

Every morning Angel kept his meds beneath his tongue. When the nurses left he'd use his breakfast tray to break the pills in half. Then he'd start making trades. Salt and vinegar potato chips. Chocolate flavoured protein bars. Apple fritters in a clear plastic wrapper. After lock-up he'd crush the rest and snort the powder through a straw. Then he'd kneel beside the door, watching television through the slot, singing along with the music videos until someone told him to shut up. At night he'd stay awake for hours, sitting on the metal stool that was welded to the metal table, tattooing himself with crayon ink and a staple he pried out of a magazine and sharpened on the waist-high wall around the shower. Outside he'd use twigs to drag cigarette butts through the fence that stood between the prison yard and the parking lot where the guards took their breaks. He showered once a week and hoarded dirty laundry and not one person sent him money or drove up for a visit. His father was an alcoholic who got laid off from a paper mill. His mother was a schizophrenic who rarely left the house. He wore thrift shop clothes to school and stole candy from the corner store just to have some food inside his lunchbox. He had never travelled or even left the city limits and by sixteen he was fucked for life. He was short and loud and stupid and he almost always smelled like shit. But for what seemed like a very long time, Angel was my only friend.

—From Tod Molloy's *Port Lands*

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