

A scrap of paper found in what remains of Joseph Blank's West & 11th St apartment has been found; Mr. Blank evidently appears to be connected to Mr. Truant and what remains of his estate.

I remember his name. Truant. Johnny Truant. Like he was a little schoolboy you'd found on the sidewalk, mouth stained with the pink remains of his latest haul. And to some degree, he was that kid; when you got him to talk, all he'd talk about was how he'd Thumped this chick the other day—or perhaps her name was Thumped? I could never remember, but I remember his name and his name's name so clearly—and his latest bender with Lou or maybe it was Luanne and his *secret, wounding past*—though clearly never secret or wounding enough to prevent him from sharing—and his apartment and seeing the light leave as the dockworker sinks and never anything about his parents well except for that one single time and more about the girls oh they felt so *lovely* and anyway

I don't know how much of it was made up. Probably most of it. But he *did* have a past of some kind—you don't learn how to lie so easily if you've never had to. And he loved tattoos. Not for the reason you'd think; for all his posturing he never thought that ink would add to his brand. He insisted his scars were enough. I never asked further—he was a good hand even with all the tremors and surprisingly bright when he wanted to be, and that was enough. I think he would have made a wonderful tattooist, given time. But, of course, eventually whatever it was caught up with him.

Or. Well.

Something caught up with him for sure. I am sure that it was not the mob although he had been involved with the mob and towards the end his words started to leave him but he wouldn't know and so he'd just keep talking and talking errant syllables hanging in the air like raindrops stopped in time but towards the beginning it was clearer and he would talk about his apartment and his book and his book and that [house](#) on Ash Tree Lane but never what was inside and that terror that followed him and somehow the girls again oh they felt so *lovely* and I'd try to get him back on track because now I was invested but he'd

retreat into the stories of women and I'd give him a task and he'd nod and go start taking care of it but then I'd hear a great crashing and I went to go check on him and he was just standing there with the crate of purple ink splattered all over the floor and there was this look on his face and you could see the sea so very deep and the cold so much cold if you looked deep enough in that face if you looked deep enough and I knew that whatever things he'd seen in his life though there were many and they had pulled him under before were nothing compared to this thing that was drowning him now and the only word I could glean from him at the end was that name and the address of that house on Ash Tree Lane and I remember his name and his name's name and that pale sea in his face splotched with purple and he'd stand there for a moment and I'd tell him to go home and he'd just

Stop. Nod. Turn his head down to the floor. And walk out the front door.

But I remember his name and his name's name: Johnny Truant. What a name. I'm certainly one to talk; my name is Blank and I run a tattoo parlor, for crying out loud

But I remember his name: the one that he had said to me as his lungs and his eyes filled with so much water. Zampanò. I could Hear the accent as he spoke, and I can't unHear it. He disappeared, pulled under by whatever horror had cast its eyes on him, and I was a little relieved—I had been scouting a new apprentice, and perhaps with the fresh meat and fresh hands I could forget the whole affair. And perhaps I could have, had I not received a package a week later. The return address a house on Ash Tree Lane, though all other identifying marks (including the street number) had been washed away by a sea of fire leaving only singed pitch in their wake. His name's name (well, a transliteration of it) attached to a plain grey Atari cartridge with a plain white label. An address to a garage sale a street over with, who'd've guessed, a plain grey 2600 console for sale dirt cheap. It was a steal even then. I could've just resold the Atari and moved on. I should've just resold the Atari and moved on. I should've just resold the Atari and moved on.