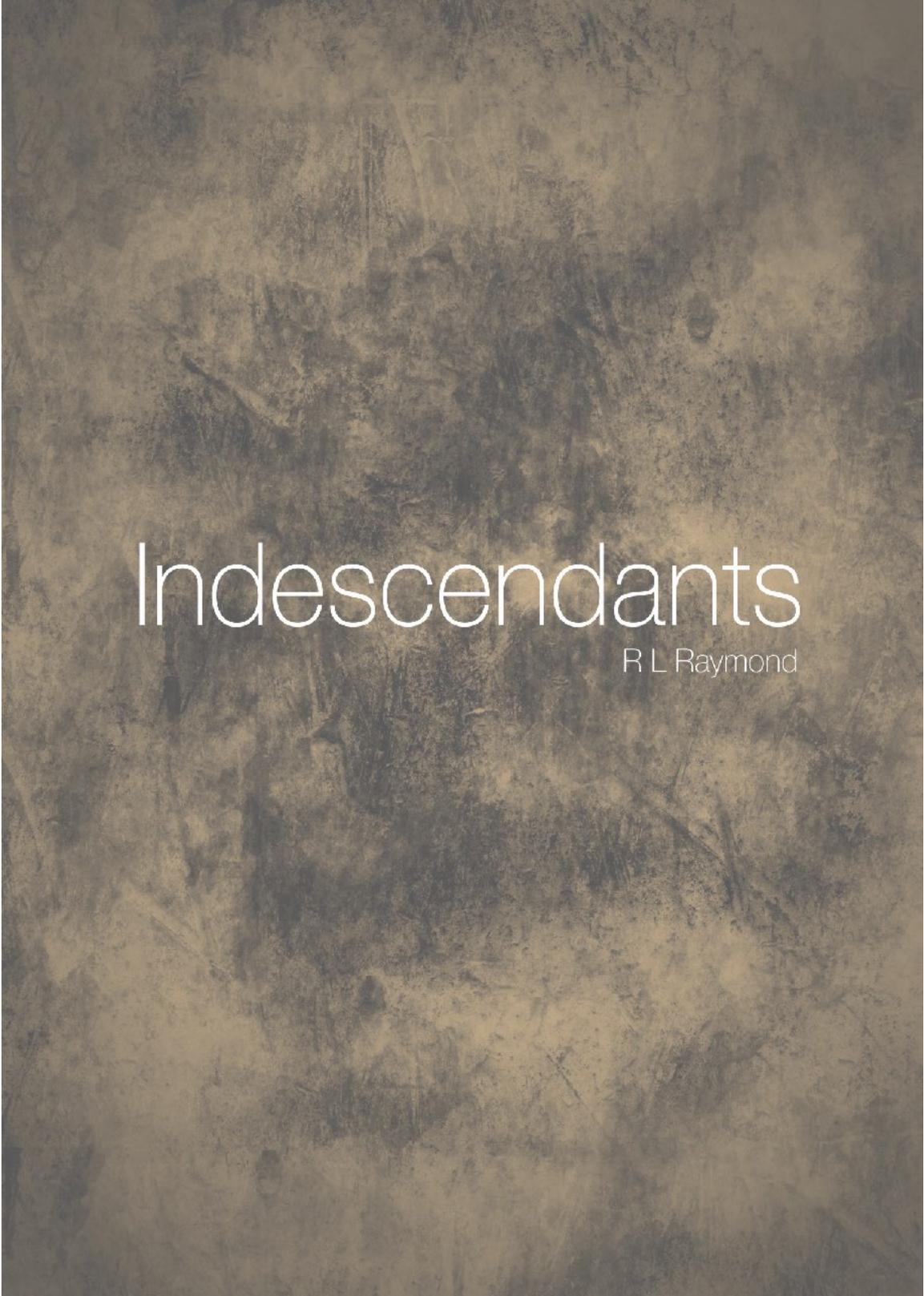


# Indescendants

R L Raymond



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# **Indescendants**

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# Indescendants

## **A finality**

He whispered  
*thank you* - aloud -  
through the frosted glass  
as she left  
    not caring  
        whether she heard  
content in knowing  
    he had

## **That morning**

under a veil  
of spiced apple

she knew

she'd lain in bed  
long enough

## Having waited so long

It was all too dramatic --  
the bus kneeling down  
in the mix of exhaust and mizzle;

The doors opening  
    slowly  
with a film-noir swish;

But how beautifully her skirt swayed  
and how perfectly she mouthed *I'm home...*

## The state of emergencies

From the window  
with rounded corners  
we look  
    down  
to see the sun  
reflected  
in field and forest floor  
from pools  
left behind  
by the morning storm

These new-lain marshes  
    occasionally  
mirror the sky  
    perfectly  
in the windless-still  
of ditch or furrow

\* \* \*

As the plane descends  
its shadow floats  
    for a second  
across the highway  
still shine-slick  
lined with cars  
heading home  
    to work  
        to a pub inside the city

\* \* \*

The wheels touch  
    down  
and spit mist

Soon we'll race  
across the parking lot

skipping puddles  
pulling our suitcases  
behind

Then we'll try  
to figure out  
exactly  
where we  
are going

## ***Fibonacci Seasons:***

**At some point in spring**

**Rogues**

**La sorcière**

**In December**

### **At some point in spring**

there

are

always

beginnings

that end in regret

a cedar planted by the shed

not quite where she'd requested and somewhat off kilter

a cedar cut back then dug out

quickly replaced with

the dogwood

she had

first

picked

## Rogues

he  
left  
her there  
as she asked  
by the willow tree  
having told her the roots were rogue  
that they grew wild all over and killed everything  
but she told him that she didn't much care about the cedars or the pines anyway  
she just wanted to sit in the shade with a lover  
who didn't waste his time on plants  
but simply wanted  
to sip gin  
alone  
with  
her

## La sorcière

she  
thinks  
there are  
witches here  
spinning hydrangea  
flowers dried in the autumn breeze  
with grit and maple leaves and yellowed newspaper shreds  
dust tornadoes in pointy hats  
dancing just for her  
secretly  
casting  
their  
spells

## In December

whispers of winter  
bend the boughs  
softly  
down  
just  
enough  
to cover  
the maze of mink prints  
crisscrossing  
the hedge  
and  
drive  
newly  
white laden  
otherwise untrod

---

## **A dickcissel**

made her forget  
the shattered mess  
of glass slivers  
under the fridge

she watched as it ate  
in the yard  
bill clicking  
at yellow weed seeds

she sipped  
warm chai tea  
without trace of a sigh  
alone in the kitchen

## Superficial

The cul-de-sac changed  
forever that day  
when they decided  
to destroy their old dog

The little girl had sniveled and cried so much -  
but the bite had been nothing  
just superficial

We learned that autumn day  
that the blood  
behind the old woodshed  
was barely thicker  
than the silence  
of our little street

*(translated from original French by author)*

## Anna-Belle

hid her treasure  
in mother's garden -  
an aluminum can filled  
with pictures  
    mementos  
    and a five dollar bill

in case...

that year the hydrangea  
turned blue

thick balls of flowers  
adorned the kitchen table  
every morning  
overshadowing silence  
    burnt toast  
    and contempt

\* \* \*

the blue faded  
when she ran away  
leaving a hole  
    a mound of dirt  
    and a few loosed petals  
around an aluminum can  
emptied  
of its secrets  
    of the bus fare  
    to daddy's house

## Skin in the game

after a matinee  
the boys all decided  
    in unison  
    to shave their heads  
save for a patch at the base of the skull

they took turns with clippers  
hidden in a basement  
    each tied a tail  
    however small  
with elastics stolen from their sisters

    they were warriors  
    they were bad-asses  
    they filled their pockets  
    with stones and marbles

they practiced with slingshots  
made from dried Y branches  
    smashing windows  
    breaking clay pots  
at the homes on the wrong side of the tracks

they ran away laughing  
screaming howling yelping  
    aiming at birds  
    aiming at dogs  
never brave enough to actually shoot

    they hid in bushes  
    they tried to be still  
    patiently waiting  
    for a new victim

they knew the little boy  
who rode past on his bike  
    maybe they could...  
    but they shouldn't...

but damn it sure would be hilarious...

they imagined it  
so tough out of sight  
until one of them  
stood up and fired

it sounded like hollow wood  
a pebble hitting a tree  
the boy fell down from his bike  
and he cried  
there was blood  
from his head

they ran away  
dumped their pockets  
burned the slingshots

they never protested  
when their parents cut off  
the rat-tails from their skulls

at school they could barely look at the boy  
when he returned with stitches and dressings  
and the top of his head shaved like a priest's

## **A brand of silence**

quietly  
on their tippy toes  
they work on their night vision

a skill  
they keep hidden  
from everybody

in darkness  
they expertly glide  
avoiding the squeaky boards

never  
hitting a desk  
or a chair or a bed

no one knows  
how good they've become  
masters of concentration

no one  
realizes  
at all how much money

they've stolen  
from parents' wallets  
and overnight guests' pockets

and  
they laugh  
about it  
over lattés  
at bright coffee shops  
that play hipster songs

## **Somewhere in the heartland**

the scaredy-cats slinked  
and hid  
in the fields

while adults killed  
the turkeys  
and promised thanks

later they came home  
pawing weeds  
from their legs

they licked grease  
from their fingers  
they flicked bones  
into the fire

they warmed themselves  
by the flames  
then yawned exaggerated yawns  
to avoid dishes and overtold tales

## One day

in grade six  
we played  
with mercury  
in science class.

We dipped our fingers  
into the cool weirdness  
of metallic  
    liquid pressure;  
we drip-dropped beads  
    onto the counter,  
flicked them apart -  
    into pin point pellets,  
then flicked them together -  
    into coagulated globs,  
we raced along the Formica.

For once  
at dinner,  
sitting at a plate  
of salmon gone cold  
because mom couldn't kill  
that fishy taste,  
when dad asked:  
*What did you do today?*  
we didn't say *nothing*.

*We played with mercury!*  
*and it's heavy*  
*and silver*  
*and quick...*

*Sounds like a great day.*  
*Now finish your fish.*

## Colours that leach

Without a whip of wind  
across the mirror lake  
their pellets skip  
some ticking the edge  
of the rowboat  
others spinning dragonflies  
off the rocks  
into the shallows  
upended and halved

They need a challenge  
    a new target  
    a new death

The water snakes are wily  
old enemies  
decidedly too fearsome

They hunt  
for eyes that pierce  
the calm  
    two bulges  
    bulbous and still

Frogs  
darting from the murk  
slimy with silt  
ascend for dry air  
and a splash  
of late summer sun  
unaware of the rifles  
    cocked and lead-loaded  
the sights  
    open and beaded  
locked

Lines of silver bubbles  
zip through the red-brown

just missing

or

the targets sink  
eyes rolled  
silently  
slipping back down  
through silt  
frogs  
settling on their backs  
atop muck

They bleed white

The boys return the next morning  
for another salvo  
until they see the bloated dead  
and the leaches  
afrenzied  
wound about the bodies  
wriggling  
    and swimming  
        and gorging

They feel  
    first sickness  
    remembering bloodsuckers  
    on their own calves and ankle  
    crying for salt shakers or redhot matchheads

then fear  
wondering how long it will be  
until someone - an adult -  
finds the grave  
and takes their guns

finally remorse  
or something akin  
to remorse

Lines zip through the water  
without effect  
shots failing to ward off  
a single leach

Rocks  
they'll throw rocks  
to scare the suckers  
and bury the frogs

Hundreds of stones  
transfer from lakeshore  
to rowboat  
to gravesite

They heap a pile  
over the corpses  
and the desecrators  
driven by remorse and fear and sickness  
ignoring the scrapes  
cuts  
gashes  
on their hands  
turning white in the lake

The marker skims then breaks the surface  
more obvious than any death  
more permanent

They row  
vowing not to turn  
and look  
hoping  
that shattered bottles and plinking cans  
will suffice

They row  
and do not turn

Behind  
a dragonfly alights  
perched on the outcrop  
wings outstretched  
flashing green and gold  
in the breeze

## Monday

is garbage day  
or accidental confession

the sins of the week  
cast out  
in plain sight  
every sunday night  
    in dessert wrappers  
        or bottles of wine  
            tucked under egg cartons  
            and mesclun containers

lined at the curb  
for curious dogs  
and eventual absolution  
by the rusty jaws  
of the collection truck

the sins of the week  
erased in one mechanical crush

except for a few crumbs  
of vanilla wafer  
on the sidewalk  
and a red stain  
        spilt on the driveway

## Variations on free will

He purchased the dog on a Wednesday  
by Saturday it was already house-trained

Within a few weeks he had managed  
to teach it basic commands and a few tricks

The best was the 'business-bell'  
a school bell left on the floor by the back door

When the dog had to go  
it would lift its front paw and 'ding'

Afterward it would watch him pick up the mess  
and drop it into a pit in the farthest corner of the yard

\* \* \*

He was devastated when it ran away  
on a Sunday

He drove about town for weeks  
yelling its name from his car window

He searched until he died  
a month later  
when he thought he'd spotted the dog  
his neck craned for a better look  
not paying attention to the road  
running a red into the back of a pick-up truck

\* \* \*

No one who attended the service  
on a Sunday  
found it ironic -  
except for the dead man  
and maybe the dog  
long picked up and given a new home -

that the bell tolled  
before they buried him

\* \* \*

## States of dust

Strung like magic  
from the desk lamp  
to a doorknob  
across the room  
a cobweb catches the light  
just right  
firing the flare  
of its own demise

the angle  
the timing  
the breeze from the register

just right

she slices her finger  
through the thread  
spins  
gathers  
    and flicks  
a tiny furry ball  
mundane  
like the bunnies  
under her chair

## The approach

in a car in silence  
eyes apart

from his seat  
the beltway  
around & under  
graffiti  
crumbling bridges  
the threat of concrete  
windshield concussions

from hers  
a byway  
winding slowly through  
antique shops  
& fresh fruit stands  
across the country  
of rusty signs

The arrival  
replete with the promise  
of restart

his reservations lost  
in swirls of dust  
along nameless alleys

her doubts fading  
under sunlight-streetlight-summer-neon  
reflected in high-rise plate glass

A restart  
at a window  
in a bistro  
hand in hand  
sharing a salad  
from an art-deco bowl

## **A shade she didn't wear**

the latté cooled at the small table  
milk foam scumming the rim  
where lips had sipped  
then sprinkled excuses and reasons  
like madagascar cinnamon

one corner of the wrinkled kerchief  
frantically tossed beside the cup  
was stained pink  
a shade she didn't wear  
the tablecloth absorbed a single droplet of blood

the pile of coins thrown down  
once the slap-sting faded  
would more than cover the latté  
and the tip  
plus a little something to offset the disruption

## A burdensome artifact

snow howled in  
early  
unseasonable and heavy  
breaking then burying  
still green branches  
and fire-orange boughs

excited  
a dog huffed  
through the whiteness  
that erased the litter  
of autumn

jubilant  
it emerged with something  
dirty and dead  
clenched in its jaw

a rabbit's leg  
    disembodied  
        chewed  
            shaken  
                tossed aside

in favour of movement  
more intriguing  
from the stooped spruce

the leg landed  
in a puff  
where snow parted  
exposing the slop  
of leaves  
already drained of their colours  
under the jagged stub  
of bone

## Interstitial

here  
dead in the pale  
a tract allowed to rest  
fallow  
yellow and dry  
at peace  
for this year  
from the harvester  
the forager  
the scavenger

there  
a sign of life  
in the dusk  
running  
straight-line  
under a dust-hung veil  
scuttling the earth  
in the wide-open space  
unprotected  
in flight

nearby  
a second puff  
more dust lifted  
at speed  
another line  
almost parallel to the first  
a few degrees off  
promising convergence  
just before the haven  
of a neighbouring coppice

the vectors meet -  
a thunderhead of grit  
hanging over the intersection  
movement and momentum transformed  
into a fur and tooth and claw

singularity

\* \* \*

one slinks into the thicket  
brushing the dirt from its face

the other drains into the parchedness  
a stain fading into the darkening field

## **The boy**

scared by the ball  
dives awkwardly  
across the field  
his fall softened  
by the dandelions

he asks his mother  
if she is upset  
and in the same breath  
why his knees are yellow

she looks away  
to the other children  
playing and laughing

she tells him simply  
that he is a coward

## Crucifer & Acolyte

marching down the aisle  
through the cloying cloak  
of incense

he tries to ignore her  
seated in a middle pew  
smiling coyly

he bears his burden  
somewhat begrudgingly  
glazed eyes locked ahead

she winks  
bites her lip  
certain that she'll  
one day  
part that alb of fog

## ***The Palm Psalms:***

**One last nail  
An orchid  
An old fountain pen**

### **One last nail**

grubby fingers  
gnawed to the quick  
drawn across the old door  
make less sound  
than he'd expected  
no screech  
    like a chalkboard  
    or temporary lover

just a scrub  
    atonal

grinding splinters into skin

on the other side  
she sobs  
into her palms  
rubbed raw

refusing to make a fist  
refusing to knock

having promised  
    herself  
    never to reenter

## **An orchid**

her grip is still strong  
yet her eyesight failing

she wraps her fingers  
    white-knuckled  
around something  
    blurry  
        yet familiar  
            a certain sweetness...  
            ... of pink

she squeezes harder  
    suffocating the image  
        the idea

losing whatever reminiscence  
cutting into her palm

## **An old fountain pen**

ink dried  
on the nib  
caked  
with flake-scale

a dab of alcohol  
in his palm  
pooled  
turns blue-black

ink flows  
insufficient  
diluted

along his life line  
and love line

---

## **Black (as) ice**

*the time is now*  
drawn out  
ironically  
syllables stretched  
emphatically

*before it's too late*  
at which point  
she leaves the room  
grabbing the car keys  
from the night stand

at three degrees  
the temp gauge flashes  
mechanically  
announcing the possibility of snow

## Sometimes

he doesn't have time  
to respect the dead  
doesn't pull over  
or slow down for a  
funeral cortege

all those vehicles  
with their headlights on  
with their purple flags  
crammed behind the hearse  
bumper to bumper...

he looks ahead  
the procession  
rolls on its way

he passes people  
who may condemn him  
but he doesn't care

*- judge not lest ye be judged*  
*- and I'm late for dinner*

## One finger - pointed

the red ticker  
mirrors the blood-  
flush in her cheeks

the dissonance  
echoes the rush  
of their anger

she screams for him  
to sleep downstairs

her tears are drowned  
by the weather  
station static

he stares at nought  
lost in the train  
whistle howl

driving rain beats  
siding and shakes

they had never once slept apart  
until the night the tornado  
ripped their house from its foundation

## The small blade

wasn't the sharpest  
he saved that one  
to clean his fingernails  
after digging in the garden

he did however keep  
the main blade honed  
to a polished edge  
always using it to cut  
the carrots and potatoes

but when he heard her  
put down the needlepoint  
to come check in on him  
he'd snap the blade shut  
against his thigh  
    and drop the knife  
        in his pocket

when she reached the kitchen  
one of her dull paring knives sat  
on the pile of vegetables  
ready for stew

*glad you didn't use that  
absolutely filthy knife of yours -  
it's disgusting to think  
what's been cut with it*

he winked  
kissed her on the cheek  
and never told her  
he didn't even wash 'em  
before peeling 'em

## Empty portrait

the shape of absence  
tangible  
the imprint of a pet  
curled near a pillow  
every night  
a depression in the mattress  
that can't be lifted  
even after  
the dog starts sleeping  
on the floor  
too old to jump on the bed

## The pendulum

She runs her index finger  
along the scar  
the non-scar  
praying it will fade  
praying it will not curse  
the child inside her

She wipes her eyes  
hoping he won't leave  
the ballgame broadcast  
and say *quit them alligator tears*  
leaving before she mumbles  
*crocodile tears, you mean crocodile tears, idiot...* unheard

The bases are loaded  
he cheers alone in the living room  
she runs her index finger  
along the linea negra  
and sobs in bed  
unheard

\* \* \*

Her child  
her boy  
learned from the father  
to catch to throw to hit  
and never to cry  
no matter what

He plays baseball  
outside  
with the father  
in the small yard  
behind the small house  
she had reluctantly settled on

She never plays

staying inside  
reading the local paper  
crossing out houses  
she can only  
dream about

\* \* \*

*OK! The bases are loaded!*  
*You're up...*  
*It's on you*  
*to bring 'em all home...*

He doesn't even swing  
at the perfect third pitch  
eyes locked  
on a long black snake

*C'mon son!*  
*Damn it... he ain't dangerous:*  
*Black Touch Yellow Kill a Fellow*  
*Red Touch Black You're OK Jack!*

*- I won't cry*  
he drops the bat  
*- I won't cry*  
he steps back  
*- I won't cry*  
he fails

like a pendulum  
the bat swings  
in the father's hand  
precise  
angry  
crushing the snake's head

\* \* \*

*the snake*

*that not-a-coral-snake snake  
is in the ditch -  
with that stupid bat of yours -  
where a goddamn gator  
will probably eat them both*

\* \* \*

The child sits  
with his mother  
wiping tears from his fingers  
on the front of her apron

The father is somewhere  
else  
away  
upset

The television is dark  
The boy watches his mother smile  
highlighting apartments in yellow  
underlining jobs in red  
drawing big black circles  
around the best ones

## Trudging

heavy boots  
choked with mud  
grind waffle patterns  
across the hardwood  
and ceramic tile  
she'd scrubbed  
still angry  
with his abrupt departure

begrudging  
his apology rings  
hollow  
over the scraping  
of sand  
    pebble  
        and stone  
ground into the floor  
with the rag  
she's rinsed  
    again  
dunked in the near-boiling water  
rewashing  
    rescrubbing  
        regretting  
her silent prayer for his return

## Tipping point

the dog did her in  
even more  
than the second child

windows bark-rattled  
when the mutt didn't get scraps  
from the brat in the highchair

or when the older one chased it  
around the kitchen table  
with a wooden spoon

her solution: put the dog out  
in nine hundred square feet  
of fenced-in crabgrass

the kids cried and screamed  
fat faces pressed against the panes  
watching their discarded toys

pissed upon and chewed irreverently

she cried and screamed  
sullen cheeks streaked with grime  
yelling for them to shut up

they never left the house  
or its insanity

not even to walk the dog  
whose only distractions  
were bits of colourful plastic  
half-digested  
choking out the weeds

## ***She was thirty-three:***

**His order  
The fountain  
In the sun  
A hunger  
Almost home  
Unafraid**

### **His order**

"And get the  
flat leaf kind  
the one from  
Italy..."  
he told her  
but today  
it's curly  
leaf parsley.  
When she pays  
she notes she's  
five cents left

## **The fountain**

She drops it  
quietly  
both eyes closed  
stomach clenched  
wishing hard  
    that the coin  
        that the splash  
will alter  
her future  
just this once  
forever

## **In the sun**

The nickel  
shines brightly  
in the well -  
her last coin  
her last chance...  
She walks on  
towards home...  
in her head  
recipes  
for pasta  
mix with hope

## **A hunger**

Trudging with  
the wrong herbs  
in her bag  
she repeats  
the prayer  
delaying  
her date with  
the monster  
who will want  
lasagna  
for dinner

## **Almost home**

*She will cook  
he will eat  
she will clear  
the table  
he will drop  
antacid  
in his glass  
then complain  
about food  
about her  
about life*

## Unafraid

She paces  
penniless  
down the street  
until...

a siren breaks  
her misery -  
maybe police  
or ambulance -

she sees it stop at her apartment  
she knows it's there to take him away

she smiles and pulls a leaf from the grocery bag  
and says - unafraid - that curly tastes just like flat

---

## ***You can't***

*change your mind now*

he misses the exit  
lulled into complacency  
by the yellow lines

*can't go back*

but he adjusts the rearview  
winces at the sting  
in his broken fingers  
squints through  
the rising dark  
expecting a flash  
of blue  
or red  
finds only the swallowing flatness of grey

now that the proverbial  
*box*  
litters the apartment floor  
with splinters  
there's not much to do

he drives  
fast  
between the lines  
sometimes  
hoping to hell  
nightfall chokes  
on his bumper

and spits him out in one piece

## On the bridge after the last argument

past the helpline sign  
    through the drizzle  
        in the vacancy of ten o'clock

he looked at her  
mumbled  
it had to end  
lowered his eyes  
voice trailing off

a waver

they turned  
simultaneously

    the adieu

hanging in the mist  
at their backs

        her tears - regret  
    his - fear  
of something unsaid

## **New Year's Eve Day**

her voice  
faint  
buried in static  
a crack in the white noise

*get some...*

overtaken by hiss  
through clenched blue teeth

*...milk...*

in a flash of clarity

*get some milk...*

his finger  
quiet  
on the switch  
silences her

tomorrow they'll drink their coffee black  
and he'll whisper *I love you*  
and smile  
    when she doesn't respond  
        right away

## February

she loved him

he loved her back  
especially the way  
it moved  
under her raincoat  
as she walked  
to her car  
still idling  
in the driveway

he didn't wave

## Sipping a chardonnay

The remark she whispered -  
however anodyne -  
pricked his ear  
like a lustful taunt

He ignored her  
concentrating  
on not turning his face  
in her direction

But when she repeated  
the innocuous hiss  
sweetly flicked from her tongue  
he spun around...

*Madam...* was all he could manage  
shut down with a wink  
a flirty smile  
and a raised glass

## In a café where he learned the truth

*Grizzle-Swirl!*

strained through  
the fading whiteness  
of her teeth

those last grains  
unstrained  
from a European  
coffee machine

she mumbled it again -  
*Grizzle-Swirl!*  
an admonition  
against another pour

already the trip  
had weighed on her  
and now this -  
bad java

she forced  
a snarlish smile  
the colour of  
double creamers

*This will not do*  
she tongued away  
a gritty speck  
*This really will not do...*

## ***Brin d'os***

There is a fear  
    that gnaws our bones  
    deeply  
    gnash-mark shadows  
    erasing the white

This fear  
    chips under our flesh  
        under our muscle  
            under our organs  
    scraping the foundation

And we pretend  
    we are not afraid  
    but we cannot ignore  
    the weakness inside  
    that makes us totter

## Le billet

he stares at the paper  
crumpled  
then smoothed  
stretched with his palms  
almost fresh  
the wrinkles visible  
like folds in the flesh  
of a progeric saint

he's worn the ink translucent  
traced and traced  
with a calloused finger  
the strokes and swirls  
the words memorized  
in spite of their blasphemy

## The adoption of rituals

there are certain  
    traces  
reminders of his past  
hidden amid the newness  
definite lines and curves  
still distinguishable  
in the alienness

the road he walks  
    - still unmapped -  
criss-crosses the denuded land  
reminding him of the part  
in a changeling's hair

almost a memory  
just off kilter  
just off

above  
in the swirl  
of cumulonimbus incus  
the mammatus clouds form  
    and hang  
        liminal

where the greys  
    and whites  
        and rumours of blue  
converge  
ahead  
beyond  
the landscape smears  
blended into horizon  
smudged into sky  
a place  
    an event  
        a recollection  
not yet revealed

but whispered  
in the gusts  
blowing the grit  
from his boots

## Irrelevant

he flips the key  
    up  
thumb-flicked like a coin

there is no face  
to make his decision  
no tail to tuck and run

in his palm  
    the key -  
before him the wall  
    of steel doors -  
one holding the will of his father

in his palm...

there were no words  
    in the end  
merely sounds machine-muffled  
muddled by the softness of age  
    no vitriol  
        of mid-life  
            screamed or spit

in his palm...

he will speak again  
from behind the wall  
his ultimate directives -  
    absolution?  
    apology?  
    globes of contempt  
    spewed from a throat  
    still hoary with disappointment...

he feels the give  
of tumblers and mechanisms

he fears  
the testament of finality

he wipes his eyes  
    unlocks the crypt  
        and executes the resurrection

## The driveway

not plowed  
was scarred  
with fresh tire marks

From the eaves  
icicles hung  
    long as a man's leg  
    askew  
    as if broken  
        blown sideways  
        by the warming breeze

They clung  
    awkwardly  
        against the first thaw  
            of the new season

He parked away from the house

He walked carefully  
keeping his distance  
and his eyes  
on the spires

He ducked  
to the front door  
now safe  
under the porch

Inside  
assaulted by warmth  
    and change  
his glasses fogged over

Blind  
    liberating a shirt tail  
    he smelled the second wave -  
    fingers of musk

of lust  
of alien masculinity  
    closed into a fist  
    punched him  
    unexpectedly  
    through the backdrop  
    of familiarity

Smells of... not him...

All was clear now  
    condensation wiped away  
    his wife sitting  
    at the table  
    silent  
    two cups before her  
    empty  
    echoes of a back door  
    resounding still

There was snow on his shoes

He hadn't dropped his suitcase

Her eyes were red

Her hair was loose

"It happened once... just once..."  
she pled

Snow melted on the kitchen floor

He didn't drop his suitcase

Between visions  
of smashed limbs  
    shattered jaws  
    splintered frames  
he focused on her

just her

*I never strayed...*

She sat  
silent

The front door closed  
quietly

Water seeped into the grout  
defeated  
in slow retreat

When he stepped outside  
there was no fog  
the wind hadn't shifted  
the icicles still hung

Yet  
as he walked  
back to the car  
snow repacking his soles  
he slapped the icy spikes  
oblivious  
letting them fall  
beside him  
driven into the hardening banks  
upright  
like bars  
askew  
he outside  
she within  
maybe looking through  
the window  
maybe not  
as he left  
again  
his tracks  
the last

## The advent of skunks

signals spring  
their bodies rolled flat  
forgotten & featureless  
by winter tires left on too long

the odours are cleared

by water  
running its thawed course  
through the salt & pebble grit  
scrubbing the carcasses black & white

like the bone & fur

left behind  
near elemental  
in the coyote droppings  
on the paths at the sides of the roads

more of an advent

of dead things  
from the dead season  
as signs of the new season  
desiccate in the warming sunlight

## **A wrinkle in time**

green tea  
infused with pomegranate  
steeps  
in a mason jar  
on the porch step

the maple tree  
on her front lawn  
sighs  
stripped of leaves  
burdened with finches  
drained of their colours

she picks up the jar  
with a dust-rag  
threadbare  
almost out of existence  
folded over and  
over-folded again  
against the heat  
boring through

the fingers  
of her other hand  
helped by arthritis  
curl into a circle  
to frame  
the birds  
to scan  
for an old  
familiar enemy

she blows the steam  
across the lens  
of her scope  
slowly surveying

the tea bag sits

longer than usual  
pomegranate  
needing time  
to truly come  
to life

they are quiet

one flits  
jerks its head

her timing  
has to be perfect  
for the tea  
for the birds

sights set  
she adjusts the rag  
waiting  
just  
a little  
longer

the pomegranate  
turns the water  
pink

the neighbourhood cat  
creeps stealthily  
close

with one-handed grace  
unfit her knotted fingers  
she lifts the tea-bag  
by its fragile string  
with a flick  
sending the mulch  
of burning leaves  
onto the cat's neck

he runs  
she sips  
watching  
the finches  
sing

## Crossing

The fences aren't for them  
    the deer  
        the dead  
who prance or wander at will

In the cemetery  
    the dead  
        the deer  
rest under pine trees at peace

Until  
the outsiders disturb  
the still  
to leave apples and flowers

    Then they hide  
    under stones  
    motionless  
    behind boughs  
    unnoticed

Until  
the outsiders depart  
at last  
and close the wrought iron gates

The graveyard is theirs  
the deer and the dead  
fed and remembered  
    flashes  
        white tails  
            ghost lights  
                in the deepening mist

## Unfortunately

they were tuned  
to the frequency  
of dead fish

their smiles  
off  
a bit  
from decks  
with crooked planks  
under masts  
that tilted just  
    a tad  
from where they waved  
with broken-looking wrists

had they glanced down  
at the water  
seemingly still --  
like a thin frozen layer  
concealing chum-coloured  
madness --  
they may have reflected  
left the ropes knotted  
lowered the gangplanks  
doffed their hats  
to captain  
    and crew  
stepped back out  
onto solid ground  
and into the throng  
of loved ones

unfortunately  
they were tuned  
to the frequency  
of dead fish

a few miles from shore

from sight  
the waves would swell  
their dreams  
and fates  
churned  
into one water-logged  
inevitability

## Duty

close the lid  
shroud the snarl  
seized on his lips

burn the bones  
hide his hands  
broken and bruised

Death won the first round...

spread his ashes  
untouchable  
by pale fingers

sing loudly  
and make sure  
there is no second round



## **About the Author**

*"A good story is like a well-placed punch: quick, effective, and impossible to ignore."*

R L Raymond tells stories through poetry, fiction, photography, and painting. He has been published in journals and collections across Canada, the United States, Australia, and Europe. He earned his Master of Arts in English Literature from the University of Western Ontario.

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## **Also by R L Raymond**

Sonofabitch Poems (*PigeonBike*)

Half Myths & Quarter Legends (*Epic Rites Press*)

Weakdays (*Corrupt Press*)

anTipas (*PigeonBike*)

## **Previously Published Poems:**

Having waited so long – *London Arts Council Poetry in Motion 2012*

The state of emergencies – *Steel Chisel*

Rogues – *Muse Press Fib Review*

In December – *Muse Press Fib Review*

Variations on free will – *Grain*

States of dust – *Envoi Poetry*

A shade she didn't wear – *Carousel*

The boy – *Crap Orgasm*

The small blade – *Outlaw Poetry*

Tipping point – *Nickel95*

On the bridge after the last argument – *Epic Rites Press*

February – *Lummox*

The driveway – *Bold Monkey*

Unfortunately – *Soliloquies*

**Indescendants**

R L Raymond  
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