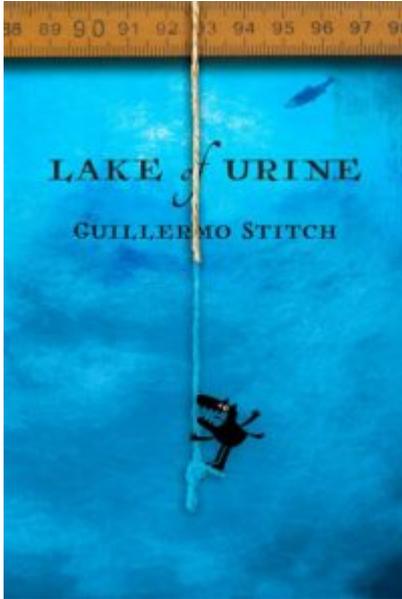


Small Press Release: Lake of Urine (an Excerpt)

written by Jacob Singer | June 7, 2020



Lake of Urine by Guillermo Stitch
214 pages – [Sagging Meniscus Press](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“I don’t know what to say,” says the Mayor of Big City. He looks to his wife for assistance but she’s got her earphones in.

Mr Squire steps forward and smiles. “I know exactly what you mean,” he says. “It’s astonishing, isn’t it?”

The glass box is a perfect cube, lit from above and also from within, where four tiny halogen spotlights at each corner illuminate a central platform, to the base of which a small electronic data logger is attached that displays temperature and relative humidity readings, and upon which the exhibit sits.

Mr Squire has bent over and his nose almost touches the glass. “Simply breathtaking.”

Bunbury is cradling an elbow and stroking his chin. “Possibly my favorite piece,” he says, “though they’re all incredible.”

“What is it?” says the Mayor of Big City. So far the Garbage Heap isn’t at all what he was expecting.

The question seems to take the others by surprise.

“I hadn’t really thought about it, sire,” says Bunbury. “It isn’t easy to tell, actually, since it’s obviously spent some time in a puddle. The water damage is, in and of itself, exquisite. My guess would be the bottom left

hand corner of a ripped cigarette packet?"

"Yes," says Mr Fry, "or perhaps chewing gum? Family pack?"

They're in a dark salon with a row of banquettes down the middle and several display cases spotlighted along either wall. The exhibition space is the only part of the Garbage Heap the armed guards have given the party access to. At the far end, a double door with a sign above it, also spotlighted.

Municipal Garbage Heap Tearooms.

And beside it a blackboard on an easel:

Scones baked daily. Try our soup.

"It's absolutely marvelous, anyway," says Bunbury, "and also for sale, should your excellence wish to consider a purchase here today."

"Why would I—"

"At forty thousand, it's easily the keenest price tag in the exhibition."

"That's a thought," says Captain le Gros. "Perhaps it is a bit of a price tag."

"No, I don't think so," says Mr Squire. "Definitely part of a packet. You can see that it would have been three-dimensional before it got squished."

"Sorry," says the Mayor of Big City. "Did you say *forty thousand . . .*?"

"That's right, sire. Would you like to buy it?"

"No, I wouldn't. I don't like it."

"I see. What a pity. Well, there are other pieces, of course," says Bunbury, indicating a nearby case that contains a sodden ball of toilet paper, "but you're talking serious money."

"Can I have a scone?" says the Mayor of Big City.

They file into the tearooms where a shy-looking young woman more or less hides behind a tiered array of paper doilies on trays, piled high with scones.

"I'd like that one, please."

Wordlessly, the attendant puts the scone on a plate with some tongs, but she doesn't hand it over.

"That'll cost you four, sire," says Bunbury after a moment.

The Mayor of Big City retrieves some coins from his trouser pocket and hands them over, then sits at a table with Bunbury and the Mayor's wife. The others crowd round an adjacent table and lean in to listen.

"There's no butter."

"No, sire. Would your excellence like some? That would also cost you four."

"Oh," says the Mayor of Big City and takes a big dry bite from the scone that keeps him occupied for a good minute and a half.

"I don't get it," he says when he finally manages to swallow. "The deal with the rubbish. It's like you're all mad or something."

"Bizarre," says the Mayor's wife. She has removed one earphone and is texting.

"In what way, sire?"

The Mayor of Big City has a mouthful of scone again and it's a couple of minutes before he can speak.

"What do you mean, in what way? It's *rubbish*. We are literally falling over this stuff in Big City. People complain about it."

Chuckles from the next table. Bunbury smirks and shakes his head.

"So we understand, sire," he says with an air of indulgence. "Sometimes folks just don't know what they've got."

He shrugs.

"Just trying to find our way out of this awful crisis, sire. Conventional revenue streams have been appallingly sluggish. We haven't had a construction sector here since Kevin Arnold sold his van in March, and financial services—well, let's just say Mr Totman hasn't been very well lately and leave it at that, shall we?"

Kelly glances furtively at Mr Squire while Bunbury continues.

"Can I smoke in here?" says the Mayor of Big City, who has given up on the scone.

"You can smoke anywhere you please, sire," says Bunbury, placing his personal ashtray on the table between them and flipping the lid. "We encourage it."

Mayor of Big City lights up.

"When I think of how long we spent squandering our most valuable resource, I don't know whether to laugh or cry, sire. Instead of recycling— and therefore essentially destroying—our rubbish, we've rebranded it."

"As what, exactly?" says the Mayor of Big City.

"As art, sire."

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