’re his nephew, right?”

“And you just returned back.”

“So how do you like
being back anyway?”

“It’s okay.”

“But originally
you’re from here, right?”

“He grew up here,
Dean told us that.”

“Thank God.”

“Because everyone
says it’s so different
when you come
from away compared to here.”

“Basically that you can
go away if you’re from here,
but if you came from away,
well, forget about coming here!”

“Imagine someone
who came from away
trying to make it here?”

“No, actually, I can’t.”

“I mean, where would
they stay?”

“They wouldn’t last a day!”

“Demo,” “Demo,”

“We’ve actually got some
good news for you.”

“Even if it’s none
of our business.”

“Which it is and isn’t,
we guess.”

“Philotimia told us,”

“To give you her number.”

“Really?” Demo said.

“Yes! Although she was
a little offended
you left her office in such a rush.”
“We won’t sugarcoat that.”
“We don’t sugarcoat shit!”
“But she did say
you should text her.”
“Any time, right?”
“Well, not anytime.”
“But any time other than anytime?”
“Right.” “You must’ve made
some impression, Mister Demo.”
“Or so we’ve heard.”
“Mister Demo.” “Because,
believe us, she doesn’t do this
for many men.”
“Well, now that’s not true, Alex.”
“I know, but it’s
a nice thing to say, Pat.”
“Now that is true.”
“But, in any case,
it was nice to meet you.”
“And to speak to you.”
“Oh, that too!”
“Bye, Demo!”
“Bye, Demo!”

Alex and Pat walked away,
and Demo found himself
in the unexpected position
of having enough
Because stuck up his
nose to sneeze out
a Constitution.

A string bean body
emerged into the
shredder area.

“Demo, what’s going on, Demo?”

“Demo, you remember
Paul Finito, right?” Dean asked,
Demo just now made aware
of his presence,
as he strapped on his hard hat.

“Hi, Paul,” Demo said,
a snuffle withheld.

“Demo, how you been, Demo?
Demo, you look like you’ve grown all up,
but you look like you’re bottled all up, Demo,”
Paul continued, to which Dean said,

“Demo, why don’t you go grab
Paul a cup of coffee,”

As Demo walked to the coffee
machine he pulled out his phone
on a whim to text Philotimia.

Senses flickering like low light bulbs,
 Demo noted Jimmy Ends seated
 reading with a torch in one hand
 and A Brief History Of A Mercurial Because
 in the other.

The Expiration Dates sat
 with all ten of their legs
 crossed, eyes glossed
 looking up through
 the smoke. “‘Because?’”

Jimmy read aloud,
 “But ‘Because’ why?”

What do we say
 when we say ‘Because’?
 Why do we imply that we
 occupy a state of being
 due to a cause?

When all a Mercurial Because
 can say is:

‘There will be a cause
 to your being Because
 there is a cause to your being’?
 But what could this cause possibly be?
 If the genesis of our existence
 isn’t a You Had To Be There Situation—
 well, what is?’”

“Hey, it’s Demo!” Never blurted
 from the floor.

Jimmy paused and turned

his torch toward Demo.
“Oh, thank God you left
this Hawking Junior book here, D,
it’s literally changed my fucking life!”
Jimmy said, to
which Of Old Age added,
“Yeah, it’s changed all of our lives!”
Demo, setting aside the anecdote
for a moment, leaned into Jimmy
and asked him if he was burning down
the breakroom,
to which Jimmy noted he was,
that he and the Expiration Dates
had come to find
the breakroom a bit deleterious.
“But that’s not all, D,” Jimmy went on,
the breakroom now rapidly burning down,
“Well, you know how we were
just reading that Stephen Hawking Junior book?
Well, while we were reading
we kind of came to a conclusion,
that, in short, we no longer believe
you can be bottled up.”
“Why don’t you just explain
it to him right now,” Never interrupted harshly,
“before the break room burns down.”

[28]

“Basically, well, we all heard
about Philotimia’s wall

being completely dismantled,
and believe me we were
all really impressed,” Jimmy began,
“And people may, sure,
say it’s absurd that
a swung elbow
could lead to a precious wall
collapsing in a secretary’s
nondescript office area.
Yet it’s not that absurd.
Because an extremity in motion
and a delicate lining in stasis
are interactions that intertwine
not unlike a person
who comes to be.
Perhaps it’s a little simplistic,
but the extremity is the father
and the lining is the mother.
Sure, maybe that’s reductionist,
perhaps even moronic,
but your swung extremity
breaking down Philotimia’s
precious wall is an act
that is made up of
a complex synthesis of interactions.
Just like us talking right now.”
Demo attempted to interrupt,
but Jimmy went on,
“All I’m trying to say is,
in a very literal sense,
we are the act,

you and I are essentially
no different than your
elbow swinging into Philotimia's wall,
and, if that's the case,
then you can't be bottled up.
You can't be bottled up
if you are the process.
To be bottled up can only
be an end result of a process, right?"
Surrounded by intense flames,
Jimmy pressed the binding of the book
against his pelvis and said,
"But nobody gives a shit
about stationary things."

[29]

Of Old Age looked like
a stuffed trash bag
passed out in his white t-shirt
in the corner as
Whenever and Never
also laid unconscious
on top of one another
in a near sixty nine position
on a lunch table.
Newly sober, Demo
mutters to himself,
"You know, I forgot
to get Paul that coffee."
"What was that?" Jimmy asked,

bear hugging Of Old Age
in the corner, attempting in vain
to drag him to safety.

[30]

Jimmy continued to,
with varying degrees of success,
drag passed out Expiration Dates
out of the molten breakroom
when the thought occurred to Demo:
“What if, when we speak of people,
we beg the question.”
He mentioned this to Jimmy, saying,
“Jimmy, couldn’t my collapsing
of that secretary’s wall
be like the life of a person,
but couldn’t a person
be made up of
a million mini-persons
that are, like you said,
also constructed like the desecration
of a secretary’s wall?”
“That’s interesting,
but I’m trying to save
the goddamned Expiration Dates!”
Jimmy retorted,
book still nestled in his armpit.
“Paul Finito,” Demo said,
“the cup of coffee!”
“Don’t worry, D!” Now shouted,

the last of the Dates awake,
as he took out his tweezers
then leaped across the room
and plucked just enough brows
to make a brush,
then crushed the brittle hairs
onto his eyelids until
Demo's blinks were inked to read aloud:

(Missing Poem)

[31]

Sitting outside
the now collapsed breakroom,
charred and exhausted,
Now and Jimmy,
the only two of the six
still conscious,
make immediate note
of an open text conversation,
visible on Demo's discarded
cell phone. "Philotimia,"
Now read aloud, "what is going on?
I'd gladly discuss
what happened earlier
with you later today
if and when you want."
"Gladly?!" Jimmy giggled,
to which Now noted
the antiquated nature

of the adverb.

Jimmy agreed,

kicking Demo in the gut.

“I was on the fence about,” he said,

curdled, from the ground up.

“It’s a very 19th Century adverb,”

Jimmy said.

“I do believe it is quite

completely and utterly unlayable,”

Now noted in an affected British accent.

“I would tend to agree

that that’s unbelievably unattractive

to almost any female

with a fully functioning vagina,”

Whenever said, awakened

by the commotion,

coughed from the floor.

“Is it that bad?” Demo asked.

“Demo,” Jimmy said,

now in a quite serious tone,

“I once had a girl dump me

and pen disparaging comments

all over my MySpace page

because I said ‘ebullient’ to her

over the phone.

Vocabulary is an incredibly

powerful aphrodisiac.”

“But ‘ebullient’ is one

of my top ten favorite words

of all time,” a voice echoed

from beyond the horizon of the warehouse.

An unknown female approached
the seven men and pulled a pack
of gum from her front pocket
and offered a stick to all
who were conscious.
Whenever declined,
but noted that,
“there’s a depressing dearth
of people courteous
of the widespread need
for chewing gum these days.”
“It’s Trident,” she said.
Chomping in silence,
she then continued,
“I’m Philotimia.
I’m the Assistant
To The Secretary.”
Whenever noted that
he was the laissez-faire
one of the group,
to which Philotimia said,
“Actually, I came down here
because Philotimia asked me
to ask you to come with me
back to my office.”

The two maneuvered through
the office, and Demo stumbled upon
Dean by the bottom
of the staircase,
who was in the process
of pulling out
a company fire extinguisher.
“What happened to the coffee?!”
he shouted,
but The Other Philotimia
quickly escorted Demo
in an outline around
the explosive compartments
of his probable Uncle—
Demo vividly imagined
Paul asking him,
“Demo, where’s the Jo, Demo?”
as they scurried so squirrely by.
This time the second floor
was a silk ascent
as Philotimia took him
to the same office
as the first time.
Now it was emptied.
“This is your office?” Demo asked.
“No, look,” she said.
In the corner of the office,
what must’ve been obscured
by the intense confusion

of the morning imbroglio,
sat what looked to be
a wishing well of
immense architectural integrity.
Demo approached it and noticed
a desk and a chair submerged
under the cloud-free,
sky-blue water. "Let's go," she said.
As the two tread water
on the top of her desk Demo said,
"it must be kind of difficult
to get work done like this."
"Experts actually say being
submerged beneath three feet
of water increases efficiency
exponentially," she said,
then continued, "So what's it like
being all bottled up anyway?"
to which Demo said, "Well,"
he stuttered his treads as he
adjusted to her continually
changing position,
"for the most part I'd say
it's a waiting game
that takes itself too seriously."
"The Expiration Dates were telling us
that the carbonation can be
confusing, is that true?"
"The Expiration Dates?"
"Oh, they were up here all morning."
"I thought they were in the breakroom."

“No, it burnt down.”

At this juncture, Philotimia asked Demo,
“So how long was your longest relationship?”
then, “So what’s your favorite trait in a date?”
and finally, “So are you a pathological liar?”
to which Demo answered,
“Twenty seven minutes on and off,”
then, “You mean, like, breasts?”
and finally,
“Not to the best of my knowledge.”

[34]

“Ok great! Well,
that completes our survey,”
she said, still treading effortlessly.
“Survey?”
“Yes, Philotimia wanted me
to conduct a survey through you.
That’s why she asked me
to bring you up here.”
“Oh, I wasn’t aware,”
“It’s not a bad thing.
She’s interested in you, that’s all.”
“No, I didn’t think it was.”
“Are those bars on your face?”
Philotimia already had a fingertip tracing
the contours of his temple.”
“Let me see,” she said,
moving her fingertip onto his eyelids.
“Actually,” Demo began somewhat proudly,

“I have an open expiration date
under my eyebrows.”

“Wow, what does it say?!”

“Best Used By __ / __ [Blank].”

In what seemed like a literal blink
of an eye Philotimia was gone,
yet before Demo could wonder
too intensely as to where she went,
he felt a docile tug on his leg.

Looking down he notes her
drowning in the water
of her own wishing well.

Demo immediately submerged
himself further to grab her,
flailing near lifeless at the
bottom of the wishing well,
using the desk as a push off point,
he thrust them both upward.

Reaching the surface
in simultaneous gasps,
they found The Janitor
waiting with his mop,
almost as if he was waiting for them,
with his trademark nonplussed expression.

[35]

“C’mon broh,” The Janitor sighed,

“Are you serious, broh?”

“No, you don’t understand,” Demo started,

“she was conducting a survey when

she got distracted by my bars,
my birthmark—”
“Yeah, I had a girl who saw my birthmark once,
I get it, broh,” the Janitor interrupted,
but now Philotimia, regaining consciousness,
noted, “It’s nothing, really.”
Dean and Paul Finito
both shook their heads
at the sight in a dooming unison.
They looked ten feet tall
to Demo from within the wishing well.
“What did I tell you?” Dean scolded,
“Don’t answer that!”
“Demo, my throat is parched, Demo,”
Paul added, “I could’ve really used that Jo, Demo.”

[36]

As this was occurring,
Demo noted The Janitor
and Philotimia conversing.
Shortly afterward she approached
him and said, “Demo,
I have one more question for you—
are your eyebrows really rich
and black enough to win
an NAACP Image Award?”
Before he could reply she continues,
“How could you find that funny?!”
Do you have any idea
how offensive that remark

is to my people?”
to which Demo said,
“You’re black?” to which she scoffed,
“My Great Aunt is!”
She then turned to The Janitor
and said, “Joey,
if you could change the water
in my well ASAP that would be great.”
“You know, no one gets you, Demo,”
she continued, “Everything about you
is unnecessarily mythologized
and it doesn’t take very long
to see that it’s really just
your own narcissism giving itself
clever cloaks over and over again.
You manufacture ambiguities
for yourself, for your amusement,
and then trick people into thinking
they notice them about you
when you plant them on yourself!”
“Oh, wow,” Joey sighed,
as Paul and Dean
now consoled another soaked Philotimia.
Paul noted, “Philotimia, he’s an asshole, Philotimia.”
“It’s all overly complicated!” Demo shouted
as the five of them walked away,
“I hope you understand that!”
Demo lifted his dangling legs
from the wishing well,
attempted to ring out his soaked shirt
unsuccessfully, and trudged back down

to the shredder area.

[37]

Flanked by Alex and Pat,
the initial Philotimia was waiting
for the drenched Demo
she'd encounter at the shredder area.
Alex and Pat were flanked
by Whenever and Never
who were flanked by
The Right Time and Of Old Age.
Now hid in the crevice
of the V formation.
Demo arrived at the bottom
of the stairs and muttered
nonsensically to himself.
Staring at his disappointed comportment,
he said, "I didn't even realize
we were really together,"
to which she said,
"That's what makes this so difficult,"
to which he said,
"Would you at least like a cup of coffee?"
to which she said,
"I need to cut back on my caffeine,"
to which he said,
"I think they have decaf
in what's left of the break room."

[38]

“Do you think he wants
some bars dropped on him?”
Now asked Never
in front of a dejected Demo shredding.
At this point Demo
was clad in only underwear.
“I think they might do him some good,”
Never said.
Demo was in no mood
to disagree, Of Old Age
was drinking decaf,
dipping the last muffin
from Dean’s Cadillac
into the liquid on every bite,
and Now stepped up
and plucked enough brows
to make a brush,
then crushed the hair
into his left pec
until the bars were
dropped to read aloud:

(Missing Poem)

[39]

The Janitor approached
in his forklift and said,
“What’s up, boss?”

Covered in bars,
Demo remained silent.
“You all set here?”
The Janitor continued,
pointing to a dumpster filled
with trashbags of confetti shreddings.
Demo remained silent
as the shredder
malfunctioned,
so The Janitor
took it upon himself
to remove the dumpster.
A still silent Demo plodded
to the back of the shredder
and attempted to inspect the malfunction.
It looked like a Because was clotting it,
so with surprising ease
he plucked it from
the various cogs to take a look.
Glancing at it further it read aloud,
“I daydream in my mind,
in my body.
What may seem has no line
for a boundary.”

[40]

Demo woke up sitting
on Dean’s desk
like a Doctor’s table,
Dean and an unnamed man

standing around him.
“Well, let’s see here,”
the other man muttered,
glancing down at a clipboard
he curls in his arm
like a new-born baby.
“Let’s see here:
we’ve got diffident discoloration,
the subject is seeping sweat,
a little bit of fizz
is perspiring out
the cap-head,
and we can clearly see that—
unscientifically speaking—
there are tons of trademarks
contaminating what’s left of the carbonation.”
The other man looked up
and then said directly to Dean,
“and then there are the bars—
these inverted paragraphs
he has tattooed onto almost
every piece of his body.
Then again, it was in all likelihood inevitable.
You have a subject here, Dean,
who was, apparently,
all bottled up placed
in an environment
of competitive sloganeering.”
“Maybe it was my fault,” Dean said,
“It was probably Dena’s fault,”
to which the other man said,

“It’s difficult to accurately appropriate
blame in cases like this,
where circumstances align
in such a way that reasons
will always be fleeting.
And, not to add insult to injury,
but once the trademarks concatenate
into the carbonation
as they have in him
there’s very little recourse to recovery.
He has very little fizz left.”
“Well, I’d like to at least
make sure he’s sent back
to where he came from.”
“And where is that?”
“Well, he did spend
some time away.”
“We can have him recalled
as early as this afternoon if you’d like.”

[41]

Recalled:
in a middle school boys’ bathroom
at 7:16 a.m.,
Seamus “Sparky” McDougal
stumbles upon
Demo “Mr. Demises” Demises
hunching, scrunching over
in a flesh fold,
back like a plateau

over a one and only toilet bowl,
sobbing uncontrollably:
deflated.

Tears drip from his eyes
and plop into the toilet water—
on their descents
each one refracts
the infinite angles
of artificial light
that makes the
specific sight possible.

Demo sees sights
of himself in
constant recombination:
schizophrenic narcissism.

The coarsened
probably pissed upon
bargain bin rear-end Kleenex
comes apart as he grasps for it—
he knows he should probably
be taking attendance.

Seamus says,
“Hey mister, what’s the matter?”
and Demo shoots a squint
through the crack of the stall
door and says nothing.

Now he knows he should’ve
looked harder for a men’s room.

“You need a nurse?”

“Go to homeroom.”

“I think you’re it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Mrs. Warner’s.”

“What time is it?”

“Seven seventeen.”

“Shit!”

Inside the stall Demo stands up
and towers over the toilet.

He jabs, hooks, uppercuts
the toilet tissue off of his fingertips.

As he opens the door
Sparky’s deeply freckled face
looks like lassitude
a foot and a half below
his eye line.

His eyes are magenta mush
and sink into his sockets
like sunburns in the shade.

The meant-for-adolescents mirror
makes Demo neck-down.

The automatic faucet
sporadically fills up his cupped hands
in five small streams.

The movement activated hand dryer
sporadically spits hot air
at his outstretched arms and face.

Almost silently, Demo says,
“Why does it have to be like this?”
as a man-made wind tunnels
farts into his face.

Seamus says, “Because,”
to which Demo says, “What?”

to which Seamus says,
“That’s what my Dad says.”
“Your Dad’s an asshole,” Demo says,
as he walks young Sparky
out of the boys bathroom
and into their homeroom.