

## HISTORY OF ADVENTURE

We were in the box, the box was in the sea, and the sea was in the belly of a tall man from Idaho. We called out to him, but he was asleep, or drunk, or asking his friends whether to keep the sea as it was, or disgorge it bit by bit over the evening. The interior lighting was not as bad as you'd think: bioluminescent plankton and Burke's candle kept our eyes working. Would we use the candle eventually to burn our way to freedom? Would the box, a cardboard cube from Lowe's, keep us afloat? Is it any wonder that Burke loved my wife, and my wife loved him? I was the captain—not literally so, not commonly known as so, not asked by anyone to be so, but the captain nonetheless. I wore the burden heavily, like a soaked wool jacket, which I also wore. Burke had the candle and the ideas, so I made him first mate, under my breath, while Burke focused on the rope. My wife had hardtack and a good ghost story she told Burke in whispers, behind her small right hand. I'd married us only yesterday, as the captain and as the one in love with her. The Idahoan screamed. A hollow, rapacious scream, both terrified and hoping to terrify. We wondered whether he knew of us at last, whether the sea suddenly seemed to him more than a sea. Burke said let's shinny up his open throat. A genius, he was, a genius of the sea.

## HISTORY OF THE FATHER

After Kima is shot in the tenth episode of the first season of *The Wire*, Major Rawls says, this isn't your fault, McNulty. And you can believe me, because I hate you, and if any part of this was your fault, I'd make sure you knew that. Only the father can give us this comfort: Listen, son. I'm trying to destroy you and remake you in my image. And yet, what you have done—it is not so terrible.

## HISTORY OF CHOICE

What we do is we take a single moment, whichever you want, and we take what you're feeling in that moment, the whole complex set of emotions from that exact time, the percentages of sadness and anger and joy and so on, the admixture of your nuanced internal sensations, and we capture it, a sort of limbic snapshot, inside this box. Well, not in this box, exactly, but close enough. And then, and here's what the last three years of this company's R&D was pretty much exclusively spent on, we recreate it for you at a later, different moment. Or many later, different moments, up to you, how many times you want that sensation. You could live in that moment for the rest of—well, plus eating. So. All we need is your signature on these six forms and a quick note on which moment it is you want. Most people pick from this list here, if you're having trouble.

## IN THE SPACE BELOW, PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY YOU WANT YOUR EYE REMOVED

One eye will often stare more forcefully than the other. In some people, this stare switches from eye to eye, depending on perspective and light. In others, though, the stare stays with one eye, and the other eye becomes a copy, a smaller and frailer version of its original twin. This smaller eye has given up its purpose; it has ceded its claims to its nearby sibling, and can only make itself known by causing discomfort. It looks elsewhere and will not report back. For years now, we've had no news of what this eye has seen.

## HISTORY OF THE FATHER

After several years, the son confessed that he was not the son at all, but an impostor. I have only been acting as the son, he said. How astonishing, the father said. I, too, have been acting. This whole time, I was only pretending to be the father. The actual father and son lived a long ways away; they'd never met these imitators and had no idea anyone was pretending to be them. Once it was over, though—once the fake father had returned to his actual life, and the fake son to his—the actual father and the actual son noticed a cooling in their relationship, as though each had remembered a slight in their past, some small thing that was both commonplace and unforgivable.

## HISTORY OF THE TURING TEST

We lost in the end because the robots were pretty funny about the waning days of the British empire and because our years of training were spent tweeting, not talking, and because all our sentences finished with the phrase So Blessed.

## JASON WHITMARSH

Jason Whitmarsh's first book, *Tomorrow's Living Room*, won the May Swenson Award. His second book, *The Histories*, was published in 2017 as part of the Carnegie Mellon Poetry Series. He lives in Seattle with his wife and children.