

I
DON'T
KNOW
HOW
TO
BEHAVE

A Fiction by Michael Blouin

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HE GRABBED
HER SUDDENLY,
HELD HER TO
HIMSELF AND
KISSED HER
HARD LIKE IN A
HOLLYWOOD
MOVIE

BRUCE MCDONALD

MORRISBURG, 1999

driving blind Port Hope Bancroft Coburg Brockville Morrisburg

the tall grass here hides everything

snow covers

the rest

most of the goddamned time

station drift dust sun and empty cups on the dash and next trip you drive

midnight-black Dodge Charger

goddamned Toronto skyscrapers and the rest of it behind

paper bag slides the length of faded dash milk smear windshield

you drive some

you stretch those long legs like that – I want everything you've got.

For Canada, moving pictures arrived on 28 June, 1896, in a former shooting gallery on rue de la Lagauchetière in downtown Montreal. From the fall of 1896, the movies appeared in various Canadian cities, as travelling showmen often brought to eager audiences a string of ten spectacles lasting one to five minutes.

“Do you think I’ve got them figured right?”

“Honey you’ve got them figured alright.”

“Howso Rocket?”

“Because you know exactly where they live – corner of money and gimme some.”

“That’s their deal, it’s always the money.”

“That’s their deal.”

“Well...”

He takes a swipe at the condensation on the window. Pulls the blind down.

“Too much bright in here.”

“Well what do you want to do... now?”

She smiles. She always smiles first. She kicks off her shoes. Skin extra light in the dim light. Pulls the socks slow. Orange peels on the floor. Casino eyes.

A few years ago he started writing a book. A novel. It started like this:

“She told me to get in the car. She didn’t tell me where we were going. And we never got there.”

He never got much further than that. Decided instead to go into the movie business. Told her there was a gun in the trunk. There was. He called her “Rocket.” ‘Cause she went off like one.

He read once somewhere this thing about a sociopath – if a sociopath was to come across a fatal car accident, and there was a dead child, and the mother was inconsolable, and if the mother were on her knees in the glass and blood, crying, screaming, the sociopath, he'd go home. And he'd practice making those same faces in the mirror.

Piece of information like that'd stop the earth in its tracks, he thinks. Fair scene in a movie, right there.

After dusk he wanders into the tree line behind the soft vinyl-sided building slowly driven by something he does not know, fingers lightly brushing the rough tree edges

his neck becomes sore from looking up

no stars.

The first Canadian films were produced in the fall of 1897, a year after the first public exhibition of motion pictures on 27 June, 1896, in Montreal. They were made by James Freer, a Manitoba farmer, and depicted life on the Prairies. The most successful producer was Ernest Shipman, who had already established his reputation as a promoter in the US when he returned to Canada in 1919 to produce Back to God's Country in Calgary. This romantic adventure story of an embattled heroine triumphing over villainy was released worldwide and returned a 300% profit to its Calgary backers. During the next three years Shipman established companies in several Canadian cities and made six more features based on Canadian novels and filmed not in studios, as was then common, but on location. Though these films were not as profitable as his first, they were not failures. Only his last film, Blue Water (1923), made in New Brunswick, was a disaster. Shipman left Canada and died in 1931 in relative obscurity.

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