

Portabella Mushrooms on the 5-1 Freeway

by Hannah Bannanah with art and music from Brock Bierly, Armcross & NEW MANAGEMENT

“We accept it. Fine.”

It was an unbelievable moment. The ruling class of contemporary society and the many limbs that make them what they are; stockpiles of legal jurisdiction, baton-sheaths, a web-work of CCTV cameras prodding light-receptors out the flatworm face of private security & police activity: all of these agents in a blood pact, a tongue pact, with their reproductive benefactor, their mother of ever-changing faces, Capital, and its social mind. It was all put on pause. Halted by an impossible embrace with the most resigning nihil. Not a Promethean nihil, but a ‘what’s the point’ kind of nihil, the teenage kind, to be frank, which has no right interrupting the very adult business of violent social control and human degeneration. But, alas, deep throated sighs and aloof glances daisy-chained the administrative offices...

In *Politics*, Aristotle wrote that “the art of war is a subdivision of the art of acquisition”. Downstream from the pragmatics of accumulation was everything hot-blooded, sincere, political. Everything debated. These are not very *friendly* terms, and as such, the-art-of-acquisition had long been coddling itself with some system of meaning & justification, some purpose to reflect onto its subject-population, to establish the value with which to justify or even motivate their participation in it. People lived it, bought it, became it. It was much better than club law, it lets law makes sense. Sometimes, all you get is club law, but this is better. So *this*... It felt impossible. It was fingers releasing from the wheel. They can’t just say “fuck it.”

Cut to Tuesday...

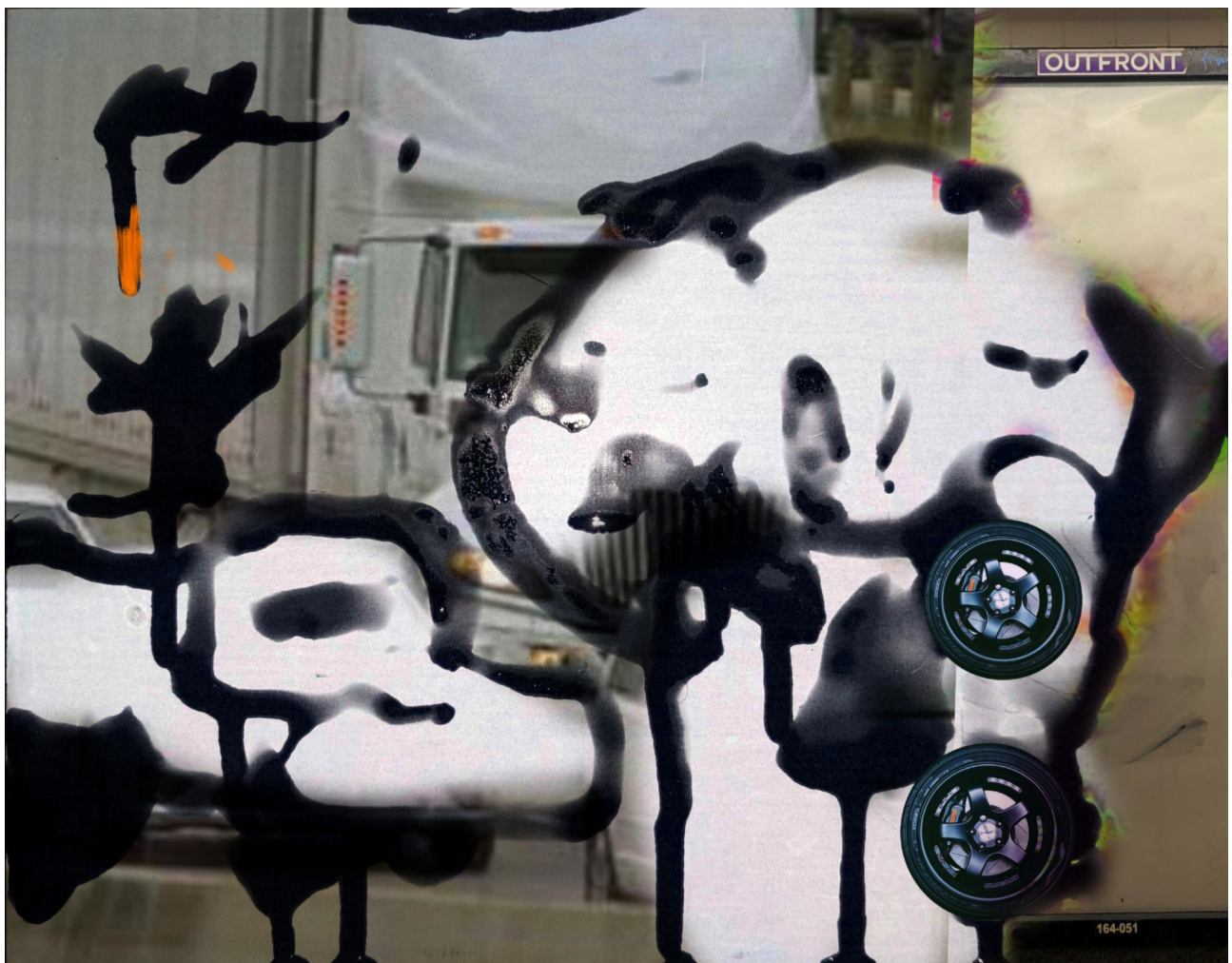
“We accept it. Fine.” said the minister, slouching in his chair with the shoulders of his blazer crumpling up against the backs of his ears. This was a professionally-worded “fuck it.” These words announced the purge but in cars. It was just like the movie: all crime is legal for a set period of time, but more specifically, crime was only legal if you did it inside a car. The cops were turned off. The one inside your head became pointless. If humans were just humans, this was their chance to burn out together like humans. The opportunity to externalize the destiny, compressed and rationed by society, in one explosive weekend of self-recognising total-destruction.

Cut to the next morning: the freeways are PACKED. The full on, both lanes, bumper to bumper business. Your dad would be pissed. 30+ million cars clogging the roads like cholesterol in your arteries. This traffic jam was an awkward moment for the social creature. People tried to avoid eye contact through their wind shields, pretend they didn’t all see eachother, recognise eachother, avoid admitting that only the network of legal structures was holding them back from their most neurotic, embarrassingly animal desires. (Or perhaps that all they needed to lose their pretences of *above-this* was permission...) They knew what was going on, all the non-violent crime was happening in garages and driveways. That’s where people were doing credit-card fraud and boofing crack. Car-pool credit card fraud was incredibly low. Raised in a ‘master and slave’ society, defining everything from the workplace to the bedroom, a structure of perpetual-frustration and petty mediation (aforementioned police and police-in-your-head, should also include ‘HR departments’ and police-in-each-others-eyes); the aggro-commuter congregation was out to rectify this inner-knot and realize their desires within the same dichotomy that put them there. The gladiatorial urge to ‘get mine’... Time to revoke power and become the powerful. Spin the gameboard of a miserable life

around. Man-to-man or man-to-property airing of grievances, self-fulfilment and its disastrous consequences for the human race was arms racing in minds to the conclusion of surprise violence. It couldn't be organized. It couldn't be graceful, they didn't have the time, most didn't have the means. They had a day, and they had violence.

It was only when they all packed the freeway, blocking destinations and grumbling in collective recognition that they're all weaker beings than they thought they were, that people choked... They were all out to fuck eachother over, bosses, exes (not the state as they were protected under purge laws.) If they survive, how could they interact with eachother after this? Was law all it took to stop this from happening, or were they just following it?

Everybody was beeping. Nobody was moving. Nobody could get out of their cars, because 1. They didn't want to become anyone's target 2. Crimes were only legal inside the cars. Someone pushed their bumper lightly into someone's trunk but hesitated as they weren't sure if insurance still worked. Bureaucrats were wallowing in bathtubs, skulking by their windows, contemplating their place in the species while the suburbs generated an immense cloud of noise and burning petrol. An antagonistic, ritual dialogue of horns. It sounded kind of normal. Some business leaders, regretting what they'd allowed, were plotting revenge within the time-span. It didn't matter if this revenge was legal or not. The winner of all this was somewhere in the middle of the big suburban road-clot. A retired postal worker gazing between his thighs, in the front seat of a Honda, at an antique grenade from his hobbyist collection of pre-2003 war artefacts. This is the one he knew wasn't decommissioned. This was the winner.



(written June 2021, final edit July 2023)