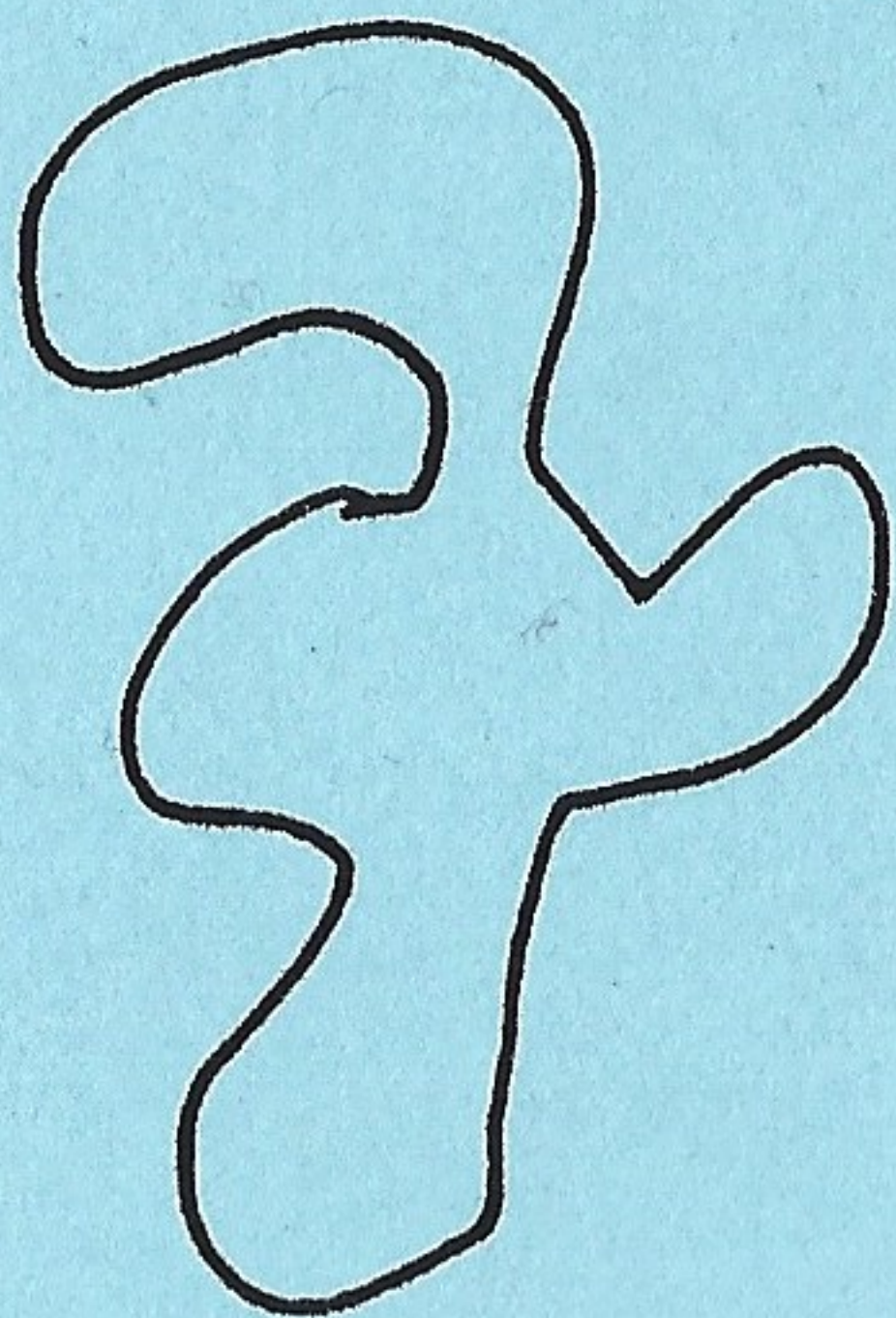
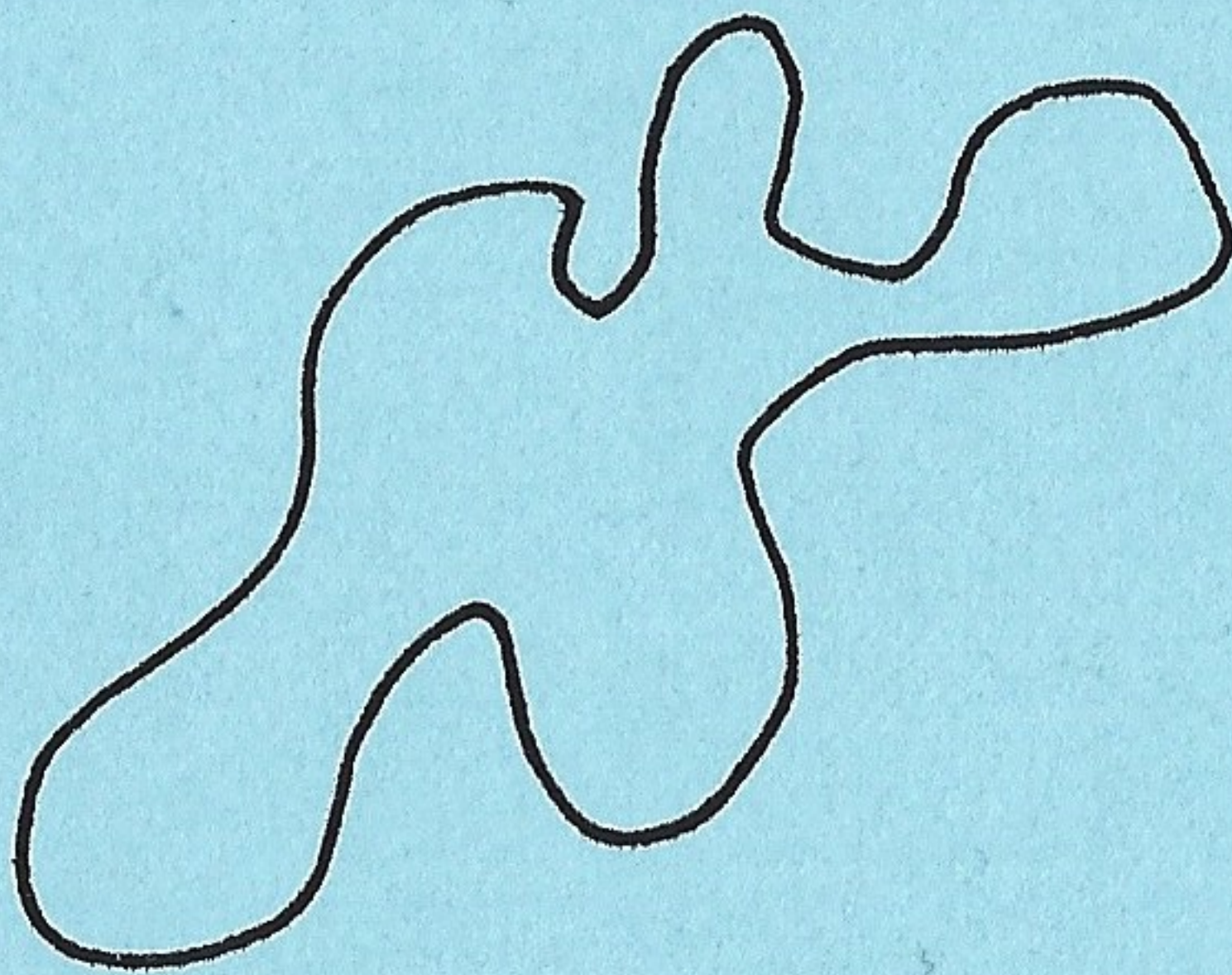
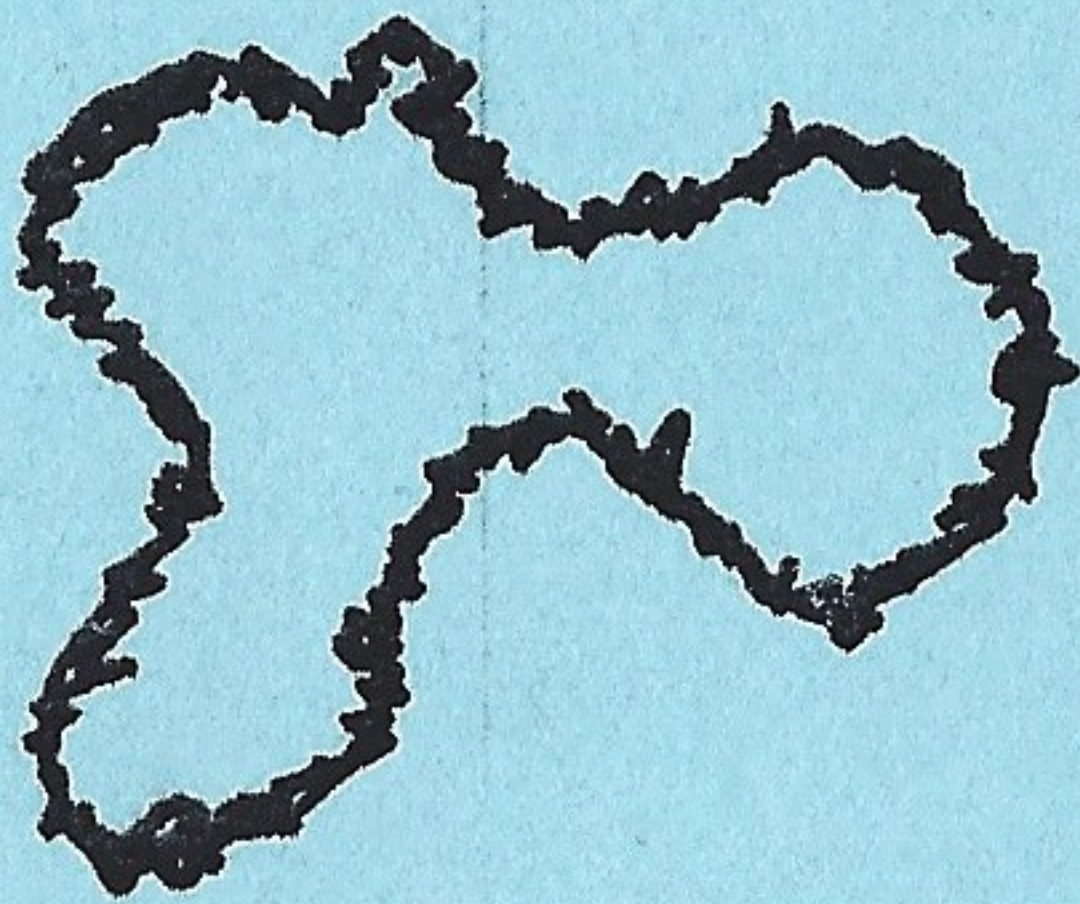
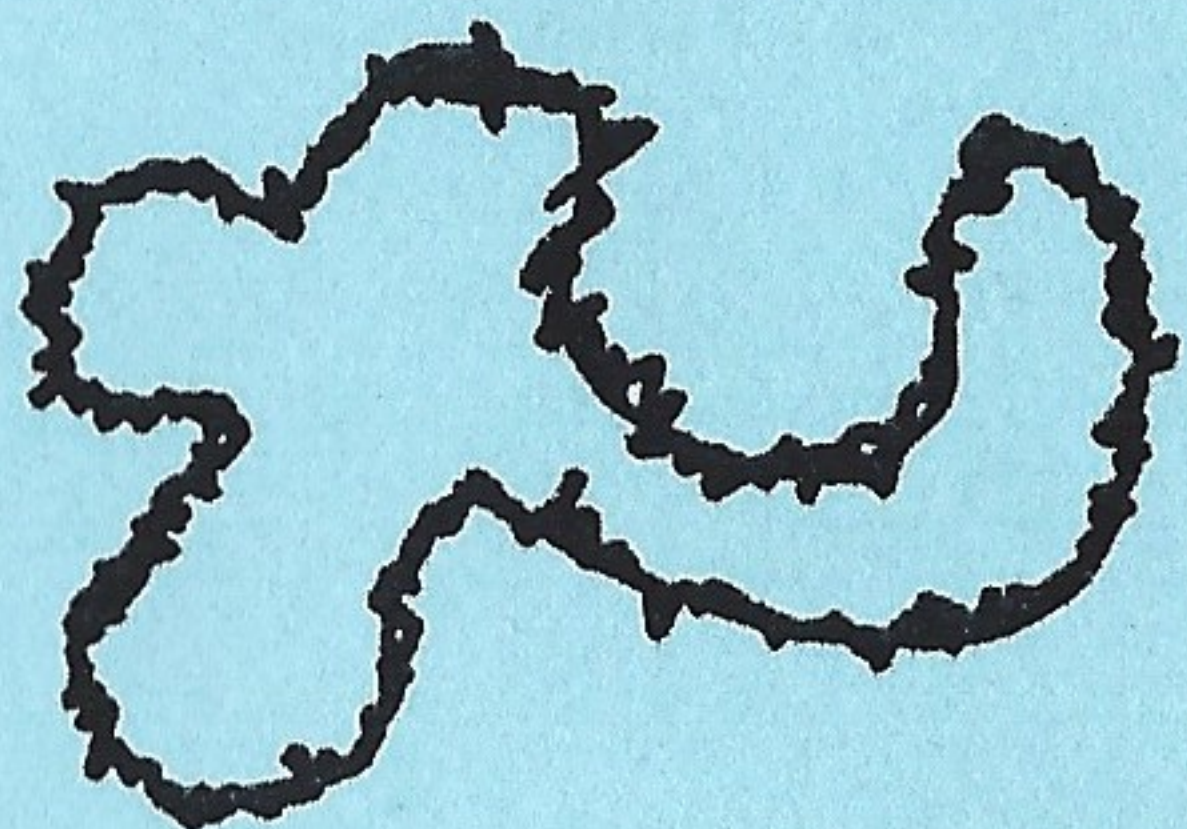


Extispicium



Derek
Beaulieu



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Derek Beaulieu

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"What is true is never interesting."
—Guillaume Apollinaire.

She was pregnant when she was four months pregnant three months pregnant when she was seven months pregnant and not pregnant at all when she was seven months pregnant. But what did she know. Out and out then out and in. She and him. I was born in the Montréal Jewish Hospital and later at the Montréal General Hospital. I am neither Jewish nor a General. I remember it this way. Generally. I was born partially at the Montréal Jewish Hospital the remainder was later.

A purple used since antiquity as the mark of wealth and lavish opulence. I remember something happening did it. Did something happen I remember it. I remember it did it happen. Something happens I remember it. It happened and she remembers. He remembers. She remembers. She remembers so does he. I was born in Montréal. I was born in Montréal or Montreal. I was born in Montréal or Montreal or Brossard or Longueuil. When I was born I was born in Brossard but then I was born in Longueuil but now I was born in Brossard again but I wasn't born there. I was born in Montréal or Montreal but we lived in Brossard. I was born in Montréal or Montreal but I lived once I was born in Brossard. Brossard was itself and then it was in Longueuil and then it was itself again but the whole time it was part of Montréal or Montreal. I was born in Montreal. Brossard has no cemetery.

I was born at the Montréal Jewish General Hospital and later at the Montréal Children's Hospital which was appropriate as I was a child. They remember it this way. Once out taken further out. Down the street. They took me. They came in early but it was time and then they took me. I was a child though I am not currently a child. That depends. One can be a child and grow and still be a child. Grow additionally and continue to be a child. Even when one is no longer a child one is still someone's child just as that someone is another's child. Being a child and being a child is different. I was a child when I was taken down the street. I was taken down the street by someone I was with them and they were with a child though not with child. A purple obtained drop by drop squeezed from mollusks found along eastern Mediterranean shores. Spurred on by intestine they had to wait for him to decide what to leave in and what to remove having already decided to remove me. Men don't have friends men work.

If Montreal then Calgary. A one-year contract or a two-year contract. A deal. Then Montreal then Calgary. A deal is a deal. He was born here murmuring on the way he was born here three or four years later and two months later. I was brought to yellow up the stairs. It was yellow and it was on the right. A moment yellow. The sun shone a spot on the wall. Right blue. Three stockings on the banister the photograph the room was on the left and blue the photograph insists the spot on the wall. Green Lane green fields Greenfield Park south shore West Island. He was silver and either he was at one's side incessantly or one never saw him it depended on him. Half a year in a box half a year under the bed. She's chasing marbles. He chased a silk ball and so does she. I looked out of doors. I am nothing new. He will be anxious to leave.

Uncontained I had to be gathered up like a campsite like a tent. I was supposed to be born on my birthday instead he was. Murmuring on the way he was born on my birthday I was three or four years earlier and two months early. To gather up like

a tent takes twenty-five hours what fits back in the bag what is best not brought home. As long as his hand to his watchband a ruler his watch. Seventeen hours of graph paper and a blue pen down and down and up. It must be true if it is written down security in a single sheet of graph paper. That was the way he remembered it. You should arrange for the last rites he said. I can't do that no I can't do that he said. Would you rather I made the arrangements he said. You had better I can't do that he said. He and him. The two of them talking. Another four hours for a little box and a chicken. An operating room at the hospital a dining room at home. Stuffed and stuffing. What gets carved apart and what gets put back together. Giblets. Gathered up like campsite stuffed like a turkey. Merry Christmas in a tube. Do this procedure in the unit. Sim 24 all well. The blue marble.

A purple once seen is it hard to forget or confuse with any other hue. He was born at the Grace where he was born isn't there. He was born at the Grace or the Holy he murmured. He was born here three or four years later and two months later. Part of the deal he was born in Calgary. The resemblance is uncanny when I watch him I see your father the way he stands and holds his body his hands she said. Do I sound like that. He moves with confidence and ease. Him. But I feel anxious. A red straw cowboy hat with a whistle. Not much.

He was on the east end and the south shore sixth of seven. In and out of the hospital seven kids in six years. Wash day on Sunday. That corner of Ste-Catherine's Air-Liquide is there across Phillips Square and on that corner is Birks with the ring counter in the door and to the immediate left right there. Across from the bus stop. Him. You have to ask them they owe you don't leave until you ask them she said. She told him. With a wooden leg and a glass eye she was a fine-looking woman. She. A night running from the police hiding with his brother who didn't hide at all gave up and went home. She knew all about it. A scrap of rope with three wooden beads red blue yellow at Camp Lewis. An afternoon at Saint Helen's Island

not yet Île Sainte-Hélène man and his world. That day with him either off work or out of the hospital I can't remember. He thought it was a year but it was just a single summer on the farm. When he died his brothers and he tied him in a sack and threw him over the bridge and into the river a burial at sea. In retrospect probably not the best idea but I wasn't there. A woodworm followed by a voice. He served on the Quebec but it never left the port. Not active active service. He served on the Quebec which was the Uganda it was only Quebec after it voted not to participate it was the only ship to do so did he vote.

A pipe in a wall the neighbourhood doctor and a flash of white. He ran through the pipe on a construction site an unfinished house. A pipe you run through or a pipe that water does. Not much. With teeth like these it's better to pull. A move to Saint-Laurent and a thirty-year silence. He became a trapper and hunter Fort St. John. Saint-Laurent brought a basketball team wrestling the canoe club a new class. Right there is the bus stop. He had a way with fried chicken. He stood at the corner and paper drops from the seventh floor. He changed occupation. Up from the Metro and he stands on another corner watches the punch cards drift on the way to class. Not far away she watched. The cop strikes as the students did the same. A bystander's decision. A piece of rope with three beads a piece of rope with a club. An optical illusion is a mustard seed. It's an excuse they could tell him the truth is they didn't want to. He'll have the same problem. One grows dizzy with this novel display one chokes and anxiously gasps for breath.

The red-feather buses lined up Atwater every summer. Yellow buses. He didn't want to go his brothers did but he didn't want to go. It rained the entire summer and he didn't want to go. He is away on the island a full day's hike and he is alone he didn't want to be there and then he didn't want to leave. It rained the whole time and he didn't want to be there they extended his stay once he changed his mind but then he wouldn't leave. Considering the options it is better than his brothers'. A piece

of rope and three beads. Not much. Everybody there is poor it was tough. Really tough. The best thing was when the two brothers took it over. Every Friday night was fight night anyone one had fought with during the week you now met in the ring with your gloves on. He fought his brother once. The brothers said you couldn't have knives anymore. He was a Mohawk one year a Seneca once no twice. He went the summer his father died he had to go somewhere it was the best thing for him. He is a voluntary sale. She is at home by herself. Four years five years the last year he was told he was too old if he wanted to stay he had to be a junior leader which wasn't as fun. No he didn't go after we moved. He didn't remember it as well as he did but he didn't hear them come down from the woods and tie them to a tree. They used to take hostages in the night. The thing is you can't take it. You hand it out hard but you can't take it. I must confess that I have reached the point of being afraid to make brusque movements or to walk very much.

He's where he got his middle name. One of them. Hadn't seen him for forty years but still cried when he finally recognized him. He is easily treated. He is harmless. He is part and parcel. Proudly brought them all down to his office after a tour of the cemetery there's room for eighteen in the plot. Her name is on the stone but she's in Salmon Arm. He was younger but he was taking notes. I'd like to report a fight I said. Where she said. I don't know anymore why I'm scared of him. Animals such as dogs.

She is afraid of stepping beyond the first rung of a stepladder. She hesitated to step to the ground from the running board of an automobile. She is afraid to catch even a soft ball. She shied from turning on a gas jet from putting things on shelves. For example she wrote that he is afraid of cows horses and pigs. He is described as showing fear in response to the loud noise of a truck. She whimpered cried clung to her parents and glanced apprehensively toward the bedroom. She could only say that she is afraid of lions. I am afraid to stop.

It's not surprising we lived down the street from each other but she caught her eye first crossing the tracks. She thinks about it. Coffee led to a walk led to wine led to something else. She is appearing for no reason. She is not a cause for concern. She is inevitable. She came to Calgary but they didn't have a deal it just was where the work was. Lived down the street but I didn't know that at the time how could I I was just a kid. She's with me and I'm with her. I don't want to believe that. Because they were afraid of him.

Remembered the announcement as someone else's name expecting. But there it is it was mine after all. Half a year in a box a number in a study. After all this why not let him decide if he wants to look normal. A punch line a drunken story. I'm just telling you the way you really are. I wasn't afraid of anything he could do. A foot is not a cause for concern. A criminal court in reverse is a red hoof.

He was struggling to breathe. More and more he couldn't breathe. Increasingly he couldn't breathe.

Threat or danger of harm from specific persons fighting pursuit by persons being confined by persons drunken persons objects associated with harmful persons specific men in uniform being shut in small space fights attacks by others playful threats and gestures fights between others. Ridiculed by teacher and students for slowness in learning arithmetic laughed at and ridiculed because of speech defect ridiculed because of unusual height teased because of affection for little boy. Imaginary events. He was about 19 years old with thin red hands and wrists. His face was splashed with red and his hair was sandy. Imagined or introspective shortcomings child is convinced he lacks ability to learn believes he lacks courage to fight other boys. Fear of personal failure ridicule appearing or performing in public failure in school feeling of inadequacy worry over future status anxiety over physical appearance ridicule and embarrassment apprehension over sexual inadequacies appearing before or

performing in presence of a group. It rarely happened. Black eyes chipped teeth split lip. Told to dance until the bowie knife went through his foot through his shoe and had to be yanked out of the ground beneath them both. Started to ride a bike to get away faster. He could have phoned me to let me know. She could have taken the earlier train. He could have told her. They could have overheard what we said. You could have helped instead of just sitting there. I couldn't have enjoyed myself more. A phobic encounter with his past. Until he came out of school and found his bicycle completely disassembled just the frame still locked to the rack. He was only seven. He was twelve. He was three, he was only seventeen. If I cause you that much offence why don't you just ignore me completely pretend I don't even exist he said. He chased him across the yard and through the swing set. The barb caught his wrist and wrote a line another mark. He was in Qatar when he pushed him down the stairs thinking that he was just like them. The last thing he wanted to think. She just stepped over him either she didn't notice or didn't want to. Maybe it was my fault. This is the one sentiment that makes me happy. Hit me. Do something. Do anything. Please be nice to me.

He was in Fort McMurray. He was in Montreal. He was in Houston. Sit down on a train, Thomas. He was in Qatar. He was in India. He was in Kuwait. He was in Hong Kong. Most of the time he wasn't here. One of the dogs on the street starts barking. He just nodded without looking around.

Three weeks late and finally they decide to induce. Did it once sent us home and then did it again her on her knees panting. She drove us to the hospital who were expecting us the delivery room was surprisingly spacious. With each push her heart rate dropped again and again 40 20 15. It's supposed to drop yeah but it's also supposed to come back up again. Forceps didn't work suction cup didn't work something that looks suspiciously like salad tongs didn't work. The heart monitor kept dropping that's supposed to be a quick beat. The rate just didn't recover

and eventually the doctor yelled something hit the red button the door. He the nurses and the salad tongs were piled on top of her and rushed from the room. An announcement over the PA. I was alone with the gowns the instruments and a heart monitor that wasn't monitoring. A long time. A nurse gowned and scowling. We're going to perform a C-section and your wife is going to need you to be strong she said. Are she and the baby going to be OK I said. So come with me we'll get you a gown and you can be there for your baby she said. Are she and the baby going to be OK I said. Maybe she said. Maybe I said. You're not listening to me she said. The anesthetic hadn't quite taken hold she jumped with a new smile the anesthetist barked Not yet and then OK now. A little slow on the APGAR tests but eventually she was ready swaddled and I could look out the window with her. Hi there I said. She didn't say anything. She had her eyelids taped closed a wintergreen colour. Was sure when the time came that she was a boy I had a son she said but there she was he was she. Her first trip outside was tucked in my coat the fridge was empty. Ida and Dactyl.

There was something pinched about her a look of suffering of apprehension and in addition she was extremely small. She was crying. I had disturbed him and he was annoyed. On other nights he was afraid of other places. Expect an egg. A wedge in a doorway is worth keeping. Like this. Inhale a house without plumbing. A smoke alarm, a rocking chair. Two magnets being followed by a voice. An open mouth insists a person skip rope. Sand.

We were two. I was one. They tried things. They tried this. They tried this again. They tried something else. They tried something else again. They went away. They came back. They took her away both of them. They tried something else but it was too early. They tried again. She was ready. She and I were there. It was just her and I there. They had her and they gave her to me. She was there with me and she was just there. There we were. A man who pays attention to emotion isn't a real man. He loved horses.

We were just kidding around and she hit her teeth on the couch one flipped up like a dog-eared page I didn't know what to do but improvised and he said he'd do the same thing if he had to funny because it had happened to him twice weeks apart as well. He is not a cause for concern. They lived across the street and were as close as family thought I was nothing but intimidated except by their son the other one lived in a caboose and doesn't talk to them anymore. There's a lot of that. Gouin and Martin. Named the street after themselves. A barrel of urine broke his back.

She walks in with a ring from that corner that Birks while he's shielded behind the newspaper what do you think she said. Not much he said. He hoped his teeth would last as long as he did. They didn't. You're just dealing with your little obsession.

Hanging herself with her dog's leash in her bedroom an overdose of co-proxamol a painkiller her mother used for a knee problem taking forty of her mother's pain-killers in the early hours of Saturday she had hanged herself with a belt hanging herself in the stairwell leading to the second floor of the family apartment.

She was given two choices. He was with the navy a merchant marine. He was an oiler on a passenger ship a ferry. He was with the navy or was with the merchant marine. He wouldn't talk about it. He wouldn't not talk about it he just wouldn't say anything. Best not to ask. He died saving another man's life pulling him out of the water. He was sure. There's a book it says he died at sea an oiler working on the engine. It said that and he didn't. He said nothing he said something else. He was caught on deck and washed overboard he remembers it a burial at sea. He was right about that. There's a book. She was given two choices and picked one. She chose one of two possibilities. She had a choice she chose. Either everything she needed every month until he was eighteen or just enough all at once. I'm afraid I have no idea what he wanted. She was lucky enough to

go with her but they were left behind it wasn't until he found out and went back and got them but how many years was that. Years ago when visiting Crete I stopped at the small museum at Chanea at the western end of the island and noticed a jar which has a crust of bright purple around the mouth. A small bit had fallen off which I picked up and put in my wallet years later I held this up against a sample of Mexican basketware and the colour was an exact match. She was a terrible cook. Tuesday is a French film.

She was swarmed by friends. She stubbed a cigarette out on her forehead. She watched. Her hair was set on fire. She told the others to stop. Pebbles from the river. She got away, she was told to remove her shoes and jacket. I know you've been keeping it inside you. They heard. And that was it. They don't think they did anything wrong. She was fourteen. He kicked her in the head. They dragged her to the water. She hid all in her closet. She was curled up in a ball in the kitchen. We didn't think you need any guilt. We think you're a nice person. Now that you've let some of this stuff go how do you and that was it. They don't think they did anything wrong. He didn't need a map he knew where he was going down the highways to Cape Cod to Boston a series of cottages in a series of cars every one new. She'd listen. You could talk and she would listen she had no problem listening and knowing what to say and what not to say to him. He asked her to stop. She stopped because he asked her. She knew that she had to stop and when he asked her she stopped. He had stopped years before but she hadn't stopped until he asked. She was asleep. She was eight. He is a little pool. They burned the papers we didn't need to see. There are some things that we don't need to keep they said. There are some things that it's best to not remember. You don't need to keep everything when there are so many things. There are things here and there and there. She is a clue to the treasure of what actually happened. Things arrive in boxes and envelopes and bags and do we need to keep each and every everything when some things don't need to be kept at all. Some of the things

are photographs. Some of the things are papers. Some of the things are letters. Photographs and papers and letters and things. Photographs of people with things. Pressurized heavy water. She was alone. She is only twelve. You might want to make a backup plan your choice of career doesn't seem to be a good one.

She couldn't remember but he sang to her. Sang and talked about when they met the swimming and the dock and living in Verdun. She asked for her mother. They said prayers together she and him each night. Talked to her or talked to her photograph. That stopped. Goodnight Lassie he said. That stopped.

He. She. She. He was angry. She was angry. She had to be centred. This diffraction of light into its spectral components makes the blue jay's feathers so bright and unmistakable. The minute grid size of each feather captures one portion of the light source.

They always told him about me and told me about him all I knew is what they said all he knew is what they said. All we knew is what they told us him and I. Purple. Just like her mother. She couldn't relate she left came back on a stretcher and moved as far as she could. He was quiet and wasn't there when he was there he wasn't there until he was there and didn't know where he was. Two years later he works on the railroad he's a carpenter. He makes coat hangers. All paw. Oil onions tea and maple leaf cookies. He couldn't write his name but he printed it on every coat hanger. I heard. The gate squeaked and so did the mailbox. Two years in the orphanage much longer if he says. He wrote with either hand but left one behind at the nuns' insistence. Never saw eye-to-eye but he doesn't see eye-to-eye with a lot of people. Not much. Was his brother there as well. Thomas and Thomas. She was given a choice she chose. She chose and she left with her and they stayed there. They were there she and him were somewhere else with her. And her. Did

anyone ever call you Francis. He chose and after two years he chose to bring them to Verdun. Only once he said. He makes coat hangers. He was married once and had another daughter. She and her died from influenza. She was an infant. Him. Over here is where the butcher was I remember the sawdust on the floor to soak up the blood and there were horses here the last time I was here. Yes he was there too but he was much younger and so they had him in a different wing I didn't see him very much. She does this they do that. Homer's striking figure of the purple sea that had always puzzled me as a student.

Gastroschisis. A vivid red hoof. Like that. Irreducible indirect inguinal hernia. Irreducible indirect abdominal hernia. Non-paretic manifest strabismus. Equally odd was his purple blood gushing forth and even a purple rainbow mentioned once in the *Iliad*.

He worked hard but he didn't work as hard didn't work. Even then he worked too much and so did he. A new sister the other one was already his but she was kept she didn't have to go. She insisted that she had to cover them. A battery in the wrong way. But Mum there's no yeast in them she said. Yes but you still have to cover them to make them rise she said. She played the piano. She knew that she just forgot. She was an only child her mother ran a boarding house up toward McGill used to toboggan in the winter. She insisted that she was born in England came here on a steamship when she was a little girl but she didn't. And she didn't have a sister either. She knew that she just forgot. She sang all the girls declare that I'm the gallant major hi hi clear the way here comes the galloping major. Then she just sings her songs when she was a girl. She knew it she just forgot. When she died we were all there when he died we weren't. It was different.

He went to high school at Sir George and so did he. Took the courses and then taught them. Said that most of his students re-enlisted they didn't know how to do anything else. His flowers won card after card. Tomatoes and cucumbers in

styrofoam boxes. Only man who could grow cantaloupe by accident. Not much. Walked down to the community gardens over the fence near Lachine. Always did his harvesting right into fall ice forming on the puddles. He slipped on the ice and fell in had to pull him out by his collar wrap him in his clothes and run. Don't know what the neighbours thought at the sight. Met at a summer camp friends of friends. A story with a new watch taken apart and reassembled the patience to do that and laugh at the end of the dock under a parasol. Her swimsuit went to her knees and so did his. He couldn't swim but he could learn. Even then he worked too much. Years later he was given flowers because he was a veteran but he refused to accept then and refused to even listen. He was a sergeant they said no he wasn't he said. They said yes and he said no. His efforts were too valuable here and they wouldn't accept him once they learned he was a chemist was more valuable here than there. Instead he trained them when they returned grew in rank and refused to hear about it. They refused he refused. He was on a trip he had somewhere to go and they could come or they could stay it made little difference but he had things he wanted to accomplish. He learned the piano he taught he worked. He hurt them he intimidated them he frightened them he yelled. You people you people did this to me.

He didn't do any of those things to us. He listened he doted he sent mail. He never used my name. Schnook. Son. Walked down Sherbrooke they all knew him by name good afternoon. Master mister. She flew by herself for the first time forty-five minutes alone. She couldn't find three or ten but the guard could. Can do.

Not even a Christmas card anymore their relationship long dissipated into less than a conversation. Perhaps a yearly call but that's too much to ask for. It was his fault that they didn't feel at home his fault that he was successful while he wasn't. And she didn't help by complaining in front of her. And he just walked away from all of it all he went north no longer willing

to try. She spent years in the hospital I only met her once or twice barely remember it. There were five left only four went. Years of mining mercury brought a shake a last-minute effort to see everyone again a new type of desperation. Felt like he just couldn't clear his throat and even after it was out it happened again. This time they were sure it was cancerous. Both of them. When they were married he left and they weren't around for long as they got married as well. He stayed and so did he and him. They each stayed but differently and not as long as the others who stayed. The rest of them are somewhere.

Men don't have feelings. Colds are afraid of me. I simply don't let death into my life. That dog don't hunt. There are things that just happen there's no right or wrong about them. How hard could it be. It's just the way it is no reason to get upset about it. I think I've hurt myself does it look serious to you. Measure twice cut once. Why do you have to do everything the hard way. Do one thing do it well then move on.

Purple blood was still unclear until I saw a cut artery spurting bright iridescent aerated blood in a film record of heart surgery. Arterial blood has that bright shining quality too and so the circle of the bright purple associations was finally closed to my satisfaction.

Why can't you take our word for it why make the same mistakes over and over again. Her and him and him and him and her and her and him and him and him. And him and her and him. Her and him and him and her and her. Her and him and her and her and him and him. Her and him and her and him. And him. Her and him and him and I. Her and him and her and him. Her and I and her. And her. She and I and her. You people. Not much.

Derek Beaulieu is the author/editor of over twenty collections of poetry, prose, and criticism, including two volumes of his selected work, *Please, No More Poetry* (2013) and *Konzeptuelle Arbeiten* (2017). His most recent volume of fiction, *a, A Novel* was published by Paris's Jean Boîte Editions. He edited bpNichol's *Nights on Prose Mountain* (Coach House, 2018) and is the Director of Literary Arts and Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

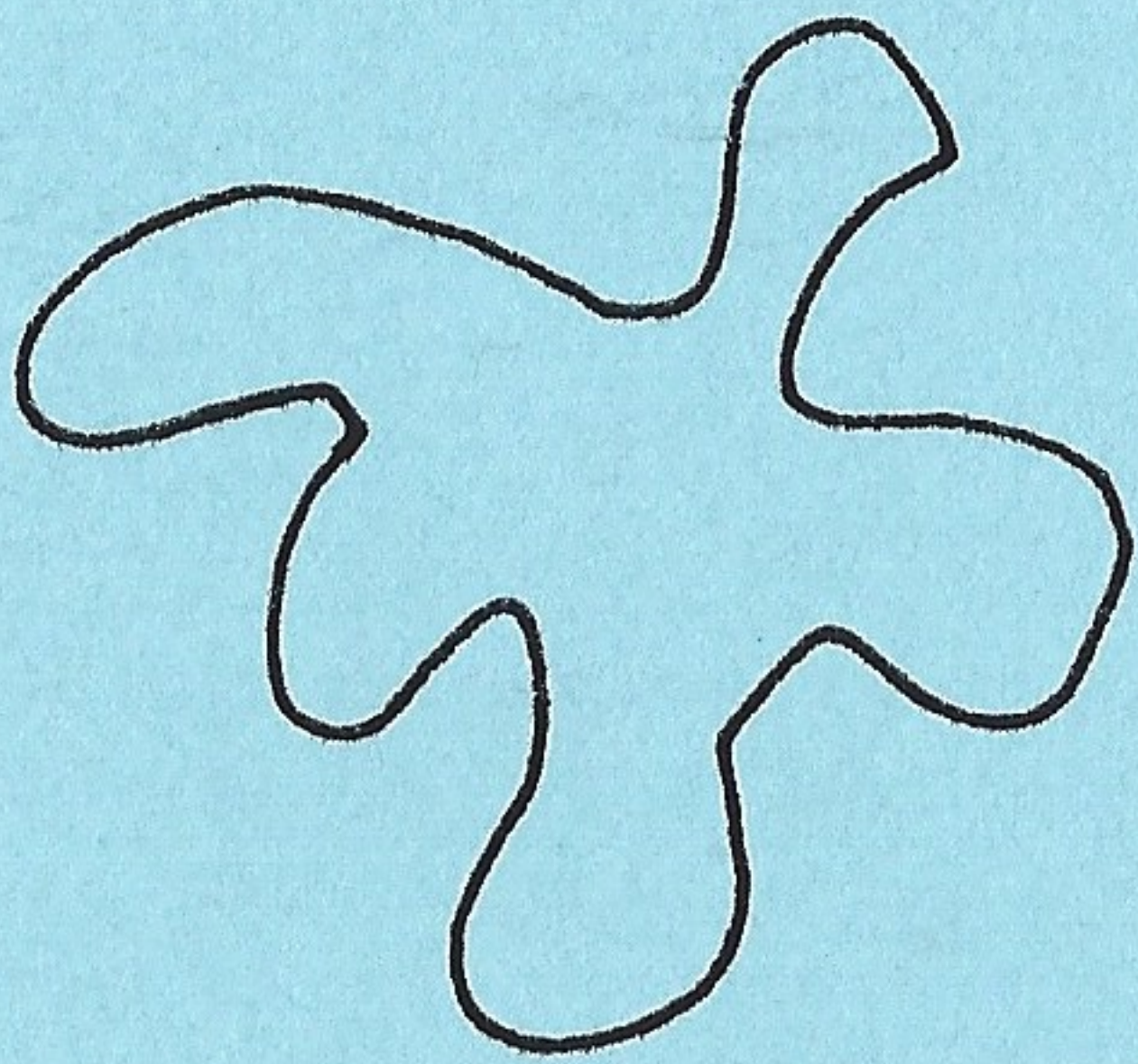
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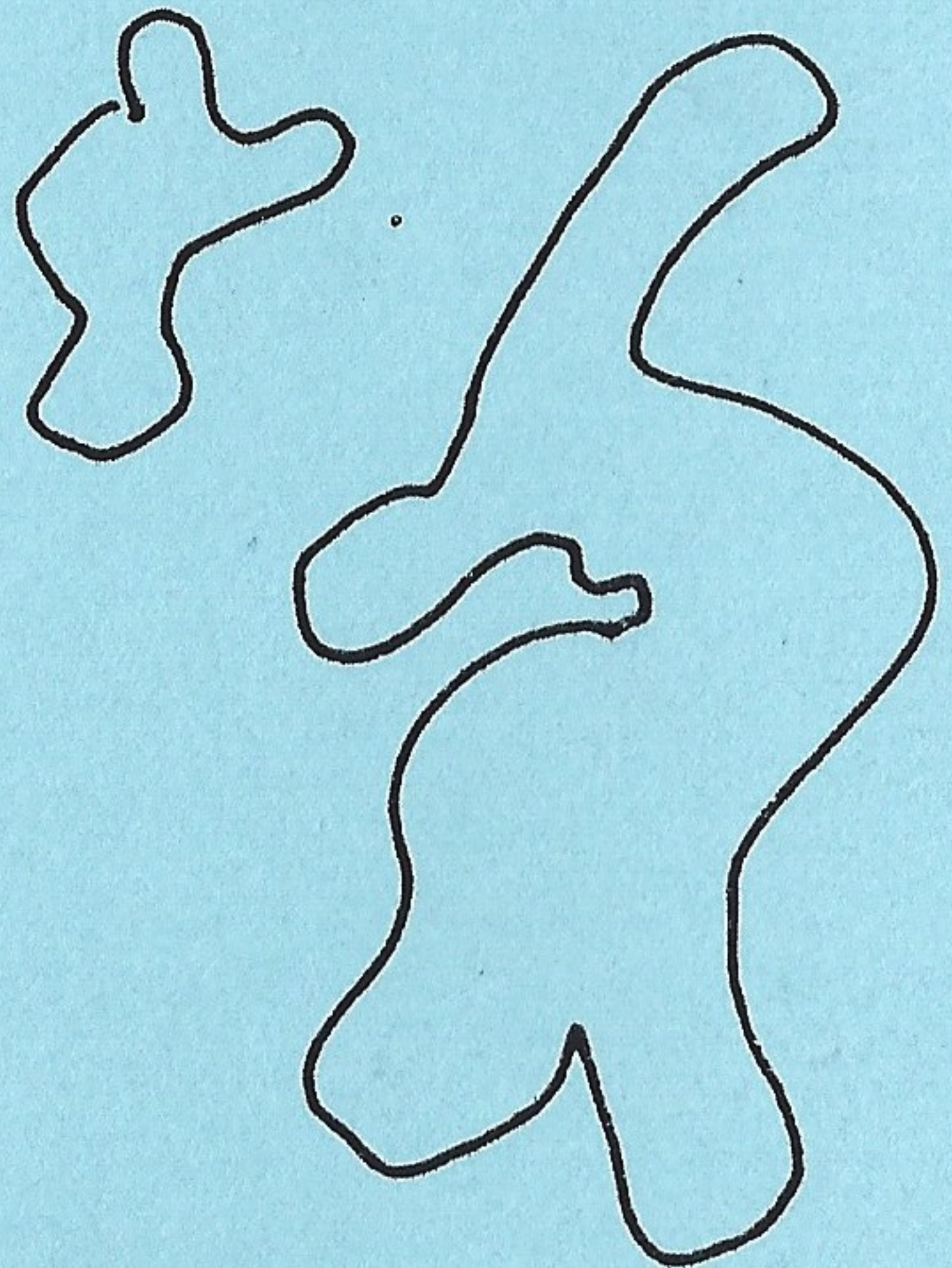
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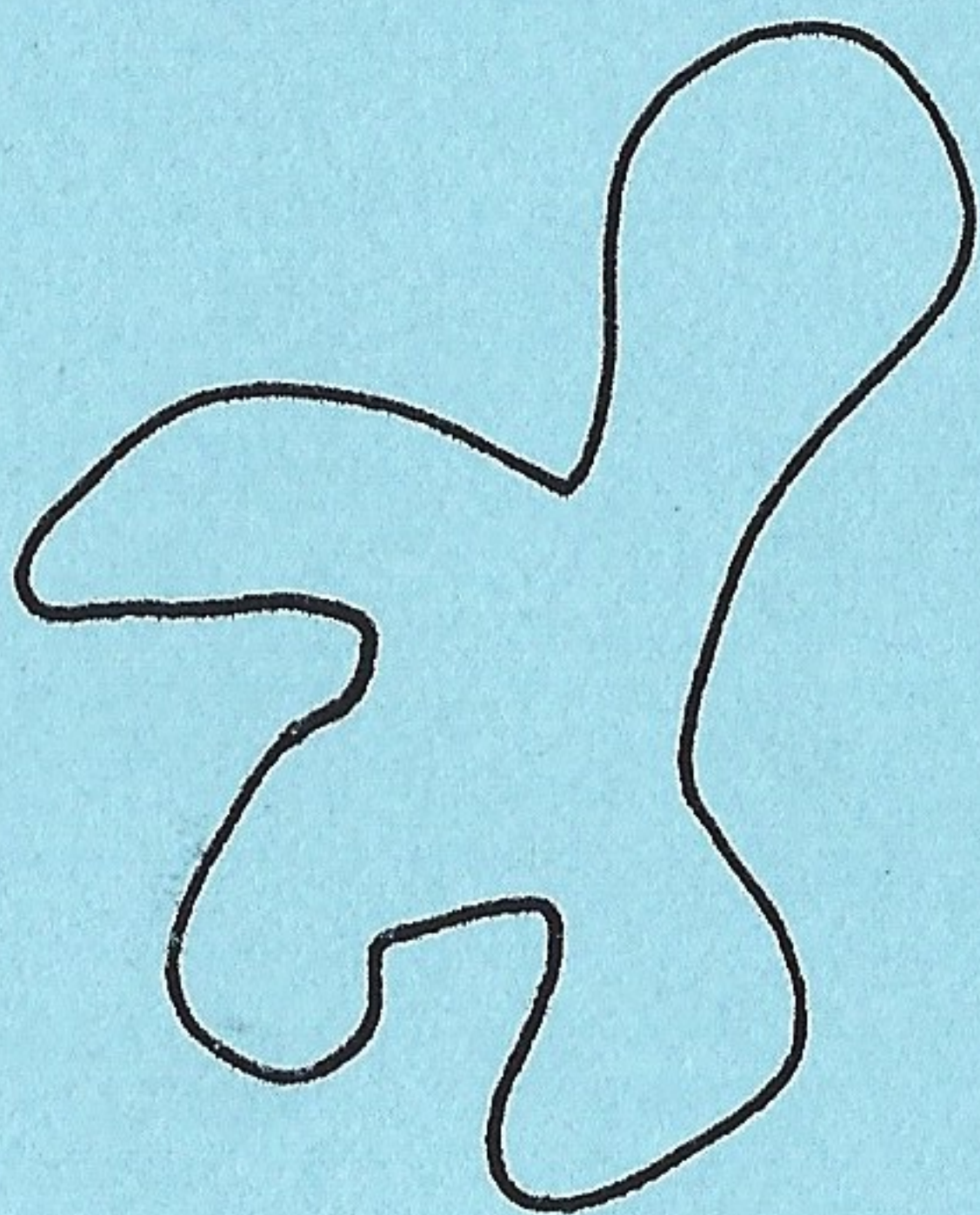




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