

# Virgin Slate

Windows Without Walls

October 2011

*It seems to me that you have to make a special effort for a virgin. And in a funny way maybe we were all virgins that night, skirting around honesty but in awe of the intimate possibility of it: something beyond touch and beyond even the eloquence of longing, beyond the reachable and the attainable, beyond the everyday.*

*And so we morphed into mistruths and half-truths, assumed new identities and became everything other than what we were, half alive, half dead, looking for that way in or that way out, finding the windows but not the walls.*

When Sally arrived in the bar there were three of them there before her. The world was a spinning falling place and she wondered how she'd fallen to this point, to this place, with these people. Then she shrugged it aside and put on her second best smile, the sweet one, and approached the table.

After twenty minutes she went for a cigarette and sat outside savouring the settling dark and the slow drift of her cigarette smoke on the night air. The world was a spinning falling place and this was where she had fallen to tonight: a darkening evening on a city street, slow drifting smoke and some sort of possibility in the air.

Back inside another round appeared. The edges softened. Someone drifted away and the night edged from blue to purple. Half truths appeared like moths in the night and she held them to the flickering candle where they briefly flamed and flared and died into no truths and not truths and maybe truths.

And another round appeared, the edges blurring now into some sweet surrender to the night, to the flickering candle light, to the bright possibilities. And she stepped away.

And come midnight she would wonder, as the music pulsed in dark strobing lights around her, why she had stepped through that window, away from them, away from that flickering night, from that blank slate? And she would hold her glass high and spin and the world was a spinning falling place and the music strobed and the lights beat and sometimes the things we have are the things we want and sometimes we let them go. And the lights spun some more and the world was a spinning falling thing and she spun too.

They say the eyes are windows to the soul...

She sat there, rocking, arms wrapped loosely around her knees. A fly buzzed lazily, circling high in a white corner. It held her attention for a while, but then the haze took over. She closed her eyes against the throbbing that was once again demanding her surrender. A slow thought bobbed its way to the surface, just out of reach, she concentrated yet it remained elusively beyond her grasp. She didn't know how long she had been there, rocking against an unremarkable white wall, rocking against the pain. How much time had gone by? Then it hit her, she had no idea where she was!

Did it matter? Was there anything beyond this white room? The fly! It was still there, doing its lazy circle in a corner. How did it get here? Where did it come from? This was the most lucid she could ever remember being, which wasn't saying much as she couldn't remember much of anything beyond this white, windowless, blank room.

She became fascinated with the fly, time elapsed, the one bright light bulb flickered. The fly made its slow, circular way to the stinging brightness. She wished it would come closer to her so she could see it properly. She knew it was a fly, yet she couldn't recall ever looking at one before. She didn't remember ever seeing anything other than this white room. The fly landed on the bulb, a small spark flashed, the fly was electrocuted and dropped to the floor, twitching, dead.

The girl made a sound, a small quiet sound of sadness. Then she made the noise again because she didn't think she'd ever made a sound before and wasn't aware that she could. Her eyes lit up in a brief moment of happiness and she let out a carefree giggle of delight. She liked that noise.

Suddenly she heard another noise, one that didn't come from her, a reverberation that didn't come from within her room. She had never heard this sound before yet it stirred up an ominous feeling of dread from deep inside her.

The repetitive 'thud', 'thud' grew louder, until it stopped just outside the room. She heard some hushed muffling and then the room opened. There was something beyond the room! That's where the fly must have come from! A large, burly, beast of a man plodded his way over to her as the girl instinctively pulled back and cowered in the corner. She squeezed her eyes shut as she felt her arm being roughly seized, a sharp, stinging prick and then she felt no more. The man smirked and thought the girl could be ready in the next few months...

"Give it up Dave!!" Carol sighed in exasperation. It was an ongoing argument that had eventually torn their marriage apart. The communication between the two had dwindled down to the same weekly telephone conversation.

"But Carol, listen to me," begged Dave, "We can't give up, that's our little girl out there!" He couldn't understand how she could just let their little girl go.

Dave and Carol had had the perfect life, the perfect wedding, the perfect marriage, the perfect house and the most adorable, charming, lovable, perfect little girl. Their existence had been idyllic. The little girl, Sarah, had been the life and soul of the quiet estate, bringing laughter, playfulness and a general joy of life to the neighbourhood. Her eyes held an unquenchable sparkle that infected those who met her with an indescribable happiness and optimism. And then, the unthinkable happened.

On Sarah's seventh birthday, she was playing in her back garden while her Mum was preparing for her party and her Dad was out getting her present. She really hoped it was a rocking horse. A pink one, she loved pink. She liked all the colours really, except white. She couldn't see the point of white. Sarah thought she saw a rabbit dash under the bushes lining her back garden. She turned to wave and smile at her Mum in the kitchen window before contentedly giggling and running after the rabbit. "Just like in Alice and Wonderland," she thought delightedly.

That was seven years ago, and that was the last time Carol and Dave ever saw their little girl. The pink rocking horse was still waiting in her room with a large pink ribbon slowly rotting around its neck.

"Let it go Dave, she's never coming back!" Carol slammed down the phone as she angrily burst into tears. Didn't he know how much this tormented her wounded heart? How it ripped a new whole inside her every week? Sarah was gone, either dead or now so unrecognisable, with God knows what having been done to her that she was probably better off dead. Carol choked back her sobs and wished Dave would just cease his pointless search.

Dave sighed on the other end of the dead phone. Maybe Carol was right, maybe they could never find their little girl and he should just give up now for good...

The man left and Sarah rubbed her arm. She wondered where she was and how long she had been there. Sarah wrapped her arms loosely around her knees and began to rock back and forth, her bloodshot eyes staring blankly ahead as the throbbing pain began again.

You should come out one night and look at this. The house looks very different when it gets dark and the lights are turned on. It becomes an inverse of itself, like a negative for a photograph. When I got here the walls were white, the sky was bright blue and the fields were green, like a child's painting of a house and only the windows were dark, but now all I can see are the windows. Four small bright squares in the distance, surrounded by nothing, floating in the black, and the reflected blue glow from the dashboard lights on the windscreen.

I haven't seen you in about fifteen minutes. I've been focussing on the brightest of the four squares, the upper left, where the curtains are still open. Your bedroom. I saw you turn the lights on and then you disappeared. I guess you're in the shower. The bathroom is on the other side of the house so I can't see the window from here. I think I can see the glow on the ground behind the house, but I've been staring for a while, so I might be imagining that.

Funny how quickly it got dark tonight. The first time I stopped here, it had still been bright until long after you left the house. People had looked at me strange that first time I left the office at five. They seem to have gotten used to it now, but they give me little knowing smiles when I go. They must think I'm seeing someone; in a way they're right, but they'd probably stop smiling if they really knew what I was doing.

I think you nearly saw me a few weeks ago. It was my own fault. You were later home than usual and I was bored. Friday Night 80's was on the radio and I got a little carried away. I turned the volume up as high it would go when Phil Collins' *In the Air Tonight* came on. I was singing along at the top of my voice, waiting for that drum solo that everyone loves. You used to laugh out loud every time you saw the gorilla in the Cadbury's ad playing the drums. It felt great to have the music up so loud, it stopped me thinking about anything else. Once the drum solo came on, I started knocking out the beat on the steering wheel just like the gorilla. You'd have laughed if you'd seen it. Or you would have, before.

I'm not sure if I accidentally beeped the horn or if the music was just too loud, but when I'd looked up you were in the top left window, looking out, looking worried. You must have heard something. You wouldn't have seen me; I'd looked out that window often enough to know that you couldn't have seen anything through the trees I was parked behind, but you still looked scared and hurt.

I felt bad then. I didn't want to scare you, not again, not after the pain I'd put you through. After I'd beeped the horn accidentally and you looked out, you didn't know it but we were looking at each other at that moment. Me through my windscreen; you through your pane in the darkness.

Slowly, silently, sadly the young girl strolled through Villa Borghese Gardens; her mood and gloom not reflecting the natural autumnal beauty all around her. The glorious evening sunshine, reflecting its golden rays on the nearby fountain were in sharp contrast to the despondent girl.

She stopped, as if in a trance, trying to analyse and negate this dark overshadowing despair that had taken hold of her.

What was she feeling so desperate?

She had, after all, organised all this clinically. She had sold her car, said her good-byes, transferred her money. She would leave all this behind, make a fresh start, escape from this human hell, this self-selected prison where she found herself.

But now, after all this soul searching, rationalising and eventually definite concrete decision making why were things not perfect and complete? She was still not free. She was still encaged within her own prison walls.

She had hoped for freedom; “free as a bird” she had boasted to her soulmate; that was her dream.

Suddenly a new insight hits her, like a bolt of lightning. She had worked meticulously at ensuring geographic and physical freedom, but had she ever considered mental and emotional distancing? Yes, the answer lay here! A new optimism bursts forth within, like Vesuvius erupting! She will start afresh. She will demolish the restrictive emotional wall that is imprisoning her and direct her gaze to the new, glistening, inviting window ahead.

## Movie

Blinding light, yet darkness within  
Alone, without-  
No man can see the t.v. show within my head.  
No credits, just a beginning, no end.  
You cannot join me.  
This is my movie  
And I must watch it alone again.

## **About VirginSlate**

VirginSlate is a group of would-be creative writers based in Cork, Ireland.

Our inaugural session happened in the Slate Bar in Cork on Tuesday, 11th October 2011. We can blame the teacher of our creative writing class for cancelling that night, so we had nothing better to do than go to the pub and get creative.

Each of our fortnightly issues will begin with a theme (a word or a phrase). We then have two weeks to submit a piece of writing on that theme. The writing can use any form and take the theme in any direction the author wishes.

Every two weeks the group meets (in a pub) to discuss the various submissions and decides upon a theme for the following fortnight. The authors then have a chance to make any edits they like before the submissions are published online.

We provide a forum for would-be creative writers to practice their writing and get some friendly feedback and constructive criticism.

Selecting a theme each fortnight makes it easier to stop wondering what to write about and to concentrate on just writing something.

New members are welcome:

Email us at: [virginslate@gmail.com](mailto:virginslate@gmail.com)

Or contact us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/VirginSlate>