The Resurrectionists

Matthew Baker

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The rising had begun that Monday morning. By Monday evening the conflict had spread. Gunfire could be heard across the city. Tramcars sat abandoned between stops.

The boys, the Sheehy brothers, stood in their kitchen together reading the classifieds in a newspaper three days old.

Lost, Sean muttered. One book, about an elephant, belonging to the archbishop's library.

Bram memorized this description.

Lost, Sean muttered. One gray fox muff, belonging to the governor of a prison.

Bram memorized that description.

Lost, Sean muttered. One portmanteau, small and brown, belonging to someone at an address.

The boys spent nights hunting for missing objects in newspaper classifieds. Restoring the objects to their owners. Earning the rewards. The boys had an uncanny sense which objects to hunt for and which objects not to bother. What was lost momentarily and what was lost forever.

Portmanteau? Bram said.

Type of luggage, Sean said.

The boys buttoned their coats, grabbed the newspaper, shouted goodbye, flew out the

door, vaulted the fence. The boys had cropped hair and snub noses. Sean had bright green eyes. Bram, younger, smaller, had dark black eyes, like a banshee's.

The lampposts weren't lit yet. Clouds lay wrecked across the shoals of the sky. Across the street, a withered-looking horse was harnessed to a jaunting carriage. A portly woman with a shrill voice was arguing with the driver. The boys nudged each other and snuck closer, hoping to catch a ride.

You're the jarvey? said the woman.

My brother's the jarvey, the driver said, but he won't work today.

Then what are you? said the woman.

I'm a carter, but the rebels took my cart. It's part of a barricade now. So if I want to work, today I'm a jarvey, the driver said.

The driver's grin was like a grimace. Teeth stained gray at the gums.

Have you driven before? said the woman.

A carriage isn't that different from a cart, the driver said.

How about the horse? said the woman.

That's a difference, the driver said.

The woman muttered something, wrapped herself into her coat, and lumbered aboard.

Reaching up, the boys took hold of the back of the carriage, climbed onto the rods behind the wheels, and crouched down, hidden there. The driver fumbled with the whip and urged the horse into a trot. The boys gripped the carriage tighter as the wheels jolted over the remains of a crate. The driver steered like someone with a death wish. The horse began to gallop. The carriage flew past Sackville Street, where a girl with a rag doll was perched singing on a horse's corpse; clattered across a bridge, where half-costumed actors were fleeing the Abbey Theater; wove between the double-decker tramcars abandoned along St. Stephen's, where a bearded carter was attempting to wrest his cart from a barricade. As the

carriage passed the park's gates, someone behind the barricade shot the carter, once in the chest, once in the face. The boys watched in shock as the body dropped, the carter himself having become part of the barricade, now.

It's anarchy, the woman shouted.

It's terrorism, the driver shouted, and the driver wasn't grinning anymore.

Sean and Bram hopped down from the carriage a few streets further.

As twilight fell across the city, the boys worked back toward the river, hunting for the missing objects. They peeked into hushed alleyways. They dug through the rubbish in a ditch. They scoured the reedy banks of a canal. A dappled horse with a gray mane galloped along an empty avenue trailing snapped straps. Kids in caps stood in an abandoned tramcar, gripping the rails, chatting, as if trying to get nowhere.

Across from the giant pillars of the post office where the rebels were headquartered, a crowd had gathered. Bespectacled women, men with bouquets of stamped letters tucked under their arms, pimply children draped with woolen scarves. Sean and Bram presented the newspaper to the crowd, attempting to ask about the missing objects. Nobody wanted to talk about the classifieds. Everybody wanted to gossip about the rebels.

Scotland has more claim to nationhood than Ireland, said a man with a tinny voice.

How about Wales? asked a frizzy-haired woman.

Everybody's always forgetting Wales, agreed a woman burping a bald infant.

In the post office rebels peered from smashed windows clutching obsolete rifles, homemade bayonets, pikes carved from broom handles. Statues lined the roof, as if on guard. Above the statues flapped the rebel flags. Sean and Bram saluted the rebels, bowed, ran on.

Across from an umbrella shop, the boys presented the newspaper, asked a man hauling a crate of cabbages. Across from a tobacco shop, the boys presented the newspaper, asked

a girl toting a stack of novels. Across from the custom house, the boys asked a woman in a lace veil. Nobody had seen the book. Nobody had seen the muff. Nobody had seen any portmanteaus.

The boys had quit searching—were walking home, their hands stuffed in their pockets, boots scuffing along the street, feeling discouraged—when they saw something strange.

In an alleyway, beneath swaying clotheslines, a carriage lay flipped against a lamppost. The reins were tangled. A wheel was smashed. Grizzled men in bent hats were tugging at something pinned beneath the carriage. Something small and brown. About the shape of a portmanteau.

Sean nudged Bram. Bram nudged Sean. The boys crept into the alleyway, toward the flipped carriage, the men tugging at the portmanteau. Laundry twisted overhead. Somewhere somebody emptied a pail of water. The boys froze.

It wasn't a portmanteau. It was a head. With messy brown hair. Its lips gritty with colored pebbles. A corpse in a stained postal uniform.

The men spun about, their overcoats sweeping, their heels scraping against the stones.

Hello boys, said one.

Gunfire pattered. Wind flooded the alleyway, lifting the laundry. Huddled together, staring at the corpse, the boys asked the men about the missing objects.

One man had tattooed fingers. One man had a gold tooth. When the men smiled the skin of their faces crumpled like the collapsed bellows of singing accordions.

You're after rewards, the tattooed man said.

We could use lads like you at a time like this, the tooth man said.

Enterprising, the tattooed man said.

Entrepreneurial, the tooth man said.

We'll work for you, the tattooed man said.

You'll work for us, the tooth man said.

Sean frowned.

What work? Sean said.

The tooth man pointed at the corpse.

We're resurrectionists, the tooth man said.

Bram stared at the corpse. Bram stared at the men. Bram frowned.

You're what? Bram said.

The tooth man motioned at the corpse again.

You've never heard of resurrectionists? the tooth man said.

The tattooed man waved his hands to interrupt.

Lads, if you haven't noticed, we're living in the middle of a revolution, said the tattooed man. Science is changing everything about our lives, from what's in our thread to what's in our trains, and resurrectionists are a part of that. Chemists, they use science to cure different diseases. Geneticists, they use science to produce new species. Resurrectionists, we use science to resurrect the dead.

Bring alive again, nodded the tooth man.

The machine, its inventor, he lives in Japan, said the tattooed man. Ours is the only machine in Ireland. We built it ourselves on a small island in the middle of the sea. And, lads, operating that machinery, it's a lot of work. Each resurrection requires precise measurements, the mixing of dangerous chemicals, blackboards full of maddening equations. Then there's rowing to and from the island, and tightening the machine's bolts, and oiling the machine's sprockets, and shooing birds away from the machine's ports.

The birds, sighed the tooth man.

We're overwhelmed, said the tattooed man. So we could use lads like you. But—now don't forget this—you can't tell anybody you're working for resurrectionists.

Bram squinted.

Why not? Bram said.

Because our work is rather *controversial*, said the tattooed man. Sometimes scientific breakthroughs advance beyond human understanding. The inventor of the machine, he was killed by a mob, his machine destroyed. Overcoming a disease? That people can grasp. Overcoming death itself? People can't grasp it. Some say that it's *unnatural*. Others have religious objections. If science can resurrect anybody now, what was so special about the Christ? The miracle must be kept a miracle.

It's the one thing Catholics and Protestants can agree on, said the tooth man.

That's why we built our machine on an island, said the tattooed man. To avoid the mobs. But lads like you, you can grasp it, can't you? What men like us can grasp? That this work is noble, honest, worthy? That this poor postman shot through the heart deserves another go at it?

Bram looked at Sean. Sean looked at Bram.

The tattooed man clapped his hands together.

So, when you find a body, you'll tell us, said the tattooed man.

And, when we find your things, we'll tell you, said the tooth man.

Sean grabbed the tattooed man by the cuff of a sleeve.

Could you bring back an older body? Dead a year? Just the bones? Sean exclaimed.

Lads, the machine, its abilities are limited, said the tattooed man. We can't resurrect skeletons. We need fresh bodies. Don't forget that.

Disappointed, the boys bit their lips, but they still told the men about the carter they had seen get shot at the barricade in the park.

That's grand! said the tattooed man.

We'll get him next, agreed the tooth man.

The men lifted the corpse, grunting. The body swung, hairy fingers clutching its wrists, tattooed fingers gripping its ankles. The pebbles still clung to its lips. With smiles like winces, the men lugged the dead postman off toward an alleyway.

Sean and Bram didn't talk about the resurrectionists during the walk back, too crushed by the fact that the machine could resurrect only the recently departed. The clouds had been swept from the sky, leaving behind a sandy seabed of gritty stars. When the boys got home their father was stoking the fireplace, wrapped in his dressing gown, wearing his silk slippers. Silently, the boys drifted upstairs, filed into their room, changed into pajamas. In the bathroom they squeezed their toothpaste from its lead tube. Brushed their teeth, whisking the toothpaste into foam. Paused, sometimes, to bare their teeth at the mirror like rabid dogs.

Rewards for missing objects in the classifieds were always generous. The boys canned the coins in jars under their beds like a bronze and silver jam. The money wasn't for themselves. The money was for their younger brother, who had been born dead the year before, a misshapen creature of blood and fluid.

Their father refused to discuss their brother, or their mother, who had been shut in her bedroom since the birth, hardly eating, rarely speaking, just a lump beneath a blanket.

There were few graveyards that would bury stillborn babies. Their brother had been buried in a mass grave, without a gravestone, among the bodies of hundreds of other nameless children.

That was what the money was for.

The boys were going to build a monument to their brother.

When preliminary inspections yielded nothing, the boys often would visit the owner of

the object to learn about the circumstances of its disappearance. The next night, Tuesday, despite the rifle shots echoing across the city, and the sporadic sound of smashing glass, and the shrill caterwauls of despairing people, the boys decided to visit the archbishop's library to ask a few questions about this missing book.

Before leaving, the boys brought their mother a porcelain plate with a quartered apple.

Bram set the plate on the table, quietly, alongside the lumpy shape of their mother. Drapes eclipsed the fading sunlight. Her blanket rose and fell with her breathing.

Ireland's going to be a republic, Sean whispered.

Their mother stirred, said nothing, went still again beneath the blanket.

Sean and Bram slipped back out of the bedroom. The boys spoke of the monument as being a memorial to their brother. What went unspoken was that the monument was also meant to save their mother. That by building the monument the boys hoped to turn a tragedy into a triumph. To bring their mother back to life.

At night their father and other men smoked cigars in the den. Bankers, professors, lawyers. Tonight, through the crack between the doors, the boys saw Mr. Wynne, the retired shipowner, perched in a tufted leather armchair. The other men could be heard only. At the house their existence often was, not corporeal, but olfactory. A visitation of odors. Pungent tobacco, musky shaving soaps, rancid deodorant pastes, the vinegary scent of petroleum pomade. Quarrelsome smells.

Occupying the post office for military headquarters? their father laughed.

Their father was against the rebels. All the men were against the rebels. The boys were for the rebels, but nobody cared what the boys were for.

It was an attack on mail coaches that launched the uprising of 1798, said a voice.

That seems to be their weakness, argued their father.

Seizing symbolic as opposed to functional positions? said a voice.

Privileging *symbolism* over *function*, said a voice.

The post office does have the telegraph machines, said a voice.

Its causes are misery and poverty and madness, anger and ignorance, and the misery and poverty and madness, anger and ignorance, are caused by a government which is in direct opposition to the will of the majority of the people, said Mr. Wynne, reading aloud from a tattered pamphlet, mustache twitching as he spoke.

Famine incarnate, said a voice.

Laying siege to their own city, said a voice.

Without any *thought* for the *repercussions* for the *economy*, said a voice.

Boycotting English goods! For months now! While England is at war! said a voice.

Like a bitch that bites its master while the master's defending the bitch from wolves, spat their father.

She would be a nation of slaves, even though every slave in the country had a chicken in his pot and a golden dish to serve it on, said Mr. Wynne, still reading aloud.

The British Isles form *an unmistakable archipelagos geographically*, said a voice.

Sympathizing with these insurgents is tantamount to sympathizing with insurgents everywhere, their father growled.

Malays, said a voice.

Indians, said a voice.

Afghans, said a voice.

The boys didn't mind sympathizing with insurgents everywhere if that was the requirement for sympathizing with these insurgents. They buttoned their coats, grabbed the newspaper, flew out the door cheering rebel slogans. Pigeons scattered from their stoop.

The boys ran into the city. Passed clusters of murmuring people. Flies hovering above rotting horses. Bookshops gutted by flames.

Along the river the market was experiencing certain fluctuations. Men with weathered skin were selling diamond rings for a shilling apiece. Toothless women wearing silk top hats were hawking gold watches in sets of threes. Looters hopped through shattered windows, teetering away from shops leaving trails of rumpled hosiery. A white-haired woman staggered across the street lugging a phonograph with a golden crank and a painted horn. Triplet girls strutted past in fur coats meant for full-grown women, their hems dragging along the street, their pockets overflowing with stolen stockings. A flushed bearded man who was waving printed leaflets suggesting that the looting be stopped was being variously booed, mocked, and ignored.

Closer to the library the streets were deserted. Sean and Bram hurried past shut shops with painted advertisements for curd solvent, house coals, gas coke. A smudged newspaper fluttered against a fence. Pigeons cooed from an eave. A dead soldier lay slumped against a lamppost. As the boys passed, a gas flame ignited in the lamp, illuminating the corpse of the soldier below like a theater spotlight. Ahead, one by one, the lampposts lit, glass boxes of amber light, as if leading the boys to their destination, or perhaps astray.

Through an iron gateway, up stone steps overgrown with leafy vines, the boys found the archbishop's library. Sean knocked, once. Bram knocked, three times, harder. Sean kicked Bram. Bram kicked Sean. The boys were scuffing about, kicking each other, when the door unlatched.

A librarian peeked out, spindly, wizened, wearing a three-piece wool suit. White smoke swirled from his lips where he was biting the stem of a pipe. Hairs that same color had sprouted on his head, along his brows, in his ears, as if the smoke were seeping from his skin, too, fossilized into curly wisps.

Sean presented the newspaper, pointing at the advertisement about the lost book.

You've found the book? the librarian whispered.

We need clues, Bram said.

The librarian drew the boys into the library, glancing at the street, then shutting the door.

I was afraid you were Pearse, the librarian said.

Who? Bram said.

Sean kicked Bram again.

Pearse leads the rebels, Sean hissed.

Bram scowled, as if having only misheard the name.

Some of the traitors have occupied the biscuit factory across the road, the librarian said.

The white eyebrows rose.

It seems the traitors are hungry, the librarian said.

The librarian latched the door. The boys looked about. The entryway smelled like oniony stew. Aside from a gigantic painting of the archbishop, who had been dead for centuries, the stone walls were utterly bare. A metal pot clanged somewhere. The thunk of a knife chopping roots.

I live under the library with my daughter, the librarian said.

The librarian began ascending a stone staircase trailing a haze of tart smoke.

The book has a twin. Up in the cages. I'll show you, the librarian said.

The boys followed close behind.

On the landing at the top of the staircase, the librarian stopped at a pair of towering wooden doors. He shut his eyes, puffing at the pipe, assuming the expression of a man bidding farewell to his lover before boarding a ship bound for a faraway land. Then he set the pipe in a stone niche.

No fire by the books, the librarian said.

The doors creaked apart. The sight amazed the boys. Dark wooden bookcases lined the

passageway beyond, stuffed with atlases, grimoires, bestiaries, encyclopedias, compendiums, almanacs, treatises, gazetteers, monographs, breviaries, missals, each book shackled to its shelf with a metal chain. Books bound in white leather. Books with gilded spines. The librarian shook a ring of keys.

The rarest books are in the cages, the librarian said. Originally readers were locked in the cages, to prevent the books being stolen. After finishing, readers would ring a bell, summoning a librarian to unlock the cage. We haven't used the cages for that in centuries, though we still keep the keys. I locked the cages this afternoon as a precaution when the rebels took the factory.

In the windows between bookcases, fragments of the nighttime churchyard flashed by. Worn ladders rested against the bookcases. Shuffling along the passageway, the librarian touched the spines of different books, announcing their contents like gossip about neighbors.

An apothecary's inventory of collected curiosities, the librarian said. Manuscripts with coded illustrations by alchemists with anagrammed names. A tome examining different systems of, and the differences between, cryptography and steganography. Cryptography being the *encryption* of a message, whereas steganography deals with *concealing that a message is even there*.

The librarian rounded the passageway. Cages stood there. Crowded bookcases served as the walls of the cages. The doors to the cages had wire windows.

The lost book concerns the anatomy of a burned elephant, the librarian said. The elephant burned alive in its booth, accidentally, in 1681, here in Dublin. I'm afraid the study of its anatomy was incomplete however. After the elephant was extinguished, the citizenry descended upon it, fighting for pieces of the body.

The librarian unlocked a cage.

Souvenirs of the incident, the librarian grimaced.

A wooden stool waited in the cage. Sean moved to sit. Bram lunged, slid onto the stool, claimed the seat. Sean pretended only to have been adjusting his coat.

We loaned the book to the college library, the librarian said. Afterward I went to the college myself to collect it. I wrapped the book in paper, boarded the tramcar, took a seat. That was when the horrible thing happened. An old schoolmate of mine came onto the tramcar. We saw each other! We started talking. He hopped off a few stops later, but that was all it took. My body was still in the present, getting jostled about as the tramcar crossed a bridge, but my mind was lost in the past. Daydreams, memories. The shapes of rooms I had forgotten. The faces of people I had forgotten. I got off the tramcar, came into the library, had a cup of tea. I felt grand! And that was when I realized that I had forgotten the book on the tram. Can't remember something you've forgotten, I'm afraid, without forgetting something you'd remembered.

Sean and Bram looked at each other. The book had been lost on a tramcar. That was a valuable clue.

We have another copy, but the book is quite rare, and we're offering a sizable reward, the librarian said. Ah, yes, here. The lost book looks like this. Posterity would be eternally indebted to you if you were able to find it.

As the boys examined the book—the color, the size, the title, the rhythmic syllables of the name of the author—the librarian withdrew a sheet of paper from the bookshelf.

Some of the texts here exist only in this library, the librarian whispered with a sense of reverence.

The librarian delicately offered the boys the paper.

This, this here, this is the only copy of this handbill in the world, the librarian said.

The boys reached for the handbill.

Just then someone shouted.

Something boomed.

Someone shrieked.

Windowpanes shattered in the library. The librarian cried out. Bram flailed backward from the seat, tipping onto the ground. Sean dropped the handbill, gaping at the noise. Whatever was firing was much heavier than a rifle. The guns fired again. Bullets thudded into the papery flesh of aged books. The handbill had fluttered to the floor. The paper advertised an exhibition held in Dublin in 1743.

FOR THE AMUSEMENT AND ENTERTAINMENT OF LADIES, AS WELL AS GENTLEMEN… WILL BE EXHIBITED A COURSE OF CURIOUS EXPERIMENTS… ALL BEING THE PRODUCT OF NATURAL CAUSES, AND YET APPEARING TO THE SPECTATORS TO BE THINGS BEYOND NATURE…

those experiments including,

MILK TO BE TRANSMUTED TO THE COLOR OF BLOOD BY A COLORLESS FLUID

TWO COLD FLUIDS COMING TOGETHER INSTANTLY FLAME WITH VIOLENCE

PAPER TO BE SET ON FLAME BY THE TOUCH OF COLD IRON

TWO COLD FLUIDS COMING TOGETHER TO PRODUCE STARS OF LIQUID FIRE

A FLASH OF LIGHT, AND AN EXPLOSION, IN IMITATION OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING IN MINIATURE

the public forewarned,

NONE TO BE ADMITTED BUT BY TICKETS

Once the firing stopped, the librarian hurried from the cage. Sean and Bram crept after, cautiously, their hearts pounding, glass shards crunching under their boots. A lone bookcase had been hit. But the books there had been massacred. The spines were riddled with holes the size of coins.

The librarian was weeping for the lost books, fingers drifting along the constellation of bullet holes.

Nervous that the guns might fire again, the boys left the librarian there, running down the staircase and out through the door.

All of the lampposts were lit now. The boys flew back down the streets toward home. Further along, the boys saw a pair of women in striped dresses sprawled in puddles of blood. Further yet, the boys passed soldiers swaying on horses, the horses snorting steamy clouds, hooves clopping against the cobblestone. Further still, the boys discovered the resurrectionists, who were scrubbing greasy oil from their fingers under a spout.

When the men spotted the boys coming, their faces broke into smiles, accordions singing.

The boys stopped at the spout, breathless.

Did your machine work on that postman? Sean said.

Why of course, the tattooed man said.

He's back among the living now, beamed the tooth man.

We brought back that dead carter you told us about too, said the tattooed man.

Told us to pass along his thanks to you, nodded the tooth man.

The boys glanced at each other, trying not to smile but secretly thrilled. As the resurrectionists wiped the water from their hands onto their pants, the boys reported the bodies of the women that had been lying in puddles of blood. The boys didn't tell about the dead soldier beneath the lamppost though, because the soldiers were the enemies of the rebels,

and the boys didn't want the dead soldier coming back.

Have you found any of our things from the paper? Bram said.

Not quite yet lads, but don't you worry, the tattooed man said.

On our honor, we won't rest until we have, swore the tooth man.

The resurrectionists tipped their hats and hurried off in the direction of the dead women.

At home, the boys gathered the plate with the apple, untouched, from their mother's bedroom.

For months now, almost as long as their mother had been bedridden, Sean and Bram had been working the classifieds. The boys had a gift. They had found a misplaced lighter, a missing whistle, a mislaid perfume. They had discovered the whereabouts of various runaway cats. They had found a purpleheart chessboard's lost king. They had resurrected mittens from ditches, overcoats from alleyways, boots from roofs. They had returned a passport to the toothless caretaker of a glass bottle company, a postcard to a pimpled gardener in a fragrant glasshouse at the botanic gardens, eyeglasses to the royal astronomer at the domed observatory, a somewhat puzzling package to a cloaked figure waiting at the turnstiles of the Ha'penny Bridge, a battered diary to a blushing clerk at the post office, photographs bound with twine to a cranky bearded man at the lighthouse at the end of the world, a broken locket to a hunched barkeep sneaking sloshing beers through a hole in the wall of the pub to soldiers outside in Phoenix Park, a brass pocket watch to the headmaster of a school for deaf children (the boys passing room after room of fluttering hands), a flask to the potbellied caretaker of an orphanage (the boys passing room after room of pillows soaring between beds), and an umbrella to a bishop at the Black Church (after collecting their reward, the boys had run three times around the church, but the

devil hadn't appeared).

Inadvertently—hunting for lost things, delivering found things to their owners—the boys had seen archways and backstreets and neighborhoods that they never would have otherwise. There wasn't an alleyway in the city now where they didn't feel at home. They lived for the stale brackish smell of its shops, the rumbling sound of its tramcars, the feel of its fences thunking, bar by bar, against their passing hands. They loved, without any favoritism whatsoever, each of its bridges. They admired its detours, worshiped its shortcuts, understood its temperamental dead ends like the shifts in their own moods.

Among the missing objects that the boys hadn't bothered hunting for: other umbrellas, other lockets, a photographer's eyeglasses, a baker's recipe, a teetotum, a mourning gown with a mourning veil. Only once had the boys gone against their intuition. A week when nothing else had been advertised as missing, a gold mechanical orrery had been advertised, and from the beginning the boys had sensed the orrery was lost forever, but they had wasted nine days hunting for the orrery anyway, nine days of walking, and rummaging, and walking, and scouring, and walking, and surveying total strangers, and shimmying across ledges, and batting through cobwebs, and digging through rubbish, until they had acknowledged, finally, that their intuition was infallible, and that there were certain things that could not be found.

On Wednesday, English reinforcements marched into the city. Irish civilians swarmed the soldiers, offering tea, sandwiches, maps outlining the rebels' positions. Under the martial law, meetings of more than five people had been banned. Householders and innkeepers and hoteliers were required to affix lists to their doors cataloging the names and ages and occupations of everyone within.

Their father, the other men, were shut in the den, celebrating the arrival of the soldiers.

The boys buttoned their coats, grabbed the newspaper, ran into the city.

When the boys passed a building the rebels occupied, the boys would cross themselves as if passing a building occupied by angels. When the boys passed soldiers, Sean muttered curses and Bram kicked stones.

Students stood at the gate to the college, smoking cigarettes, gripping rifles, their hands with veins like forked lightning.

Me, I would've taken the college, a student said. We've got *hundreds* of rifles. We've got *hundreds* of bullets. We're in the city's *dead exact center*. Instead, what do the rebels take? A biscuit factory! A flour mill! A whiskey distillery!

They're no cowards, a student spat. But they're no strategists either.

Sean searched abandoned tramcars while Bram stood guard. In the tramcars Sean found four corpses—a tawny-haired rebel in a slashed uniform, an elderly man with scabs on his hands, a pair of women dressed like maids—but no sign of the lost book. Between tramcars Bram helped to memorize the details of the bodies.

The boys discovered the resurrectionists further down. The men stood perched on the railing of a bridge—as if about to leap into the canal below—scrawling something in a scraped ledger. The men were murmuring to each other but stopped as the boys ran up.

Have you got anything for us today? the tattooed man grinned.

Eagerly, the boys reported the bodies in the tramcars, emphasizing the body of the rebel.

Extraordinary work! the tattooed man said.

We'll go straight there, agreed the tooth man.

The resurrectionists hopped from the railing onto the bridge, their overcoats billowing in the air and then snapping back down as their soles hit the ground.

What about our missing objects? Sean said.

Our things from the paper? Bram said.

Smiling ruefully, the men tucked away the ledger.

Sorry, lads, but still no luck, said the tooth man.

The resurrectionists clapped the boys on their backs and hurried off toward the tramcars.

Frustrated, the boys shoved their hands into their pockets, watching swans drift along the canal.

Despite that a military gunboat had begun shelling buildings—and doing so with fairly unreliable accuracy—the boys decided to visit the prison to ask a few questions about the lost muff.

The boys ran through an abandoned neighborhood, pinching their noses against the odor of burning tires, smoldering furniture, scorched dogs roasting in the embers of razed houses. Someone on the roof of a bank was sending semaphore messages with colored shirts for flags. Soldiers along the river ducked behind a barricade and then popped up to fire at a shape in a window. A dressmaker's model tumbled out of the window and clattered apart on the road.

Union flags fluttered above the walls of the prison. The boys knocked at the gate. Nearby, under a ledge, a bearded vagrant wearing a pair of gold watches napped in a makeshift hovel. The hovel was lined with wrinkled newspapers faded with age. Only the page at the shoes of the vagrant was legible. The paper advertised a product sold in Dublin since 1873.

WORLD-FAMED BLOOD MIXTURE… THE GREAT BLOOD PURIFIER… A NEVER-FAILING AND PERMANENT CURE…

these cures eliminating,

ULCERATED SORE LEGS

SCURVY SORES

CANCEROUS ULCERS

GLANDULAR SWELLINGS

BLACKHEADS OR PIMPLES ON THE FACE

the public forewarned,

THIS MIXTURE IS PLEASANT TO THE TASTE

The gate grated open. A rifle peered through the gate. A squat guard with a mangled ear stood there gripping the rifle. The guard looked annoyed.

Go home, said the guard.

Sean presented the newspaper, pointing at the advertisement about the lost muff.

The guard frowned. He unbuttoned a pocket, removed scuffed eyeglasses. He mumbled something. He leaned forward, squinted, read the advertisement, silently mouthing each word.

You have the muff? said the guard, blinking through the eyeglasses.

We need to know where it was lost, Bram said.

The guard buttoned the eyeglasses back into the pocket.

I'll take you to the governor, but if he decides to lock you away for the night, that's your own faults, said the guard.

Sean glanced at Bram. Bram glanced at Sean.

Bram shuffled behind Sean, making him take the lead.

The guard ushered the boys through the yard, where prisoners were breaking stones with sledgehammers. The prisoners worked wearing convict caps and swivel handcuffs. Hatters, fiddlers, vintners, glove-sewers, horse-shoers, gold-beaters, wool-spinners, flower-makers, thimble-riggers, arrested for various wrongdoings. Beggars for begging. Train-hoppers and stowaways for refusing to pay fares. A guard with a sneer was ringing a triangle to signal the day's end.

Into the prison, through shadowy tunnels, up a bitterly chilly stairway, rounding a corner into an atrium lined with three stories of metal cell doors. The atrium had a ceiling of arced glass, like a glasshouse, except that there weren't any plants. It was the biggest empty room the boys had ever seen. Steam rose from vents in the floor. A lone guard patrolled the catwalks.

The guard with the mangled ear glanced back at the boys.

You hear that now? said the guard.

Echoey tapping sounds rang across the atrium. Water gushing. A pause. Another muted tap.

That's them in their cells. Tapping messages on the water pipes. They think we don't know, spat the guard.

The boys followed the guard from the atrium into another tunnel.

What do the messages mean? Sean said.

The guard frowned.

We don't know, the guard confessed.

The guard knocked at a door. Someone within shouted. The guard threw the door open.

Patterned drapes bordered the window. A wooden desk pinned a rug to the floor. In a clouded mirror with a gilded frame, the boys saw themselves. Sean's cheek smeared

muddy. Bram's lips blue from the cold. Coats buttoned to their chins. The governor, a colossal man with shining curls of reddish hair, was jabbing at the keys of a typewriter like someone trying to smash an insect not merely poisonous but somehow personally offensive. His uniform was rumpled. He had a chin like a weapon.

The guard coughed.

Sir, there's an notice in the paper about your wife's—

I have already heard all of the jokes, the governor said.

The guard coughed again. The governor dismissed him. The door shut.

Hesitantly, the boys presented the newspaper, asking about the circumstances of the disappearance.

The governor propped his chin on his hands, staring at the boys over interlaced fingers.

The boys stood nervously looking back.

How are your parents weathering the insurrection? the governor asked.

The boys said grand.

Do you know what an objector is? the governor asked.

The boys said yes.

The governor, apparently no stranger to deception, explained anyway.

An objector is someone who refuses to serve in the army, said the governor. To pacify the nationalists, Irish men aren't conscripted into the army, which has nonetheless obviously failed to pacify the nationalists. Conscripted means forced to enlist. Consequently, all of the objectors imprisoned here are English, Scottish, or Welsh. Boys? What's that you're wondering? Why would anybody object to serving his country? A few words. Quakers. Tolstoyans. Milquetoasts, weaklings, cowards. That's why. Religious fanatics, the philosophically debauched, and men afraid of dying. Objectors can apply for exemption, but truthfully, applicants are typically denied exemption, because that's what cowards de-

serve. Thus the objectors are shipped to France. Given non-combatant duties. Digging trenches, building toilets, laying telephone lines. It's time you knew, however, boys, that there exists something much worse than an objector. An absolutist. An absolutist is an objector who refuses to serve *even as a non-combatant*. Won't dig or build or lay anything. Won't make his bed. Won't even dress in his uniform. Absolutists typically are court-martialed and sentenced to death. Boys! Don't look so grave! The death sentence is a court-martial formality! The sentences are reduced, almost always, from firing squad to hard labor. The absolutists are shipped to prisons in England, Scotland, Wales, and yes, even here. When an absolutist arrives, however, we don't give him hard labor. We shove him into an empty cell, we shut the door, and he doesn't see another soul for forty days. No mattress. No blanket. No window. A bucket for excreta. For meals, peas, bread, and porridge. That's what he gets. Boys? Can you imagine what happens? To a man alone for forty days? For five days, he's quite bored. On the seventh day, he begins pounding on the door, ringing the bell for a guard who never comes, shouting whenever a meal is delivered, begging for someone to speak to him, please, please, please. By the ninth day, he's arguing with invisible phantoms, hearing things that aren't there. By the tenth day, he's hallucinating flashes of color, his own dead body, stars. By the eleventh day, he's weeping constantly. Around the twelfth day, his mind hangs itself, leaving his body alone in the cell. Which, again, is what cowards deserve.

The governor sighed, rubbing his temples, as if cowards wearied him.

After that, of course, they still have another four weeks to spend in the cell. And even after that we can give them repeated sentences. Some of the objectors here haven't seen another soul for a hundred days. Naturally, some of the objectors kill themselves, which only goes to prove that their objections were sham.

The governor rifled through a drawer.

And, boys, I loathe a coward, but I despise a traitor, said the governor. Once this *aggravating insurrection* has been dealt with, I pray that the traitors are sent here. I am going to invent methods of punishment that I simply cannot describe to children of your age. I pray it, I pray it, I pray it.

The governor withdrew something.

Here's a photograph of my wife wearing the muff. She won't tell me where she lost it, which makes me suspicious, frankly. Find what you can, the governor said.

The boys took the photograph. Gunfire rattled. The governor glared out the window, watching the city burn beyond the prison.

Cowards, the governor said.

The governor reached for the typewriter.

If they wanted to kill people, they should have bloody enlisted, the governor said.

At night, from their beds, the boys would whisper plans for the monument. Some nights the monument was stone, was brass, included a cloud for their brother to sit on, included a crown on their brother's head. They would argue over what the plaque should read. They were wavering between several quotations.

Zeppelins had begun bombing the coast of England. Sean swore that the Germans would send the zeppelins to Ireland, that German solders would parachute into the city and fight for the rebels. Bram stopped praying to the Trinity and started praying to Germany. Beyond murky panes of glass, the sky glowed red, reflecting the fires below. Sometimes gleaming sparks would shoot into the sky, like souls fleeing the planet.

On Thursday, before leaving, the boys fixed a poster to the door. The boys had found the poster spiked to a fence-post. The paper advertised a proclamation given in Dublin that

week, by the rebels, in 1916.

WE DECLARE THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND TO THE OWNERSHIP OF IRELAND… THE LONG USURPATION OF THAT RIGHT BY A FOREIGN PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT HAS NOT EXTINGUISHED THE RIGHT, NOR CAN IT EVER BE EXTINGUISHED EXCEPT BY THE DESTRUCTION OF THE IRISH PEOPLE… EVERY GENERATION THE IRISH PEOPLE HAVE ASSERTED THEIR RIGHT TO NATIONAL FREEDOM AND SOVEREIGNTY: SIX TIMES DURING THE PAST THREE HUNDRED YEARS THEY HAVE ASSERTED IT IN ARMS…

these declarations concluding,

WE HEREBY PROCLAIM THE IRISH REPUBLIC AS A SOVEREIGN INDEPENDENT STATE

the public forewarned,

THE IRISH REPUBLIC IS ENTITLED TO, AND HEREBY CLAIMS, THE ALLEGIANCE OF EVERY IRISHMAN AND IRISHWOMAN

The boys buttoned their coats, gathered the newspaper, shouted goodbye.

The portmanteau had been advertised as belonging to someone at an address on a street far to the north. The boys were expecting some type of house. When the boys reached the address, however, there wasn't any house there. The address was for a cemetery.

A gravedigger had abandoned a mucky shovel along the gate. Something was whistling. A watchtower rose from a jumble of graves.

The boys were met at the gate by a watchman with a lamp. Coarse black hair overhung

his neck, his ears, his pale gray eyes. His lips were fat. A thick crease marked the skin of each cheek, from eye to jaw, like gutters that had been designed to divert the watchman's tears to the ground.

I've heard of you lads, the watchman said. I have a friend at the prison.

It was the watchman who had advertised the portmanteau. He described it (small, brown, leather, a brass clasp, empty at the time), related the circumstances of its disappearance (lost a week prior during a stroll along a canal), and could offer nothing else.

Then, perhaps seeing that the boys were disappointed by being given so few clues, the watchman offered to take the boys into the watchtower.

There's a rule against bringing visitors in there, the watchman said. We'll have to be careful that nobody sees.

The boys nudged each other, excited at the thought of exploring somewhere forbidden.

Looking up at the top of the watchtower from the base was dizzying. A variety of rusted tools were stored along the curved wall of the interior. The light of the lamp that the watchman carried cast shadows across the clutter. While climbing the winding steps, the watchman asked if the boys knew the names of any of the rebels who had been killed.

Are you for the rebels? Sean asked.

I'm not for them, but I know a number of them, the watchman said. When I was your age, I spent a year at Pearse's school.

The arched window at the top of the watchtower overlooked an expanse of tilting headstones and sprawling trees. Crypts with gates barred like cages. Statues stained with rain. Dusk had crept into the cemetery without anybody sounding the alarm. The boys leaned out over the window ledge, their breath swept away by the view.

At the school we had this museum, the watchman said. The other boys voted me curator. The museum was this giant wooden cabinet. We kept species of leaves, samples of

bark. Dragonflies, butterflies, starfish. Anything we found. It was a source of pride for us. Pearse, as headmaster, had donated artifacts of his own: a cannonball, a sword, pikes from the uprising of 1798. Otherwise the museum was essentially ours. Pearse had given us only one rule. But, as curator, I had to swear by the rule. We *were not permitted to gather anything living.* That was the rule. We *were not permitted to kill anything wild*.

The boys leaned further out the window ledge, their boots kicking above the floor.

Pearse wanted a beehive for the museum, the watchman said. All of us knew this. It was part of the lore of the school. This empty space in the cabinet. And that autumn we found a hive hanging from a tree near the stream. The bees that had built it were still living there, hovering around, buzzing. We waited a month, and the bees were still there. We waited another month, and the bees were still there. The next month when the bees were still there we took a rock and knocked it down. We swung at the bees with bats and rackets and hurleys until all the bees were dead or had flown away. Then we carried the hive to the school. I put it in the museum. And when Pearse saw it, he called me into his office. I was thrilled to have gotten him what he wanted. I sat there waiting for him to praise me. Instead, he asked me if any bees had died. I lied, but he knew already. He burned the hive. I was dismissed as curator. Another boy took my place.

The boys leaned even further out the window ledge, blood rushing to their heads.

I worshiped Pearse, the same as the others, said the watchman. More than ever, after the hive. And that's why I feel this way. Like, for him, this isn't a rebellion. It's a performance. At the school we often would stage plays. And that was the only time that he would allow us to kill wolves, or demons, or people. When it was part of a performance. When we were on stage.

Then the watchman went quiet, leaning against the arch, gazing out at the cemetery.

The boys dropped from the window ledge back onto the floor.

What are you supposed to watch for out there? Bram said.

The watchman glanced over.

Resurrectionists, the watchman said.

Sean and Bram looked at each other in surprise.

The resurrectionists? Sean said.

Say your mum died, the watchman began to explain.

They'd bring her back! Bram said.

Indeed, the watchman said. A manner of speaking. The night after her funeral they'd sneak into the cemetery. Dig to the head of the coffin. Pop the lid. Wrap a noose around your mum's neck. Drag her out the tunnel back above ground. Give the body a new hat, wrap their arms around it, and walk it straight out the gate as if their friend's a bit drunk.

To bring her back? Bram said tentatively.

Sell the body for some coins, the watchman said.

Sean had stopped breathing. All the color had drained from Bram.

Sell the body? Sean said.

The watchman patted the windowsill of the watchtower.

Don't worry lads, the watchman said. These days bodysnatchers are rare. And, for the few still in the trade, I'm on guard. You saw the watchtowers at the prison? This watchtower here is just as efficacious. Theirs keep anything alive from sneaking out—ours keeps anything alive from sneaking in.

A swaying lamp was floating along a pathway through the cemetery, headed for the watchtower. The watchman frowned, the creases in his face thickening.

That's the superintendent, the watchman murmured. You'll have to go.

Quiet, dazed, the boys walked home.

Before the rising, the boys had walked those streets any number of times. Seen the

swept walkways, the gleaming windows, the brick townhouses with flowering yards. Neighbors chatting, clutching baskets of steaming bread. Girls with dolls.

Now the boys were walking through different streets altogether. A fire was burning in the yard of a townhouse. Shattered glass littered the walkways. The district beyond the cemetery was deserted, as if the site of an incurable plague. The boys wandered dumbstruck past a makeshift barricade of armchairs, sofas, washbasins, trunks. Tramcars had been overturned, the tramways scattered with broken crates, smashed basketwork, undelivered letters. Gunshots murmured, the same noise, again and again and again, as if repeating a question that had no answer.

Along the river the market was mayhem. Preferred currencies were nuts, roots, grains. Wrinkled men with bejeweled fingers sat slumped begging for bread. A sooty woman was shaking gold watches from her arms, bartering for a withered carrot. Trails of flour, apple stems, shredded cabbage leaves, yolky bits of stomped eggshell, led out of looted grocers. A shapely wirework mannequin had been abducted to a doorway by a bony girl with gold hair. The girl had lipstick streaked twice under one eye, like greasy scarlet tears, clutching the wirework as if the mannequin were her mother. At a bridge, boys in caps were massing crates of plundered fireworks. Sparklers, wound coils of firecrackers, gigantic skyrockets on flimsy poles. Fire had gutted a three-story hotel. Its plate-glass windows had melted into the road like glassy lava. In the ruins of the hotel, among the charred remains of the ballroom, a pair of silhouettes staggered about like waltzing ghosts.

The silhouettes lurched between dusty beams of moonlight.

The silhouettes were topped with shadowy bent hats.

The silhouettes lurched into a beam of moonlight.

It was the resurrectionists.

The men were struggling with a body. A blubbery, hairy, sneering body buttoned into a

railway uniform. The men hoisted the corpse over a mound of bricks, then set the body on the ground, panting.

Liars! Sean shouted.

Sean and Bram skidded, coats flapping, down a slope of bricks. Where the wreckage was still smoldering, their boots stirred whirling embers. They ran to the body.

Bram jabbed a finger at the men.

You don't have any machine, Bram said.

You steal bodies from graves, Sean said.

The tooth man laughed, the gold tooth twinkling in the moonlight.

Bodies from graves? said the tattooed man.

We used to, said the tooth man.

The tattooed man wiped sweat from his temples with the back of his hands.

The cemeteries are dangerous, said the tattooed man.

Watchmen with guns, watchdogs with teeth, said the tooth man.

We aren't resurrecting bodies from cemeteries anymore, said the tattooed man.

We're resurrecting bodies from the city itself, said the tooth man.

From the streets, said the tattooed man.

From the rubble, said the tooth man.

That's evil! Bram shouted.

You said it was for science! Sean shouted.

The man with the tattooed fingers splayed his fingers across his forehead, adopting the expression of an overworked schoolteacher faced with a pair of especially taxing students.

Boys, boys, boys, said the tattooed man.

It is for science, said the tooth man.

The medical schools need bodies. Heaps and heaps and heaps of bodies. And as the

only bodies they can acquire by law are those of donated relations, they dodge the law, and they pay us to get some more, said the tattooed man.

Albeit a bit stingily, now that those donated relations are legal, said the tooth man.

So when you're on your deathbed, and your esteemed, honorable, principled doctor saves your precious life with some technique or procedure he learned by cutting apart corpses, you'll have us to thank, boys, for risking our evil lives to fetch him those bodies, said the tattooed man.

Fireworks bloomed in the sky above the hotel. The booms shook the rubble. Grunting, the men lifted the body again, gripping the wrists, gripping the ankles. Gold light flickered across the street. The men hauled the corpse along a ridge of stones.

You can't! Those are people! Somebody's missing father! Bram shouted.

Some of those are rebels! Sean shouted.

The tooth man dropped the body. He whirled about, strode back to them scowling, and snatched their collars in his fists. The boys flinched as he leaned in.

You think this isn't about money for the rebels? the tooth man hissed.

It's always about money, called the tattooed man.

Pearse's father sold gravestones, the tooth man hissed.

There's always been profit for their family in this type of thing, called the tattooed man.

Standing tall again, releasing their collars, the tooth man beamed, patted their heads once, and then strode back to the body.

Trembling, the boys watched from the ruins of the hotel as the resurrectionists dumped the corpse into a cart and wheeled the cart off toward the bridge. Beyond, a shrieking woman with gnarled hair had wrenched an apple from the clutch of a pleading boy. The girl with the lipstick tears was still clutching the mannequin. Golden streaks plunged haphazardly through the sky, shimmering, like meteors auguring the end of the world.

When the boys got home, their father had torn down the poster.

Knowing the truth about the resurrectionists made the boys feel sick.

It wasn't that they had been misled. It wasn't that they had been exploited. It wasn't that they were to blame for bodies being sold, getting cut apart, never receiving proper burials.

It was the idea that the men might have dug up their brother.

That, all of this time, they might have been saving to build a monument for a body that wasn't there.

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, the noise was rife. Rifles cracked, machine guns rattled, artillery boomed. Armored vehicles prowled the streets, brewery lorries covered with iron boilers. Where before there had been a row of buildings, now whole buildings had been blown out, leaving a layered view. Staring across the river, the boys could see buildings one, two, three streets back simultaneously. The rebels fled the post office, scattered into townhouses, got trapped there by the soldiers, then used crowbars to tear through the walls, trying to tunnel to freedom. The families in the townhouses were starving, huddled together under tables and chairs. Wrinkled men wrapped in white flags were slumped dead in the alleyways. If the boys had still been working for the resurrectionists, they would have had to take notes, and even then they wouldn't have remembered every body that they saw.

The boys were digging through rubbish in an alleyway when they heard the news that the rebels had surrendered. Passersby cheered. Sean swore it wasn't possible. Bram was on the verge of tears. The boys ran to the river, coats unbuttoned, flapping, dusty. Soldiers with rifles were marching unarmed rebels to prison. The rebels' heads were bowed. The citizenry had gathered at the bridge, shouting curses at the rebels, flinging heads of rotten cabbage. The soldiers forced the people back, defending the rebels from the cabbage, hav-

ing to protect the same people they had been trying to kill the night before. Most of the soldiers were Irish. Some of the soldiers were fathers, brothers, sons of the rebels. Horse carts pulled down the remains of burned buildings. Soldiers waded through canals, searching the water there for submerged ammunition. Soldiers inspected bread trucks, searching among the loaves for hidden rifles. Soldiers posed for photos with the rebels' flag.

The rebels were sent to a different governor, at a different prison, in a different district, presumably to the gut-wrenching disappointment of the governor the boys had met. And that next week the English began executing rebels. The rebels were executed by firing squad behind prison walls. Pearse was executed, and people could finally relax. The other leaders were executed, and people agreed justice had been dealt. A number of subordinates were executed, and people were ready to forgive the rebels, forget the rising, move on.

But the executions didn't stop. The executions kept coming. Another, and then another, and then another, sometimes three a day. The shots rang like church bells across the city, as if time there were measured not by passing hours but by passing lives. One of the rebels was married in his prison cell with the guards as the witnesses and then shot in the prison yard the next morning, and then a rebel who had never even fired a gun was shot in the prison yard, and then a rebel who had been crippled by polio was shot in the prison yard, and then a rebel who already had been shot in the ankle and was suffering from gangrene and would have died anyway was carted out into the prison yard on a stretcher and tied to a chair and shot, and that, then, was when something changed. People had stopped spitting, had started whispering reverently, when speaking the rebels' names. The shopkeepers were selling photos of dead rebels. Their father, the other men, were now using words like martyrs instead of traitors. The boys saw the resurrectionists marching in a nationalist

parade. Their mother squinted into the sunlight, stepped onto their stoop, and spoke. Their mother was alive again, and, still, the boys felt like old men lost in a foreign country. Wherever they were, they didn't want to stay.

Some ruins were still smoking when the boys found the portmanteau. It was scuffed brown leather, had a brass latch, contained rolled posters. The boys kicked it into a ditch and left it there. The portmanteau could have been anyone's. Any number of portmanteaus would have fit the description. On every street in every neighborhood of every district now there were abandoned portmanteaus. The boys' own street was littered with objects. A coal scuttle leaning against a fence, a log carrier flung against a lamppost, a copper sextant that had dropped out of some pocket into the road, a mahogany swordstick that had fallen into the gutter from some passing carriage, tortoise-shell eyeglasses with cracked lenses, busted piano chairs, ivory cutlery strewn across the stones, a needlework box with ribbon peeking out, a homespun shirt in a rumple, a tea caddy with the key in the lock, an upside-down cradle. A policeman's truncheon. A postman's whistle. A bicycle with patched tires. Warped steel beams hung off of a jagged brick wall. Buildings stood alone on streets where all of the other buildings had vanished. Archways led in and out of nothing. The boys sat on a bridge, chewing bread, feeling defeated. The city itself was lost. Already they could sense that they would never find it.

About The Author

Matthew Baker is the author of the graphic novel *The Sentence*, the story collections *Why Visit America* and *Hybrid Creatures*, and the children's novel *Key Of X*. Digital experiments include the temporal fiction "Ephemeral," the interlinked novel *Untold*, the randomized novel *Verses*, and the intentionally posthumous *Afterthought*.

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