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On Sunday

David Napolin

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien
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Only the White Meat

If sharks flew they avoided the mutant forest, where phage-ridden former humans vied with giant pitcher plants for the few morsels that entered there. Out of the forest the red river ran, and you could fish out humanovegetal larvae, drowned and spinose. I spread my nets each morning, seeking not the worthless larvae but the toothsome skipperfish and the rare jack hobblins, highly prized for its medicinal properties. Nevertheless, many a time the loathsome spiny things are stuck in my net when I reel it in at dusk, and are the very devil to get out. I think there is some toxin on the spines, for one evening after a particularly vicious jab, I dreamed I entered the river myself, and swam upstream, into the forest. In my dream I swam to where the river bubbled out of a fuming pit, surrounded by vast pitchers of disturbing hues. I crept silently beneath the giant plants as they swayed in a breeze I could not feel, seeming at times to bend towards me and to strain with open "mouths." I had not gone far when I found a disturbing figure working over a high table. The creature was tall, and seemed at once ungainly and frighteningly graceful, like a preying mantis.

David writes: *I began writing poetry as a holiday tradition started by my mother, though my early efforts were a bit macabre for her taste. I returned to poetry a decade later because I no longer had time to write fiction. Poetry encourages word play and a focus on mood rather than events. This was a challenge for me, because SF and fantasy are often driven by content more than mood. Genre poetry differs from much genre fiction—even when we tell a story, we do it differently.*

Its hair resembled plastic hose, its limbs were shiny like a bug's, and its back was covered with iridescent violet fur. I could hear its breath whistling in and out, accompanied by a faint irregular clicking. Horribly, the creature's odor was the familiar one of wet dog. On the table ... but I could not see what lay on the table. I only saw the hideous creature gouging into something that moved and mewed, and extracting at intervals a struggling larva with wet and reddened spines. The larvae went into a metal basket taller than I am. Occasionally, the creature excavated from what lay on the table a larva limp as a rag; these were thrown over its shoulder into the sullen river. The third time this happened I almost saw what writhed upon the table and I made some small sound. Immediately the creature turned and rushed upon me with scissored limbs. These ... I don't want to call them arms ... fell upon my shoulders, severing my head. The creature picked up my head and tossed it into the basket with the larvae, then turned back to its ghastly harvesting. Somehow my head is still alive but I cannot move. One of the larvae has fastened upon my wounded neck and begun to suck desperately, its spines flailing wildly. I cannot scream. My neck hurts so, I hope that I wake soon.

ON SUNDAY

by David Napolin

There are holes in heaven
When you look through the trees
Especially at morning
When rain in swift descent
Veers from the sky,
When air is asleep
Except for birds,
The murmured drenching of leaves
And rumble
Of a distant train
And articulate six o'clock
With no gold buy grey
And slow heave of foliage.

Why revere a cathedral
When trees in shadow
Spread wider and more varied
Than any church?
And who could not, without an altar
Worship the inscrutable silence of a tree
Or loneliness of early rain?