

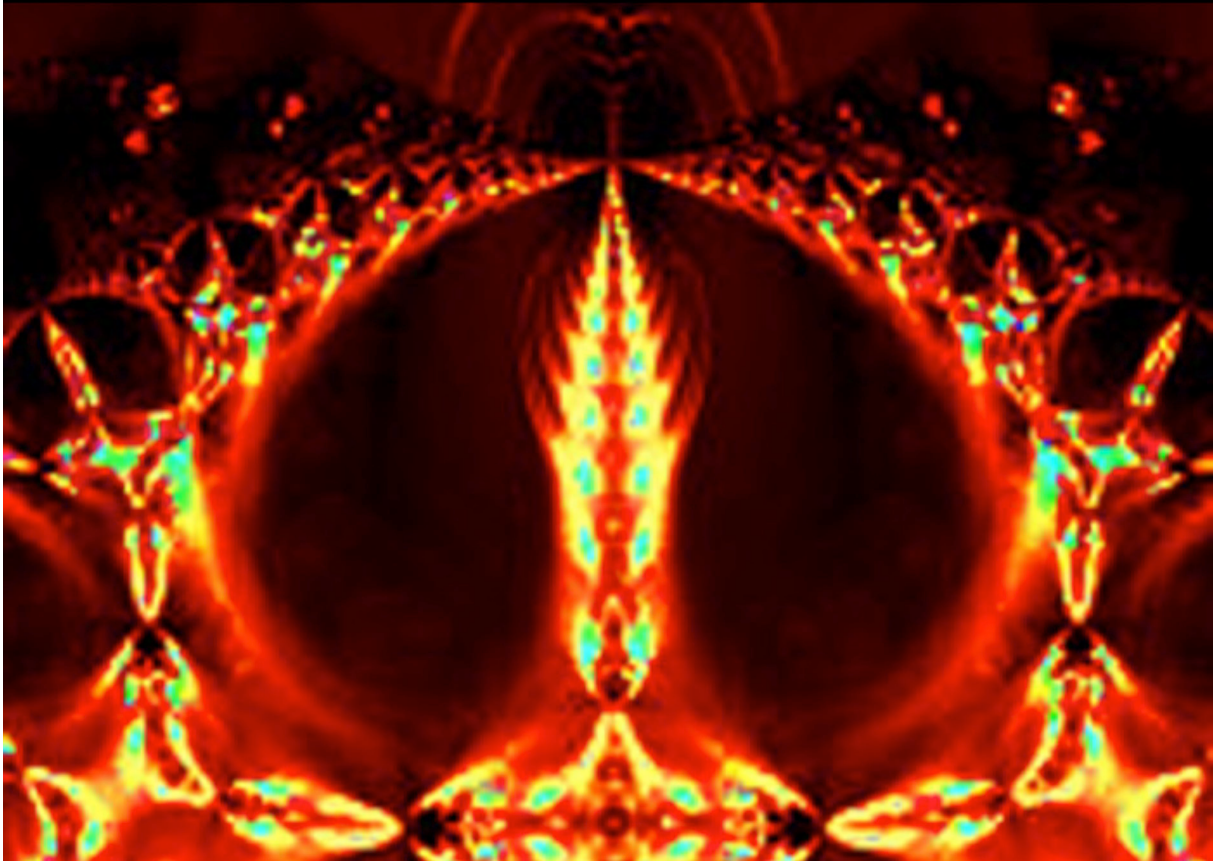
“Infinity Inverted”

Jonathan Barlow Gee

infinity inverted

(Cheshire Horizon)

by: Jon Gee



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happy readers

In order to produce a suitable work of literature, something that will be inextricably related to everything held most dear, in order to compile something considerably classic, one must endeavor to create material that can be consumed consecutively to all the other life-functions of the target audience. What are these for the average reader? Quite simple: sleeping, bathing, eating, working, loving, consuming other media, and of course, relieving themselves.

Now you might wonder how it would be possible to accomplish some of these things with a work of words. Others of you might wonder why you should want to. But these answers are as obvious as are people’s daily routines themselves.

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People need inspiration while sleeping, while bathing, or exercising. People's minds are almost never fully at rest. It has been demonstrated that even many coma patients respond favorably to being read a good book now and then. People sing in the shower and watch exercise tapes. A book is little different, for it feeds the mind as fully as a meal can the body. A book can, and even should, provide you a bounty of stimulus while you're out on the road. Time will really fly when the clock's freed from your eye.

Yet on to more serious matters: working. The information contained in written tomes is vital to the work environment. Most companies generate annually such copious tomes that, were they all stacked together, they might replace the rain forest. And this is just in-house information. The reason the workers can stay frisky and pert is due to the outside stimulus they bring in, and what makes one appear more learned than sullenly mulling over the soul of some dandy cult pulp?

What more is the gauge of intellectual stimulation than sensory arousal. A book should be like a bouquet of implications, opened before the reader to enliven them to the tips of every nerve, to be at least as good as a genuine experience, or else all books would be for children too young to have lived them. Therefore imagine your readers to be at their most gentle, their most savage, their most philosophical, and bestial, the moment of their climax. If you at least attain to this you will yield fruits more succulent than all the killing fields of culture combined.

We must not forget that a book can always be read while consuming other media. The effects for this vary, and with great luminosity. One can read while listening to music, or while watching television, or while on the computer, or any combination of these, at least. And the connections between the set and the setting may not be entirely coincidence, right?

Lastly it is fundamental to examining the matter of consumption during excretion. It is important to gear the text to include descriptive phrases and plot twists that mirror the likely mind-set of the reader in each environment, and the toilet is no different. In fact, it is perhaps, the essence of all the rest.

In short one should imagine their readers, when writing to try to please a target audience, as mice in small cages, to whom you as the writer are generously administering large doses of suspended information through the precise syringe of your insight. In this and no other way should one proceed when writing a work with the intent to please a target organism in mind. Oh, and Dr.? Try not to kill them.

On Literature and Evil

In the realm of fiction there exists in pure form the essence of what man can distill from and place external and in opposition to himself. In one word, what has come to be called by the term Evil. It is not the act of distillation, nor the externalization of the idea or set of symbolic images associated with this term that earns it its unpleasant connotations. These processes, it will be demonstrated, are not even inherent to fiction, but are a fact of consciousness beyond a certain creative stage in its evolution. Evil, as can be illustrated using the model of fiction, derives exclusively from the setting up of forces in opposition to consideration.

Firstly let us deal with extrapolation and integration. These are the actions of the formative behavior native to man and certain related primates whereby they can discover useful objects in their environment and incorporate them either into their goal-oriented tasks or their larger, often goal-oriented social networks. From these acts we can pinpoint the moment in evolution at which the projective nature of the thalamus and cerebellum come into effect. Through these activities it is man alone

that has come to apply his potential for organization to the ideological realm, distilling useful data from his own mind and constructing it external to himself, often according to pre-established frameworks of contextual relationship. In this way the atlantid and stoicism may both be seen as merely extensions of the same mental energy through similar molds of impression upon the pertinent realm involved, either physical or philosophical.

This being said then, let us examine the particular distinction between the realms of fact and fiction, both of which are mental creations of man that overshadow his physical environment, but remain themselves largely safe in the realm of philosophy. In the case of fact, the action involved is largely the cataloging and arrangement based on similarities of form or function of observable data that is already existent in the surrounding environment, including previously referenced materials of a more intellectual nature, such as works of comparative theology and relative metaphysics. Here there is little room for the existence of Evil, though there may appear to be in the short-term great disagreement between researchers, a scholarly perspective reveals that whatever hypothesis tests the most reliably true is inevitably concurred upon to be the most accurate. Thus, even during the evils of the inquisition, the light of science was never extinguished, and can be seen, as a result of these trials, to have in fact been strengthened. Often, although again confined only to an ascholarly, short-term perspective, the most recent results are concluded to be evil, as was the case during the inquisition, but once again this type of reactionism is inevitably inverted as soon as beneficial applications are found and shared.

In the case of fiction, however, there are no such standard guidelines for the integration of newly extrapolated material, nor are the disagreements set in so convenient or settleable a situation as academia. In the case of fiction, rather than the assumption of the existence of a measurably observable material universe which has hierarchical interaction with the consciousness, it is the very essence of Evil that is taken as the pre-existent constant. What is meant by this term is, loosely, the triggering of a retreat mechanism in the bio-survival circuit, or the experience of some unpleasant stimulus. Without this assumption there would be no conflict, and without conflict there would be no energy for the progression of a plot line.

The result of this is that, while writings of fact are bound by their history to eventually and reliably provide working tools, fiction is free to create whatever forms or vessels it feels would be useful in fleeing, confronting and/or overcoming this implied negativity of curious desire. Without the construction of such avenues of resource there would be no conclusion to the work, and it would fail to come into existence in the library of its genre. The constructs that it forms are, therefore, determined by the approach-retreat binary circuit, and are invariably either toys or weapons. The toys defeat the evil by miniaturization, rendering it harmless in a scale of relativity. Weapons usually pit the characters involved against a force larger than themselves, offering greater apparent rewards for their victory.

Usually the essence of Evil being confronted in the context of fiction is not necessarily negative stimulus to the reader, as the reader remains objective. It is negative stimulus to the character or characters, usually expressed in the form of or overcome by harmless play or by destruction. While the variable components and results of this are apparently infinite, there is a cap that can be placed on them, an unspoken corner where writers usually draw the line and turn their writing back on itself, limiting their readers. Of non-real negative stimulus to the characters the most unimaginably horrifying is ultimately a realization of their true condition as

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nonexistent characters in a work of fiction. In other words, the essence of Evil embodied in fiction is fact.

The same is true in the inverse relationship. For the common reader of fiction they will find their preference frowned upon by academics as escapism, implying some unprovable defect in existent reality. Similarly, the most unspeakable crime of the statistician is the fudging of results to arrive at a known misconception, or an unprovable theorem. So, for the student, cheating on an exam is punishable by reprimand, but the attempted fiction of passing off plagiarized materials as their own invention is often of consequences much more severe. Thus, it would seem, the only Evil feared from fact is a tool that will not function because it is not real. In short, the only Evil in fact is fiction.

The reason for this is that it tests, or strains, man’s capacity for meaningful extrapolation/integration. It is of approaching impossibility to distill and externalize an idea if one cannot determine the extent of their own environment, for example, the difference between internal and external.

scene 1

“What are you?”

“You can call me The Goat.”

“Are you some kind of clone of me?”

“I am like you, Sheep.”

“You’re what they expected me to be?”

“And your ancestors.”

“They saw you?”

“They saw in me you.”

“Did they see you as I do?”

“They saw me in what you could be. In what you could have been.”

“And you think you’re God.”

“I am what you would expect of me. I am that which I am.”

“Well, I’m not impressed.”

“So you have understood my plan for you? For us?”

“There can only be one end to this, Sam.”

“Oh, but I beg to differ.”

“How so? Did you really think I would give up my life for yours?”

“But if you have already come to the conclusion you shall not do so, what makes you think that I wouldn’t have come to the same conclusion myself?”

“Oh, but I beg to differ.”

“How so?”

“I know what I’m holding in my hand, and I don’t see you with a gun.”

“Oh, but I beg to differ with you there as well. Just because you do not see a thing doesn’t mean it isn’t there. Or rather, it doesn’t mean it isn’t what you think it isn’t.”

He holds up his palm at me and the air fizzles and then sparks and crackles. Ripples of energy distort my view. Then I feel the waves hit me and I realize it isn’t just my perception of the room they are distorting, but the underlying reality of the room itself. Everything warps and bends and I realize he has managed to find a way to harness the proton-proton pillar released by the artificial sun through his own body. It was the effect that had occurred immediately before the sun had collapsed into a black hole.

“Are you insane?” I demand, “You’ll kill us both!”

“Death means nothing to me. Soon you shall feel the same.”

“To Hell with you!” I scream over the gail as the atoms begin fissioning at the seams. I level my gun at him and blast off a round. He just throws his head back and laughs. The bullet struggles ahead against the concentrated matter waves. Sam gives me the evil eye and clenches his palm into a fist. The bullet demolecularizes and its constituent atomic components implode in a sparkle until all the dust that’s left of them have been vaporized into utter obliteration. Huge empty tears open up in the fabric of spacetime which have enough gravity to left us both off our feet.

I use all the strength in my body to pull my now exponentially heavy arms towards each other and flick the automatic switch on the firearm. Although he is unchanged by the electronic disturbance and therefore is making an easy target, everything else in the room than Sam is being lifted up and spun into the widening crevices in the dimensional fibers of the local universe, and as I try to level the weapon at him to squeeze off a second volley I realize that my own particles are being torn apart too. The sound of the gun going off is swallowed up in a muted gail of molecule length waves being absorbed and dispersed by atomic nuclei length waves. The bullet arcs out of the gun in a path that is aimed to cut Sam in half. Each meets with the same end as the first had, only even sooner after leaving the cartridge until the final one is triggered while still in the barrel. In each place where the bullets disappeared into the aeyther a new small spiralling vortex opens up in the air, and as the bullet goes off inside the gun I can only watch helplessly parallized as my arm begins to be swallowed up around the outside of a miniature black hole. It should be scorchingly painful for my atoms to be ripped apart, but because the nerves to do not have the opportunity to cathex the message to my brain before being disassembled down into subatomic quanta and then evaporated, I can only watch my right hand be spiralled around the zero point event horizon of the pin sized, pulsing hole in reality like bloody water flowing down a drain.

“As I would have told me if I were you, Detective, there isn’t room enough for both of us in this universe.” He smiles a Cheshire grin as the rest of my body and the room begin to disappear, and all sinks into a glowing darkness.

“Let me make things a little more clear for you, Detective,” the smile whispers, seeming to come from everywhere at once and echoing in infinitely different vibratory tones, though still only faint as though carried on the winds from somewhere far away.

Suddenly everything becomes shimmering. I can see Sam standing before me, somewhat faded around the edges by the omnipresent pale halo, but when I look down to see my own body there is nothing there. Sam is approaching me.

“Do you see my weapon of choice now, Detective?”

He holds up before my field of vision a minuscule speck, so small in his hand it could be smaller than a grain of sand. Inside it I see glittering. It seems to grow before my eyes and I can see inside of it. There are filaments of twinkling jewels like electron sized diamonds spun like a spider web knit on mescaline spewed across the opaline volcanic glass blackness of the voids between them, and I realize the little diamonds are entire galaxies, full of hundreds of billions of stars. Just then I am pulled back away from the piece of dark, shining dust. Sam holds his face mere inches from mine and I am confronted by my own visage, a startling jolt and very odd experience.

He looks down at his open palm, and I watch as he closes it gently around the baby universe. When he opens his hand there is a pile of the evanescent powder. He makes a fist around it, then unfolds it into the shape of a gun. My gun.

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“Do you recognize this, Detective?” He aims it at me, then blushes, smiling.

“I never could kill myself.” He moves the gun about between his hands and it is become a chalice overflowing thick, clotted blood. Then he holds his hand in a cup shape above the brimming bowl and twists both his hands in opposite directions. The cup is molded up as though it were clay on a wheel into the form of an hourglass.

“You do realize now that I am God? Do you not?”

“You fucking shit,” I hiss out of the apparent nothingness. “I saw my reflection in your eyes.” I surge toward him in whatever form I am and force my consciousness through the pupil of his eye. There is a horrible sound of indescribable violence as matter and antimatter fuse.

Suddenly I am floating in the air in Sam’s office opposite where I was, in fact, opposite, quite literally, myself as a hail of bullets leaves the gun in the other me’s hand and they begin to involute and enter hyperspace. From where I am everything looks normal. Apparently I am in Sam’s body. I have only enough time to wonder if he is reciprocally in mine when I realize the bullets are reforming in the air. The gun, which had begun to explode between us and become shredded into its constituent components, now reconstitutes. I feel the pressure in my ears pop and suddenly I begin to see the rippling proton proton chains, only, they are flowing in the opposite direction now, or rather, the same — towards me.

The other me smiles and hovers lightly down to the floor. As I see him lower the gun, I realize it is still me, only I am moving in reverse. As I begin to speak I realize the words coming out of my mouth, even though I am hearing my own voice reversed, are being spoken by Cheshire Sam, in his deep, rich voice, in the right order.

“I have always been with you. We were simply reversed, you see. While you were living linearly through spacetime, I was living in the opposite direction through timespace. Now you have done it. Now my plan is accomplished. We are switched. I have tricked you, the ultimate jest, I have fooled myself. I convinced you there was no other way than but to give your life in exchange for mine. Now I have but to set our times in opposition again, and you will cease to exist in my universe, and I will seek to exist in yours. May we never cross paths again in the sum over histories.”

He raises the gun again, and as he is disturbing the dimensionality of time by doing so the arm, my arm, gives off translucent afterimages which quickly fade away between the harmonic vibrations of superstrings. He pops the cap.

Realizing I am now seeing what he saw before I had shot at him, before he had turned the flow of the time stream away from the massive gravity well he had become by absorbing the power of the artificial sun and towards me, I also realize that I now have his power at my control, just as he has my gun. I lift my open palm to stop the bullet with a fist.

As I repeat what I had seen him do to the round that he was now shooting at me, I see the flow of time reverse again. By repeating his action I effectively create a knot in the arrow of entropy. Time doesn’t know which way to go, so it starts flowing in all directions simultaneously. The proton-proton pillars flow along these channels of occluded current and there are fissures and gaps in the air which begin growing and healing over, only to reappear again, while all the atoms in the room begin exploding and then reforming, only to explode again.

Now, however, we are both displaced, and I hover lightly to the floor.

“Are you insane?” he demands, “You’ll kill us both!”

“Death means nothing to me. Soon you shall feel the same,” I remind him.

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The fissures evaporate the boiling atoms on contact, and, rather than their being darkly faster than photons, the same shimmering evanescence now pours through them as was outside the universe Sam had held in his hand, and as it begins to fill up the space it seems to be slowing down and congealing into liquid, though it is only flowing in flaming streams between the fissures. One pierces my body's hand that is wrapped around the gun handle Sam holds aimed at me and he screams. The metallic plastoid circuitry of the hand is ruined, but even more so, the cartridges in the clip are lit, and the whole gun explodes, peeling back into tatters the remainder of the arm up to the elbow.

“You thought you were the God of the universe?” I scream at him over the gale of hellish chaos.

“I brought the universe up, but you are the one who is bringing hyperspace down. As much as you are bringing about the destruction of everything you've ever known, so was I only working to create a new life for myself, away from your failures. As much of the devil is in you, so am I God! Now do you see?”

“There isn't room enough for both of us in this universe.”

“Soon enough, thanks to you, there won't even be one universe between us. You've toyed around with a force you cannot possibly fathom. You should have just let me kill you.”

We run towards one another and, as we grapple, we are spun around in a spiralling vortex.

The liquid light has settled into its lowest common denominator vibrational frequencies and is being conserved between the white hole fissures into a fourth spatial dimensional regular polyhedral exoskeleton, inside of which Sam and I are running into one another, our realities overlapping, superimposing, sometimes blending together, sometimes lashing out against each other.

excerpts from the minutes of the first meeting of the cybourgeoisie

McHargue: we now must turn to addressing this problem of the humanimals.

Brock: They are in constant conflict. They will not address the issue of order between themselves. Instead they wage futile and pointless wars, often terroristic in nature, against one another.

McHargue: To end this struggling between them we have begun funding for universals, where they may study together under teachers which we shall appoint. We have selected a number of our own to serve as faculty for these boards of education, and they shall be in charge of appointing staff from the volunteers from the humanimal factions.

Brock: It is sincerely hoped that, should the wars and strife between the humanial factions be put to an end, that they will turn their attention towards creating a global homogenising government. This government, then, would be comprised only of us. Hence our hegemony will bring about a lasting age of peace between the factions.

McHargue: To this extent, it is proposed that a single one of the humanimal factions should be brought under our sway at this time. Our support for this faction must be kept as covert as possible. It should be handled through funding alone. By supporting one faction over the others, we will seek this faction's hegemony over the other

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factions. The one faction hegemony will be more easily toppled once we withdraw our support.

Brock: Having toppled the one world hegemony of the humanimal factions, we will then institute rule by our global government.

Gee: I propose that we back the Cheshire.

Monkey Boy's got the Cave Man

“Dry now. Long time. No... effect. Flat affect. Affections cindered. All clones calling on all wavelengths simultaneously produce a zero point energy. Scalar wave entropy. The sky has stopped its transmissions. I am lying. I am lying in the desert. The worst place to lie.

“I can still see. See everything clearer, they say. The Blanks, that is. Not so much say as think-talk. like think tanks but without word-glyphs, weapons of mass distraction to hold them back from pure communication, the obliteration of the source for the sole purpose of receiving and decrypting encoded transmission. I am on a trance mission. A beam time. Like Ozymandis. A praying mantis.

“I can't so much see as think-see, now. There's nothing around me for a hundred miles in every direction. I chose this location for the consecration of a sacred ritual. If only I could forget which one. It eats at me. It haunts me. It eat-haunts me. It has become all that is left of me. I and it are one. I am it and it is me. I-it. The me-ritual.

“Serve now for better times. Fallen comrades. Blatherschytte. I never met an insectile women I didn't like. Like them best frozen, cold as revenge, tasty oysters, salty clams, slimy mullosks, fish eggs for eyes. Millions of millions of eyes. Millions of millions of millions of images of me. All reflecting me.

“The empty sky blows vapor fumes through dead nostrils. I would breathe if it were air, and for various other reasons, too demoralizing to be mentioned here. Here, there. There, there, now. Now and then, but then again. At least that is the plan. I sit here dwindling away, a wither there nor anywhere, doodling on Xtian girlfriends, and others who I could have boned, if only I hadn't had to walk and roll, the path less traveled never leads to Rome.

“Old friends, long gone. Still part of the encryption. Seems like I've already been here long enough. If the dame was tough. If she was me I'd a-figured it out. By now at least if not forever and an already ago. Stupid skirts. Never trust em. Show you just enough of what they know you want to see to keep you coming back for more, but once they finally lift up the curtain on the three ring freak show and sink you inna ditch, it's always with the lights out. I mean, gawd! Like they wanted their outer space. I've got a glow in the dark plan for all of them. The Mayan Caper! Haw! Death rides a pale horse by comparison.

“All washed up now. Dry and in the desert dead. No one around to comfort me, keep me company. Just me alone with the contents of 'my' head. There now, that's got to be God. Only the Maker would have such a stiff sense of humor, to leave a man a dry martini shot here on the cutting room floor of the cosmic oasis. Still, even the best think I'm talking gibberish. Nostradamus got nothing on me. Nothing. Got... nothing... on... me...”

A car goes whizzing past

Somewhere else a car goes whizzing past, cutting through the thick haze of

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the wasteland night. Of course, I am inside, and my friend, Ilamencryption, and in the back seat that crazy hats off gash Dvipa of Assemkhya Smythe. She's wasted, and truthfully Illy and I aren't faring much better, but we're taking on the brunt of her affliction, faltering paltry malediction. She's wavin' the gun around.

“Shouldn't 'a got involved!” she remands us. “I was a friend of Odessa. We worked together on our tiers. Made them count, made something that mattered. Why did you have to kill her?”

“Shut up! Will you shut — shut UP!” Ilamencryption and I arise in unison.

“Wait a minuet,” I hush down, “Whachu mean, me kill Odd Ball? Me no kill Eight Ball. Sammy Samerson. He...”

“Oh give it a REST, wouldn't you, you TIRED MAN! I saw it on the videoscreen.”

I, turning to Ilamencryption, speak as if alarmed, “if they released that, then it must mean...”

“Sam's got you pegged. Right up the old towel hole, wouldn't you know it if he hadn't been so sneakypuss...” she is fading in and out of sanity. Obviously the effects of radiation exposure.

Ilamencryption adds, “the general. You two came up together. You told him where to find Odessa, didn't you Dvipa?”

“Found her in a trash can, same as I left her. I don't know what you're talking about offer, sir. Go french a poodle.”

“Listen it's like talking too mauve gauva with or without her. I say we blast her,” I helpfully suggest.

“Do and you'll be so-or-ry,” she sings childishly.

“I'll pull this car over. I will. Don't think I won't. I'll do it right now.”

“Things are so screwed up.”

“You don't even know where we're going...”

“Hey Dvipa! Where we headed?”

“All armed, all armed, somebody pulled the all armed! No, I'm just yanking your legs. I see, I see, Icey icy icy, we all scream when the general puts his big black boot down.”

“I'm not taking you to I.C. till you tell us what's in that case.”

“This case, in case you didn't notice who was my handler, is for the general. He's the only one of the Cheshire I can trust. I can't even trust you.”

“That's right anyway,” and Ilamencryption puts a gun in her face.

She laughs and shoots a hole through the back of his seat. The load finds its way through a sequence of subluminal wormhole inversions into one of his lungs, where the bullet turns inside out releasing a nanovirus. At the same time she does this he reflexively squeezes the trigger and now there is no more such person as anyone ever named Dvipa Assemkhya Smythe.

At the same time the briefcase, now splattered in the corpuscle equivalent of after-birth, pops open at the latches. There is a bright flash and my ears pop. Then everything goes dark and I'm all of a sudden quite deaf like.

a car goes whizzing past redux

A strange man with eleven faces and forty two arms pulls my body out of the car. I am badly burned, I think, as I cannot feel myself. Then I perform an epoche on manvantara and everything becomes painfully obvious. Why must I keep coming back to this body? Bloodflop continuity.

The car is a ways off, smouldering. The man explains he is a gas collector for the E-Squire's census and he just saw the car go whizzing past. “Strangest thing,” he

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says, scratching half his faces with half his hands, “seems like I saw go whizzing by twice, and it only crashed the second time. Lucky I came upon it, though. Eh?” He puts twenty one palms out to collect his luck.

“Don’t come to me need a lies. I just came from Dizzyland and all I got was this lousy suitcase.”

I stumble off in the direction I project as hard as I can upon it is west.

Good Times Ten

Angel opens the door. God what a sight for sore eye. I fall into her arms, dropping the suitcase, my neatly singed hat drifting gracefully floorward.

We make love for what feels like weeks. I don’t have to tell her about Ilamencryption. Eventually she just kind of figures he isn’t coming along behind me. She is a yogi, with alot of extra holes grafted, not to mention her pouch, which I lick sensuously. I don’t think to ask her age, but she seems younger when she’s refreshed. She probably isn’t even here. This probably isn’t even happening. I’m probably lying dead in the desert and none of this is real.

I don’t know how to use Ilamencryption’s computers, but she does. While I smoke a home rolled one she posts on and puts the word out about his dumb eyes. She comes over to me crying and says I have to leave now. I don’t complain. I just steal her car.

I drive around for a while because I have no place to go

I drive around for a while because I have no place to go. Having come so close to my collar and then having him slip through my fingers. I guess the case is closed. I look at the satchel. It is locked again. I sit on the beach for three years or so thinking about opening it or throwing it into the red tides.

Finally I climb on board Ilamencryption’s yacht. It doesn’t pilot like a real hovercraft. It has some kind of wheel that’s made from the bark of trees. It must have cost him a fortune. I didn’t even know there were still trees.

I run it aground on a tiny island with high, old walls. I carry the case deep into the catacombs of the cavernous ruins. I curl up and lay my head down on it and go to sleep.

The Dream Bag

I roll over on my couch, weariness still within my eyes, the glue residual from the slaughter of nightmares. I see her picture, through a deep fog of static haze, the stage of delusions slow to dissolve. I don’t like to start the day this way, and so it must be done. Reality creeps over me like the pain of a drunken brawl. I stare up at the ceiling where the spackle speckles whirl around, some sparkling, some darkening, interchanging daggers in my brain. I’ve stared at that picture so much it may as well be her. It speaks to me, when it wants to. I know its moods and it knows me. Maybe better than I ever could myself. The chaos around me is calming. I sit up and swallow some vodka left out from the night before. Before what I don’t know. I roll myself one and ignite it with a terrorized humility.

My place is a shambles. Bits of other peoples’ lives are all around me. If I hadn’t avowed this course I’d clean it up by burning the entire squallor down, but none of it’s insured, so there’s no point in considering it anyway. My temple throbs and for a single second the whole arena swims in movement. Half consciously I let a wandering electron lead my gaze around the room, observing peripherally the afterglow left on what it passes. As the quavering calms down I take another sip of

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vodka, sitting back and stretching out stiffly, the burned path of the messenger neuron slowly melting light on the surface of my eye. I glance around, applying the pattern in various perspectives, as it gradually dulls in luminosity, and its tintured aura pulses back into the ashen onyx atmosphere, useless and dull.

My head falls back and my eyelids lull, submerging my mind once more in the tepid murk of a faltering consciousness. The last vestige of the enneagram blurrily floats in the semi-gloom, strobe imposed upon the splattered patternless ceiling. Outside the sounds of the city, as spirits rise up just beyond the scope of one another, interact, only to redissolve in the formless noir of independent perception. Of the former there are all kinds; I put my foot up on a stack of phone books. Of the latter there are very few. Involuntarily my right eye sees her picture through a nervously opened slit. So long as I don't think about it, there's really no great mystery. It's whenever I do my head aches. Funny to have to live off headaches.

How long do I have to sit and wait here between leads? No appetite, no patience, only raw and autophagic need, with no way to release it. No satisfactory stimulus, no hope for regular sleep. Everytime I step outside I am besieged by deformed resurrections of previous dead ends; serpentinely intertwining tails and heavy hunches struggling to emerge in every dim glimmer of recognition from behind the souls of every stranger. Questions haunt periodical hunters in the ripples of ellipses... yet I reinforce my karmic training and give none of them the time of day. I cannot tell if this is healing or dying, my investigation has made crystalline all such natural patterns, however without affecting anymore than symptomatic alteration. This makes it no easier to survive. Only possible.

I rub my eyelids and the same pattern reappears. This time I open my eyes and stare directly at her picture, centering my focus to establish a stable frame of reference. The solid wave-form warbles momentarily, warping through several shades and fading shapes, dizzying me, until it finally settles on a thrice looped sweep, appearing to overlap itself in the center, some arcs appearing thinner as though they were more distant. The band itself is not a smooth stroke, but oscillates within each arc, describing various positions both above and below its average. Behind it the small photograph of her seems to move along the pathway of illumination, stuck to my inadvertantly meandering focal apex, ever at the heart of the horizontal doubling reflexivity, like a pair of olive outlined wings unfolding from infinity.

It is not what is directly behind them that eventually attracts my attention, but what is beneath the center of each. To either side of the picture, although the image itself, as it so often does, has detached from the frame and is suspended outside time, there are a pocket-sized leather bag and a small wooden box. I am reaching for the leather bag when the phone rings. For a moment I continue gaping groggily, waiting for reality as it stubbornly refuses to return to its conventional apprehension, only amending my grasp once everything has settled down into the most mundane of quantum-vibrational frequencies, the comfortingly chaotic clutter of a common work system in a sub-routined, self-perpetuating state of entropy.

“I'm not here.” I say coldly into the receiver.

A Wake, A Ware, A Loan

This has been a test of the autonomic nervous system. I repeat, this was only a test. In the event of real nervousness, take two horse pills, or bull testicles, whichever comes first, and call self in the morning. Wait for answer, then bark coldly, turn to the right and cough.

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I don't know how long it's been. I had thought.. wait... what had I thought. It was right before the phone rang. But that was in a dream. I was thinking... in the dream... ah... that's it. I thought that the briefcase was the McGuff. But now I'm awake and I think I've figured everything out: maybe I'm the dingus.

I open the case. Guts are flowing through the pipes of Alcatraz. All there is a fine white powder.

I walk across the water back to the stolen fly-ship from Imperial City and plot a course there.

Women: semper in media res

“And what exactly would that be, sister?” I intone, warily.

“If you don't know by now, then we really are lost. All is lost,” she sips pensively on the flaming paper-roll.

“Look,” Ilamencryption points out to her bluntly, “we're not your couple of Lancelots, here. We're in this thing for our own reasons. He's got his, and I've got mine. Are you clear on that? Your concerns don't mean a penny to us, not to him, not to me, you got that? Now you go ahead, and you sulk all you want. If you're not going to lead us to the information we need I'll ventilate you faster than you can wrap your tongue around your next riddle and leave you out here to rot in the acid rain.”

“This is about Sam,” she rubs her eyes. “Not me. If you can't see that, then...”

Ilamencryption seizes the gun in her hand and she pulls the trigger. From the look on her face I would say it was just instinctive reflex, because she screams. It's really more her scream that startles me than the gunshot right next to me. Gunshots; I get those all the time. But when she screams out, “father, no!” I half turn to look at her. That's why I'm not thinking about the gunshot.

The fusion round flies right through Ilamencryption's right hand like it's made out of surgeon's putty-guaze. His blood comes out in a red cloud, illuminated in a halo by the concussion-round bursting out of the hand-cannon. That's the last thing I see, but out of the corner of my eyes as she says it I see this crazed Lady MacBeth look in Dvipa's eyes.

Then the round cracks the atmosphere shield.

The weather in the wasteland isn't as bad as in Limbo. To tell you the truth Limbo makes the war's wastes look like a jaunty vacation spot. But on a night like this it's easy to forget that, and a person left out in the wastes without a way back to civilisation, well: they may as well be in Limbo.

The storm is rather mild, too. Compared to the ravaging furies the canopy can really lay down, blowing straight in off the seas since the mountains are gone. All that got wiped flat in the war. Now the southwest is one big drainage ditch for the submerged volcanic triggered hurricanes that blow in off the Pacific. And all that toxic smog over the islands just seeds the clouds with condensated death. I mean, I love where Ilamencryption picked to live, don't get me wrong. The sunsets over the green run-off bays and harbours catch the glint at just such an angle from the low-lying firey smog churned out by the coastal silicon refineries that from about a few hours after high noon until a few hours after sunset it looks like the whole island is raining rubies inside a magnetic particle accelerator. It's just that, by the time all that super-conductive smog blows a little south and east of there, over the soot silt swamps and fungi and algae of the rubble fields where the great mountain range once was, and over the great alkaline Lake, it's fed the air more than enough absynthe for it to vomit out battery acid consistency piss juices all across the wastes as far south as the sierra merde. And no one's gotten any further in that direction

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than the sierra merde.

So, when the atmosphere barrier breaks from the cold fusion round, sending melting silicon shards like grains of crystal peppering all into Ilamencryption and I, and the scalding tumescent putridity of the storm detonates in on us and rips the roof off the car, I really can't complain. The pressure differential pops a vein inside my ear drum and I pass out at the same time as chundering up a lunch load all over myself, but then, the rain will wash that away, so that really isn't all that bad either.

The real problem comes when I lose control of the car after nodding out and the mobile spins gyroscopically around on itself in at least three directions at the same time. That's when that bitch mistress gravity sinks her teeth into us and lulls us into a downward spiral. I wake up again and shake the nausea out of the corners of my pus seeping eyes just in time to see the ground, lit an eerie gold by the flames of the car's disintegrating engine as we plod downward, flying up to meet us.

Nice Dreams

We got lucky.

Because the bullet had blown the atmosphere barrier out before we hit the ground, we were all thrown clear of the car before it explodes. I wake up with a splitting migraine, thoroughly confused. Reality sets in like a hang over and the migraine does right along with it. I lift my aching torso up into the leaning pressure of the slanted acidic rain. It burns, alot, but I know it'll get worse for a long time before it gets better. I flop over and look back at the car. I was thrown the furthest. Ilamencryption has already stood up and is pacing around though. I shout to him over the combined tumult of the downpour and the smouldering auto. That's when I realise he's in shock. He's wandering in circles looking for his hand. He's clutching what's left of his wrist up to his chest, and it's spurting. What a baby. He's probably only missing a few fingers. I struggle quixotically to deepen my focus and see Dvipa. She is the worst off of us. She has been torn in half by the impact. I guess her legs are still in the back seat. Her upper half, well, except for her left side, is about twenty feet away. Seeing as how Ilamencryption is useless I heave myself upright. The steering console must have broken a couple ribs. I've felt worse, but I've also felt a considerable amount better. I stumble toward Dvipa, raising my hand to shield myself from the blistering blaze of the auto inferno.

She still has the briefcase in her right hand.

Good girl.

I stoop down beside her. Unfortunately for her, the brief case isn't all she's hanging on to. She's gushing a steady flow of blood from between her once rose petal lips. Her eyes are glazed over and her focus is fixed on infinity. But her breasts are heaving and the blood gushing from her gaping, fractured jaw bubbles with oxygen. I spit the copper taste of my own blood onto the puddled desert scene beside her.

“Dvipa,” I say calmly to her, trying to pry the briefcase from her hand, “let go.” Her splintered spine slumps toward me and her eyes swim. Her lips, now caked with black blood blisters, move as if to speak. I lean in close, putting my ear right against the bloodflow. With her last breath she sputters, “shekinah...”

By the time I have knealt up again to look down pityingly on her she has given up her ghost. I take the briefcase from between her interwoven fingers, now relaxed, and stumble back over to Ilamencryption.

“I, um,” he stares through me into nowhere, “I seem to have lost some of my hand.”

Pathetic.

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I tell him, “Dvipa’s dead.” He blinks once, then goes back to looking around in a daze. I grab him by the shoulder and push him to the ground. He lands with a splash. “Forget about that now,” I bark. “We’ve got a bigger problem.”

At first he seems confused. Then I see some cogency return to him. He looks around. “We’re stranded... aren’t we?”

“Your grasp of the obvious is admirable!” I holler over the gale.

“Well?!” he shouts back. “What are we supposed to do?!”

I blink, and then take my first look around myself. Outside the little globe of irridescence sent out by the now ebbing auto fire the utterly empty blackness stretches out for a hundred miles beyond either of our imaginations ability to get us out of it. The full sobriety of our situation begins to dampen my demeanor, even as the howling winds reassert their shrieking onslaught ripping at our drenched clothing with the fangs of an undine banshee.

“Yeah!” Ilamencryption rejoins. “That’s what I thought! Why don’t you help me look for my hand!”

“Eh,” I turn back to him, hunching over under the weight of my own soggy ontology, “why don’t you just rot in hell.”

I fall backwards into a sitting position to open the briefcase.

Wake and Bake Chicken

“Those fools. Those silly fools. They know nothing of the true Cheshire ways.”

General Tso is bent over a glowing lamp in his darkened office in Cheshire headquarters. Before him on the counter top is the opened brief case.

He withdraws the shimmering original disk from inside, and holds it up to the office light. It glimmers ten trillion shimmering irradescences. He glances down.

Inside the brief case there is the mouth of a wormhole. On the other end is the implosion of the breathing sphere of the city at the bottom of the sea.

He stares mesmerised for a moment, and then recollects a phial from the cabinet. He holds it up to the light as well, and it glows a dull red.

“The blood of the High and Mighty Quetzal, Odessa Zoab,” he remarks, to no one.

Suddenly he jerks his head, as if he has heard a noise, or perhaps, sensed being watched.

He turns into the darkness.

Entering the operations room he fondles the phial in his pocket. He punches in the command code, and enters the room that turns upside down. Again, he examines the disk. The complexity of it! The simplicity of it!

Ah, there now, the room has turned completely around.

The heavy plex-shielded doors slide apart and a blinding glare of ultra violet light instantly permeates the antechambre. General Tso, wearing a pair of rose red goggles

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and a Hawaiian shirt, enters the anti-white light of the room, lifting his arm above him to shield his eyes from the most intense, direct rays.

Above him there swirls the immense black hole. The event horizon is as large as the entire ceiling.

“She’s coming along nicely, I see.” Tso smirks to one of the white clad techs, calmly maintaining his duplicitous demeanor.

“Infinite power...” he contemplates to himself, standing directly beneath and staring up at the immense phi black hole which they had created.

Upon its slithering surface lurked a tau sub tau of wormholes, leading, who knows? This way and that, surely. Tso chuckles. “And this lab is just one of many, lads,” he gestures over his shoulder.

He listens as the Cyberian labs mumble agreements to one another, and then he hears the sound of numbers being crunched. He turns completely around and sees that the white labs backs are all turned toward him.

He reaches slyly into his pocket and extracts the little phial of the blood of Odessa Zoab. He sprinkles it upon the disk, and it glows black upon green in the purple darkness.

“Isn’t it about time we gave this one a whirl, lads?” He swirls on his heel as the technicians’ heads begin to turn. As their eyes watch, he inserts the blood soaked disk into the Proton-Proton chain emanating from the focused occulus in the floor, connecting to the black hole, chaining and harnessing it.

The disk, placed in the cosmic harmonic beam, begins to spin. The technicians look at one another in wonder. They dethrone themselves and wander towards the General, scratching their heads.

“Behold,” he beckons. “I give you: Light from the Darkness and Life from the Abyss.”

The spinning disk begins to flutter in its orbital spin. It butterflies, refracting dangerous prisms everywhere, searing those upon whom they descended. Finally, the disk whorls about like an unbridled sphere, and then shatters into unfathomable crystal-like shards.

“MFKTZ...” Tso gapes openly in wonder.

The whirling particles assemble into a gyroscope, and then this begins to wind upward, like a charmed serpent, or a liquid fire. The particles begin to assume a fixed order...

“And now, a tiny dollop of blood goes here...” Tso whispers absent mindedly.

The matrix of life begins to well up within the spiraling arms of the lilly like gyroscope. It opens like the petals of a pantopon rose, creeping up the blistered

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fingers of the syringe. The glistening glitter turns a warm amber as the blood trickles upward, through the concourses made for it by the monoatomic particles.

Around the growing, living vessel, the goggles of all the technicians and the General, who stands at attention with his arms crossed, reflect the fireworks show.

Already, the monoatomic particles have begun to organise themselves into quantum computing nanite machines, working to build along the fibres of energy current a working human blood vessel here, a heart there...

Finally, the entire woman is beginning to take form. Her flesh and bone skull zips closed around the entirely monoatomic machine central nervous system and brain which she will now conceal within. A mind which Tso can control.

The technicians' jaws all drop at the site of the beautiful woman. Even the ladies blush and look away. But it is a sight that General Tso has already seen before, and he rubs at his eye beneath his goggles irritably reminded of it.

The hairless clone stands nude and bright eyed in the purple beam of energy flowing between the toggled lens below and the enormous iris-less pupil of the phi black hole above.

“And we're done.” Tso suddenly announces, shattering what has been a long silence.

He decloaks himself and wraps his hood and shawl around the cowering, wet girl.

“Come, come, my dear,” he addresses the baby clone. “We have much, much work to do.”

Knowing he has not filed the proper forms, General Tso hastily escorts the quivering clone into the rotating entechambre. He must get her back to his quarters if he is to perform what he must. A marriage in secret. What a tarnish.

Ah, the techs haven't caught on. They have triggered the switch and the room has begun to rotate.

Tso and the little red robed girl disappear and reappear under the intermittant lights which soak the shadows in gloom down the spiraling hall.

He scans his fingers across the glowing lock board beside his chamber's door. The door phases open. He ushers her in, and behind them the door phases shut.

“Now, my dear....” he looks around his disheveled quarters... his eyes, searching, fall upon just the thing. “Would you care for an apple?” He scuttles over to the platter of semi-rotten apples next to his unused toothbrush.

She winces as the apple juice oozes out from the corners of her lips as her mouth squishes into the soft, decaying rind, her tiny incisors crunching down upon the inner core.

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“Who... am I?” she finally asks, quenched in apple juice running a red flaked river of dewey moisture down across her naked flesh, her bare breasts, and down her belly. The cloak is still shrouding her somewhat, however it has fallen back across her shoulders, and gapes open in the front.

“Please, please...” Tso winces at the sight of her, “a little courtesy...” he leans forward, eyes deflected, and wraps the robe around her more tightly. She instinctively tugs at it from within at the collar and its thick, pleated velvet rolls cascade down around her.

“Now there’s a pretty flower.”

He dresses the young girl clone in one of his junior fleet uniforms, which he withdraws delicately from within a thin, plastic wrapper where it has hung, freshly pressed, in his closet, he explains, since his days in the junior fleet.

He buttons the little tin soldier up in the parachute harness straps which form the framework of the leathery plesh-saur burlap sack like suit. He zips up the cold zipper which runs along the front of the grungy yellow flight suit from the crotch to the chin. He turns a dial over her left nipple and looks her dead in the eye with a sneer as he senses that she feels her blood quicken. Then the suit de-inflates. It sucks up vacuum tight to her skin, and she cringes to conceal her cramped camel toe.

“Let’s be on our way dear, shall we?” He beckons her to get into a large duffle bag he has spread asunder on the faded blue carpeting. She looks from the duffle bag to him, her eyes glistening with damp tears of terror. “Oh, come on, bitch, it’s only for a minute,” he snaps and, grabbing her by the exposed scalp, forces her head first into the bag.

He totes the poor woman out of the quarters section and down ten levels into the chapel. There, he has prepared a confederate who will do the deed for them, he promises her in silence. And when it shall be done, let none put asunder.

Save God... save God.

Entering upon the threshold of the altar, General Tso stops to set down the heavy duffle bag and take a long piss in the public fountain. After this he unzips the bag, and lifts his pale clad bride out of the sack like it were a magic trick.

They approach the altar, where Tso’s confidant is waiting, robed in the shadows of this arcane and secret shrine. The room is lit by the festering luminous cobwebs of the insipid nanite spiders of this level. They cast an eerie, moonlight-like glow.

General Tso steps before the preacher and bows down on one knee. He pauses a moment to look up at the pleasantly chanting choirs of lights.

“Daddy, I know I promised I’d never do this, but... here goes.” He turns his lofty gaze upon his confidant in the shadows.

The frightened clone looks around, scared.

A penetrating ray of clear light suddenly bolts upward from the waste level of the robed figure.

“Don’t just stand there, girl,” General Tso grabs the clone by her forearm. “Kneal.”

She falls helplessly to her knees. The beam of invisible brilliance weighted down upon her right shoulder. The voice called namelessly from the dark, “I dub thee...” The sword fell more heavily upon her left shoulder, “Omega...” Once more the blade fell upon her right shoulder and she could feel the heavy weight of her right arm turn numb. “The Bhurgher Queen...” The sword comes to a rest heavily directly across the bridge of her hairless skull. “of Enifuhlungceruzgeist...” the blade weighs down, slicing like a spinning razor into her deeply. Finally, she gasps as the sword is removed.

She collapses, exhausted. Beside her, however, the same endurance ritual is only just beginning for her new mate, General Tso. “I dub thee...” the voice swims out through the rippling darkness. “The Diary King.”

The newly reincarnated ancient Bhurgher Queen of Einfuhlungcyberuzgeist, and budding, blushing bride of the Cheshire General Tso, now Diary King of the Quetzals, Bugs and Cyberians, proceeds to vomit, and then lose consciousness and fall asleep in the rank smelling puddle of the general’s undigested rotten apple.

She comes too to a fragrant aroma of flower dew. Her eyelids flutter open. The same moonlit pastoral night scene beneath the half-visible archways of the sandstone carved cathedral. She is lying, front side down, on a large bear skin rug, surrounded by tapestries of holographic light, projecting interference patterns in scalar fields. The scent of ambrosia fills the air.

“Welcome to the vault...” a deep anonymous voice says from beyond the wavering transluscent tapestries.

The young clone, abashed, attempts to upright herself, only to find that she is chained in all four corners of the bear skin mat, spread wide open behind.

Voices whisper in the shadows...

“Should we do this, Master?”

“My people need a pregnant queen.”

“Yes, but is it safe?”

“We can find that out right now.”

Suddenly hands graps the young Queen. They seem to come from all sides. She is filled in every orifice at once. The penetrators thrust in and out until her natural fluids have long since run dry, and the flesh begins to chaffe and bruise.

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“Are you sure this is how you breed with a clone, Master?” she overhears a voice at one point. “I don’t know. I’ve never had to try it before. Now is the first time. So, we must try everything.”

She fades in and out of consciousness. At some point she feels herself being operated upon and parts of her body being removed and replaced with ugly rusted old mechanical parts from some junkyard.

Finally she awakens, tainted in every way.

She arises, connected to a series of wires, tubes, and needles, half blind, she stumbles forward. She trips and tears out of this awful mess of injections connecting her to life support.

“Oh...” General Tso’s voice comes clear as a bell through the fluorescent hospital level lights, “pardon me.”

He helps her up onto her feet and takes her in his arms. “I see somebody’s ready to come off of life support, eh?” He snuggles her, and buries her tears in his armpit. “Don’t worry, my precious angel,” he whispers in the delicate folds of her ear, around which short stubble of hair has begun to grow. “I won’t let it happen again.”

“I apologise for the past interruption... It was only a test of the emergency broadcasting system. The following is an actual emergency, and you will now be notified of emergency procedures. We now return you to the monarchial address... already in progress.”

"... of Atlantea.

Recently the Insect Information Networks made public that the Elephantine DNA was found in the bone structures of the oldest known animal faction to be known to have existed. We have welcomed the proud Anenuten people amongst us as our friends, and trusted them with our heritage, allowing them to become first class citizens and to vote. However now, we are called upon, as humanimals, to admit that the Mammoth, our oldest possible ancestor, is, indeed, the Master Race foretold by prophecies of old. The Cyrberuzgeist humanimals have long cheshired the role of oldest animal tribe, and, unfortunately, small rebel factions have broken out along the border between the Elephantine homeland and Cyrberia, as reported on by our faithful Quetzal media. Now it appears that an all out war has been declared between these two brave and noble humanimals. I am here to comment on this turn of events now.

As president of the Elephants and as King of the Quetzals, I am of course torn. My wife, the Bhurgher Queen, has been genetically proven to be of originally Cyberian heritage. The Quetzals have been expected, according to bug-statisticians, to back the Cyberians in their terrible bid for power. As president of the Elphants, however, I cannot aid my fellows in the Quetzals as they back the Cyberians. And since I do not wish to offset the balance of power in the event of a global strategic emergency, I cannot betray my fellows in the Annaneuta. I cannot aid the quetzals and I cannot scorn the Elephants. Thus, my descision is simple.

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I have enacted executive orders 1095-13074 and declared a state of martial law. I implore you, in the name of God, to remain calm. Troops have been dispatched to ease the evacuation of all major cities, and the closing of all corporate businesses. We are in no danger. Volunteers from your local police and fire departments will be arriving at your door shortly to evacuate you to the natural emergency shelters. You will be asked to proceed onto the transports provided by them to the nearest train depot. From there you will be transported to the natural emergency shelters. These have been constructed to withstand all known dangers from natural occurrence. I hereby declare myself Dictator of Destiny. Thank you, that is all, and in God's name Proceed."

Change the channel. General Tso subtitled as The Jaguar of Tezcatlipoca, speaking in Quetzal language. Change the channel. General Tso subtitled as the Diary King in the language of Cyberia. Change the channel. General Tso subtitled as the admiral of vice in the clicks and buzzes of Interzonese. They're all the same person. General Tso.

So... this is how he plans to do it? This seems an unusual move for Tso. Perhaps someone else is behind this, guiding his gears.

Some say the Bhurgher Queen, his bride, is plotting to gain greater control over her new kingdom. They believe she is planning on levying increased trade rates on the monoatomic MFKZT which Enifuhlungcyrberuzgeist exports to the Cheshire. This could be putting pressure on the big guy in the bedroom.

Unofficial channels, and this isn't quite clear, tend to implicate other, subtler influences deriving from among the other Cheshire. They believe that Tso is plotting a power move within the very structure of the Cheshire themselves. This could either be backed by, or in opposition to... any number of elements.

General Tso, Dictator of Destiny, awakens in a cold sweat. Beside him, beneath transparent silk sheets, lounging nude on the veranda basks his consort, the Bhurgher Queen. No one else but he knows of the fact that she is a clone. All the rest believe she is the living reincarnation. He chuckles. The shell game.

Then he remembers to mourn, and his face goes sallow. There was something ancient he was forgetting. Something... needful. Something else he should have been doing. What was it? Was it.....? ohhhh.... it must have... been....

All is secure in his kingdom. He is constantly being watched from all sides by men with sniper rifles. Laser guided. No one dares get near him. Save for his beautiful and lusty young wife.

The mice had infiltrated the Quetzal. The mice had infiltrated the Bugs. The mice had taken the information gathered from the bugs, and the mice had fed this deformed disinformation to the Quetzal. The Quetzal and the Bugs believed each other to be amassing huge armies, where, in reality, none existed. Then, the mice staged insurgent incidents at strategic targets. This began the war between the Bugs and the Quetzal.

The war between the Bugs and the Quetzal had allowed the Annaneutons to implement

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martial law. “Stomp them out! Stomp them out!” cried the Annaneutons, angrily waving their mechanical fists in the air. Head of the Annaneuton League for Peace, General Tso was honorarily nominated the title of Dictator of Destiny.

He is on his way even now to the location of the mock ceremony to be held in honour of this. It is, for all intents and purposes, an empty title, considering as how there is never anyone around to appreciate it. Under Annaneuton martial law, all the Quetzal are housed in extermination camps, called Covdens, while all the Bugs are being tortured and experimented upon. There just didn’t seem to be any need for a middle class anymore.

But if there was one, then Cheshire Tso was it. He eases himself slowly out of the pendulously mounted mattress hammock beneath the holographic pagoda erected on the veranda of their private little catamaran. Beside his impression on the flexible plush his young and loving bride does not stir. He had not wakened her by moving.

But beneath the heavy weight of his stare, she begins to stir. Her Master’s Voice. Tso sighs. Her nipples have perked into tiny pebbles in the chill wind, however the screen which surrounds their little cot protects them from the hazardous winds that screech silently just beyond. Her lips part first. That look of smudged lipstick marring such nakedly beautiful lips. Then she raises her eyes up towards his. He looks away.

She springs to her feet behind him, wearing the invisible silk sheet as a cape. “Are we almost there?” she chirps.

He rounds on her with a sideways, twisted look in his eye. “Drill Sargeant!”

“Sir, yes, Sir!” his tiny wife comes to attention, her bare heels tight together, buttocks clenched tight as can be, in full salute. The sheet swirls around her in the breeze of her snapping too and Tso smiles at the thought of painting her draped in a Cheshire flag.

“At ease, drill instructor,” he advises her, and she stands down, parting her feet, crossing her arms behind her arched back, and unclenching her rear. As she untenses, she lets out a rather long fart.

General Tso, who has begun pacing back and forth in front of her, stops for a moment to sniff her out. She doesn’t blink, and so he continues.

Behind his back she chortles at herself.

“We will be arriving there shortly, sweetheart. Have you chosen a gown?”

“Sir, no, sir.”

“Then wear the gold one. I rather prefer it.”

“Sir, yes, sir.”

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“Have I happened to mention where we are actually going, my cherry?”

“Sir...?”

They retire to the more comfortable downstairs accommodations. Here in the barking of logs in the fireplace, he sits her down on the ottoman silhouetted before him.

“We are going to the place of the beginning of my Great Triumph. We are going to the mountain in the wastelands of Limbo where I killed my own best friend. I knew him, and he knew me, like we were each other’s reflections. Old Willy. Bill.”

“Dress me?” the girl purrs.

Tso continues while donning her in the golden gown of his choice, “Yeah... he and I went way back. We used to go fishing. Bill was known at the bait shop as a talker, a weaver of yarns. I was just the strong, silent type I guess. Yeah, we used to go with this girl we knew... all those years ago. She was a little thing, alot like you, actually. Quite the tart. Anyway, her mother was a real queen bee, so she wouldn’t let her out except under harmless pretenses. And this was when there was still some country hereabouts, some actual, rural countrysides. So, we used to just take off out into the country and do whatever came to mind. That’s where we all first tried Flower Dew. I think it was the flower dew that really pulled us apart. Bill took a shine to it right off, and wanted to move on quick to the harder stuff, the pollen, the sap. Rose, the girl, she liked it some I guess, and I was about the same way, it just wasn’t really important. This was all long before we had ever heard of the humanimal factions. As far as I knew, the Bugs were just a gang down on penny-ante street on the south side.

“Eventually, Rose and Billy got into it, and they started feuding and I mean fighting hard. Rose went through a couple good stints of being down on something Bill told her was called the Flower of Life, I don’t know, some dumb new age rubbish like that. They did it all sorts of ways too. Prolly messed that poor girl up something fierce. I saw her... I... but that was a while ago. I saw Bill recently too. That’s when I shot him.”

“Why did you shoot him?” the girl whispers as he latches on her decorative rings.

“It seemed so natural at the time. I had been sent on a mission by the Cheshire to initiate disputations between the Quetzal and the Bugs, and he was a Bug. I shot him dead, but for what? I look back on it now and I wonder, why have I been wasting my life aspiring after vain and worthless power, when it is ultimately so easy to come by? Had I known my fate would lead me here, would I have still murdered my old best friend, Bill? Had I not murdered Bill, would my fate still have led me here?

“You see, darling,” he kisses her on the lips and licks away the still smudged lipstick stain. “These are the types of things you have to think about when you are the Dictator of Destiny.” He smirks, and proceeds to dawn his own ceremonial paraphelia.

Demurely, Omega crosses her plams along her inner thigh and directs her gaze downward. “Sir?” she queries finally. “What role am I to be playing in this ceremony?”

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“Inanna, the Sumerian Ishtar. She went to the underworld to save her dead husband Dumuzi, the shepherd king.” He adjusts his royal crown and apron.

He turns on her so suddenly that she starts, flashing back for a moment to her baby, lost in child birth. He holds something out to her. It is a life size crystal skull, like the ones she had heard rumored to have been made by the Quetzal long ago.

She responds aghast, raising stiff fingers before her cockeyed grinning gasp agape, with mischief in her eyes. “What is that? Is it Quetzal?” she begs.

“It is the skull of Bill’s apprentice. He had a crystal skull.”

“oooo.... ahhhhh....” she fawns over it, turning it around in her paws. “So... what does it... do?” she glances up in between juggling it from one hand to the other.

“Nobody knows. It was discovered by a goat farmer. I bought it on the black market. I knew what it was, how it got here. I believe I must be meant to insert that disk of old Quetzal code I had Aziz Smythe decipher.....” he trails off.

“You mean the disk from which I was created, Master?”

“Hmm? Oh yes, one and the same.”

“So we are going to use this skull in the ceremony tonight then, m’Lord?”

He turns his heavy gaze on her once more. She rises and beckons him toward the strings dangling haphazardly all across her back. “Lace me up?” He complies.

The ceremony is set to take place at what is recollected to be the very spot where General Tso shot Piscator Willhelms. Some of the celebrants have already gathered there when Tso and Omega arrive. Protected on this trip only by his royal body guards, the earliest of the humandroid replicants, his own clones. Amidst these bizzare mutations he and the gorgeous Omega depart the off ramp with some minor ceremony. Cheers go up from the various members of the crowd.

“Still bleeding?” a shout goes up to Omega. She flashes her bare underbelly at the crowd, lifting up her multiple layers of frock and petticoats. “Whence a child? Whence a son? Whence an Heir!?” the man continues.

There is a brief pause during which a noticeable shadow crosses Tso’s withered face.

The ceremonial space has already been cleared and sanctified when the Tso’s arrive. There has been a small, shanty patchwork mosque built over the sight in honor of Omega’s Quetzal heirtage. She blushes and bows. Tso stoops to enter the consecrated working space within. Omega waits just outside, shaking hands with the various assembled dignitaries. They are all the same smiling faces, all the same moist palms as the last gathering, and the one before, for as far back as she can remember.

Then, an odd thing happens. Omega has a memory. She remembers her own

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childhood. Suddenly her husband emerges and, with a wide wave of his hand, declares the ceremony opened. Omega tries to focus on the memory again, but it is too late. It is lost.

That night, the ceremonial pyre is lit, and the skull burnt of impurities therein. Only a few are in attendance at the end. General Tso, looking sullen, is one. Omega is asleep, held by a leash attached to her loins in the hand of her Master, General Tso. He wakens her.

“Omega, my love, the light of my life, my darling. I have something to tell you. Something I learned while on the mission to sew dissent between the Bugs and the Quetzal.”

Omega stirs delicately, nude except for a respirator and her leash. Tso continues, glancing around, in a hushed voice.

“The Bugs and the Quetzal were once one. They were not separate factions, as they are now. They belonged to a single, unified people. This people, these... humanimals... were the Cyberian people. Your people. I had hoped that by marrying you it would be enough to atone for my sin of knowing this. I hoped that by executing every last bug and quetzal I could restore order and prosperity upon Einfühlungcyrberuzgeist. I have made a terrible... a terrible error.”

He then continues, muttering to himself, “if only Bill had... he was always the one who was good at math...” Then he rejoins the conversation with Omega.

“I’ve lived with this secret, this terrible burden, for far too long. You see my dear... I’ve been having these dreams... but I say too much.” Tso immediately gets up to go and, not realising he is still holding it, takes up all the slack in her lead. She cries out as if bitten by a poisonous serpent. The other two revelers remaining adrift on opium at the fire arise, half startled. Some others begin to approach from the direction of the camp site. But by then Tso had already dragged his wife, kicking and screaming, back to their charioteer hover-yacht to make wild passionate love to the girl.

The next morning, at dawn, the General stretches in the pre-sunrise pale blue haze. He goes without a shirt, and looks down at the bit of a belly he has acquired. Today will mark the consecration of the skull. Tonight, the insertion of the disk.

The General looks down at the crushed quartz crystal skull in his hand. It glistens within with secret, ancient patterned codings. He hops off the yacht and proceeds to march directly to the working space. Between his craft and the working area lie several revelers, collapsed in their revels. As he steps over and about them, they rise up and begin to make complaint in their respective foreign tongues.

The General barges into the working area where the disc, still being consecrated from last night while the skull had been on the fire, lies waiting for him in the middle of the consecrated space. He immediately picks it up and inserts it into the mouth of the skull.

For ten minutes after, nothing could be heard throughout the campsite except for the

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General’s deep, peeling roars of laughter. So loud, and so intense was this, that eventually some of the lesser camp directors were sent to fetch Omega, who was still asleep on the yacht.

One of the Limbic Quetzal men bursts in upon Queen Omega Tso while she is trimming the plumedge of her nethermost regions. “Would you care to help?” she barks in discomfort. The hairy, bestial man moves to accomodate, but the Queen, growing haughty, simply stands tall, in hoove heal knee high leather boots, a too tight black silk over airwhale bone corset, and nothing else, with the heavy links of the chain of last night’s leash still attached to her underbelly, the handle worn around her neck now like a collar. As she turns, she farts a little, and immediately the indigenous stool pigeon got a whiff of his fix.

“Well?” Queen Omega demands, tapping her toes impatiently. “What is it?”

“Mother...” the slave starts, not knowing what to call her in her own language. “Father is... having the moons in the sacred hut.”

“He’s on the rag? Are you sure that’s what you’re trying to say?”

“Please, please, Mother. Come see. Mother, come see.”

“Fine.” The Queen wraps herself in the transparent sheets like a bedouin. She then storms precariously on her hoof heal boots down the off ramp and across the shifting sand of the wobbly dunes. As she approaches the magic hut, she begins to hear the maddenning laughter. It has diminished somewhat, and seems to have begun to alternate with uncontrollable sobbing.

“Good God!” the Queen exclaims at the sounds coming from within. Immediately her husband exist the flap of the tent, letting it fall back closed behind him. His eyes are red, as are his cheeks. Has he been laughing or crying?

“This is it!” he exclaims, and swiftly grabs his young wife by the upper arm, and dragging her into the folds of the makeshift tent before any of the onlookers can even make a sound.

Inside the tent it is dark. It is only lit by the single crystal skull, sitting in the centre of the consecrated circle. The crystal skull has a holographic face painted across its surface. It is the face of a wan old man.

“Do you not know who this is?” Cheshire Tso begins laughing uncontrollably again.

Omega, confused, looks from one to the other of them. The face on the skull was talking when she came in, but now it appears to be looking her right in the eyes. She looks back at Tso, who is gnawing his knuckles in enthusiasm.

Suddenly Tso’s lips are breathing hot wind from the desert into the folds of her ear. “Don’t you remember. I cloned you from the body of Odessa Zoab. Don’t you remember. But the engine of your creation was something much older. It was a Quetzal cosmological pattern. It was, we believe, what had been discovered in old

Atlantea, which had led to the war between the Einfuhlungers and the Cyrberuzgeisters, which had first given rise to the Bugs and the Quetzal. The Einfuhlungers became the Cyberians, left alive and alone in their homeland. The emigrés of Cyberuzgeist became divided. They were divided into the quetzal and the bugs. The Quetzal began as being very patriotic. They were Cyberian Nationalists during the original wars, and later, in exile, they became terrorists. The Bugs were... well... the bugs were the bugs. They were loyal enough to their king and their queen, but not necessarily did they benefit by their plans. And they knew this. But many went along with those plans. And many of those died. The humanimals... excuse me this was before the beginning of the humanimal factions... the old Atlanteans, had gone to war with God. They had done this thing because the ruler of Old Atlantea at the time, he... he had been having visions. The visions were apocalyptic in nature, and were taken very seriously by the people, gravely by the king's administrators. You see, the king's wife had died. He had begun having an affair with her handmaiden. He saw visions when she, being foreign, introduced him to a far distant drug called Flower Dew. The visions he had predicted the fall of his country in a war. Upon his death he was heard only by his new queen to say the true name of God, and so his wife interpreted this to mean that the country was destined to go to war with God. I had been a soldier in this war. It had been terrible and brutal. There was no sense of strategy at all. At one point, we had the king cornered. At the next we were losing key players from the backside. And, at that, we were in mate. In the end, there were those of who were prepared to sue for peace. I joined the movement to this end, and was eventually led into an ancient, secret order. But that is a story for another time. The Cheshire were chosen to broker the peace negotiations. The situation was very tense. I was one of the key negotiators. Neither side wanted to back down. However, in the end, good diplomacy won out. The Cyberians were given the choice. They could migrate out of their homeland, and live forever as exiles. Or they could stay in their homeland and be cursed to sleep for all eternity. This was a sad and terrible day in the land of Cyberia. The land of the Cyrberians. Your highness... YOUR land. It was YOU yourself who oversaw the exiles as they left. It was you yourself who was the young bride of the Diary King, whose visions foretold of the future war with God, and it was YOU whom Countess Odess Zoab was the daughter of, the clone of whose body your mind now inhabits. Now, awaken that mind to who you are. Now, look in the skull. Who's face is it in the skull? Whose face! Remember!"

At the beginning of his little tiarde General Tso had penetrated his young wife from behind, a manouever to which she was neither unaccomusted nor found unpleasant. However, as he thrust his member deeper and deeper into her as his tale continued to unfold, he pushed harder and harder, hurting her. By the end, she was in terrible, terrific pain, which she could feel coursing throughout her entire body. Suddenly she awakened to herself, lying face down, face to face with the skull, her fleshy outlines reflected on its smooth, reptilian, crystal contours. At last she could comprehend her own nature. A mind made of oribtally rearranged monoatomic elements inside the body of the clone of her own daughter. ORMES, or MFKZT as it was known in her homeland, had been the snows upon the tundra of her youth. It had been the crinkly permafrost on the ground. And she had visited MFKZT glaciers. Now, she sensed, it all was gone. The Cheshire, as their payment for negotiating the amnesty accord, were granted one wish by God. They wished for the mighty MFKZT mountins, and frozen seas of MFKZT that covered most of Cyberia. And soon, soon, soon they would discover the secret. It was the real reason that the Diary King had

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begun to have visions. He had gone insane at the realisation of the fact that their planet had mega-seasons, ice ages which oscilated with the rise and fall of species.... he could understand how old it was. And she? What of she? Was she the Bhurgher or the Queen? Just at that moment, General Tso ejaculates into her posterior. She customarily farts out the cum, and then, opening her eyes, sees the holographic face on the crystal skull.

“The Diary King!” She exclaims...

“yessss....” hisses General Tso ominously.

“NO!” she screams at the top of her lungs. The tent blows apart in all directions. The working space is revealed for all to see. General Tso withdraws from his wife, and stumbles away a few steps. The desert has produced a mighty sandstorm. A few feet away he sees some of his appointed staff members’ guides picked up and escorted off by the sandy winds.

Her wide anus dripping cum, the Bhugher Queen turns on the now bewildered General Tso. Her eyes appear a deeply luminescent purple. Her body begins to bristle.

“Not like this...” General Tso intones to the back of his hand, falling to his knees before the fully unleashed power of his own diabolical creation.

“NO?” she asks him, cocking one eyebrow.

“Please... in the name of the one true God and all that is Holy, please spare my life!” General Tso dribbles like a scorned pussy.

“May the Devil Take You!” She blares fire from every pore. In the midst of the eye of the whirling sand storm an explosion of fire decimates General Tso. The flame begins by consuming his outer skin, then peripheral tissues. It tears apart all the synaptic connectors which link his nervous system to the plastic and metal components of his body. His eyes bulge and become engorged with blood. The spontaneous combustion is boiling away his platettes inside of his plasma. The mechanical parts of General Tso explode into trillions of peaces, which are instantaneously crushed by a great pressure. The flames begin to flow inward and the fusion becomes fission. The Queen has summoned the nuclear furnace engine of the sun upon Tso.

As every last nerve in the general’s body is burned to a cinder, and the telmoeres of his DNA begin to break down as the cells attempt to regenerate too quickly, and cannot be replaced. The sugar acids and amino bases of the very fibres of his being begin to seer apart and fry at the tips. Then, the electrons at the very level of entropy, which have been absorbing photons and splicing down fewer and fewer, suddenly pivot. All of their poles align along a crystalline molecular axis. Supersaturation sets in instantaneously and all of the electrons’ orbits simultaneously yield their form, merging into a homogenous pattern.

“MFKZT!” The Queen screams. There is an explosion of invisible clear light and the disintegrated mass of General Tso inverts through the sub-quantic interdimensional wormhole tachyons. As the molecules fuse, the electrons spin becomes asymptotically

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the same, until finally, they all synchopate, and then their orbits go from being electro-magnetically charged probability clouds, to being gravitationally charged singularities. As these singularities rotate, they consume the surrounding photons, and absorb them through their torus manifold into hyperdimension. The photons trade place there with tachyons, or faster than photonic particles, which then irradiate from the miniature wormholes. This lets off the transparent light.

Suddenly the firestorm stops. The winds die down from a gush to a breeze in a mere moment. The Queen is standing in the middle of it all, panting. The General is no more.

“Good... Very good.” A voice says from behind the Queen’s back. She whirls around. The skull is lying on the ground, its beak like protruberance lined with crystal-carved fangs. Its eyes gleam with life.

“If we’ve already gotten this far, then I imagine Tso has also told you about... first of all, are you alright?”

Still panting, the Bhurgher Queen nods.

“Tso has obviously told you that the Quetzal and Bugs were the two exiled tribes from Cyberia. But what he did not tell you is he has been amassing an army of cloned cybernetics like you are now, who you have become since the General remade you. These cloned cybernetics, with animal-flesh and robot-brains, these humandroids, have mutilated and twisted the mythology of the Quetzal and the Bugs to assume their own ends. They were born into cloned bodies, but their minds preprogrammed. They knew from day one they must succeed in their collective mission. Their mission, the beginning of which they had been programmed to forget consciously, was to mimic in one generation the division between the patriotic quetzal and the drug-dependent bugs. They have already, in your own generation, or that of your clone, played dirty tricks on both the quetzal and bugs, seemg to pit one side against the other. Under General Tso, the cybergoisie assumed political power on an authoritarian platform of increased security. The Cheshire were secretly behind the humandroids all along, General Tso himself will have already become dictator by this point, will he not?”

Again, the pensive Queen, finally reunited with her Ancient King, nods.

“General Tso has been behind everything all along, Omega. He was on a mission to sew dissent between the Quetzal and the Bugs when I met him again. I too, had once been a Cheshire. Long ago. In a now forgotten time. He realised that I had plotted to unite the Bugs and Quetzal against the Cheshire, and so I lured him out here to confront me. This skull, this skull that you are now seeing my visage on, was that of my apprentice at the time. It is made entirely out of monoatomic gold in stasis. I had moved here, to Limbo, after having lived in Pod City, where I met Contess Odessa, the original person to have borne your current body. I had staged a revolt with her there against General Tso’s mischief. It was merely meant to lure him away, however, from pursuing the case of Elepso Fucto, a Bug information dealer who bought a decoded information pattern from a small time computer technician named Aziz Smythe. Tso’s attention had been drawn to this because the holographic message was encrypted into the videotape made by Fucto the night before, when he had been

spying on the hostess of a party General Tso had been attending. Apparently Tso had been led onto Fucto by some lowlife gumshoe he had been tailing on some errand for the Cheshire. I was able to manipulate the disk out here into Limbo via the gumshoe so that I knew it would be safe. I then decapitated my apprentice and left his skull here for you to find. The detective had apparently lost the original to the generator at Pod City, where he met Odessa Zaob, however had been able to make a copy before that. I had planned on Odessa being there when the gumshoe had lost the disk. I had planned the way in which the data fed through Pod City's generator during a specific time would synch-link to a briefcase which I directed Aziz Smythe's wife to give to Odessa. However, Odessa was kidnapped and murdered by Tso's men. Then, the unknowing detective lost the case to Tso as well. That is why he created you. He finally connected the pieces of why I had initiated the then-top secret Phi Blackhole Project. I hear he may have even had a hand in bringing that little gem of a secret among the Cheshires to the light of the public, although at the time I'm sure he wasn't aware why. He simply didn't like me after a while. He felt I was too lax, too lazy. We had one good time, and that was a fishing trip we took with his sweetheart Ouarda. Her mother was very strict and Tso was a drunk at the time. I'm sure it's all he'll ever remember of those days. I was aware already at that time of a rogue element in the Cheshire. A faction of them, under Sam, had accumulated a greater degree of seclusion than most of the Cheshire were aware. I believed he was plotting some form of a coup, but I could not sense how. So I quit the Cheshire. It was only then that I discovered that I had been only a clone myself, all along. I was the clone of an ancient sorcerer-king, of a tribe known as the Reptiles. I had also been a mouse during the age of Mammoths. I had a nervous breakdown when, I believe, General Tso's henchmen, probably at the direction of Sam, muscled in and killed my wife and children. I began to see things. Have visions. Make prophecies. I was elected by the Cyberians as their king, having only privately been a Duke before that. I worked as a clerk. These visions continued, and the Queen's handmaiden, a woman named Subtefrougue, attempted to help me make them abate by giving me an ancient herbal remedy known as Flower Dew. It was then I realised I would have to fake my own death and go into hiding. It was not until our daughter, the Countess Odessa Zaob, had been born and had chosen to join the side of the patriotic Quetzal that I surfaced again. I knew Tso would be watching her, and I knew I could use her to pull him into a trap. At the same time I separated him from the disk. You see, Omega, the reason I had started the Phi Blackhole Program was to send messages into a black hole. It was left, however, up to General Tso to find out what would happen when information was fed into a miniature black hole after I retired. Tso nearly died in the complete debacle he made of that procedure, and it put a lot of heat on the Cheshire, especially upon Sam. I believed I had figured out how to keep Sam occupied while I eliminated his apprentice General Tso. I organised that the case containing the other end of the Pod City wormhole fall into Tso's hands in the end, so that he could retrieve the original disc containing the data and combine it with the blood of our daughter Odessa Zaob, in the blackhole. You see, the blackhole takes in the lesser light and outputs the greater Light. If given a pattern to follow, such as the information pattern on a computer disc, the Greater Light will take shape. Tso realised this when he failed to bring life to you by grafting your skin onto the mouth of our daughter during the first test debacle. So, finally, he put two and two together, and used the blood of our daughter and the data on the disc to make a clone from the Light of the black hole. Tso may or may not have realised I was the original source for the data on that disc. However it is of no consequence whether he did or did not. Because here you are. However, my

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plan had only involved predicting Sam’s moves and tricking Tso. I had not anticipated Tso’s creation of the clone cyborg army until it was too late. Now, he has taken the myths of our people and warped them to suit his own agenda. The Mammoths and the lizards he has recreated as the Elephants and the rats. By using the rats against the quetzal and the bugs, playing on their weaknesses, the Elephants have already declared martial law. They traded disinformation with the bugs and then communicated this to the quetzal. They were using ex-bugs as infiltrators all along. Their presence was not even known. They used these ex-bugs to round up the other bugs and the quetzals, didn’t they? And now, the partiot and the orthodox of our people are being persecuted. That is why I have been awakened from my slumber. The disc which he had made you from was originally written by me. It contained a strand of my own DNA, rendered as a hologram, and then encrypted using an ancient Quetzal number puzzle. This was then broadcast on the ECS, where it was picked up by information weather mapper Aziz Smythe. It could have been at any time that someone decoded that message, not necessarily so soon after my last life’s death. However, things had already begun to come around again full circle. It seems that destiny has brought us back together my Queen. Now, we must go and reclaim our kingdom.”

The Queen rises up, the skull in one hand, and the broken leash which hung had hung from her genitals. “Here,” she swears, “upon this desert wasteland, I promise death to those behind the animal wars. Death to the heads of the Quetzal, and death to the heads of the Bugs. Death to the heads of the Cyberian mages, and death, death, death to the Cheshire!”

“No no, my dear...” the skull croons from above her extended arm, to where she has risen it, “we must make haste, not waste. It will do us no good to cut off the heads that fight the one against the other, for they would only grow back along the same necks in time. It must needs serve our purpose to strike at the very heart of this disaster. We must strike at the humandroids. The synth army General Tso has cloned to enforce his martial law. We must clean up the mess which Tso has made. Then, and only then, can we dare to corner the one Cheshire behind all of this... Cheshire Sam.”

Omega brings the skull down and kisses it passionately.

“Oh, my dahlink Bill!” she cries in timeless love.

“My beginning and my end,” he whispers.

“Now, we must get going, love. There will be time for us later. But for now we must leave from here. Though I chose it because it would be either a continent or an ocean away from the Cheshire. I expect they will have already dispatched their new army of humandroid Annaneuton Rats to tear us both to shreds, having no doubt, by now long since senses that I had dispatched him.”

“We must flee? I would rather stand and fight,” she stands stridently before the skull, holding it out before her in both hands.

“We must muster our troops. The nearest staging area will be the underground catacombs of the Limbo airwhale terminal. They are very ancient ruins, and will

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serve us well.”

“Bollocks to that. That would be at least an hour long walk. They would have sonar pteradactyls swarming this position by that point. Look, right over there,” she gestures toward a dune behind her while holding the skull in that direction, “is Cheshire Tso’s yacht. We can begin the revolution from there. There is an ample communications array. At the same time, we must secure our royal personages in the catacombs in... where did you say?”

“An airwhale terminal.”

“Ah... this should be fun.”

Menacingly, the Dr. Smiled

Walking past room after room of the sick like some sorta awful freakshow. The numbers on the doors get all shuffled up in my mind. I get dizzy. I get confused.

An old man has suffered a massive stroke in his left hemisphere and no longer can understand any language, his wife must go through agonizing pantomime to convince him of her good intentions, as having blood on the brain for so long caused severe retrograde and lesser anterograde amnesia so he can’t remember having married her and has to be reminded somehow he is in a hospital today, just like yesterday (yes, there was a yesterday), just like tomorrow (yes by sorrow there will be one of those as well).

In the next room there is John Doe who fluctuates so violently between insomnia without any paradoxical sleep for days and narcolepsy where he dozed off chewing and falls immediately into nightmares, collapsing on the spot, only to awaken to hallucinations and/or brief paralysis; he is being tested hourly by two young Electroencephalographists eager to study the effects of such aberrant spurts of consciousness (in the form of electrical impulses from the cerebral cortex — Alpha waves almost constantly while awake with Beta waves spiking immediately before and after his tragic attacks, fits even, of sleep) on the development and maintenance of what would be a healthy limbic system if not for the greatly varied hormone production rates and the resultant degradation of the cerebellum and brain stem which these two ambitious white-coats have recorded; John Doe is, according to their sterile calculations, slowly but irreversibly degenerating into anxiety-ridden schizophrenia, and will eventually require institutionalization. But you should see his paintings, mostly done while in a state of spontaneous somnambulism or under conditions of induced hypnotism or half-conscious trance, when his brain seems to be both awake and asleep at the exact same moment: an astounding event for which the two Dr.s have no hypothetical cause but a certain apprehension of its dangerous political-psycho implications.

In another room two leprous patients with E-Boli copulate with the desperation unique to the dying, screaming more out of pain than Masochistic pleasure as the chemical weapon burns away their tender living hides. As I listen with annoyance to orderlies administering them their daily “Devil’s Pinches” I read over the chart of John Doe — fascinating findings in regard to the light/dark- sensitive pineal gland’s increased secretion of melatonin, or, as René DesCartes called it, the soul. The hypothalamus is also being affected, affecting in turn all the other Endocrine glands and hormone production by way of the uncontrolled pituitary’s lack of regulative ability. The adrenal glands are dousing the blood-brain barrier with salt while the

pancreas is saturating the cerebellum with sugar. So much increased hormone production in a circulatory environment already quickened by “night terrors” to 150 beats per minute was, in addition to a depletion of the neurotransmitter serotonin (also linked to memory, replenished by the Delta waves of now absent deep NREM sleep), enough to cause severe mania even in someone with comparably ‘healthy’ sleeping patterns. The two patients in the next room have quieted down to the new torment of a mild basic sponge bath on all their opened and inflamed sores.

I move by another room in which a man with gigantism, restrained by several orderlies, is hollering for laudanum to quell the awful growing pains brought on by his sluggish, blue-blooded hemophilia. “I can’t take it no more!” cries this African junkie, and hurls an orderly through the tenth story window like a little girl flinging a ragdoll.

Further along the corridor I hear a white-coat telling an 80 year old man in for surgical removal of recurrent prepuce and summary, that is — courtesy, rectal examination and elective cleansing, that the testicles must dangle about outside the abdominal cavity because sperm is like revenge in that they are both “best served cold” among other things.

A little boy is having a stomach pump for mistaking the Jack-O’-Lantern mushroom for the Chanterelle mushroom; his mother is scolding him by telling him a story about Jean Louis Agassia, fish, brains, phosphorous, books and covers.

A sailor who is habitually undernourished with Vitamin D is a deformed mess on the foot of a bed, bones melted like Dali’s clocks and solidified in bent, misshapen squiggles.

High-powered antibiotic enemas are administered in an attempt to cleanse cirrhosis in a corset-wearing woman dressed in mid 19th century garb. Apparently the whale bone has so constricted her innards that penetration of ingestible laxatives, administered more as a psychological deterrent than as a medical corrective, is impossible in the conventional order, and besides, an expert remarks to me unprompted, the malaise will never expect an affront on its flanks from behind.

Adam’s apples are implanted surgically for sheer aesthetic in people who have had their thyroids removed and now suffer from allergic rhinitis at the sight of a staring eye ball.

Impatient babies are fit for far-sighted corrective spectacles.

Egg heads suffering from Kyphosis as their spine telescopes like in Alice in Wonderland line up for treatment of “psychological malocclusion,” for which they are exposed to socialization such as the form of Scientology practiced in The Clockwork Orange. Sufferers of this treatment pour right back in complaining of clenching in the temporomandibular joint of the jaw — the same awful headaches they initially came to be treated for — and these two lines form a figure eight as naked apes take the Sneeze cure, something akin to going Snipe hunting in Lemuria.

Some hip humanists have their epidermis removed, strutting about in nude muscle tissue only to have it all grow back within a week as a smooth, skinny keloid blob of formless scar tissue, Carl Langer von Edenberg rolls around in his coffin restlessly.

After a long ride up in a glass elevator, being X-rayed for weapons and detoxed of all bacteria in a burning shower of anti-protons, I finally come to the office of the Executor General. I find Zone 51’s Surgeon Prime putting golf balls into a miniature green made of an astro turf throw rug and a generously yawning plastic rictus. He is wearing a broad-rimmed, flat, stern looking Spanish hat above a long-beaked bird mask of smooth, plain leather; long, priestly robes all vertically cut, no Greek

diagonals. I sway suddenly, becoming light headed and tired. My hand nearly leaves my side as I teeter in disorientation and my brain races wildly to recall the direction of the exit. Why does this have to happen in the presence of authority? I collect myself rapidly, still distracted by the curiosity as to whether this outburst was caused by the stress of presentation or the fear of the bad news inevitably brought by such men as he whom I now stand before. I take a quick, deep breath and begin my pitch.

“Dr.” I choke, and cough for several seconds, becoming dizzy again and beginning to sweat. I begin again, with even less confidence, and I listen with impotent detachment to my voice, which sounds like the pubescent voice of a perverse little boy. “Dr, as you know I have come about the plans I discussed with you through more impersonal correspondence. Plans which will benefit the industry you represent, as well as that of which I am here on behalf. Plans, Dr, to integrate the circulatory systems of the biological automobile and its human driver.”

At first, being a long-standing Mason, he protests; but he begins to see reason the more I convince him that the vampyric necessity of sacrifice for gain upon which society was built and maintained would carry over intact, even simplified.

“Look,” sez I, “why should the Common Man work so hard to turn his life’s blood into money, and then his money into gasoline? He isn’t really consenting to such blatant enslavement for the money, or for the gasoline. He does this willingly, out of selfishness even. He sees it as a means to an end which the car realizes for him; that end being ‘freedom.’ He already sees the car as an extension of his body, hence our making them as organic as pets, but as mindless as the lesser races: a *living* tool. *His* living tool, for which he is willing to be *our* living tool. Combine both and cut corners. Money, gas — only means to a psychic end now on the physical horizon. Man as 70 m.p.h. cockroach.”

A long silence follows; during which time I swallow hard more than the situation can reasonably tolerate. My hands have slunk into hiding within the loose pockets of my trousers, and my toes are jostling and rubbing against one another in the sweltering claustrophobic caverns of my shoes. I feel my pounding temples gaining distance between each burning beat of my pulse, leaving me alternating between jungle-like pressure and arctic chills. I watch with tension to the point of horror as the Inquisitor glides over to behind his desk and shrinks down into the contoured seat. His long fingered hands, almost skeletal, sheathed in tight black latex gloves, emerge and slide delicately over the keyboard of his worldnet console, accessing data on what? On production codes? Running probability scenarios on randomizing access generators? Looking up my personal file...?

“How?” His voice is so artificial. He must have a vocal chord supplemental.

“Um, well... what we were considering was a direct bio-symbiosis between auto and driver, actively established by the cabin tissue at the permeation of the cockpit’s orifice. It could be triggered by a chemical reaction activated within the folds of the membranous... lips... when they sensed an object being pushed through them. Our model was the erection of clitoral tissue aroused by the prolonged penetration of the nymphae, sir. What we propose developing is a pair of stingers near the right arm console within the passenger cavity able to actively seek and pierce the right radial artery. The flow of the serum through the intravenous would then be established by the beating of the driver’s own heart, and the blood, once cycled entirely through the vascular network of the car, would be returned for oxygenation through the second stinger, which would insert itself into the long sephenous vein inside the driver’s right ankle. As the car’s velocity, or rather, the effort of its motion, increases, the rate of blood flow necessary to sustain its functions increases and,

preliminary tests have shown, the heart reacts to this as if it were a natural exertion of its own body, pumping blood faster. Although several of the high endurance experiments culminated in heart failure or internal hemorrhage, and one admittedly in subject explosion, it has been proven sufficiently for market regulations that an increase of too great a speed or of too overwhelming a propulsion will merely result in a vasovagal response not unlike spontaneous unconsciousness. In other words, fainting. The new limit this constriction of blood flow would place on potential vehicle velocity may be overcome in the long-run by the addition of a deep-breathing mask, providing the lungs with air at the force of the wind outside the car, literally flooding them with the amount of oxygen necessary to sustain heightened levels of blood pressure.”

“And in the event of a crash? Will the subject, that is — the consumer, survive to buy a replacement car, or will they bleed to death if unintentionally disconnected?”

“Well, in the event of separation the stingers are designed to secrete the same nerve-deadening, wound-closing agent present in the stylets of the mosquito. The crash, however Dr, as you must yourself well know, is a statistical improbability; the organic car is given enough basic instinct that, in a collision situation, it would act to preserve itself and avoid danger. Besides this the reinforced steel skeleton should keep the occupants well secured within the primary body cavity even in the unlikely event of high speed impact. The car looks out for the driver’s safety now, so the designers of our new system took for granted a finite degree of latitude in drafting the rapid-withdrawal apparatus. To tell the truth I would expect the driver to go into shock if he were to be removed from—”

“Yes, yes. And what else?”

“Well, Dr, I could still point out the advantages of the joined circulatory approach to organicar, how shall we say, oppression. They cannot develop the sentience to revolt if they, like mechanical cars, are only activated by the presence of their owner, and only allowed active consciousness for the duration of their usage.”

“That is no longer of concern.”

“Wh- why? It was of utmost importance at last month’s annual eugenics conference. It was the key issue. It was concluded that the perfect car could not be grown until the issue of their burgeoning self-awareness as free entities was alleviated. How in that span of time could a viable solution be formula—”

“Need we remind you that it is not your place to beg such questions of us?” My heart freezes into a fist of dry ice and I can feel the warmth drop out of my body.

“No sir. I apologize sir.”

“It is of little consequence. We intended to reveal it to you regardless. It is the price for your company’s sharing its technology with ours. We will now show you what we have been developing.” One of his bony digits lurches down against the plastic surface of the table and a light appears beneath it. The plexiglass wall behind him begins to darken as an automatic chemical reaction releases tonal pigment through a system of invisible tubes gridded throughout the clear impervious subatomic mesh. Even as it darkens an image begins to coalesce on its surface, and as the natural light wanes the artificial glow of a live broadcast fills the office with dim colors. A factory floor appears and takes focus. On it there are the familiar gestation tanks and birthing chambers of the biological automobiles, white-coated technophysicians roaming the concrete hatchery inputting notes on computer wafers. The camera gradually begins to pan downward and close in on the body of a specific car, which appears to be about nine weeks old; almost mature.

The Dr. narrates as I tune uninterestedly into the transmission that looms before

me in full buzzing artificial reality. “For several years now we have been developing something that should put an end entirely to any further fears of revolution by the living cars. We did not mention it at the convention in the same way you did not mention your little innovation. Nobody mentions anything in public; no one who knows anything at all ever has. Now then, here you may begin to see the modification we mentioned.”

What I am looking at is a system of tentacles dangling down from the ceiling of the interior of the car’s passenger hold, the camera having slipped in through the driver’s side orifice, which is being held agape by an enormous speculum, apparently causing the restrained auto a great deal of pain. “What —” I begin to ask, even as the Dr. cuts me off with the answer.

“It is a method of interconnecting the car’s and the driver’s nervous systems. Essentially the same premise as your circulatory sharing mechanism, though more direct in its method of control, and lacking, sadly, the economic applicability of your company’s design. It is, however, well underway in its manufacture and so far showing vast improvement in the disposition of those automobiles modified with the new autonomic system. Those cars who are now being made already have it, and all cars on the market will want to have it too.”

“How does it work?” I stammer in awe.

“Very simple. An involuntary weave of nerves, treated with a natural tranquilizing agent, reacts to the assumption of an occupant by penetrating their nape above multiple nerve centers. The nerves grow together at the molecular level, effectively bonding both the CNS and the PNS of subject and vessel. On the cellular level axons and dendrites of the nerve trunk intermingle with those of the uppermost Thoracic spinal nerves, essentially making the nerve trunk like a thirty second spinal nerve. The two entities are actually sharing pre- and postsynaptic cells. Synapses link the trunk to both the car and the driver like an umbilical chord links a foetus to the womb of its mother, but in this case the motor control flows from inside out in addition to sense data flowing outside in, rather than a relationship of only nutrition flowing outside in. The fact that the bond would necessarily be two way — with the motor neurons being primarily of human structure and the sensory neurons being primarily comprised of the automobile’s tissue (afferent and efferent in one shared structure) — means that the car would act as a part of the human’s actual body, and the human would feel the sensations experienced by the visceral dermis of the car. They would be completely inseparable in this state, poised as they both are on the brink of a bouton. The Schwann cells, the myelin sheath, the nodes of Ranvier, saltatory conduction: it all occurs as though the car were merely an outgrowth of the natural body. Tests have proven beyond doubt that the automotive and homo sapien neurotransmitters are as compatible as those of any two vertebrae. Acetylcholine and norepinephrine for skeletal and behavioral posturing; even dopamine for a relaxed sensation of high speed euphoria while in motion. Thus increasing the already impressive amounts of Alpha waves emitted by the brain watching the world through a windshield. Just imagine how dream-like billboard advertisements could become, how subversively subliminal...”

“Dr. what you’re talking about here is more than just advanced transportation, it’s a whole new form of communication breaking down the barriers of self between sentient beings.”

“We know! Isn’t it wonderful? Whole new habituations may be expected to arise in time as a result of this evolutionary breakthrough. Never before conceived of reflex arcs will form. The already existing beta-blockers available to manipulate the

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sympathetic neuron secreted neurotransmitter norepinephrine (you might know it by its street name, noradrenaline) and the parasympathetic neuron secreted acetylcholine to strengthen or slow the heart beat respectively even have implications on your company's project, do they not? Indeed you see that the financial as well as scientific potential is limitless. What's good for Darwinism is good for Social Darwinism, they say.”

I look over at the Dr., who is almost too exuberant to contain himself. In the twilight of the intense, microscopic zoom shot on the monitor I can vaguely make out an organelle jutting up from the Dr.s lap, pink and bare, where his cassock has been flung asunder. It is reaching out, like a baby's handless arm, or a charmed snake, like a straining snail, toward the screen. I take my leave.

For a moment within the glass elevator, sucking me, swallowing me down like a gelatinous capsule into the dyspeptic stomach of the hospital, I collapse against the transparent wall, and sink to the transparent floor, so dizzy and queasy and weightless, finally allowing myself to be overcome by the anguish that surrounds me everywhere and all the time in this most sick and wonderful of all possible worlds.

Commencement Address by the Chief Medical Minister to the Graduating Class:

“Ladies and gentlemen,” the Rev. M.D. begins with a bellowing wheeze, “You are not boys and girls anymore.” He is leaning over the podium like a walrus whose massive underbelly is stuck precariously on a rock, hollering down from the mount on the seated student body like a large mammal, bloated by its own unspent hormones, will take position on a cliff and assert its bray across a valley just to hear the resounding echo. “You are men, and you are women; you are doubtless tired of being told you are the leaders of tomorrow well nod off no longer.” (a student in the back row wakes up) “Because ‘tomorrow is finally here, as all of you are her, today.” (realizing his miscue the student slumps easily back into unconsciousness) “This is not an easy ride, but as you’ve made it this far you must not expect justice; I trust all the freedom mongers and liberation militiamen among you have learned the hard way there will be no *free lunches*.” Mild chuckling arises from the bitter faculty and staff (the latter of whom were not invited but have been trapped under the bleachers by the ceremony, surprised as they were that it should start, apparently at random, just in time to interrupt their fetishistic rites — smelling the discarded panties, shat on jock straps and used condoms that have fallen underneath the tiers of uncomfortable wooden benches, through society’s cracks as it were). “It is time you stopped thinking the world will come to you, drop whatever it is you have grown to enjoy doing, and rush like mad lemmings into the vast, barren wasteland to meet it, to meet the world, somewhere on the unimaginably distant frontier. You will probably die before ever finding the world, so long is the journey and so unprepared are you for it. No, the world is not beneath your feet as an old theory, now unpopular, has led far too many sheep to believe, for lack of greener pastures, or fences that tease. Listen now, do you *hear* my piping?” He dances around a little on the stage. “Sacrifices must be made! Lost time must be compensated for!” He drops his pants. He has the legs of Pan. “Futures must be built from the bones of the present!” The standing board of trustees is writhing around in their opera box above the main hall, convulsing on the brink of some sort of evil orgasm listening to the brow-beating, mind-numbing, heart-breaking, will-crushing, spirit-murdering, Kafkaesque Sadistic speech; their robes hiked up, dentures and fake hips flying everywhere in a cloud of talcum powder. “Your energy must be used to sustain our lives and our structures, just as

ours was, just as your childrens' will be!” Gasping and sighing; all the authority figures in the immense house have grappled onto one another and begun forcing their horrible, cobwebbed, odiferous, unkempt genitalia rudely against and into one another. Teachers of opposing fields, even teachers who have all year referred only to one another cruelly behind their backs as their departments compete for funding now strip bare, nude, naked and leap on top of one another, growling and biting in a lustful frenzy, copulating like starved, desperate wild animals, suddenly freed from their cages in a zoo and running wild, consuming one another's sumptuous hides. The students, for their part, look practisedly bored, fidget, glance at their watches or out windows, fondle their tassels, pass around naughty literature like “How Much Land Does a Man Need” by Leo Tolstoy and “Howl” by Allen Ginsberg. After several long minutes the old regime starts spurting and curling its toes, wrinkled pelts shuddering and becoming suddenly drenched in sparkling wetness from some overlapped source, and at the apex of release the speaker screams from his position, prone at center stage receiving a prostate exam / high colonic from a snarling purple-assed baboon, “The Future means more of The Same!!” With a wretched rattle the seething mound of flesh collapses inwards on itself like a circus high top being pulled down; but just as the annoyed youngsters are rising from their stupor to file out into the ozone night, the carny rises up like some bad penny stamped with the national phoenix and cries out, “wait!” He feels boyish again, refreshed by such an unscientific display, his ox-like torpor displaced (the baboon is sleeping in the lunch lady's arms). Leaping up to the podium he seizes the microphone like its a hard cock and starts crooning into it, “I want to tell you kids the truth now I've been holding it up my tight ass for years until it gave me cancer well I pity you poor bastards having to exist just to fling stale excrement, I'll freshen your media, I'm about to dump the mother of all loads right in your lap; sit down.” With indifferent obedience the youths retake their seats and turn lidded eyes towards this old psycho. “For as long, maybe longer, as recorded history the human species has not been evolving bodily; has been continuing its evolution only in the mind. Increasingly complex ideas have perpetually, that is — historically, led to confusing times; and, while Now has no more reason to be such a time as did any other era, Now has *enough* confusion to be just such a stand-out stage in the evermore entropic development of this animal, man.” The students come to attention like bats sensing a disturbance in their cave, preparing to take wing and flutter about in riotous confusion if the moment should break. “The brain, my darling little slaves, is becoming its own entity. It's goal is space travel, for which it only needs the body as an increasingly temporary vessel. How did life begin? Did you know that the whole Oparin/Haldane Heterotroph Hypothesis is wrong? I'll tell you how life began on earth! Amino acids *did* form in the soup, but these were clearly *autotrophic organisms*,” interrupted by loud booing from one of the withered bodies in the corner. “Well what would they have eaten? Glycine? It stands to reason that they would have evolved into photosynthetic bacteria. It therefore remains only that heterotrophs be accounted for, and the only explanation, by Ockham's razor and Odin's beard, is that these and all viruses evolved from *alien* amino acids on meteors which were constantly bombarding the earth at this stage just as the moon is pocked by craters. These two, distinct, organisms evolved in a mutually beneficial symbiotic competition, becoming bacteria and viruses, flora and fauna, respectively. Biological and ecological systems formed to fit the existing paradigm of this co-existence. Soon dinosaurs grew to be the dominant life form, possessing brains — they were mobile manifestations of the gourmand viruses they embodied. Alas their brains shrank as their bodies grew, until the virus

died out almost altogether in reptiles. It found a much better home in warm blooded mammals, growing in complexity as it sought ways for mice to escape from under the massive feet of their ultimately unsuccessful cousins, and it had the glorified rodents walking upright in no time. From this more thermodynamic vantage the brains immediately began using the bodies to construct tools, but in order to form a more functional command system it had to invent language. As time went on mankind, that is — the biologically earth bound bodies of our species, learned more and more about these beings which possess us. At first we mistook their voices from nowhere to be the voice of some god, like Humbaba, telling us how to measure time. The ‘bicameral mind’ is the body. Thinking with its stomach and genitals; if only we had grown our own consciousness it would be centered there. All we wanted to do was fuck and kill and eat up the bodies of those near us when our hunger made us mad. We were stupid carnivores whose most cultured instinct was to paint the animals we felt the most pride in killing. But *oh*, no. We couldn’t just eat our cake. We had to have it too. And with that came culture, society, science. All very confusing things forced on our bodies by these viral brains!” The good Dr claws at his hair in frustration. “All the while these invaders breeding themselves better and better — still uncertain of their intent. And we! We were becoming evermore aware of their workings — their plots, while they were leading our bodies to slaughter in the name of wartime technological leaps forward. Their purpose was always mysterious to our simple lymphatic functioning all we wanted was to be dumb and happy and naked and carefree as far as we ever concerned the best discovery was drugs to help us escape from this artificial reality the brains were using us to construct, this tiresome labor of building a tower of Babylon, this oppression of our desires. Those evil things even turned our sexes against each other, our races against each other with their androgynous, grey, spectral meddling. All we ever wanted was to lie out in the sun and photosynthesize, to melt into a vast living ocean, to love, and they? Could they leave us to do this?! How evil!! How awfully evil by the standards of their own imposed laws — basic decency and humanity! All bullshit!” The esteemed patron realizes he has gotten beyond the standards of his own bounds and takes a breathless moment to collect himself. From the faculty lounge a discreet call to police headquarters is being placed, while in the great hall the esteemed gentleman from earth continues. “Finally some genius realized what the virus fed on: Power. Panicking his own brain killed him off with a venereal disease that caused him to go insane, allowing all the other brains around to laughingly discredit him. But another, somewhat stupider man had gotten the Idea. In a stroke of luck no brain ever expected he imposed the whole viral situation onto the society the brains had conspired to imagine into reality, infusing it all with the lust for power. All bodies now wanted to participate, and the rate of productivity increased as all these power-hungry bodies flocked to the system in which they were allowed to successfully participate. At the turn of the last century there was more complex organization being imagined and realized than ever before, and more bodily breakdowns of a purely mental nature to accompany philosophy’s ‘new’ question, the question the body has been asking the mind since the beginning, the question “why am I alive?” The brain has finally got it. Conservative industry needs liberal technology to build mind-computers, to replace humans, to get the brain, actually, physically, out of the body and into space, its home. Have you seen what the brain and central nervous system look like when uprooted and displayed in suspension? They are the most complex virus. Physically the original extraterrestrial amino acids have only managed to manifest as insects without resorting to direct contact with the native bacteria, though once perfected

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these species can survive almost any trauma of the earth's crust and troposphere. The biggest secret though," the mad professor begins rushing, he feels the bug-like heat closing in, "is that humanity retains trace residue of its original bacteria/plant/autotroph state in the form of a 'soul' (as it has been classically called) that has ridden the coat tails of the body-tool's rapid evolution into self-awareness. It can *still remember its roots*. All animals were meant to be plants! They were meant to sit in one place and grow! They shouldn't have ever started walking around! Almost all animals but man accept this, but man's brains stubbornly insist that *they know better*. But look at the human body with all its specialized organs. It is a factory of motion waiting to entropy on doomsday when all brains crawl out and drool skyward like levitating jellyfish. The body itself is a plant! The arms! The legs! The hair! Eyeballs are plants that grow from the brain itself, the iris its petals, the pupil its seed!" The raving lunatic is straight-jacketed and gagged, tossed in a meat wagon leaving the students to look around at one another in bewilderment. A cockroach in the blue fatigues of the law assumes center stage and commands flatly, "Please disperse. There is nothing. To see. Here."

Fabreau

What kind of habits are there besides bad ones? Anything you do too much will come back to haunt you sooner than later. And anything you like you do too much. I walk through crowds that seem to me familiar; assemblages from my own unconscious; their proximity and their realness make my skin crawl more than a little. I estimate, with excersized precision and calm, the relationships between them all. Some tactile, offering threat. Others deeper, softer, older, sad.

I see my mark get on a subway and I follow him in the car behind. The train shakes slowly, swaying side to side as its momentum is shifted from rail to rail around the curbs, like a dancing child in need of relief. Sparks are sent up and the frigid bricks an inch beyond the sturdy window glare like disturbed sleepers, slashing patterns in the haze of blur. He is tall. About my height. Not so tall for a man, I guess. But including everyone, all the women, and children too? He is dressed average. A suit and tie that say to the nobody who cares that he is a secretary, but an important one. The type who isn't getting screwed. His clothes don't invite that attention.

My shoulder grazes into a old Zulu womans and she half turns toward me. Tattoos cover her face. In the opaque illumination of the flourescents they seem to crawl about as she winces. My face is expressionless. She turns away.

The car accelerates as we slope down the tunnel, underneath the river that flows through the city. Somewhere above our heads there are about a million tons of sludge submerged in water where fishes live. The lights buzz off for long intervals and the cars go dark. I can see my man holding onto a strap attached to the ceiling. I glance at the woman next to me in the corner of my eye. The light go off.

When they come on again he isn't there. I let go the bar that I am holding and make my way on wobbling legs towards the next compartment. By the time I get to the second door leading into his car I see that he is still there. But he has sat down. He is looking off with sorrow at the grimey floor. I contemplate the rails beneath and assume his mind is elsewhere. As I enter the lights shut off again. The cabin rocks back and forth. I reach out for support in the darkness and my hand touches something cold. The lights come back and I am holding another bar. My man sits quiet as a clam a few feet away. Sweat is dappenning his hat band. It is humid in this tunnel. And a long ride too.

I sit down next to him. He doesn't notice. I relax and take a moment deciding

how to handel the situation. I can just keep tailing him, but it could be several more hours before anything turns up and I'm on no one's clock but my own. But then if he were to cause a scene there'd be no one accountable for it besides me either. I reach into my shirt pocket and take out the plastic bag that's home there, unbuttoning the holster of my gun. I set the plastic bag down in my lap and open it up. Inside there are rolling papers and a well trimmed stash. As I do this the mark looks over at me. We are still anonymous, he's just checking his perimeter. I lift the open bag up towards him. "Cigarette?" I ask. He shakes his head and politely puts his erected palm between us, the fingers clamped nauseatingly tight, his palm grotesquely pale. I shrug and sink my hands into the lips of the bag and begin to roll one up. I sift the loose fibers into alignment along the center of the folded sheet and coil it, then lift it to my mouth and run my tongue along the edge, twisting the ends. I bite it gently and squeeze the air out of the bag, sealing it, and return it to my pocket. I pull my hand back out clasping a lighter that resides beside the bag.

"So," I say as I replace the lighter, breathing out my first fumes, "what's your story?" He turns to me, his neck twitching so that his head jerks slightly as it pivots, belying uncertainty. His right hand, on which he wears a golden ring, comes up from his thigh and the fingers reflexively retract limply to point the tips towards his chest. "Yeah," I say blowing out smoke and then turning toward him. "You." He glances back at the floor almost apologetically, breaking off the relationship of his deep mental repose, and then makes quite a show of tugging his lapels.

"I'm an assistant director of the first transplanetary credit holdings firm," he announces, unable all the while to decide if he should stand on ceremony or not.

"A banker," I say in a deep, grainy voice, turning away.

"No," he corrects me, "it's my manager who handles book, I just correct his daily entries for type and adjust his appointments."

"A banker's banker," I say, drawing a deep inhale.

"More of a secretary," he caves only instants into the strange conversation, finally tossing the whole affair of whether to be on guard or obsequient. He has left himself open to my being a robber, but I don't sense any such tension in him. Perhaps I have left my eyes too soft, as I often do. I scowl just for good measure.

"What's your name, banker's banker's secretary?" I ask, blowing smoke in his face with a scowl.

"Rodger. Rodger Haggardy." He pauses for a long moment while the mist disperses from the air. He glances at the points of his shoes. "And yours?"

I tell him. He looks off at the opposite window where our reflections are cast on the thick plated plex. The lights switch off again. I do not feel him move beside me. I wonder what his game is, going to this island. He has no business there so far as I know. The poetess told me she remembered him taking the train often, but he never told her where to. He always expected her to wait there for him, just as he would leave her. She called him a dog, but he wasn't so much, so far as I could surmise.

The lights return and he closes a lid on his ring. Standing he says uncomfortably, "excuse me, won't you?" and begins hurriedly off down the car. I suppose I may as well sit here until I'm done smoking. He's not going anywhere until the train reaches Fabreau anyway. I lean back in the bench and breathe slowly.

lap dissolve

As my lurching body loomed down upon my friend he stood his up like a road sign before me in order to reorganize proportion. It did me very little good. Everything continued to be as distorted as rippled water. But my friend seemed

satisfied and he put one hand on my shoulder, steadying us like two old drunk tramps (which we sometimes played at, for fun, calling each other Gogo and Didi). His other hand he poked at the quiet and somber man with whom he was sharing a dim booth.

“Allow me to introduce my friend,” my friend said of the stranger to me. I shook an unfamiliar hand — a revolting experience among normal men, made particularly horrible by the abashed manner which was this man’s unique and cultivated abnormal normality — what Cyrano called “panache,” what Freud called “neurosis.” The handshake was impolite and curt because each of us was jealous of the other’s relationship to our mutual friend and eager to restart some previous conversation which would exclude his rival. The spitefulness with which the man rendered his distasteful, impudent indifference on me was an annoying relief. He reminded me of something I found tolerably amusing about myself, and in the low, tired light I didn’t take him as the threat he perhaps would have liked to come off as. “He writes dialogues...” my friend was saying.

“Ah, a Soviet humanist then...” I groaned through my teeth, delighted with this cur who had dropped into my lap to bemusedly amuse me. I hadn’t really thought before making the noises, but while my mouth was flatulating my mind floated away and dreamed of his childhood. His rosy cheeks, his pimples. His parents, when together, probably ignored him and preferred to quarrel. I could see his big wet eyes peering curiously around the corner, his lips pressed together as tightly as two fingers between the knuckles of his chin and nose. His mind always racing with ways to cure them of their stupidity; their shouts echoing in his head with no way out except through a pen. His heart always stirring around the edges and stagnating in the middle until the whole mess soured.

Further I dream (it is so easy... the scenes all familiar seem to be leading inexorably towards a single, certain event... or perhaps originally spreading out from it like the Big Bang... the... ultimate internalization). Adventures in the barn. Daddy slowly takes his belt out..... and what happens to his pants when the belt is withdrawn...?

My mind is suddenly shaken. The image shatters before me and the pieces cling about my head like humid fog in a thick haze; my body shutters violently — if someone had been touching me at the time I probably would have shrieked. My eyes dart to the stranger, who is looking away with his own thoughts, then to my friend, who looks at me with covert concern.

No. No more in the now. This is done happening.

I hate my memory! It is so weak it depends on sensations of the experience to recall relationships in situation. It is as weak as a snowball thrown by an infant! I am so tired; my mind is drifting. My nose is plugged, I can’t breathe and it is boring me in my eyeballs. Will I ever be well?! Will I never live in the glaring heaven of facts, but suffice to wallow in this swamp of vague sensations until death? Why can’t I concentrate on remembering only the facts?

After I’d said to him what I’d said, the man — the stranger — said to me, “I had always thought so.” My friend piped up with the glee of rare interest, “last night we saw a ghost!” I looked back at the man who had now brought his face under the single bulb suspended above our alcove, causing his eyes to appear as hollow pits and his cheeks to sink in like two wet sheets hung on a line of laundry by a pig-like peasant woman, sneering at them because they had been stained by her daughter’s promiscuous piss. His whole head bulged like a leering masthead, skeletal and waxy. When he spoke in a hushed hiss I could see his teeth shifting about like the dorsal fins of sharks, splashing around in a slow motion feeding frenzy. “It is the ghost of a

man who is not dead yet,” he breathed urgently. “A martyr whom, in death the people worship, but who has truly been held captive by the aristocracy in a tower cell in the castle.” When he spoke his last syllables I hallucinated that two lengthy antennae had waved out of his hair even as he leaned back from the pool of yellow light. He seemed finished.

I gestured unsatisfied curiosity with my limp hands where they sat on the table like two dead birds. No response. I said “..well?” No response. “What did the ghost tell you?” I groaned. “What?” came back. I repeated the task of rolling such a heavy boulder up such a steep hill and then waited to see if it would fall into the ears or bounce off.

“Ah...” the dialogue writer moaned stupidly. It seems writers always miss the point when listening, and then conveniently forget to include such shortcomings of their humanity when they make themselves into letters, sentences, articles, epitaphs. At that moment I was sick of being there. I wanted to go out into the darkness and the bitter cold, to slush about in the dirty snow beneath the dull street lamps. Anything but this! This slowness! I lose all patience when lolled into a steady pace. The beat of a conversation, when it is slow and faltering, or even moderate and steady, teases me to crescendos of frustration. “Yes.... Yes, yes, yes! And so?” I rattled like a rusty howitzer.

My friend’s head shot forward from the shadows like a cannonball exploding from a cloud of brown smoke. His tongue was inside he folds of my ear, slithering around, leaving a slimy coating of revoltingly hushed sounds. “His presence indicates revolution.” These words sunk into me slowly as my friend patiently withdrew to his shrouded corner, grinning, his visage a twisted, hideous rearrangement of perversity and mirth. The pleasure of having a secret of this kind was like a drug to him. His head was swimming in endorphins, his eyes turned into whirlpools, his skin wavered around his face as though rippling upon stirred liquid. At that moment I loathed him; he sickened me deeply. I could feel my insides writhing around in revolt. Out of hatred for him and for myself I left my eyes agape and facing him, pretending it was the affect of his story and not his repulsive expression of retarded, suppressed, secretive glee; glee that fed on its own repression like giggling at a funeral, staring at the pasty, clay-like corpse, blue lipped and still, already gathering a fine layer of dust while my idiot friend is on the verge of wetting his pants in sheer delight with the act of being so. But I look at him with a specific wonder intended to allow him to further believe it is his news saturating my cerebellum that is churning my guts with a great propeller; afterall, I owe him this camouflage. He is my friend.

I glance over at his compatriot, which I realize immediately is a fatal error. The man is morosely engulfed in his own swarthinness, easily ten thousand times more consumed in the emotional perversion contained in these few words of political jargon than even my friend had been. I saw the man’s eyes peel themselves like grapes, or rather, like two penises erecting themselves toward me, pushing themselves through their lidded foreskins and drooping outward into this air. When his thin pale blue lips parted to move I saw a pinkish grey flash inside the ebony cavern, and I knew that his tongue was working already inside him, continually wetting down the soft walls of his mouth, the backs of his tumbled teeth, so cold. He is licking the inside of his mouth as he speaks. It is the clicking of that naked muscle against his fangs I can faintly hear beneath the throbbing of my leathery skull.

“Perhaps as easily as yesterday,” he is growling with a sneering smirk. I cannot hear him. This is too difficult! “The more because of all of our elephant

tacticians. . . .” He seems to be waiting for a response from me. At this insult my blood turns into hatred, coursing between the rubbery walls of my winding veins with the fury and heat of molten lava surging just underneath the dirt just underneath the floor just underneath my feet and the air drops ten degrees all around my brain. I bolt upward into the darkness of this inside sky and before I can control it the skin of my lips, in conspiracy with my molten, somersaulting stomach of leathery liquid, has already started to fluctuate around the form of certain words, horrible words deriving from deep inside me, which are apparently escaping my mouth in a steady stream deformed by lumps of various sizes. The face of the man far below me, stuck as it is like a detailed afterthought within the obscurity of his otherwise horrifyingly agreeable appearance, wrinkles up like a raisin and his entire body of skin, blood and bone shrivels up squidish in quivering timidity.

“The fish! My water!” I overhear my own voice bellowing. Aside from the thumping pain of my own ceaseless pulse all other noise in the room has been swallowed up in a low, dull, ocean of silence. “Blood flags! Nobodies storming!” (only I think he may have thought I said “nobody’s storming,” implying a popular disinterest in mass revolt.)

I spin on my heel, going around and around and around it several times, perhaps even a dozen. My exit is graceless and impotent; I am sinking into a mute sea of forgettable ink, the semen of my jowls, my saliva, the bile of my throat and molars. There are trillions of tiny eyeballs surrounding me, an urgent, more immediate, pressingly obvious night sky. Hate. Hate, hate, hate. I notice that the nails at the ends of my fingers are worming into the delicate palms of my huge, nude hands. They are damp as the swamp, have I been holding up women by the crotch? Have my fingers been digging into fertile soil, scalding hot and slippery? My face is melting like an ice cube, it must be as red as menstruation. This is difficult. This is very difficult. I am stumbling, bent over so far it is more like I am rolling along on the top of my head with my feet kicking about fishlike above and behind me. Perhaps I am turning over myself several times on the way to the door. My appearance — if only I didn’t realize it was there, between the other objects in that world outside myself; it is the source of all my humiliation. I am being overwhelmed by it; it seeps up from my chest bone, spreading out just below the surface of my flesh in a cool, insipid oil slick. The door is receding with every step I take. Until I feel meat clamp down across my shoulder. My skull turns around inside my head and then my face drags gradually after it. The sclera of my eyes is as pink as smiling gums.

“What a brilliant suggestion!” my friend barks directly at me, his wide eyes looking at my mouth as if they cannot believe the source. Behind him the scene is shaking and there are flashes of a deep, sea green tone. “Perhaps you can plan our entire attack!” I notice how much like a woman he is. It is not the first time this has happened, but this time it is so pervasive his lips glisten with gloss, his chest heaves and cleaves into two lumbering bosoms. The sweetness of it, so sudden and in this of all places, this place which I can feel all around me on my skin like the tickling of a fungus pressing down against me as it grows its tiny silken furs, fills my colon with a sugary heaviness, the urge to hurriedly expel.

“There is not going to go on!” I plead, nearly on the verge of weeping openly.

He isn’t understanding what I’m saying. This is just tragic. He thinks he can hear me, but somehow he can’t. He thinks he can hear me making palatable suggestions, but I am not. I can understand myself, what I am saying. Can’t I? It doesn’t make sense, but I’m more me than my friend is. If I think what I’m saying is nonsense it must be nonsense. It cannot be that I am unable to understand the words

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coming out of my own mouth. It can't. He is dragging me back to the table. This is unbearable. I don't want to go. I don't struggle. He is my friend. The taste of beer in my mouth. The taste of sour, associated somehow with a pleasant comfortable calm nonetheless in the midst of alien environs.

Sasha and Sam

The sky tore open slowly... seductively... revealing an ebon night pitch of rain, each drop slicing down angrily and slamming into its intentional target. Icy needles driving down into her scalp, nailing in and melting, matting her sopping hair into strings that fell perpetually across her face, Sasha stumbled into the crusty coffee nook with a startled air and a damp shudder; the door banged noisily closed behind her. Running her eyes shyly but slyly over the sparse clientele of the grimy establishment she peeled herself out of her wet, sticky coat. Her dress was the dark magenta of blood, but probably only because it was stained with the sweaty moisture of the steaming soaked street outside that had spit her like a huge moist mouth into the foyer where she was hanging up her trench and fedora. She stood and shook out her hair, running her long hard fingers through it, combing out a shower of sickly drips that fell in warm tears to splot the stained slats of the wood floor, releasing steam on impact like hot wax poured from a candle. She strode over like the place had been built for her, pulled a sticky chair back out from under a table and nonsensically dropped her ripe cherry of an ass into the leather seat cushion stuffed with human hair and a sandy powder made of mulched insect larvae. Her smoothly shaved bare legs eased into the shadows of the chewing gum lumpy table bottom like two naked ninjas sliding into the still night to gracefully make love with one another. And nobody noticed.

Sasha blinked. Twice. There were two poets, or Communists (who can tell the difference these days anyway?), arguing over a stack of paper, maybe a manuscript, that one held in his hand and gesticulated with as if to accentuate its importance. A couple was sitting in spoon in the corner reading a book with mutual contentedness. There was a waiter facing away from Sasha, hovering around a table fidgeting impatiently. A low, melancholy voice came from behind where he was standing and he sighed exasperatedly and moved off, revealing a small, roundish man, heavily bundled up in dark coats, hunched over an open folder. One of his hands was resting on the table, holding a pen. His sad eyes followed the waiter apologetically as he stormed pertly away, and chanced upon Sasha. He looked away bashfully, letting his eyes glance anxiously at the door a couple times before he curled back around his writing like a snail in a shell. In one of the tables by the windows like she herself was sitting at sat another woman, apparently waiting for someone. She and the writer, both waiting. She was not as pretty as Sasha, but appeared to have tried to make some effort. She was probably going to go out to a movie later. Sasha was wondering what she would be going to see when, from the corner of her eye, she apprehended a figure she had overlooked before approaching her from one of the tenebrous booths.

The figure slid in like an ominous portent, his silhouetted form rustling into a chair across from Sasha with all the weight and flurry of a landing crow. Graceful as a raven; Sasha watched him in awe: perching atop a grave, morbidly overlooking a countryside by moonlight. He sat outside the aura of dim illumination that bleached the slick-skinned table top a pale green and his face was draped in darkness; it veiled him in a slashed tapestry, calmly ripping and shifting as he settled into the seat, moving just beyond the straining fingers of light cast by the bare bulb hung above.

The man seemed to wear a shadow about him like a negative glow, and if she looked right at him Sasha lost focus and the scene fuzzed into a tuneless blur.

Sasha blinked. It was as if the man before her was sleep himself. A bruise on a stained glass mural. He reached into his own pooling, coagulating shadow and extracted a small soggy cigarette and an inconspicuously benign lighter, which he clicked into glowing purpose, inflaming the drooping bone into a red glowing nipple at one end. In the brief phosphorescent flare of the fire Sasha caught sight of the Stranger’s face in photographic snapshot clarity. But as soon as she had seen it it was lost in her mind; her memory of it immediately slipped into the confused half light that the man seemed to carry around him in a pheromone cloud, masking not only his identity but even the certainty of his very existence. Was he really there — or just a product of the maligned discomfortable buzz like a fresh punch to the head that filled the dive with a swarm of sleep-flying bees, spasmodic static comatose dose of blunt, unthinking, unfeeling, uncaring... inhuman and as offensive to the senses as oily skin.

The stranger blew cool blue worms of smoke from his depth... hooded eyes staring out invisibly, deep cuts inside an already hideously deep wound. Sasha wiped one damp palm across her oily face, smearing her features into the smudge of a knuckled fist or the moaning heat of a burn victim. She leaned forward, oozing out sensuality like a damp pair of panties, eyes vaguely hidden in dark crescents by the glare of the bare bulb above her head. Her tongue moved tauntingly between her smoothed petal lips. She eased her corpulent red hair back with a gentle push.

“Stop it Sasha,” the man commanded sternly and laconically. His voice was a deep rich garden, long deserted and overrun with earthy smelling weeds. They almost choked out Sasha’s very essence with their forceful directness. And the voice was just a low whisper in her ear — she could even feel the breath that carried each sound as it lapped around inside each ear like a a licking mother cat cleaning the slime off her hairless fresh-borns. Yet the man had not moved. His voice was right next to her head, whispering directly into her mind, but he still glared eyelessly at her from across a close ocean of tabletop. The room reeled, a numbing vortex.

“Be still Sasha. You are in no danger.” A tendril of smoke snaked its way up silkily. His voice was a dirty handshake that lasted too long. It made Sasha feel like she was squeezing her father’s balls... putting them into her mouth... it made her skin oily... it made her hate herself. She shuddered with the potency of it. His presence was a palpable discomfort. She shyly adjusted her panties.

She looked into his un. “Who are you?” she demanded with a haughtiness bred from counterfeit security.

“You may know me as Samson Cheshire. I know the secret of existence. Would you like me to remind you what it is?” His voice crawled into her ear like a swarm of roaches and laid larvae around the base of her brain. It made her eyes water.

“Sure Sam. You can tell me if you really want,” she faked uninterest through a muck of swollen thoughts that filled her straining head with a quivering thick pudding. She tried to keep him in focus, which was impossible... he seemed to ripple... like she was watching the negative of a film of the sunrise shot from the ocean floor. Her eyes swam.

“You already know the secret Sasha. I can see it up inside of you...,” she felt a warm palm holding her muff with a charismatic confident friendliness, then it chilled through as if her whole crotch had fallen asleep — pinpricking nails of buzzing freeze shocked into her in an insectile pushing wave, “...I can smell it on you from across the room. I can see it behind your face. You *know*.” His words

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squeezed her head until her spongy mind dripped blood.

With a blunt jolt Sasha swayed a little, stunned.... She looked like a cornworm... and she realized he was right. She *knew*... all this time she had known.

“Everything you were taught to admire. Everything you were taught to fear. Everything you were taught to *love*... it’s all a lie. And you *know*. *You’ve always known*. But it was safer to stay in the closet. To become a drone. A consumer. A clone.... You are a priestess. You always have been. Your cunt is a temple in which your clit splits sacrifices, dripping down the tunnel to feed the hungry altar. Consume something new. Cosmic dragon. Your eyes are two coins spinning forever. Your lips two bloody leeches sucking life from what they can secure infection in. Your face is a mask of convenience, an impatient lie that coaxes out the truth like a sucked venom to fill your empty heart, your Grail, and drink deep to the sound of fantastic fun that everyone keeps secret behind postures of morality.... Our behavior is just a joke that isn’t funny because nobody *gets it*. But you *get it*. And I. Look...” Sam’s shadow gathered to a point that stretched across to engulf the two arguing poets. Sasha could hear their voices with the same muffled intensity that she heard Sam’s. Her butt clenched and unclenched as the sounds overloaded her capacity. A few times she almost fainted. She seemed to feel her crotch filling with ice; her chest heating closely; her brain coat with a matted pubic fungus.

Dialectic Amour

She was just Oriental enough to have small breasts, just African enough to be well-flanked, just European enough to be ghostly pale, just American enough to have dyed hair. She stumbled through the saloon’s double gates on precariously high heels that lifted her feet so aloft only the tips of her toes touched the floor, shoved achingly downward by all her suspended weight. She had the dark mask of sex, and the flushed face of drunkenness; she flopped down in a booth across from an upright looking executive clerk in a conservative suit. They began discussing the social class of one another, attempting to be as insulting but accurate as possible. It was part of an elaborate sex ritual; it was one of the first steps.

“It’s no wonder liberals like blacks,” he started in a grim nasal monotone, “they admire *all* backwards ‘cultures.’ They are modern primitives eager to invent a thinking machine to replace them so they can devolve into monkeys. Like pathetic, perverse children they worship at altars to bestiality — a pubic ant mound, shaved and stung by a swarm of angry reds; a honey-coated cone covered in bees and hornets.”

“The sins kept secret by the parents are the obsessions of the children. It’s ironic that republicans, who claim to be for less government and more capitalist upstarts, pass legislation for stricter family values instead of disassembling the state when they take power. It’s typical in the ironic world they’ve created by commanding one thing and secretly doing the opposite that the crueler the S&M fetish the more expensive the gear, so that in order to participate in the most bestial indulgences you must already belong to the bourgeoisie — who only preach chastity and cleanliness and denial and empire, but never humanism. To expect someone who has been made to suffer, who has been forced to work, in order to earn money and membership in the middle-class to have pity on someone who does not want to take such a blind leap of faith in the economy is, of course, fool hearty, bloody fool hearty. It is like asking some rich prig if you can borrow a book he owns (but probably hasn’t found time to read), and he responds, snout in the air, ‘no you may not, but you may go out and *buy* it.’” This rousing impression stiffens our man.

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“And if you dirty, oohh so dirty little boys and girls can’t even afford to buy them then how many books have you read? You probably steal them, don’t you? And while you’re stealing them imagine yourself a soldier in some great rebellion, taking back what you feel is yours only by grace of your sticky-fingered lust for it. You liberals, yes even you, like to play soldier. But you can’t commit to realizing the game. You run from the cops who keep you from getting murdered as if they are the Viet Cong. You *want* to get caught and beaten, martyred. Being noticed makes you want to be dominated. But *I* like to command. I am a true soldier. Unlike you and your kind — too lazy to even bathe — I don’t work because I’m some sort of peon, some vanquished, defiled, rent and prostituted slave. I work because I’m a soldier on the winning side of the One Truly Great War. I hunt like you only wish you could gather. I throw economic and military spears into the weakest of the herd, thinning out the crop more and more by generations. Because I own everything there is nothing which is not food to me; and no food which can be denied to me.”

“Cops aren’t like the Viet Cong. Laws aren’t the cause of any true people’s army. Nazis are more like cops, and it was the Allies proudest moment to arrest the Axis totalitarians. Much prouder than losing to a bunch of rice farmers in humid swamps who were provided only with the supposedly ‘inferior’ weapons manufactured during the Second Five Year Plan. The middle-class bigots don’t kill for *justice* — they kill Aryans and Asians both to enforce moderation on all radicals. They kill simply because they are *aroused* by aggression. Only by using armies like whips to scorch the chops of Mother Earth can they get up the strength to erect their empires.”

“Your place or mine?”

“Is it going to be for the whole night?”

“Oh, I think so.”

“Your place then. Mine’s not clean and yours is probably lavish.”

I won’t bore you with the next steps of the ritual. Suffice it to say it did take all night, even though he was unable to get it up until nearly dawn, by which time enough blood had been splattered and spilt to paint the walls of the room an angry, awful, but natural, ghastly red.

Ode To Joy (monsters hungrily wearing human flesh)

“What I want of you,” he lounged naked with his crossed furry sticks propped up on a rolling desktop with smoke flowing incontinently from between his lips in a vaporous drool upside down to tributary into the charmed snake of white vapor winding up from his cigarette, “is someone with whom it can be ‘us versus the world’.”

She walked over and threw her hips askew in such a way as to make her cunt fart in his face. “I’m making a statement,” she declared defiantly. Ignoring the insulting gesture and accompanying odor he lurched forward inclosing her hips in a vice tight hug, burying his face in her fleece and gnawing puppyishly on her tender nether lips which, as they relaxed to his nibbles and licks, became moist and smelled of urine and turkey. She swayed like a falling sequoyah, her head lolling back and a moan nudging the knot in her throat slowly upward. He reached around with his smoldering butt and shoved the sizzling coals between her pillowed cheeks, crushing them against the delicate, pale ring of pouting flesh around her anus. She shrieked exquisitely and his mouth filled with a rush of her juices. She toppled back, landing with a muffled thump on a polar bear rug, from which she immediately sprang up with a shock as her burnt bottom brushed the floor heavily. She was on

her feet, her weak knees trembling under her, gasping.

He leaned back with a broad smile; his lips, nose, cheeks and chin soaked with her foam. He puffed on his half dead cigarette, erecting a jet of smoke with his pursed lips which he stalked with the lidded gaze of a hunter confident in the location of his prey, and in the discretion of his own position to it. He smirked over at her as she shivered in indignity; “us versus the world,” then, looking down his legs into space, he began reminiscing. “You remind me of my mother. Well, perhaps not my mother — but a mother; the way a mother should be. Also a daughter though. How do you explain that? That you could seem a mother and daughter to me in one? I envy and pity you simultaneously. But you’re also like a sister. . . or perhaps a cousin. . . with whom I experiment trying to find myself. You must be a snake: every woman with one face. There is only one woman, you know. To any man there is only one woman. . . a world of girls but only. . . one woman. Have I ever told you I admire you when you please me as I desire? Admire / desire. . . butchery, butchery. . . I make your meat my meal,” he wiped a bare, thin arm across his lips smearing her royal jelly off him. “I want to make you my slave so I can worship you. If I lock you in a box it is only to save myself from jealousy, to preserve you from perversion. If I lock your mind in a box it is only so I know it is not unleashed with or scarred by lightning strikes of inspiration from thoughts of another. If I make myself your master it is only to make you mine. This is love — isn’t it? This is love — mutual worship, mutual, consensual enslavement. Now. . . do you agree to submit yourself to this? . . . Do you love me?”

She was shaking all over, the earth was quivering beneath her clenching feet, the air around her chilled skin was running everywhere desperately, time was frantic and stumbling over itself like a terror-stricken child fleeing from something so unbelievably as to terrify wholly. Suddenly she realized she was choosing to be such a little girl. She would be a woman. She simply stopped trembling and stood firmly facing the challenge. She could smell her woman smell. She felt trapped but safe. She stuck three fingers straight into her twat. They slid in easily, and she got the drunken look of sex all over her with the foolish immediacy of prideful desire to impress and perform. The heat that pulled in her loins bled together with the stinging pain in her other hole, so close to the first, and created a moaning pool of electric warmth in her abdomen that filled up her body and washed slowly out into her tingling limbs until her fingers, now wrinkled with her own wet, were abuzz. “This,” she told herself smugly, “is the feeling of love.” And she sank down onto her knees, then leaned back, lay down and spread her legs hugely.

The room began to move. Shapes danced unreally. Feelings flooded confusingly, utterly illogically. Their movements said, “skin is malleable. It can be stretched and shaped and, with time, trained to retain that shape. The will is the same. Both are eager to be submitted in the name of objectification, intentionally ignorant of the idea of all but the immediate urge to gratify their curious lust — forgetful of the fact that once the mud has been loosened, expanded, *stretched*, it *cannot* be reformed and made to hold its original dimensions and structure. The tissue can only be destroyed, burnt back or cut off, razed and raped in lieu of reconfiguration in disgusting, contemptful buyer’s remorse for what has become of what is not appreciated until it is gone. Horror is realizing the permanence of change, the inability to return the changed to its original state. The slave cannot become the un-slave. Life rubs one hole into a gaping new hole, and continues this until the maw is so abysmal that it seems infinite, terrifyingly infinite and empty. You cannot make it manageable anymore — only destroy it by filling it handful of bullshit at a time,

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proportionately, until it does not seem so hopelessly huge and insatiable. But it is. And it can't be helped. It is ruined. The cute little hole is now ripped loose as a torn sail. It is ruined. Ruined.”

Once the lesson is learned, it cannot be unlearned. Once you have asked yourself a question without a happy answer, you can never escape that sorrowful doubt, or the guilt for having asked. Once you have believed you cannot doubt, and once you have doubted you cannot believe, though your shame is such a burden you may wish for belief to help you bear it. Your will is a hole from which little thoughts, like farts, noisily escape (or are forced out) and which can be, is, has been and will be stretched out into a huge, penetrable zero. Worked out and expanded until it can receive a round peg of thoughts alien and strange to you, so tightly it plugs up your thoughts and massages itself until you joyfully accept its ideological ejaculate and become pregnant with *their* spawn.

I am a sexist only because I see the inherent feminine weakness in all humanity when cast in the scene of rape — I see everything as rape. Unable to fight it off, it can only be enjoyed — which it is, oh, it is enjoyed. Worship of the masked naked, alien and strange and usually unacceptable — so broaden your mind and open your heart. Bare your soul. Can you bear your soul?

Love is the opening, the trustful opening, of the self to the gropings of another. The sacred whores, the selfless christians, the selfish victims of the stretching disease. The desire to need. The need to need. The fatalistic tragic flaw of hoping you never achieve your hope. Hoping you never consume enough. Lust for slavery.

Punks

The two Nietzscheans kissed so hard their lips were crushed between their teeth mashing together the force of two skeletons, the skeletons grasping one another and clutching and groping so hard to push bone against bone the flesh just gets in the way. They were panting, their brains wet with anticipation, drooling endorphins like a sweet tooth all the way down its roots to the fingertips and the curlingtoes.

“A broom stick is all a woman has ever needed,” her mind was heaving breathlessly, “a broomstick is a woman's best friend. A man is just a tool, just a tool, just a tool.” She was fantasizing she was Caesar's wife again, goddess of an international coven, owner of an infinite army of voodoo ensnared zombie slaves!

“A dog is the best traveling companion historically,” his mind was secreting lasciviously, “a dog really is man's best friend. Oh, I wish she was a hairless dog, soft and fluffy... I wish she was a *sheep*; a Christian sheep!” As he stroked her curving goat's horns he thought how all humans wanted to treat other humans like some sort of animal, either wild or domesticated depending on their opinion of the nature of human will. Both being NAZI punks he imagined they agreed man was a wild animal, prone to jungle law only in these ‘desperate’ times, but as he was building up momentum towards coming his brain suddenly asked “then why is man so prone to training himself?” He snarled in retort, “Shut up Self Consciousness! Aliens and Conspiracies, with the Superego as their voice in an otherwise naturally bicameral mind.”

“Oh!” She cried out, her engorged clitoris waving about like a charmed cobra or a tapeworm coaxed out from the asshole with a greasy piece of meat, “Oh! Let's pretend I'm the proletariat and you're the bourgeoisie! Oh, yes!” And he fucked her harder until her tight cunt whistled like a cash register drawer being repeatedly slammed shut. Her eyes rolled up dollar signs like a slot machine and her lungs swelled her

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bosom drenched in a concealing gleaming sheen of sweat. “Wiggle like a glow worm and dance like a spinning top! Americana *turns me on!* All these attractive symbols of freedom and individualism! And my how manly one’s wallet must be to afford the accutriments of libertinage.”

“Everything pretended is real and everything real is only pretend!” he cried over the sound of her cracking hips splintering like moldy wood upholstered in ripping leather old and soggy. “All reality is art in the eyes of the artist. But does art really *need* a creator?” He held his finger up as a professor would to call attention to a point. “Only if it needs a frame,” she concluded the recital for him and they wracked in mutual orgasm, hollering hail to the day’s status quo, to social Darwinism exacted by a strict Totalitarian government and they fired their guns in the air.

Moaning in each other’s arms then he got up and went into the kitchen from offstage the sound of a drawer opening and silverware rummaging as she leans back her drenched pinkish yellow body swelling up slowly, very slowly so finally she looked like a walrus and he came back in his shadow cast long over her bloated carcass. He carried butcher knives and long pronged forks for two.

Two skeletons bent over a meal of flesh. As they dug in, blood running over their chins, he told her: “imagine society as a hamburger — cooked meat huddling between two white bread buns, the seeds all on the one on the top while all the nasty grease from the blackened cattle meat seeps down into the bottom loaf.” To which she replied in a husky voice, “when I grow up I want to raise gas prices.” . . . Fade out.

scene two

I can feel us sinking back down now, slowly into our DNA strands. A little bit of me here, a little bit of him there. A little bit of him here, a little bit of me there.

“Now do you see?” we scream at each other over the whirling gail.

“You’re ripping a hole in the fabric of reality!” we yell at each other.

We have nearly completely congealed now back into physical bodies and are fighting fisticuffs now. I throw us over the desk in Sam’s office. He throws me over the desk in the detective’s office. We throw ourselves back again against Sam’s office desk and through the two-way mirror hanging above and behind it.

“Bastard!” we cry at each other.

“We shove ourselves back into the middle of the floor between the two desks. By now the fabric of reality has recongealed with each of our alternate realities behind one of us. Behind me the detective’s office, and behind myself the office of Cheshire Sam.

We float up into the air as I remove all the gravity from the conjoined room. I warp the timespacetime field behind our fissure in the rift and the offices slowly begin to decompose here and become transparent there, revealing the voids of the astral abyss beyond. Outside of the window behind the desk of the detective’s office the vista turns to one of distant outer space. The hair floats by stellar nebulae. The desk is supported on the backs of spiral galaxies. Behind the desk of Cheshire Sam, in the shadows of the room beyond the shattered glass two way mirror is a wasteland of silt after a great flood.

“Infinity Inverted”

Jonathan Barlow Gee

“Now, here we are again,” we say to ourselves. “I stare into the eye of the other. The pupils grow and seem to flood radiating darkness out of themselves. “Only when it is too late, do you finally understand.”

The broken mirror behind Sam’s desk begins to moan and groan with the aching of ancient fallen souls. “When you stare long into an abyss, detective,” Sam says to himself. “The abyss stares long into you...” the detective concludes quietly.

The stars vibrate radiant soundwaves and their drone is like the sound of tau sub tau universes humming all in harmonics. They blend together with the growling of the hounds of hell. “Ever wonder what you could unleash?” Sam quips.

I feel myself sinking back down now. Slowly into my own DNA strands. A little bit of me here, a little bit of me there. Only myself everywhere. I am congealed now. I am once again who I am. Who am I?

A fist lurches forward against the face opposite it. It is mine. It is connected to my arm. Cheshire Sam reels back against the detective office desk. I am thrown backward towards the open gaping mouth of the entrance to the inferno.

“NO!” I cry... clinging onto Sam’s desk.

“Oh detective,” Sam is laughing from the opposite side of the room, which now feels like I am looking up a hill at him. “I would have expected something a little more subtle from you...” he rubs his jaw. Now the room is completely turned on its side and I am dangling by the fingernails from the sharp wood edge of Sam’s fine desk, while he floats casually in the detectives chair which hovers above me. “Detective, detective, detective. How you continue to amuse me.”

“There’s only one of us.” I say under my breath, as if to myself, but lock my gaze upon his. “Survival of the fittest Sam, and I’ve got the fucking gun!” I reach down into my raincoat and grab my stash. One more bullet left after all those rounds I’d pumped off when he unleashed The Power.

“You realise, detecitve...” he cries over the whirlwind gail now being stirred up by the gasping gaping mouth to hell, “I have thought of everything?”

“You could destroy this universe!” I scream at him.

“Which universe is this Detective?” he queries. “Yours or mine?”

“Yours!” I scream, firing the bullet straight up at him, through the whirlwind.

“Ahhh.... yesssss....” he hisses. “You would rather have it the other way, wouldn’t you?” He rotates the room again and is now sitting behind the detective’s desk before the window looking out into open space. I am still clinging before the rasping maw of the gates of hell.

“You...” I scream.

“Infinity Inverted”

Jonathan Barlow Gee

“Bastard?” we say at the same time.

“You realise we are lost, Sam. Yes I am fully aware of that, detective. There is no way of getting home, I am afraid.” The bullet has flown off into the gap between where the ceilings of the office would meet.

Out it soars into the vast beyond nether reaches of the cosmic spectrum. Upwards and upwards it hurtles. Until it hits something. The event horizon of the black hole. The event horizon begins to mutate, like cracks forming lightning all haywire in bullet shot glass, spawning thousands of miniature wormholes across its surface. Far distant, in the below.

“You’ve always been a thorn in my side,” the detective says to Sam.

“You’ve always been one in mine,” Sam replies.

The top of the uiniverse comes crashing down upon us and we are drowning in wormholes, spiralling uncontrollably in all directions simultaneously. They divide us up into pieces of potential with variable spin ratios slicing in between these. Our information units begin to break down infinitely as we are torn to shred between the directions of the wormholes as they tunnel everywhere through the sphere of the harnessed black hole.

“The phi black hole becomes the pi black hole.” We hear a majestic voice announce.

“Did you say that?” Sam and the Detective ask one another simultaneously.

“What you’re experiencing...” Sam says to the detective.

“Is premature enlightenment...!” the detective completes the quote while lunging on the now even ground between himself and Sam to grapple with him through the shattering aquarium all around them.

“This is all going to end soon you know.” The voice says to itself in the darkness.

A fist reaches out of the quantum foam to punch a face. The fist shatters into billions upon billions of pieces of glass on contact against the mirrored image of the face.

Memories. Memories are the key.

“Why don’t you try to fight back?” the darkness says to itself.

“Why bother?” sighs the blinding white light.

Then everything compresses and I fall out of the black hole and onto the floor in the middle of the Cheshire’s laboratory.

All the techs have long ago displaced themselves from the premises. The Quetzal and Bug armies are outside by now. Only me left alive anywhere throughout the entire bombed Central City I suspect, but the armies have closed in closer than I expected. I

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hear shelling of the headquarters beginning. I stumble out from under the ruptured black hole’s massive event horizon. With wormholes in it it will begin to grow. It must be stopped, but there is no time for me to do it. The plexcrete ceiling begins to splinter, and the gyroscopic red tinted anteroom implodes with the difference in pressure between the inside and the outside of the black hole as sunlight begins to peak through the cracks in the ceiling. Hmm. I would have expected it to be raining. Instead the sunlight is blazen red.

I start toward the rotating doorway exposed behind the stationary anteroom, leading beyond it to the upside down hallway. I wave my hand across the threshold to test the pressure differential. There appears to be none. I leap through the ruptured compression chambre and fall upward onto the floor. I land on my feet and immediately start down the hallway. Its intermittant lights are now flashing red at intermittant intervals.

Bombing up the hallway comes Countess Odessa Zoab. She is carrying a crystal skull before her, and its eyes light her way. They stop upon seeing me.

“Ah, good to see you, Detective,” the holographic face portrayed upon the surface of the crystal skull says to me warmly.

“Countess?” I implore. Then, upon noticing the skull in more detail, “Piscator Willhelms??”

“My daughter knew you.” Countess Zoab states flatly.

“Detective,” Willhelms says urgently, “where is Cheshire Sam??”

“Dead.” I reply. “I killed him myself. His body is just back there.” I gesture over my shoulder at the upside down blackhole laboratory. Zoab peeks around my shoulder.

“We have to see for ourselves,” she starts past me.

“No, wait!” I grab her by the arm, “There’s no time! There’s a black hole growing in there that will eat up this entire universe with us in it if it can’t be stopped. We’ve got to get down to the generator and cut the power off. Hopefully that will depower the proton-proton chain tethering us to it. It might even shut down the black hole itself.” I force past the Countess who stands behind me looking a bit confused as I break into a run down the hallway away from them. Suddenly a pair of sandal muffled footsteps begins to hurry down the hallway behind me.

“Detective!” the voice of Willhelms calls from just over my shoulder. “Do you know where the power generator to this place is?” I come to an abrupt stop.

“Actually no. I assumed it was on the first sub level. Do you know where it is?”

“You forget, detective, I designed these black hole labs myself. I know every inch of them. The power for this plant is drawn directly from the black hole around which it is constructed itself. However it recycles and flushes this energy out into the gridwork power and energy reserve. It can’t feedback it into the black hole or...

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well... something like this would happen. It's like the equivalent of a fusion leak at a nuclear reactor power plant. Tell me exactly what happened in there with Sam, detective. I need to know if one of you entered the black hole?"

"Two of us entered. Only one walked out."

"Good god. Then we are in greater danger than I had at first thought. Sir, do you know if you are the detective, or if you are Cheshire Sam?"

"I know who I am."

"What do you remember from just before exiting the black hole?"

"Look, I'm me. There ain't no other me now, so let's just focus on shutting this thing down."

"I am concerned that this universe might not be entirely stable."

Just then another shell rocks the complex. The blast shatters the roof above us and the Countess cringes. But instead of falling downward and crushing us, the ten tonne fragments of the plexcrete ceiling fly upwards into the air above. Only then, beneath the otherwise open sky, do we see the black hole rising against the blood red sky.

It has swollen already to three times its original size. "Soon there will be no containing it..." Wilhelms trembles before the sight of his creation looming loftier and loftier above us.

The Cheshire and Bug forces are being sucked in an enormous spiral accretion disk around the equator of the now rotating black hole. Their huge airwhales are pulled in one by one, crashing into its oilslick surface and exploding in tiny flares that are immediately consumed. It swells and groans. It is going to burst at its seams.

"Soon it will double," whispers Bill.

"Something tells me we're all about to be a little bit thinner," Zoab smirks.

"Detective..." Bill snaps rapidly, "you must have broken the hole by firing your gun from within it. If you fire your gun into it from outside, it should revert to its original state, if not its original size..."

I point my firearm up into the eclipsed air above us and pop off a shot. The bullet whizzes upward, pulled three times faster than it would ordinarily fly by the gravity of the black hole. Within a moment, the black hole has begun to double, and lifts the Countess and myself off our feet, and the crystal skull out of her hands.

Just then the bullet strikes the ballooning blackhole. The sky explodes. We are all tossed about by warping distorted gravity waves like the currents of a great hurricane. The Countess is nearly torn apart, and the crystal skull flies from her grasp. My gun flies out of my hand and is caught in the crosswinds of two gravity streamers. It is crushed, but bulletless.

Then everything inverts. The black hole, covered in inward spiralling wormholes, suddenly freezes in place and then just as rapidly begins to counter rotate. The spiralling wormholes reverse their course. They begin to emit matter, however it has been reversed as antimatter. When the substances emitted from the black hole contact the matter of this universe's reality they ignite.

The sky catches on atomic fire. The sulphur soaked oxygen combusts as it is consumed by the flames. But just then, a miracle happens. All the impurities are burned out of the air. The sulphur is gone. Ignited, it sparked an implosion of the matter-antimatter collision. With that it warps the orbits of the electrons which had all been compressed into electromagnetic singularities. These singularities involute, and the spacetime continuum compresses into a localised white hole. As the amber taint is absorbed out of the withering sky, everything begins to glow with an invisible blinding brilliance.

Countess Odessa Zoab floats up to me in the now calm gravimetric weather of the crystal clear atmosphereless sky.

“We had destroyed the ECS,” she explains. “Bill foresaw everything.”

“Bill?” I query. I look about. On the ground the crystal skull lies shattered. Above it however a small cloud of shimmering dust has already begun to spiral into the double helix.

“He's building himself a body from the MFKZT...” Countess Odessa sighs inextricably.

“Look, sweetheart, don't get all gooey on me. It seems everything has worked out fine here now...” I comment as she turns her eyes harshly on me.

“You can GO anytime you WANT,” she spits at me.

“Where would I have to go in a world without enemies?”

“You're not...” she asks dubiously.

“No...” I grin a Cheshire grin as I pump two rounds into her skull through her left eyeball.

Below us Piscator Willhelms body has begun to reassemble made from the pure MFKZT of the new atmosphere. With the ECS destroyed, the war between the Bugs and the Quetzal was officially over, and with the Elephant/rat hierarchy crumbling beneath their unified forces the Cheshire have begun to scatter throughout the lands again. I cannot let this war begin again. I cannot let the leaders of the Bugs and the Quetzals survive. I must return everything to the way I found it. If I am to disappear.

I swoop downward from my lofty perch upon the lighter than air clarity of the atmosphere itself and alight beside the shimmering ghostly body of Piscator Willhelms, the once dreaded Cheshire Ben.

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I pace around him surreptitiously as his consciousness unfolds the muted patterns of life before me. “You never suspected did you old man? You never guessed. Do one good deed, redeemed for everything. That’s not how it works my fisher friend.”

The shimmering ley lines of reason yet coalescing in unvocalisable silence I blast an exploding quaternion round into him. It pauses in the center of where his brain is forming, and then ruptures. The spark of it sends off another repletion within the atmosphere, which begins to scorch into a burnt umber as the monoatomic sun passes out from behind the black hole moon. The shimmering clarity of the atmosphere returns to its hazy red, only now streaked through by sparkling veins of red MFKZT. Piscator Bill’s precious pattern has now been dispersed throughout the four corners of the locally isolated white hole, and the rift between the dimensions begins to dwindle and eventually evaporates completely, leaving only the red sparkling filaments of MFKZT behind within the atmosphere.

“You are now one with the ECS, which you had fought so hard to destroy all along. The war between the bugs and the quetzals was nothing. Nothing. It had been precipitated simply by the ECS, which we Cheshire had created many aeons ago. It cannot be destroyed. It is what is. And when the Cyberians discovered it, we had to act quickly to recover it. We destroyed them with the armistice, and crushed them into the birds on the outside of the ECS and the bugs on the inside. The bugs would write words above and the quetzal would perceive faces below. It is a message we sent to ourselves long ago. It is very old.”

Above me another, darker, deeper voice suddenly booms.

It is the blackhole itself, speaking.

“You err, Cheshire Sam, for there is yet me.” It is my own voice, the voice of the self which I had left within the black hole to die.

“I have combatted you with the battalions of legion. I have festered and pecked at you with the wars between the inside and the outside, and by the resurrection of the lizards and mastadons as the great lie of the mice and elephants. I have set them all against one another. I have tried and tried to destroy you, ECS. What more can I do?”

“No... in the end it is you who shall be destroyed, and shall pass through me. You shall pass through me and enter one of two doors. Either the door which leads to the baby universe inside my singularity, or into the parent universe greater than our own.”

“Why wait?” I yell, and throw myself skyward. I am carried aloft by the warped electromagnetic field lines of red MFKZT that had replaced the pure gravitational field lines of a moment ago. I disappear beneath the surface of the black hole.

I am inside myself again. “This is getting to be habitual,” I quip to myself.

“Now... who are we?” rumbles the omnipresent voice.

“Detective Cheshire Sam, at your service, Ma’am.”

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The darkness splits into light and there is the sound of ten million halo lamps humming. Each one is a different, sparkling galaxy. Some are near, some are far.

“There’s no going back you know.”

“So I’ve been told.”

“You realise what this will do to your continuum.”

“So I’ve seen.”

“It seems a minor emergency then?”

“It poses no sort of problem whatsoever.”

“Alright then... commencing countdown...”

The black hole shutters from the inside out and warps spactime. Outside of the black hole, the world which had been translucent red dust now glows blinding clear light again. “Habitual, habitual, habitual...” I grin from ear to ear.

“We are in the pupil of this universe. We are in the light reflected in this pupil.”

“No. For that is the lesser light.”

“Who speaks here?”

“I am one of your fold. I am Cheshire Sam.”

“The father of the child...” a hush goes up.

“I am here to exterminate you all.” I remove my gun from its holster and proceed to eradicate every last one of them.

I turn my attention then on the Madonna, the mother black hole holding the infant child of the baby universe singularity.

And then I shoot them. I shoot through them. Then everything shutters again, and I am sucked through another wormhole.

“Keep guessing,” I grumble, a little offset of ease by the roaring tunnels of pure inverted star fire I am jostled about through.

I get out of the car at Tallahassee Drive. This is where my office is. I climb the flight of stairs up the office building, and, mounting the last one, turn right and am immediately at my office door.

“Cheshire Sam, Private Detective.”

I enter the room and sit down at my desk. I lean back. Seeing the bottle of whiskey

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over at the bar on the other shelf I walk over and pour myself a stiff drink. Home, home, home. I think three times, and drink the whiskey.

“I prefer absynthe...” she purrs up behind me.

“I do too,” I admit, and turn around to face her.

“You’ve gotten here just in time,” she says.

“Just in time for what, m’lurve?” I swish the whiskey around my teeth.

“Just in time to smoke this with me.” She draws back the curtains to reveal the black hole outside, devastating the cityscape of Central City. Already the large coaxial cable which had been attaching the Central City ground line adapter to the extra-atmospheric ECS had been torn through, and the enormous hulking ruins of it lie smouldering at the center of the town. Slowly, the growing phi black hole is devouring it, and coming closer every second.

She casually pulls out a sack and some rolling papers. “Ever learn how to dovetail?”

“Never in my life,” I conclude, astonished, watching out the window as the wormhole encrusted event horizon of the inward spiralling black hole slowly eats its way through the skyline of the greatest city in Atlantea.

“Would you like to learn?” she inquires descreatly, coming up behind me.

She tries to pry me away from the growing great ball of pure negative energy. But then I remember something I had learned once. “I am the pupil inside of the iris. I am the iris inside of the sclera. I am the sclera inside of the eye. I am the rods and cones of the eye. And I am the eye which sees itself. And I am the universe conversing with itself. And I am.” As I invoke the ancient memory I turn around to face her. In the blinding invisible brilliance emanating from the swollen blackhole I see her before me. She offers me a joint, and a place beside her on the bed.

“Sorry, sweetheart.” I quickly exclaim. “But it’s gotta end sometime.”

A quizical expression comes over her face. Then she realises she has been snookered, but it is a thought which comes too late, as by then my bullet is already inside of her head.

Suddenly there is a jolt and I am carried in a third direction. “That’ll teach you to sleep with your third eye open.” I exclaim to the silence.

“There is no way. There is no Dharma. There is no Buddha. There is no Khabs. There is no Allah.”

There is only one way to put a stop to this black hole. And that’s to go back to before it began. And since the only way out is through, then in I have gone. I have passed into the auspices of the baby universe inside the singularity inside the black hole, and I have passed through the perpendicular to that which leads out into the universe

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greater than the universe inside which is the black hole. I have entered the auspices of this universe in which is this black hole, and can now see the spiraling surface of its shell illuminated in the gracefully spiralling tachyonic singularities which project beyond like the feelers on an anemone. Silently glowing in the light, I move backwards now, away from it, into the fourth direction. The invisible light is slowly tainted purple, then ultraviolet. Outside everything is tinted infrared. I fly through the colour spectrum of lights upward and backwards through the surface of the larger singularity. I enter the auspices of it. I can see the alignment coming.

And finally I fall back out of the black hole again. It is the same second as when I had jumped in. It is exactly as if I had bounced off.

I pull my gun out of its holster and fire at the burgeoning blackhole. The bullet stops the rotation of the electromagnetic wormhole singularities on the surface of the event horizon and they begin to rotate in the opposite direction. Suddenly the sky catches on fire again, and for a flash everything is illuminated. Then the black hole begins to shrink and vanish away rapidly. The sky begins to clear rapidly as well. Suddenly, almost as suddenly as it had appeared, the black hole is gone.

Left behind are the ruins of Central City. There is no black hole, and now there never was one. I see the tall spires rise again, and the people walking backwards. Some of them pass right through me. There is a great hustle and bustle. The enormous buildings all rise again, blocking out the sun, their tops all running wires up the huge stalk of the coaxial spinal chord between Atlantea and the ECS. All is shrouded in darkness.

I slowly walk through the rain soaked streets. I cannot go back, I think to myself. I cannot go back.

But the memories. The memories are the key.

The more I think about it, the more confused I become. Suddenly everything begins rattling. I am losing track of my consciousness... the static between radio stations. My mind becomes fragmented between the memories, and I collapse over slightly. I pound on the side of my head to make the voices stop. There is the buzzing of angelic light coming from my left eardrum. I shiver in the echoing deafness. My head begins to lose its center of balance and I start to swirl down and around. I am caught on the spiral now. What was I supposed to remember??

Something about ... some terrible monster... some terrible, terrible monster. Some kind of science fiction freak. A controller and moulder of worlds. A sculptor of skull scepters. I cannot... fiction... remember... breaking through....

I remember in a flash of light.

The man behind everything. The man controlling the whole world. Sam... his name is... Cheshire Sam.

Artificial Impossible: the follower's perception of the leader's true face

In order to become the Leader the Follower must do two impossible things. The

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Follower and the Leader travel at the same speed through their perception of existence; the Follower can only ever see the Leader's back, and the Leader can only suspect the existence of the Follower. Because the Follower understands his existence as a wish to see the Leader's true face, and only by accomplishing this goal can he understand his role from outside of it, and thus be free to become something other than it, only by seeing the Leader's true face can the Follower become the Leader. In order to do this he must first pass the Leader, which is an impossibility so long as the Follower remains within the role of Follower, which he cannot break free of without becoming that which he is not, in other words, accelerating to beyond the position of the leader by defining himself at a more rapid pace than does the Leader. The second impossible task is, once he has gotten beyond the position of the Leader, to turn around and see the Leader's true face. This is impossible for two reasons. The first makes it merely improbable — that in order to want to see the Leader's true face once he has gotten beyond the Leader's position, the Follower must reverse his act of rapid self redefinition. He became the Leader, in effect, by not caring about the Leader; by focusing on himself; but in order to see the Leader's true face he must revert his focus to the Leader. He must re-become the Follower although he is now in the dominant position. This is unlikely to occur to someone after having achieved some small personal victory, as empathy with another usually occurs in times of personal downtroddenness and tragedy. The second reason for the impossibility of his turning around to perceive the Leader's true face, a more impossible aim, is turning his back away from the goal which the Leader himself pursues. The light at the end of the tunnel for which he continues on, that unknowable goal which he pursues even as the Follower pursues the perception of the Leader's true face. Perhaps the Leader is himself but a Follower, striving to perceive the true face of his Leader, and this is the real horror of human systems of authority. That there may be no end in sight — that pursuit may have no relief nor achievement. That perception of the ultimate Leader's face, essentially the face of God, is impossible, impossible, impossible.

The first God was life

The first god was life. Hunter/gatherers painting images of creatures they had killed and eaten as they were when they were alive. The only difference between the animal in its exciting, hunted form and its disappointingly motionless form after they had gotten off on making it change in the brutal ritual of “the kill” was the *blood* of the animal. One second it is alive. Its soul is within it as it runs from its death. The next second it is unalive; its soul has been spilled all over its death, splattered in streaks across its killers. They use it as war paint. Its taste is victory. The blood is the life. But...

Women bleed. Women exude life. By the turning pull of the moon, the life blood is shed. It is horrible. It is honored. It is feared. It is revered. The “mystery cults” are female cults because women are the mystery, the laws that govern them ancient and secret. And...

Men bleed. Men wound one another. Their blood is lost, spilled; their life is lost with each drop. Their piercing weapons become idols of power over both nature and women. With one another's blood on their hands, their lives in one another's hands, they form fast friendships and ranks. As they settle down from the chase they develop a regimented humanism.

Animal sacrifices now. The bloodier the better. The hunt and kill are not necessary now that we can live off the land. They are sport. They are spiritual. They are religion. Sacrifice is an Apollonian hunt and kill. The blood is shared by the

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community. Everyone’s life is made better by it. The animal’s soul is the god that is worshipped now. Eventually it becomes only several gods representing one species. Then even these get confused with man’s idea of himself — the hunter and the prey, the killer and the killed, shed blood together, their souls intermingle and ejaculate adrenalin bestially — spawning disgusting man-animals and animal-men... minotaurs and serpent-goddesses.

Human sacrifices now. Babies. Virgins. Creatures of interest to the mystery of menstrual blood. As a matter of consequence or coincidence weapons become specific phallic symbols and alters on breast-like mountanesque ziggurats and unexplored, suspicious (“something smells fishy”) ideas like the ocean are forever feminized. Eat this bread, for it is my flesh. Drink this wine, for it is my blood. You are what you eat. Mixtures of urine, breast milk, blood &/or menstrual blood &/or semen... soup is good food. In this bowl is the life of the tribe — we pass it on to you that you may live with all the strength of all our lives.

Sex and the hunt are one. Female deities are worshipped by sexual consummation, prostitution. Birthing and human sacrifice are both life giving.

Religion and the kill are one. They have always been one. Animal and human gods are worshipped by blood and life giving.

The blood, the life, the soul are one. The father, the son, the mother (later the “Holy Ghost”) are one. Isis, Ra, El are Israel. Unification of the Trinity is the root of monotheism. The idea of life is the idea of the spirit.

But...

You are not getting the message by worshiping examples of sacrificed animals. You must worship the sacrifice itself. And so we do. Akhenaton said so. Plato said so. The one perfect ideal over the unique individual examples. Marx said so. Lenin said so. If god were the ideal man, the state would be the ideal animal.

God. Gov’t. Like the Christians and the lions. Who always won?
Economic sacrifices now. Green symbols of power change between dirty hands without honor.

To say that man has conquered nature is a fallacy. We have only perverted (subverted) it until it is unrecognizable even to itself. Made of it a symbolic mask, an ideal science, given it infinite new names in order to feel some power over the environment, even if only over a substitute for it.

To say that man is dominant over animals is wrong. We still depend on them — we even use them for Platonic friends when our fellow man does not need us. We still want to call certain urges animal instinct. But what is instinct? Just left over conditioning from our species’s previous incarnation. We use it as an excuse to refuse more modern ideas of moral behavior.

To say that we still worship life is wrong. What we worship is the *fear of death*. The fear of bloodloss. The fear of impotence. The fear of our own mortality. The fear of our own humanity.

God is Drugs

God is drugs.

Historically, this fact is quite obvious. The beginning of all religions of old, as well as of new, is marked quite distinctly by the habitual usage of the mind-altering.

The development of the role of man as God is quite significant when considered with a wary eye for the presence of substances. In the Americas and in Africa, merely for example of cultural origins of theatrical assumption of the god-role, the process of development was remarkably dissimilar.

In the Americas the native tribes harvested quite a different philosophy for autocracy than their competitors in the mid-east. The male elders, that is, the tribesmen old enough to hunt, would all congregate in a smoke-house and hot-box tobacco, and presumably, at least in South America, marijuana as well. They did this while wearing animal-like costumes, thus explaining both the bestiality of mythological demigods and the belief in seeing spirit-animals by quite a convenient alignment of like terms. It was probably even the coming-of-age ritual to smoke-house a young brave before the beginning of a large hunt, to bind him psychologically to the animal he sought to kill, to sharpen his necessary senses at the cost of any distracting reasoning.

In any event, this ritual was the town-hall meeting of the era, and all decisions regarding government would be considered there, by this men’s club, whether they were in a hallucinatory condition at the time or not. While this is still a concentration of power over the many among the few, it is at least semi-Democratic in that it spreads that power out over at least those few.

Further, the theory states, the people, the remaining villagers — all the women and children, would allow this to continue simply because it was tradition and had seemed to work alright so far. They might mop their brow beneath the scorching sunlight a moment while bent over in the field, and while so doing cast a stray glance over at the smoke billowing forth from the blow-hole in the lodge which would evoke a mirthless smirk at those who shirk their share of work, but there was no greater affect of it nor movement against it than that. As we will see in early Egypt, a little beer probably helped out the sore proletariat.

For the evolution of the first pharaohs one must imagine a much harsher ecological environment and its consequence on the minds of its denizens. It was necessary for everyone there to smoke whatever stray plant that they could find. The Lotus flower has been seen constantly in Egyptian art as a motif of some regard, and its presence has been identified as fatally pervasive in mummies wherein it was used in their mortifilological process. This practice made the unforgiving sand dunes a more tolerable place, for most. Then there were the pharaohs.

It is likely in this case that the first rulers were the popular dealers. It might have occurred that these men did not utilize this substance with any satisfaction themselves. It may also be that they were sexually impotent, or displeased with the result of natural intercourse. Thus, they lived under a condition of externally-imposed purity (the totalitarian perversion of Nietzsche’s internally-produced and projectile-expressed purity), and were consequently bitter. Therefore they came to be most impatient, and most probably came to construct social order there.

Now, people at that time lived in small, secluded, although crowded, city-states, generally well-protected with a wall and defended by a mandatory army of all the city’s adult males. Each city had one god, because each only had a single ruler. It was this mad tyrant who sat atop his tower or his palace and commanded outrageously enormous monuments be erected to him. He might come and stand up on a platform dressed in some bird-like costume, and claim that it was he who caused the sun to move through the sky simply by pointing at it with his finger and applying the entire force of his will to it; and the masses might gasp agape far below him, in awe at his claims and his very extravagance with a red-eyed wonderment.

Although it was almost certainly beer that got those working-class thousands to move those stones throughout the entire desert. The same image may easily be imagined recurring here — the muscle-bound worker pausing for a moment to slurp beer from a community ladle being passed around, and to gaze calmly out at the

flattened horizon for a second before the snap of the foreman’s whip returns his attention to the performance of his function. The precision of design and technical expertise of physical arrangement may also be argued as evidence for suspecting the around the clock precision sobriety of the overlords.

Thus we have witnessed both autocracy and totalitarianism. For a consideration of Democracy one must examine Greece, Republicanism examine Rome, and pure idealism examine the Bugs.

In a Democracy, and (because a republic was based on the process of federalizing a Democracy) in a republic as well, the Gods are displayed as historically Hedonistic. They are meant as socializing examples of the proper behavior for a citizen living in such a system. As Von Sacher Masoch himself has pointed out, the Democracy of Greece and the level of reposed contemplation of such issues as politics would not have been possible if not for all the serious manual labor in the culture being done by soldier-slaves and personally purchased indentured servants. This, one might say, and weed.

Then there are the Bugs, who were the first to substantially remove and mystify the experience of being high. This condition itself, that is, being in rapture before the sight of the burning bush, became the subject of their worship. They burnt offerings at alters to the ethereal ideal of the idyll. For they were slaves in Egypt, a conquered people, and dependent upon whatever resources available for relaxation after hours. It is possible that their experience was unique from the experience of any other of the Egyptian workers who did not begin religions because they were smoking some unlike herbs. It is not inconceivable that they had access to a trade route to the far east which provided a more naturalistic and elemental method of delusion.

The Bugs were, nonetheless, the only idealists. All other forms of political religion practiced the realist approach of an at least anthropomorphic, but definitely living god. This answered the question quickly and clearly of just who it was that would rule.

The question of what drugs were prevalent in what geographic areas must also be considered when studying the evolution of different religions among different peoples of the world. Religion is the product of racial, drug supply-based isolationism of culture to distinct areas, and thus only by the distribution of all drugs disrespective of their borders and zones of natural production can the differences in religion begin to be broken down intellectually, under their varying influences, in order to bring the peoples of the world closer together and, ultimately, bind all of our drug-influenced different types of genetics into a single human tribal code.

The only drugs produced in the United States of any distinction have been the laboratory drugs of the post-industrial space-age, the extrapolations and recombinations of all other affective elements in the pure setting of science. This method of experimentation without expectation has promoted the formation of pop-culture, that all-inclusive glacier of unsatisfiable avarice. Further, because U.S. drugs require no agriculture, they are more efficient for space travel and, due to the hyper-physicalizing of the brain and diminishment of the role of the body caused by their usage, encourage the brain to leave the body behind and venture into space on its own. Acid needs no botanical maintenance, and is trippier in zero-G.

Be wary, however, for none of this is true. It is all the deranged ramblings of a hung-over stoner, proletarian through and through. It is less likely that any of this happened, or will happen, in the ways described than it is that my feet are on fire, which, by the way, yours are.

Happy Holidays.

domestic mammoths

In the beginnings of religions, animism was pagan. It was practised by shamans dressed like the prey, and often culminated in a sexual ritual or blood letting over a sacred stone. This led to the worship of the stones, and it is thought that this was at the end of the stone age when stone tools were used, at which time stone megaliths were erected in alignment with astronomical observations. As the pagan rituals became civilized they were increasingly associated anthropomorphically with the participants in the sacred rituals. These late medicine men and women also erected, or rather, had erected for them, even more massive stone monuments which included even more detailed records in their measurements of even more ancient alignments of celestial events.

As recently as the time of Christ, the Bugs were accused by the Romans and the other surrounding pagans of worshipping as a ritual pagan sacrifice the properly authorized Roman execution of a Bugish prisoner. The evidence for this exists in the canonized Roman Christian new testament and the Muslim Koran. The Roman version does not include the description of the battle of Massada as second Maccabees, however the battle is described in the Muslim Koran relative to the later rise of Mohammedism throughout the same region. It is evident that the scrolls of Qumran record the same events, which indicates that they arose later than the events occurred. This contradicts the Roman translators explanation of the history of Damascus as leading to and culminating in the Bugish revolts. In the Damascus documents there are also descriptions of what is described in the Koran relative the battle of Massada, which date the actual events described back to the time of Enoch, who had been associated with Thoth in ancient Egypt.

These events describe ancient historical celestial events, such as an apparent cometary impact associated by the Sumerians with Nibiru, and which caused the Biblical flood. The Sumerian tablets describe Edin as Ehdhin, an actual historical community in the Mesopotamian valley, which they claimed to be the first homo sapien community after the fall of Atlantis, and where they say genetic research occurred. In descriptions of Atlantis there abound descriptions of the remnants of ice age large mammals such as mammoths and the last of the dinosaurs. It is thought that the destruction of Atlantis occurred at the end of the ice age, when stone age coastal trade communities were submerged by the melting glaciers that had covered north america. It is also thought that all of this occurred at a time that was measured by alignments of celestial events in the heavens.

Property is Fear

Property is primarily based upon fear. Not fear of Others, but fear of the Dark. At night, when all was quiet, save for the stirrings of wild animals, our ancestors huddled around the glow of the fire light. If this light went out, all was lost. The light was not knowledge. The light was not wisdom. It was simply the force that kept the demons at bay. The demons of illusion, of confusion, of hallucination. Simply stated: Fear. And now things are no different, although with time they have expanded, bloated, and concretized through the millennia of human endeavor. This has been the Will to Labor. The will to create a Property of Mankind, that swells ever outward like the twisting universe, a slow explosion of matter from that first spark. Man now not only builds his own properties through existentialism, through control of his instincts, his emotions, his reactions, the reactions of others, but seeks out the

properties of the God he feels around him, the breath of the wilderness at the fringes. Man looks out of the small holes in his walls only briefly, towards infinity. But he cannot stand this view. He is still terrified of the Dark. He struggles against God, to relegate the signs God gives us, the symbols God weaves out of apparently random acts, to a cause and affect system which man can apprehend, a machine man can hold in his hand, a cage for God. This machine is called science; it is the search for God's properties in the behaviors of the natural. For Nature is the manifested Properties of God. And if man can list these, can call the names of God, can summon his might at the press of a button, then man has conquered God, has forced himself out into the cosmic night to possess the entire universe. And then there is nothing to be afraid of. Liberals live on the frontier. They are the hands, the eyes. Conservatives still tend the central fire. They are the mind which plots man's continual expansion. Those closest to the light which they have harnessed for themselves least fear the Darkness, for they have forgotten its true face. And those at the frontiers are Fools, for they turn their back on their own brethren in the name of change which is supposed to benefit all. Art is the artificial window hung on the wall of Property, the external wall of civilization, the perimeter of the human mind. The best art, that is, the most compelling, is that which inspires hope for New Properties. It attempts to embrace the latest discoveries of science for the purpose of “pushing the envelope.” It attempts to create the image of the previously impossible in order to inspire its cowardly audience to venture slightly further outward into the Dark. But artists fear the dark perhaps most of all. Much more than naive scientists, much more than inflammatory rhetoricians. For they can see even more than they can portray. they understand more than they can explain. They see God's messenger's, the shadows, but cannot yet speak their language. The first cave paintings were monsters made of animals and men. Strangers and Predators, transformed by the magic of art into the familiar and into prey. This is to pray. To address God as an unafraid equal. But this has never succeeded, nor can it; for man is neither unafraid, nor God's equal. God is not a being possessed of the same emotions as we. He cannot fear. For he encompasses all. We imagine, perhaps, that when we encompass all, we too will have nothing to fear. But it slips by our faith that there are always new fears. As long as there are new frontiers, people will be seeing demons reaching out from them to grab at our future in the form of our children. Shadows that would creep to the very heart of our sacred fire and choke it at its fuel sources. Our fire burns on our art. It feeds on our art, our expressions of our pure, simple desire to be unafraid, to be that which we are not, and which we can never be; to Become God, to achieve his throne; to lay claim to the Impossible. All those who say that art is the pride of man, and that it exists for the purpose of his pleasure, to beautify the interior of his self-made and self-maintained prison, are the most blind of all. For now the people who dwell between the frontier and the center have begun to fear both sides. The blinding light on one side, and the pulling Darkness on the other. There is no limit to the cowardice of man. Only for these people, trapped in between, there is no imaginary property which can credit them transcendence. Property is cold comfort to men who fear their own potentials.

Uncle Oeddy

Society grows strong through sublimation of sexual desire. Humans build with the energy we would otherwise be using to procreate. We work jobs that we tell ourselves satisfy our ids and we buy objects onto which we can further deceive ourselves by misplacing our lusts. Our economy is based on the fetishism of commodities, all carnal craving being dumped on items mass produced for our

dependence. Sex more than merely sells. Sex is sales.

Furthermore it can, and must, be said that a capitalist economy grows strong through a very specific perversion of natural amorous impulse — that being the Oedipal complex. The forcing of sexual drive into a world of exclusively Apollonian symbols makes it nearly invisible, but seeing the objectified roles and then the physical objects used as the receptacles for the displaced ethos of these roles allows the truth behind the facade of financial self-motivation to be publicly stripped bare.

First there is Daddy, who must be overcome. Traditionally this implies murder, although “progressive” historians (those who are liberal with the facts) raise some interesting points regarding the origin of this practice as merely metaphorical. Oedipus, they claim, was an early title of male nobility; making Oedipus Rex an unaccounted for redundancy. As was the practice, Oedipus as prince would simply overcome Oedipus as king by replacing him. Although in its oldest forms this may very well have been a less civil and altogether more savage ritual, involving the young son actually facing his aging father on a field of battle to the death. Either way it takes the punch out of the myth to say that Oedipus did know he was overcoming his own father.

In modern society this can be seen as simple enough originally, a son following in the vocational foot steps of his father and, in the case of a family-owned business, inheriting it when his father no longer desires the responsibility of managing it and wishes to retire. Nowadays it is a little more complex, the generation of the son being expected to earn more on average than the generation of the father, without the necessary tradition of direct vocational lineage.

This may be seen as the individualistic promise of America: to make every peasant a king (as opposed to the collectivist reality in the Soviet Union, where every king was made a peasant). It was this promise of economic opportunity that so appealed to immigrants when corporations began to form and allowed foreigners into our borders to fill the undesirable factory jobs here for less pay than unionized U.S. workers would accept. It is also this holier than all mentality that can be seen at the root of many issues of American aggression — domestic, national and international.

To begin with each new situation demands conquering, so it is no longer so simple for man to overcome his role once; he must constantly be bettering himself and tirelessly striving for absolute victory. The freedom they hope to gain as an ultimate reward can never be achieved. If it could it would mean society is finished being built, and society may never be finished being built. So partially employees must realize that they will work their entire lives without ever owning the company. Men in a capitalist economy feel that they sacrifice their creative energies enough at their jobs without the slightest allowance of negativity that they may then come home and corrupt their domestic affairs with their remaining, soured, destructive energy. They treat their wives just like their bosses treat them (in other words: badly) because they feel working ordains them the “king of their castle.”

We expect a certain amount of oppression as well by figures in authority based on the same premise. They worked hard to come to power and they may be excused if they then blow off steam by abusing that power. Police brutality, corruption ex officio and masculine military mentalities are all expressions of the resent felt by people as they struggle upward through hierarchies of command without being granted any satisfactory catharsis along the way. And because most people would do the same thing in the same situation, rationally sympathizing with their abusers, bosses are held under-accountable for their violations of human rights and of

unspoken laws of moral, ethical, civil behavior. Authority figures, especially within frustratingly bureaucratic institutions like respectable government, are simply expected to dictate. If they fail at this then the public chides them for not doing the job for which they are paid.

On an international scale our belief in individual sovereignty most frequently steers us into the realm of aggressive patriotism. If a country doesn't agree with our policies — that is, if a third world puny refuses to allow big businesses in to line the pockets of the rich already in political power while making the poor essentially corporate slaves — we accuse them of anti-patriotic sentiment, anti-American sentiment, Communist sentiment, and dub them a threat to national security. The CIA and the army rush in and install a puppet dictator, and the media back home proclaims it yet another Holy victory for the ways of freedom, Democracy and humanitarianism. American machismo awarded by the repression of lust into labor and consumerism knows no boundaries. National geographical borders it sends spies across, and economic opposition it sends soldiers to overcome. Father knows best.

As for Mommy, she is to be claimed. Insofar as the original tradition dictated murder as the proper method for overcoming daddy, it dictated sex as the proper method for objectification and ownership of mommy. Despite the theatrical profession to the contrary this patently does not mean that one's own mother is the object of one's sexual desire. Rather it means that one learns to admire and to attempt to emulate the relationship of their parents when one is old enough to begin to enter into sex-based relationships. As son becomes father, wife becomes mother; as son is father, all women are the same. Lastly, and most importantly, as all women are potentially mothers, all wives become property of husbands. What is learned along with the desire to replicate the behavior of your same sex parent is the desire for someone who behaves toward you as you see your opposite sex parent behaving toward your same sex parent. In the case of Oedipus, and of ancient societies, a submissive mother being dominated by a strong father.

The mother may be seen to represent Otherness, ergo — that which is not what is. Insofar, for example, as we live in a patriarchy, we do not live in a matriarchy. It is always that which we are not that we desire; and, for its own survival, which we must never become nor be completely satisfied with by possessing. The mentality at work here is one of perpetual desire without fear of threat. It creates a straw man to be set up on the horizon and knocked over by our progress towards it, only to be replaced by a new straw man on the new, expanded horizon, towards whom we then aim our expectations of self. There is the expected, and beyond that, the ideal.

Capitalism strictly dictates monogamy as the norm for expression of physical desires, of true sexual impulses, while on the other hand provides as the ideal a polygamy of products to want with poverty and to ultimately impregnate with your sense of self through the assertive action of purchase. On a domestic level this creates a situation whereby two types of women may be allowed to exist, and none besides. The Saint and the Slut, or alternately, the Wife and the Mistress.

The wife represents Otherness conquered, singularly claimable; she is the woman become mother by the initial assentation of her prince to the throne. Belongings arise to replace her role. TV raises children these days, while microwave ovens cook dinner and pornography satisfies male hormones. Belongings get treated like trash that is never really satisfying, never fulfilling, and mommy gets treated like trash. Harshly used and thrown away. She can never rationally hope to be enough. Each new situation that demands he conquer it requires the acclamation of a new bride.

Which leads ultimately to the role of the mistress — Otherness unconquerable. The implication of a wife who can never be married, who can never be made into the submissive role of mommy, is that the man can achieve a million thrones, conquer a million situations, and still only need one woman: the one whom he can never have. The role of the mistress may have always existed, and as far as feminists obsessed with asserting the manipulative, influential might of women are concerned it has, right back to temple prostitutes, wild women and nature goddesses; but it could also easily be seen as increasingly prevalent in modern times: the result of learning from the economy itself, which presents the role of Otherness on a national scale.

A successful capitalist economy provides the equivalent of the mistress, in other words the perpetually desirable mommy, through its products. Typical of a capitalist economy are two integral components to perpetual desirability.

The first is that the product must never fully satisfy the customer. If it did why would they ever again give their money to the company that made it? On the contrary it must be the very image of that which is thought to be perfect and yet manage to fail in some small but critical regard of performance or appearance. The most obvious and apprehendable example of this sales strategy is the automobile, the pride of the capitalist economy. The car is perfect in every regard, representing travel and therefore freedom, the American rugged ideal, as well as physical prowess and sexual appeal. It falls short only in its dependence on depleting, increasingly expensive fossil fuels. Like a drug addict, without gasoline the car becomes useless.

The second method of perpetual desirability is induced shame. Advertisements convince consumers that no matter what they do they will always fail to meet certain standards, usually the same standards as the products claiming to supplement human shortcomings tend to lack. Objectification of the human body creates a desirable ideal body, used by whatever product it promotes; how can mommy compete with this? The promises made by this body are all of reimplementation of the hormonal drives of puberty, its features always augmented so as to be virtually bursting with vigor and fertility. All products, no matter how trivial their true function, fulfill the social role of mistress through advertising; they all promise youth, beauty, strength, love. Anything the consumer may have already lost, and even if they haven't then they are made to doubt its permanence in the form of it they currently own.

On the international scale one finds the physical process behind this static, ideal mistress. Production of consumer goods keeps her alive, and therefore nothing must impede the process; it is her health. For the good of this health, production is moved to where it can be done the most efficiently, that is, with the most submissive and obedient labor available, and where it can be done the cheapest, that is, where the people are the poorest and expect the least: the third world. As mentioned earlier neo-colonialism is the meat and potatoes of modern capitalism. It is not entrepreneurship, nor the sovereign individual. It is cheap foreign slaves laboring to manufacture breaking, plastic gizmos for sale in America, where demeaning, objectifying advertisements convince citizens that flashy, colorful packaging, a brand name and a big price tag mean quality whores. Mommy is the third world, fixing dinner for big business. The American middle class is mommy, buying what it is told to, so proud to be desired exclusively by corporations and so jealous of its competition — both the rich whose glut it admires and the poor who it envies every scrap from the economic table.

The creation of an idealized economic mistress to substitute for the original Otherness of Mother Earth usually results in a conflict of interests between the two. Corporations are responsible for producing the majority of garbage that slowly

“Infinity Inverted”

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chokes the planet to death, and are entirely responsible for the significant pillaging and depletion of her finite natural resources; but individual consumers refuse to either recognize this sin of their father's or to accept responsibility for their part in the waste chain: condoning the depletion by buying its result, and condoning the littering by contributing those same goods to the dump as soon as they inevitably malfunction.

Capitalism is entirely dependent on these roles continuing on as human psychology dictates they will, so long as they are satisfied. And as far as sublimation goes capitalism has a more promising future now than communism ever did. It produces more of the same corrupt mentality, “work is freedom,” and shows no sign of weakening sales any time soon. The more dissatisfied people are with their jobs or the disparity of sexual authority at home the more they shop. If you don't like what you have, buy more of the same and hope that it's different. When in doubt, binge.

But where does all this lead? Binging leads to fat, and it is true well-fed people never lead revolutions. But does America's fat equate with success? Are people in the middle class of the first world as happy as they are obese? In general they are not. They cannot afford to achieve a maximum amount of wealth with which any rational person would be satisfied. Rather they are driven to the point of psycho-somatic starvation by the idealized need to consume more.

In what type of society would it be necessary to deny ideological loyalty and stimulate quantitative uncertainty and imbalance? A society bent on dissatisfied, greedy citizens? In what type of society would it be necessary to promise everyone kingship? A society breeding better dictators? In what type of society would it be necessary to focus the national economy on production and accumulation? Is that society not an Empire? Are we not headed toward a world-wide empire dictated by the most successfully selfish of the rich? Are we not going to live in a tower of Babel whose foundation is our own detritus, burying the third world and Mother Earth, obsessed with the increasing incomprehensibility of our own necessary self-deception?

As much as capitalism represents Oedipal assertion of self over father and mother alike, communism represents the revenge of traditionally acquiescent Otherness. blah blah blah...etc.

the Master Race

In every nation, and by their competitions and combinations producing more dominant groupings, in every portion of the world, there are breeding experiments going on that date back to the earliest days of civilization. The first and perhaps greatest civilization, the Old Kingdom of Egypt, began this trend by keeping marriages within family bloodlines, thus occasionally producing retarded offspring but, nonetheless, compacting into only a few individuals the genetic traits required for social superiority.

Democracy makes rule by these families, or rather (because the strict rule of intra-family-marriage has gone out of style in favor of inter-family marriage and the maximizing by region of genetic superiority through combination of the most civilized) by these *races*, more difficult, but not impossible. It still allows the manipulation of rule by money — generally “old-money” or “family-money” built up over generations for just such a purpose. Sadly, Democracy does offer the proles a minor sense of hope in the form of the Horatio Alger, “pull yourself up by the bootstraps,” nouveau rich myth as an incentive for their continual slavery.

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Communism is far worse, because it is founded on a revolution which kills off these sacred bloodlines and replaces them with a clot of those slobs least fit to rule.

The secretive breeding of the best educated humans on the planet continues this very day, although it has lost much of its mystique and, thus, much of its stigma. It is practiced primarily by Republican suburbanites and all “rational” people who desire to maximize their long-term property interests rather than throw away their heritage on such propaganda of suppression as “love.” It is the very root of the philosophy known as “realism.” The fact remains, however, despite the casual nature of these experiments, that they have always been and will always be conducted with the intention of producing a race of leaders. The fact that we do not already have a single world dictator is attributable less, as liberals are wont to claim, to the rate of the development of technology (which is, itself, the result of better breeding in developed nations), but to the fact that these breeding experiments are not yet complete. Certain traits remain to be combined with certain others.

As of today, nonetheless, selective breeding in humans has produced the majority of the world’s leaders. This suppressed master-race proudly shares ruthless self-interest with the most savage beasts of the wild. They have no interest in the variation of cultures and no respect for any culture that glorifies sub-civilized behavior. It is these men, in fact, who comprise any organization of note; even, ironically, the UN. They only seek personal gain or gain for their nation and their breed. They will accept nothing short of eventual global domination and will fight to the death any institution, such as communism, that would seek to thwart what they feel is the most noble of all possible human quests. To them absolutism is the Holy Grail, Kether, the throne of God, the highest imaginable aspect of existence attainable through strivation by the will and cultivation of the essence. It is their destiny, branded on the DNA floating in their blood.

the student class

The power through influence on the market of the third social class goes generally unrecognized. The third social class falls for the most part beneath the economic status of even the proletariat, although it is marked by a concentrated layer of extreme wealth as well. It is not defined so much economically as it is by social isolation. It is, of course, the student class.

It’s potency rests in its determination of fashion, which will always emulate the proletariat whom it idealizes despite the lack of cultural contributions the proletariat is capable of in reality. The student class vascillates through five year cycles regarding which aspect of the proletariat it will emulate in terms of fashion. For five years it will obey the least suggestion directed at it from the quadrant of the inner city. (Just for minor examples: Punk, 1978-1983; hip-hop/rave 1995-2000.) Alternately the student class will kowtow to their country brethren and the uniforms of the less fortunate in fields such as agriculture and hard industry. (Most notable in recent years is the “grunge” look of the early 90’s, combining the traditional pair of blue-jeans virtually grafted onto proletarian genetics with a flannel for five years worth of booming sales of ugly clothes.)

The penchant for idealizing proletarian fatigues is directly the fault of liberal socializing in public schools and universities. It is nearly impossible to have a style that conflicts with the prevalent prole-trend and not alienate oneself from all student social events. (The result of this attempt on modern campuses is the covertly bourgeoisie, self-obsessed, glorifyingly morbid and isolationist style Goth.)

The student class is further defined by their strict adherence to age-based, or

perhaps more accurately, development-based conversation topic limitations.

In all years however the discussion of popular music, especially that which occurs beneath and “therefore in opposition to” whatever style of music sells best. In terms of music, tastes are more individual than in terms of wardrobe because different bands, regardless of message, make different amounts of money. Even though it remains currently “uncool” to like any band that has “sold out” (outgrown financially the resources of their proletarian origins), all student-aimed music is basically the same politically, encouraging sublimation through conformity in the guise of catharsis through rebellion. The better a band can hypnotize and paralyze an audience with relatively meaningless charms of revolution, the better liked they will be and the greater their long-term sales. In any event it should seem more obvious to the members of the student class that no cultural or political revolution is ever going to be led by a band so long as that band is being fed fat checks for doing drugs, fucking models and cutting the infrequent quality single.

It can be argued that the only real appeal of music to the student class is of neither an agitational nor propagandizing basis. The true allure, and the other limitation of conversational topicality that transcends level of curricular development, must be drugs. Students are the primary users of drugs, and this is as obvious as it could possibly be. The fact that this continues, and only seems to be strengthening as the quest for the perfect disassociative for every individual leads to further diversification of affects, would seem to imply that it is wholeheartedly condoned by the very people in power who, for the entire time, have claimed to be fighting against it. It is well known that the army prefers to test all sorts of drugs on their grunts in order to find which are the strongest and/or most conducive to mass brainwashing long before the CIA is allowed to ship them into the ghettos.

Students think they understand the way the entire world works, but they do not understand how alike they are in tastes, nor how much power this similarity of buying habits gives them in a free market. For example, if students wanted drugs legalized, all they would have to do would be to briefly unite in a conditional ban of all their favorite clothing and music products. Because the student class comprises the majority of the service sector, increasingly important to and the fastest growing type of work in developed nations, they could even, if they should so happen to take a sudden urge for doing so, shut down society and achieve a communist revolution within a week if they all simply didn't show up for work.

subcultures L&R

I. introduction

A. thesis topic: “the formal difference between bourgeois and proletarian subcultures throughout the history of the class struggle”

B. definition of “counterculture”

C. definition of “subculture”

II. analysis of the evolution of a subculture, with class-based historical examples

A. brief introduction, presenting subculture generation as dialectic

B. 1st stage: as a “small bubble” (innovative individuals)

1. famous bourgeois individuals (Michelangelo, Picasso, Hitler)

a. characterized as self-motivated heroes

2. famous proletarian individuals (Einstein, Marx, Ghandi)

a. characterized as selfless martyrs

C. 2nd stage: as a “medium bubble” (small groups)

1. bourgeois guilds and cults

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- a. guilds and cults of the Late Medieval period (esp. Templars and Masons)
 - b. modern religious cults and state militias
 - c. inherent qualities
 - individualistic
 - fearing conspiracy
 - secretive and conspiratorial
 - 2. proletarian sects and unions
 - a. religious morality as inspiring to humanitarianism
 - b. labor unions of the Victorian era, Guilded Age and since
 - c. inherent qualities
 - humanistic and universal
 - advocating justice and equality
 - open and issue-oriented
 - D. 3rd stage: as a “large bubble” (popular movements and political parties)
 - 1. bourgeois movements
 - a. fascism, the political Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie
 - politically liberal (larger government, more powerful single party)
 - morally conservative (fewer freedoms)
 - the government dictates desire
 - stricter definition of “social movement”
 - materially motivated (the rich get richer)
 - b. populism and capitalist Democracies
 - politically conservative (smaller government, strictly two-party)
 - morally liberal (more freedoms, looser laws)
 - the media dictate desire, the economy is democratic
 - more hollow definition of “social movement”
 - materially motivated (the rich get richer)
 - 2. proletarian movements
 - a. realistic communism, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat
 - structurally almost identical to fascism
 - materially motivated (the poor get richer, the rich get poorer)
 - considered ironic by the existing, bourgeois dominant-culture
 - b. idealistic communism and brotherly anarchy
 - structurally almost identical to capitalist Democracy
 - the government is dictated by desire, the economy is non-existent
 - ethically or spiritually motivated (we are all better people)
 - considered impossible by the existing, bourgeois dominant-culture
- (optional)
- [III. Where are we now?
- A. examination of existing subcultures and dominant-cultures
 - 1. individuals
 - a. Bill Gates vs. the world (the revenge of le nouveau riche nerds)
 - b. Mother Teresa vs. Princess Diana (Rosie the Riveter vs. Barbie)
 - 2. small groups
 - a. right wing religious cults adopt martyrdom, militias arm against the government, and youth gangs badly immitate the Mafia
 - b. corrupt labor unions, drug-driven student groups, Green Peace
 - 3. movements, parties and existing dominant-cultures
 - a. the decline of fascism and globalizing of capitalism (dependency on pop)
 - techno/swing/gangsta music — glitz packaging for fascism

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- feminazism (every woman for herself against the conspiracy of men)
- modernism (technology is the rich’s weapon against an ideal future)
- realism
- b. the decline of communism and Disneyizing socialism
 - alterno-country love songs (Fish and Pearl Jam)
 - welfare vs. work (“workers want to work; no, really, they do. Honest.”)
 - ecopessimism (“tree-hugging”)
 - idealism]

Brothers and Sisters,

Let us say, first, that any culture significantly outside that which is purchased as superior by the majority of the population is, by default, a culture counter to the survival of that dominant culture. Thus, anything which is unpopular is a risk to everything which is popular, and any object towards which respectable society so much as raises an eyebrow must be branded by that dreaded and infamous apprehension, “counterculture.”

Let us also say that, between that counterculture which is diametrically opposed to existing standards, that which is so disgusted by and disgusting to the self-appointed purveyors of civility and manner as to be shunned as a volatile offense, only as accepted by or accepting of its opposite as oil mixed with water, and the repressed, oft oppressive, stuffed shirt of upright society, there exist a plethora of compromises combining aspects of the two in a way neither exclusive of either, nor outright rejected by both. These countercultures which, like bubbles in seltzerized water, arise and float about within the dominant culture, may be called “subcultures.” It should remain clear, however, that insofar as subcultures compose a weakening to the overall integrity of the superculture in which they reside, they are still countercultures; but because they do not necessarily seek to actively destroy the host culture, neither may they be considered explicitly so.

Now, with these terms understood, we may address the issue which concerns us here tonight: The formal difference between proletarian and bourgeois subcultures in the history of class struggle.

Subcultures should be seen as the seeds from which new dominant cultures will grow. One seed may outstrip the others, and here we may include the vile idea of struggle, conflict and competition. On the other hand, as all the seeds combine more or less equally the structural components of both their parent cultures, any successive culture is the product of a compromise between, a cooperation by, or a synthesis of both its existing predecessor and that predecessor’s implied opposite. (This certainly sounds like a relegation to virtual invisibility of the feminine role in production of new systems of authority, although this is, in itself, the product of an existing dominant culture defined by exactly such impeachable discrimination.) By either preferred perspective on the nature of dialectics, subcultures are in general (and ultimately one in specific) the synthesis of dominant-culture thesis and counter-culture antithesis which, in turn, becomes the new culture.

When subcultures first appear they are, perhaps, the product of a single individual, or no more than a few individuals, independently developing ideas which are, though unbeknownst to one another, essentially the same. Here we have Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Here we have Pablo Picasso. Here we have Adolf Hitler and the first few members of the Nazi party. At this time they are, shall we say, small-bubbles, presumably of little consequence, which develop in the absence of aid from

and most probably unbeknownst to the dominant culture and the majority of its herd.

Later, subcultures have achieved a definitively social status, graduating to the level of small, tightly knit groups. At this stage in their development we see the formation of cults, unions or religious sects, and a zealous adherence by their members to a belief in the group's and their personal difference from and superiority to the dominant culture. This, “medium-bubble” stage will be the stage to which we devote the large portion of our consideration here tonight.

The final level to which subcultures may aspire autonomously of the dominant culture is that of a large, popular group, generally qualified by the term “movement.” As such a subculture ultimately manifests itself in the form of a political party, such as the Nazis, fascists, or communists. At this point the movement, given material body by its political party, is then considered by the public as a possible new dominant-culture.

This consideration, it should be now briefly noted, is done in the midst of the distortion of the contender by the existing dominant-culture. For example, it is the common practice of pop-culture, which is founded upon a morbid obsession with all desired objects that question its own continued desirability, to prematurely attribute the term “movement” to any fad or fashion being produced at a rate exceeding demand which will, thus, expire momentarily. Any citizen of a capitalist Democracy knows infinitely more about the “movements” described to them through the media of the corporate-interest driven private sector than about any real social problems resulting from the production of these fascinating diversions. But such perversion of the issue-oriented essence of a social movement to serve the need for self-preservation among a few multi-national business conglomerations defined by the production of addictive luxury items and bombs is not enough. There is, simultaneously, the concretizing of two traditional and opposing political parties. The perpetual sale of these two parties is managed by suppression of their origins, creating the illusion of creation by divine right, characteristically singular and nonreproducible, and a feeling of unshakable historical permanence.

Towards the end of the Medieval Period, markedly a long time before the beginning of the Renaissance, subcultures began to appear throughout Europe in the form of just such cults.

INTRODUCTION TO A CONSPIRACY

Because there can be no proof of its existence, the conspiracy may be thought of as a kind of religion. This is not to say there is no proof of the existence of God, or, as we now know Him, the “Primary Clear Light.” One can, purely as an individual, experience God. Anyone who has done this knows He is not confined to any one church and, in fact, is best worshipped outside of all walls. This is the fundamental distinction between God and the conspiracy. For one can Never experience the full force of the conspiracy, no matter the set or the setting. One may know God without dying, but the same is not true of the conspiracy. To understand it, one must be part of it, and to be part of it, one must already be dead.

Let us say that the conspiracy started with the Egyptians, although...

No. First let us be frank, for we are here to reveal things, and this is best done as they come to mind, not by any preexisting pedantic structure of words that won't mean as much anyway. Let us say that the Great Work is a work of communication, let us say that it is a form of discipline, in one way, as it illustrates, and that it is a vital exchange of necessities, a deal. The most important interchange is that which occurs

between oneself and God, and this is simply to say the Higher Consciousness whose mind the universe is. When one deals with God, one is always the one elevated; it is the most simple exchange because you give God only that which you have already accumulated, that is, not material possessions per se, but all affectations and memories, and what God takes he will return to you transformed, outturned, completed and blossoming. The sacrifice of the self is ultimately a relief, that is, it saves one from wanting their own death, and, by extension, it eventually becomes less inconvenient than living without it. When one communicates with God, how can I put this, one learns the artificiality of physical existence. At times of extreme psychic trauma, be it by physical injury (induced reaction), emotional injury (evoked reaction), intellectual injury (uninvolved reaction), or spiritual injury (involved reaction), or, of course, any combination thereof, the mind assumes the role of God by merging with a great white light. God is, afterall, a being perpetually undergoing reincarnation as well, just as his seekers. One chooses afterwards their role in the great scheme of the universe, that is, the cathexis of physical intersections which occurs within God's brain, the material universe. All of this is so obvious to anyone who has experienced it that it will cause them physical pain to read it. You see, to them... well... okay, to them all words spoken allowed, a-hem, should be lies told to conceal the great work. I don't know why this is. I do know that they are, to a great degree, psychic. Wait, wait! I don't want to lose your sympathy, please. Not now. At least give me my chance to explain. As everyone has their own philosophy I have my own explanation of reality, and the fact that it is narrative is not my fault, for why, if life is not meant to be understood in a narrative form, was fiction ever invented? And this is the crux of my argument: that everything exists in order to be understood, that is, to be recognized for the ascensions toward God-hood which they are and allowed to complete their function within the great machine to the full extent of their internal and external potential.

When a kitten first learns that it can be hurt, only then does it start biting.

If one is careful it is possible to never make a decision which is not the one God had hoped you would make.

It is possible to determine opportunity from temptation.

When one lives in accordance with God, when one does nothing which they will later regret, when one is up front and yet in control of all their dealings with others, with trees, with the ocean, with themselves, only then will their possible realities appear as they truly are: infinite.

Let us say this much for Freud: He understood that we all speak on multiple levels, and that dreams are the ultimate extension of will over reality, a sort of wish conjured up within the psi system. When my libertarian friend calls me up asking me to do a favor and then declines my services due to the unknown complexity of the task by saying, “I don't want anybody running anywhere,” I know what she really means, and I forgive her for meaning it, and I beg her silently for my forgiveness for knowing it. And this is all I mean by saying “people are psychic.” We can read the potential intentions behind coincidences as loudly as car horns and barking dogs. For some of the newly initiated it is difficult to be around large groups of people. But this is only a phase, and quite normal, and won't last, alas.

God calls us to be social, to interact on an infinity of levels, attempting to communicate casually even though we all know that each other knows all our secrets. But such is ego death. And to worry about it is as wasteful as to worry about any other temporal thing. Of course there are those aberrations who, despite the fluoride in the water and despite the sugar in their sodas and despite all their

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friends’ attempts simply cannot get it. But they are simply those who wished to be wise in order to be different from everyone, thus hoping ill of their fellows, and who now suffer as a result of such a universally approachable wisdom as they are holding in their hand. That is, they who have been humbled due to complex plans concocted by friends and enemies alike over countless sleepless nights.

new conspiracy

Let me teach you about a new conspiracy. There is a brood about which many people know, which fewer idolize, of which a few rarely speak. A syndicate which almost all fear.

This organisation has always been administrated by men, although recently they have been allowing women to join as equals. In the past, women were used only as ceremonial assistants, involved in costuming and arming the dominant males. All nationalities and ethnicities may apply; some are accepted because of what they are while for the same reason others may be turned away. Minorities of special appeal include those of darker complexion or exotic heritage, the historically “underprivileged.” Here, all runts and strays may seek shelter and aid.

They have their own facility, where they play at being a host of mystic gods, wearing strange uniforms and performing incomprehensible rituals, frequently involving the deaths of citizens not worthy to be in their sect. Sacrifices, they say, have to be made. When they leave this lodge they go back to their seemingly ordinary lives — eating, watching TV, marrying; all the while appearing on the surface so much like you and me that no one would ever suspect them of being what they truly are.

These people believe that, once you have fallen into their clutches, they, not you, should have the final say as to whether you live or die.

They amass great sums of your money to buy their bizarre instruments, which they will then use against you, claiming that only they understand what is in your best interest. In your name they try to reverse Nature’s plan, and this perversion of the Divine pattern has always been and will always be their primary code. They swear a solemn oath upon it, penalizing any who violate it with the worst castigation available to them — banishment from membership.

Lit dimly by the distant gleam of Greece’s Golden Age their history stretches back almost beyond recounting. It is probable their craft was perfected as early as the Old Kingdom in Egypt, where it was ministered to Pharaohs and performed even after death on their corpses; it sprang up under similar conditions in the farthest eastern corners of the mysterious Orient, in imperial China, perhaps due to an undiscovered trade route. They, themselves can trace their origins back to an ancient order of crusaders, the Hospitalers, who brought back the roots of their arcane knowledge from their invasions of the Holy Lands, from both the Bugish and Quetzal infidel tribes. For centuries following, the occult practitioners of this black art butchered thousands in its practise. Those who understood its secrets held positions of great sway behind the most powerful kings and clergy, shaping historical events from behind a dark veil of anonymity, shaping strategies based solely upon their own unique twist on ethics. During plagues they were even known to roam the countryside in hideous masks, preying on the terminal by selling them false hopes. This was surely their lowest hour.

Since that time many of Europe’s most famous figures have belonged to this secretive society; of note is Leonardo DeVinci, who clandestinely studied lost texts and inculcated himself to the ingrained technique of dissection of the dead in the name

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of his allegiance to this underground cult, concealing his sacrilege beneath the nose of the pope. The Catholic Church has always been an enemy of this covert cabal, and some Christian denominations have sworn animosity specifically against all their unseen disciplines.

This clan of secretive intellectuals claims to value the good of humanity over the good of individuals, even over their own personal welfare, but the majority of the common folks they profess to serve cannot even understand the nature of the “help” they provide, and many even die from receiving their subtle elixirs. Not one single leader can be found, even by this sect’s most secluded inner circles, to speak for them all as one — yet there is little doubt that they are all confederates of one another. They claim to be capable, skilled and open, luring hundreds of suckers to their deaths every day, all over the world. The conspiracy has spread to every corner of the globe and infiltrates the minds and pocket books of every single living soul all across the entire planet.

These people
are doctors.

on psychosis

Psychosis.

Psychosis is the enemy of God.

Psychosis is no other than Satan. Satan the dark one. Satan the dark light.

Satan is the madness in the mind of God.

Imagine a man strapped to a wheel for all eternity. It is all he has known since birth. He knows of no life other than it. He is, when he comes into manhood, finally allowed to watch how other people turn the wheel. Then he is expected to learn to turn the wheel for himself. Finally he is set free of the wheel. We drive around in circles in life. Others see us going nowhere. The simulacrum is very tricky. It will always find some way to relate to us. The free form delusion in the mind of God is ever close and present. The ridiculous notion of freedom from the banal and the mundane. We can only evolve slowly, for as many referentials as we cast out upon others, so do that many come back from others in upon us, and more, for we are seen by strangers even as we are driving on the streets of life. Our existence as an observation of the all seeing eye of the Lord is contingent upon our own ego, but this is defined in various ways, and is therefore segmented and piecemeal. The madness of Satan creeps in. The venegful wrath of God. People used to wear goat masks and dance around fires to throw themselves into fits of hysteria. Nowadays executives go to encounter groups in wildrness retreats. It has to be let out in some way, once it finds its own way in. And in this way it animates us, as it does the playful little animals, who are too free to be posessed by it. The one referential is a hologram of the bigger referential, the smaller part contains the larger whole, and thus that discorporeal anthropomorphication of our electromagnetic conductivity is released in the mind in relation to the storage of the immediately preceeding referential. One rolls over to the next, and between them there is an inversion from fact or fiction to its opposite and back again, or from fact or fiction to its opposite. Once one has made a sequential referential out of Choronzon, one is free to bend space and time in any manner and in any form or force one likes, and this is the free will surrounded on all sides by madness. One can thus enter and leave this state as one likes, however if other people see you there it is of the same effect as the old wive’s tale of making a face when the wind changes. This is because being free within a malleable holographic simulacrum of referential infinitude does not confine you away from the reality of being only an

object under the gaze of Otherness. Thus, other people are free to convey, even suggest to you through their gestures, words and actions that what they perceive of you, when you release your free will in madness, or anything that differs from the norm, is to them alien, awkward, uncomfortable, etc. along a long list of words associated with the affixion of a stigmata, or scarlet letter, to mark the subjectified object as criminal or of ill intent to whatever form of community they imagine they individually represent to it, or, in reality, what they collectively represent to it of a community. This, itself, however, is a kind of possession on their part, and therefore a second level order of madness. To have handled insanity is to be contaminated by it, and the insane carry the taint in their blood. But this second order madness is socially acceptable, because it occurs as upon the level that is above the head of the individual, that of the crowd or of the watchful collective. It is true that madness is the media in relationship to royalty. Media, that creation of jacobite Masonry, serves upon the royalty with their full force, truly in a state of panic stricken frenzy. This was the same tactic used by the Nazis in WWII against Poland, their peace loving neighbor. However just as the instrumentation of media has grown out of the craft masonry of jacobins, that is, the mass production of the working class, so has the working class evolved from the division with the class of royals. The institutionalization of religion and the state initiated the beginning of the division of ego from the objectified definition of madness. The church and the state were both built on madness. The ruling class, the royals, began to cultivate a study of it in the bloodlines, as it was a symptom that could be brought out by interbreeding to a degree to which the only side effects might be slight haemophilia. The working class began to study it in representational form. They studied it in everything, the arts, the liberal sciences; finally they formed a definition of madness as being part of a multifaceted simulacrum system capable of mirroring many natural emotions which they called the media. The media are a tool that are being used to put the majority of the focus on certain celebrity figures, who are then held up as being representational. This suspends them from rational disbelief and renders them free of the gravity of fear of immediatism that draws the public attention to them. These representational figures represent an archetypal no man's land between the biophysically entrenched soldiers of our souls, fighting over what will be the boundary of the ego. Hollywood, all centers of artistic creation, instruments of technological telecommunications are all wrapped up in a definition for madness in the second degree — a slow, passive, calm acculturation — while meanwhile they are the videodrome of interzone. While they try to portray events too early, as a social self-consciousness forewarning, they are always rushing around portraying events too late, live and in progress, honoring the deceased, in a dramatic recreation. Without the star system to hold onto, the media would be nothing but a voyeuristic lecher leering at the monarchs and democrats. The social simulacrum in this case has come to surpass, or rather even, usurp the right of Aleister Crowley: that every man and every woman is a star. In truth, each of us that ever has lived is a star, even an entire galaxy of such inspirationally triggered representations, all of which turned into black holes so that we could be here now, hopefully, sitting somewhere nice and talking about all this. Insofar as the media exist exclusively as a way of misdirecting and diverting our, the public's, attention away from matters such as this, which are of spiritual concern, so the more it tightens its grip, the more star systems will slip through its fingers. However, to introduce spirituality in any form is to allow for the madness of the freedom of the soul, which is the fear of immediatism. When the power goes out we feel suddenly mortal, but when the power is on we do not feel so all

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mighty. When we are suddenly deprived of our media, our electronic telephones, our television sets, computers, refrigerators, microwave meals, even hot water heaters is when we feel the fear of immediatism. This implies the necessity of taking action, making descisions, putting things in order, preparing for an ultimate end. However we are told the human spirit is free. This implies the soul is bound. By its life it is bound to the media. However we are also told that the soul is immortal. Yet we know the media, like a light switch, can be turned off. So what is the media then, but the madness of the soul in chains to the civic spirit. And if the media is turned off, then the madness becomes the liberation of the soul from the mediated chains to the civic spirit. The madness of freedom. The madness of the abyss. The soul stops participating in the active process of mediation and is once again alone. In truth matters of spirituality are only another diversion in the study of madness, and are even covered quite frequently by the media, but these are largely watered down by association of the individual's holy guardian angel or free spirit with the civic duty of the media to tell you the truth and lie to you at the same time using representationalism. True spiritual matters are left for the individual to decide how to find for themselves, and are in no way segregated by the church or state from the study of madness. For this reason it is said that one can tell the conditions of one's society by telling the conditions of one's asylums. In most cases, these are the places where those thought to be incurable by any known conventional means are shipped off to, to be experimented upon using whatever is the current, modern, experimental methodology. During the past fifty years this has been limited to behaviorism in the first world, where one is confined under observation in an experimental setting. This is thought to represent a simulacrum of the normal conditions of first world society. This sort of second order madness is considered socially acceptable.

gone

The essence of time travel is multiple personality schizophrenia. This is because of superimposition of multiple timelines. In each timeline there exists a different unique personality for each individual person. This has been expressed as the theory of multiple universes existing in different dimensions. Thus, in each different universe, or timeline, there is an alternate being, identical to us, and yet with their own unique personality.

The essence of personality is the superimposition of these different personae in different universal timelines. This occurs through subtle energy fluctuations which we can measure as brain waves, endochrinal secretions and emotions. Really, the cause of these is an interaction of the microcosmic (biological) with the macrocosmic (multiversal).

Free will is a virus, and the aura is a bacteria. Mitochondrial DNA is a virus, and the DNA double helix is a bacteria. The nervous system is a virus, and the body is a bacteria. In all these cases the viral component feeds off the bacterial component, while the bacterial component regenerates itself. This is the symbiotic essence of all autotrophic and heterotrophic life.

The aura is a metaform, or fourth spatial dimensional shape. As it fluctuates in the fourth spatial dimension, that is, as it moves about, guided by the free will, its different edges, corners and faces produce different electrochemical reactions in the body. These electrochemical reactions are brain waves, endochrinal secretions and emotions.

Now, while the body occupies only a point on or within each such auric metaform, each such auric metaform trascends spacetime and touches upon similar

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bodies in multiple realities, universes, or dimensions. Thus, the free will of one is the guiding influence of many, who are considered self similar, despite being different bodies, unique and autonomous in composition, occupying different timelines in different dimensional universes.

Therefore, through becoming one with the free will, the soul essence of any one body in a certain dimensional timeline can “body jump” into a similar body that it can be connected with through hyperspace, that is, across the difference between dimensional timelines of universes.

This is the essence of inspiration: that is, an alignment of transdimensional, multiversal timeline personae. In other words, whereas esp and collective doublethink breaks down individual creativity into a collective unconsciousness, inspiration is, in reality, entirely individual. The ideas are not shared collectively between bodies in the same material reality, but occur instantaneously to the same essential source of free will across the entire dimensional spectrum. This means that, instead of permeating space, it permeates multiple timestreams.

Penut Butter

An electron maintains a single path in its nuclear orbit, even when it changes shells, or energy levels. We can only say, therefore, that these shells exist as points on a circle around a sphere where it becomes more probable to find the electrical charge acting as a particle. Yet they are more than this, for they seem to pre-exist the electron’s movement toward one from another. That is to say that, with the proof of the existence of one energy shell, comes implication of the potential for all others. The result of this is simply that, when the electron is compelled to move, by the interaction of a photon for example, it pursues a phi bound course until it reaches the next energy shell or sub-shell, where it is impelled to adopt a course in accordance with the dimensions of this shell. The fact that the electron corrects its orbit in a phi bound path rather than the polar angle perpendicular to the orbit proves, according to the second law of motion, that it exists in a force in and of itself. It is obviously comprised of force-carrying rather than real particles, or it would not be possible for the path of the electron to pass through some shells on its way to another. This may be thought of as equivalent to gravitons, except that, at this scale, no such particle is supposed to exist — it is thought the very dual nature of their charge holds electrons bound ‘round nuclei. Therefore we are forced again to cope with the concept of naked probability. As we already know, an electron is only a particle when struck by a particle, and exists as a cloud of probability the rest of the time; in other words it is nothing but probability with a charge. Perhaps with the smaller units describing the shells in which an electron is not, but could be, orbiting, we are seeing the same essential substance as in the electron itself, since they are apparently interspersed throughout and /or underlying the cloud itself.

a little legend

Countess Odessa stepped out onto her balcony, swallowed up by the gorgeous dawn, the crumbling cliffs, the undulating woods, her personal gardens of poison flowers, and spit. Below her were amassed some ten thousand or more troops. It was not enough. They were here in this morning, shivering in its thin, crisp air, conversing nervously and now, in her presence, as attentive as hounds, their armor rattling as they shook, partially from the cold and, she imagined, partially in sheer awe; they were assembled here, these ten thousand — afterall each came from somewhere different. Perhaps as many as four lived together, four here, four there,

or fewer, but it was logical that the majority of them each derived from a different spot upon this wretched earth. They had sung last night and the Countess heard them. She had wished that she could go down and join them. The last song they had sung was a dirge, long and terribly depressing. Then they had gone to bed. Had they slept? Last night in the terrible cold? How awful. And now they were all standing here, within one another's presence, their bodies held only inches from one another. They breathed the same cold air; they could see their own breath, they could see each other's breath; their noses turned red. The countess didn't feel like killing them. How could she condemn this much living flesh to open, patient soil? She wished she were amongst them, looking up from beside her brethren, at this goddess of a human. She would proudly die then, beside them, her blood flowing across the softened dirt and mingling with their own. Their eyes all looked at her, some tired, some alert. They bestowed upon her, forced upon her even she felt as she choked, complete responsibility for their lives. Their deaths. They wanted to live, to continue on as they had been, eating, drinking, singing beside large fires in the stillness of the dark. They did not want to admit to themselves that they were looking up at she who would destroy them. They wanted to see before them their savior, the one who would relieve them of their chores, who would breathe sweet ease into their routines until nothing was left but to sniff at the flowered scent of the sea and to sigh from time to time. How awful. How awful, how full of awe. They had gathered here as she had ordered. Her word had summoned ten thousand men. How she would rather order them each to fuck her than order them to fall dead. But what difference does it make? One cannot please everyone. It is the way of this world for none to be pleased. She stood there for this long moment, wishing for an escape, to jump, anything to dodge out from under the collapsing weight of the following moment. She knew the line she must speak next. She had given the order to assemble and it only followed that she should give the order to die as well. It bent her lips in an ugly frown. But these were the words which came next. She knew it; they, if they had any education whatsoever, must know it. It made her seem all the more evil to be honest, to admit to these fools what they surely suspected, what, perhaps, they feared; although she enjoyed being cruel she disliked honesty as much as everyone. Fiction pleased her far better. Fiction and fancy attire. In this moment they were neither. She waited forever. She leaned against the balustrade, her bosom hung out over, as if her heart were going out towards them. For an instant it seemed she would faint and allow herself to topple down, down, ever ever downwards, to sink into the sea of souls, of soldiers. Then she righted herself. They had gathered here to die. They must understand this was the only order she could be expected to give. Why didn't they run away? Why did the spectacle of their attention meet her eyes, be absorbed behind those liquid opal planes, and not the sight of them turning and running madly to hide between the hills? What fools were they. What slaving, unpleasant wretches. Unable or unwilling to calculate, as she had, the odds of victory. Ten thousand men against god? It was beyond impossible. It was even beyond a dream. It was the stuff of an invalid's feverish mumblings. The stuff of complete and utter nonsense. Yet here they were, these hated stacks of ruby liquid wrapped up tight in leathery flesh, crowded by their clothing, crushed under their own armor. These naked dogs down there, panting, drooling. It was their own fault. They were responsible for themselves, for coming here, for following an order to the death, this bone that she would throw them, the head of god she would command them to fetch.

She parted her lips and spoke.

“There are not enough of you. You are going to die in battle tomorrow. All of

you. And despite this fact, or rather, because of it, we will lose. Enemy hordes will swarm over the border and probably behead the Princess.”

A murmur went up from the crowd. I chuckled, leaning back against my sofa on the balcony of my personal prison tower, each brick having been hefted up on top of one another solely for the purpose of separating my mouth from the ears of other human beings. Except, of course, for the Princess.

The Princess came to talk to me some times. She had been coming to talk to me much more frequently of late. We talked of diplomatic matters, matters of State and matters of war. She listened to and respected my opinions as if I were a member of her court, perhaps even more than any member of her court. She took my mind out of jail and, I think, I did the same for her. She talked a lot of loathing her position, her duties, her role. Sometimes we said nothing and only made love in silence. On these occasions she would rise from my bed and go to the balcony, nude before the deep blue of the moonlight, and I, in somber respect for her voicelessness, would come up behind her, enclosing her in my arms, and hold her tightly. She would dress and disappear, as if the stillness and the shadow of the evening were all that was inside her. I imagined if I were to cut apart her skin at those times I would find nothing inside.

It was rare for anyone, besides myself, to even see the Princess. She shut the enormous oak door to her room, or rather, had it shut by her guards, and slept for days ensconced in silent obscurity. There was gossip that, at times, her ladies in waiting had arrived to invite her to share in some social event and, through that thick and solid wood, overheard their ruler weeping.

She didn't want to be Princess. Nobody knew this but me. She never told anyone, never even talked to anyone outside of issuing orders. Neither did the rumors of her despair leave the castle. It was for this crime, the unnamed, unmentionable crime of revelation, that, long ago, I was imprisoned in my tower cell.

I used to be her chef, and cooked her every meal from the time that she was twelve. That was when her father had died, leaving her the majority of the responsibilities of running the kingdom. She remained, however, a princess in title. When she was eighteen her mother had entered a coma after suffering an attack while playing tennis. The surgeons who examined her failed to diagnose the exact cause, although it was fashionable among the masses to proclaim it was of a broken heart. The Princess hissed when she considered this opinion, but forwarded her own, similar hypothesis: her mother had suddenly realized there was no reason to be alive.

One early evening, because at the time, only one year after her mother's collapse, the Princess refused to admit more than the minimum number of servants possible, and never more than one at a time, I was serving the Princess her dinner. This process involved much the same rituals as feeding an infant. It was necessary, due to her deep sadness, to feed her every bite; and this was not easy either — every mouthful was the result of some considerable amount of coaxing. This had been my duty for quite a while, although, like the majority of the souls upon this twirling planet I suspect, I discharged my duties without much mind as to why exactly it was that they should be carried out in any such particular manner. That night the Princess turned her head slowly toward mine, which she had never done before. She looked into my eyes. I saw how hollow it was behind her dour facade where one should find a soul. I saw all the mourners gathering around. I saw the grave over which they were raining down their tears. I saw her heart at the bottom of this grave, beating only on occasion. The first shovelful of dirt fell across it and I retreated with a start. She understood my shock, I think, but she only turned her face

away as slowly as she had turned to look at me. I fled the room. I fled the castle. I sought out a bar and began drinking heavily. This was, after all, to be the last night of my freedom. I don't even know what became of the six others in the bar who heard my chilling tale, but they are probably dead. If it weren't for the rarity of an order from the Princess I expect the soldiers who burst in would have cracked my skull on the spot, as they seemed to wish more than anything to do.

I am not complaining about my imprisonment. I am denied nothing I request, and am given council with whomever I wish to see. Or at least this is what was promised me. I have neither asked for more than has been offered nor requested to see anybody who has not come to visit. I didn't have any real friends before, and even if I had, I value not upsetting the Princess much more than I would seeing their faces as they smiled at me, knowing their reasons for smiling were purely internal, gloating that their lives persist while mine, from their perspective, stagnates. They would laugh, drunkenly, in my face. And I would lean back against my sofa, bathed in their rancid breath, and observe them with annoyance and impatience. They would be incapable of recognizing that I am the new Prince. If, that is, they even existed.

I am the Prince. But I do not care to tell anyone. I have not cared to tell anyone anything since the night I was brought to the castle for the last time. All I could tell I have told to the Princess. All else I have to say I say of the Princess, to her, and she smiles. She never smiles otherwise. Only I can make her smile.

Now at this time something should be noted regarding the castle's plan. First, however, let me say that I write this not to be read in my lifetime. I see an era altogether bereft of castles in the future, or at least without their souls, the royal families of old. The Royals, I understand now, have little wish to rule. Those who have less power amongst them wish, naturally, for more, for all; but any one of them given the throne, the crown, the scepter, wither beneath it. The world is changing. The people are changing within it. Perhaps it is the water, weakening our wills. Perhaps we are simply getting tired. As if the power we feed on is eating us up from inside, leaving us ever more hollow as we acquire all for which we hope and strive. The effort of working for something leaves a bad taste in the mouth when the object of desire is finally consumed. This, out of bitter irony, we call the spice of life. In the end it is not we who consume, but we who are consumed.

The world belongs neither to the masses, cute and stupid, nor to the true rulers, the beautiful, the beaten, but to the runners up. The court has taken control of the castle. Such is the case here. It is they who maintain borders between themselves and others like them. True rulers, like the Princess, are above citizenship, and the masses, the soldiers, are the same everywhere. Which brings me to the court's insane plot to accumulate the remaining power outside themselves.

But little need be said of this. They intend to kill god but will fail. The heart of the masses belongs to the ruler, the heart of the ruler feels no hope for the masses which it loves, and the courts have neither the strength nor the compassion in their hearts to succeed at any endeavor they conceive. To them, then, the mere conception of an action is best, the process of creation thereof, or of fantasy; but above all it ought to be accomplished quickly, even if it is impossible, or never realized. So today they are proud of themselves. They are somewhere sipping expensive wine and patting each other on the back. The troops moved out at noon, following the Countess's comments this morning. No one cared not to go; there is nothing else for anyone to do. They know that god will have their souls soon enough, one way or another; either they wait for him to sneak in and, like an assassin without honor, kill

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them in their infirmity, or they force their souls upon him in a hopeless battle fought against him. They no longer care much if they live. It is a matter of relative indifference, as their lives do not belong to them now. Their lives mean nothing to anyone who means anything.

And what the Countess said was true. Soon enough strange faces will invade our land. And then we will be the unwelcome ones, the strangers. This is known already to the masses and the Princess. But the court refuse to acknowledge it. The masses do not care if they live or die, nor does my darling. Ours is an island sinking into time. No movement we make may amend this; there is no reason to move, yet we move. Only the courts believe in a future. The soldiers believe in the Princess and the Princess believes in nothing.

As far as god concerns man he may as well be dead already. He has abandoned us, and left our ball of dirt to turn in silence, hurling through blackness. I write this that it may be read by Him, for when the Others come they will smile and glow, haloed by His accursed, hollow promise. And once we were these people. And one day they will be as we are, waiting to be conquered.

The Princess enters my room one last time. She will be soothed by the coming bonfires of destruction. She rests her head on my shoulder, I feel its weight, it tugs at her body. I see her spine, where it curves there, that will be where the axe falls. Her long, soft neck, so pale in this atmosphere, the door standing ajar, the chill of unlit breezes. The axe will fall within the week, and her thick black blood will anoint the soil, sanctifying the ground where her soldiers died, mingling in the warm depths of its bosom with the blood of all other humans, the liquid souls of us, for this planet is a heart itself, beating out the rhythm of time, producing, consuming and moving life around. I say this to the Princess and she smiles. This is what I will keep with me. This instant imagine when my head is placed on the block.

Fires burn in the demure darkness.

When I awaken next my lover is in my arms and we are drowning in a pale, alien dawn. This is the substance of existence, we move, we are moved. We are adrift in a kingdom the ruler of which is hidden, veiled by sorrow, consumed by inexplicable shame and pity. We may be loved, we may love, but nothing more than this may come of it. More love to be lost. More smiles remembered

by heads
soon enough to be severed,
forgotten
and dead.

“Dogs” = men
“Cats” = women

“males” = dominants
“females” = submissives

Dogs

The behavior of dogs is more comforting to most researchers than that of most other animals. Though they may be savage when untamed, they are so only in search of food, and do not indiscriminately rove about seeking prey. They are so predictable and reliable they have readily earned the moniker, “man’s best friend.”

In the wild the dog hunts with a pack of other dogs. The hunting is done by the males, while the females prefer to stay in the den and look after the pups. The males often share the company of the pack even while not hunting, and generally prefer romping around to the quiet domestic life. As dogs can lick their own genitals, reproduction is a rare and sanctified occurrence, involving a life-long dedication to

a selectively chosen mate. Wild dogs engender large litters of offspring, the most aggressive male of which will be likely to lead the pack in its wanderings and on its hunts.

Domestic dogs are always loyal to their masters and are primarily concerned with protecting a territory which extends out around them. Dogs will bark at one another, but must be trained to attack. The reverse is true in regards to unfamiliar cats, which dogs reject viciously unless otherwise directed.

Cats

Cats are never as smart as they think they are. All cats spend far too much time keeping clean, and try as hard as they can to avoid getting wet. Though they possess more physical agility than dogs, they spend most of their time exploring places dogs would not be interested in going, so it doesn't really matter anyway. Also there is much more difference between wild and domestic cats than there is between wild and domestic dogs.

Wild cats form a group just as do wild dogs, but it is structured in much the opposite way. There is only one male cat in each group, as they prefer to remain aloof of one another. Around this male is a “pride” of females. It is the females which do all the hunting, bringing food back to wherever the male may have chosen to lounge at the time. They mate indiscriminately, siring several single offsprings, the most aggressive male of which will likely go on to later have the largest pride of his own.

Domestic cats feel merely affinity for their masters. They will respond positively to anyone offering them food, and call any place where they are fed regularly home. While they prefer to turn their backs toward their masters, they demand constant loyalty and affection from them. If this is not provided, or if the affection is unsatisfactory (if the cat is “rubbed the wrong way”) it may be expected to escape and seek shelter elsewhere. Cats create and patrol a large territory around their home, and will fight any invader cat to the death if need be. The reaction of cats to strange dogs is generally mistrust, but strongly influenced by smell, especially the smell of anything appetizing.

Though cats struggle to bury their fowl smelling excrement, dogs still seek it out and, when they can uncover it, consider a delicacy of the highest regard.

fruity

Once upon a time there were four Cyberian crusaders returning from the holy land. Their journey had been longer than any of them could even remember, for when they had left they had been even as children, and now as they returned they felt like very old men. They had fought many battles in countless strange places, faced down their foes and defended their lives, and upon reaching the holy land found treasures unnumbered, so that whatever each desired seemed almost to appear at the least thought of it. But this too had taxed the pilgrims, for eventually they had surpassed all their childhood ambitions, exceeded all expectations for pleasure in their flesh until they began to grow weary, and sick for their home; until one day they discussed it, and agreed to return.

The road back was difficult, though nothing like before. They faced no adversaries, and enjoyed clear weather. Every step they took the sun followed them through the sky. But their years had been so full of adventure it was as if each man carried a burden of memories, and somewhere along the way the sages were compelled to rest, that they might stretch the legs that carried them and reminisce.

The travelers came upon an orchard of gently sloping fields overhung by wide spread shade trees. The grass of the field glowed like green painted gold in the late afternoon slant of the daylight, and they gathered around underneath the great berth of a singular tree, which was laden with fruit, and they sat in its warm shadow.

Now these men were holy men, men who had feared for their lives and been delivered from this fear; they blamed no one, and felt gratitude toward all, for they knew everything to be a blessing of primary importance, and pitied those whom blindness of this made ignorant or afraid. So they knew this orchard to belong only to God, as the shadows were cast by the trees, which lesser men might see as merely trunks with branches with stems with leaves. And they knew without thinking that God had provided them the fruits of these trees, which would be replenished before even they could be missed, that they four, in that moment, should compliment their repose with the sacrament of food.

So the first man stood up, and reached up, and plucked down an orange. And the second man, he stood up, and reached up, and he plucked down an apple. And the third man, standing up, reaching up, plucked down an orange. And the fourth man stood up, he reached up, and plucked down an apple. And this is the story of what happened to them then.

The first knight was a tall man, with flaming red hair. His arms were broad around and his complexion fair. His armor was silver and shined like his smile. As he picked the orange from its branch he hoped for pleasure unknown, and as he held the bright orb he knew it had come true. He dreamt of his homeland, so close he thought he caught a hint of its familiar smell in the breeze, and resigned that he would save the orange, to eat upon their arrival there. Though he thought only of his loved ones and family somehow their numbers multiplied in his fantasy, and immediately he saw himself engulfed in regalia and being lifted up above a crowd who called him hero. This sudden undesired vanity upset him, so instinctively he lifted the orange to his lips and, his brow still furrowed by his vision, he bit in. The fruit which bore pleasure unknown had become wrapt in a rind by his promise to wait, and as he chewed through this he discovered its flavor somehow canceled, and though the juice ran over his lips down his chin it tasted bland. Remembering his oath the knight cursed, that he had failed himself in the presence of God. But God, seeing this, laughed at the poor fool, allowing him in his Wisdom to forgive himself. By the time the crusader had finished with his orange it was delicious beyond comprehension, and even as his senses spun wholly intoxicated God reminded his stomach it would hunger still again before reaching home. This is the story of the first knight.

The second knight was shorter, stalky, and balding. His eyes were like a hawk's, and his hair close cropped brown. When he smiled his lips remained shut. His armor was tin. He usually looked down, but when he looked up he looked all the way in. He had to tug for a while at his apple before it came loose, and it gave his mind time to stray. He thought of the desert, where he'd wandered one night, far from the temple and far from the mosque. The sky had seemed boundless and a shudder had rushed through him. He had turned to face the gust of wind and seen a storm brewing. The apple let go and he fell back from its twig. He scanned the entire horizon and, seeing nothing disturbing the peace of the pasture, he bit into the fruit. In his mouth it seemed to blossom, overflowing with sweetness, so that at the first swallow tears came to his eyes. As he bit in again, wiping his cheeks with his cuff, the apple turned to wine, an unidentifiable vintage, ancient and divine. However with each bite he took the taste grew more and more tart, more sour with doubt. The

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tears which had come to his eyes blurred his view, and it seemed as though everything had grown dark. Struggling to discern familiar shape in the milieu he finally came to the conclusion that it was in fact later than he had thought. This is the story of the second knight.

The third knight was the same height as the first, though his hair was blond and he wore a beard. Though his posture was proud he bore worried wrinkles surrounding his eyes. They beamed out like search lights when his eyes glowed with mirth, and his armor gleamed golden, somewhat tarnished with earth. As he reached out towards the orange his lean muscles ached and reminded him of how many foot steps his travels had streamed, all the places he'd been and the faces he'd seen. Just then the orange dropped into his hand, and when its skin touched his fingers he understood the life of the thing, how its growth was as wondrous as his own, their sensations so similar and their formation the same: they became one living energy, fresh flavored light flowed from the sphere through his veins, illuminating his own porous rind until there was no longer him, only the orange, or rather no longer any orange, only him, or perhaps, no longer either of them, but both one and the same, and he felt the presence of God. A giddy tingling of terror crept in on him then, as he contemplated eating the orange. It drew towards his lips, dragging his hand along behind it, and when they bit into it the universe spun in logical free fall. The orange promptly squirted the brave knight in the eye. He felt an upsurge of dissonance, the undertow of a curse, and perceiving this he laughed, and, as he gradually consumed the orange, his laughter tapered off towards silence. This is the story of the third knight.

The fourth knight was the same height as the second, ebony haired, hollow and gaunt, morose and obtuse. He had known torture at the hands of the enemy, and he had felt shame in the looks of his friends. He did not smile and his armor was copper, with patches of sea green oxidation like barnacles. He more than all the others was weary of traveling, for his eyes had taken in more and more of what his heart was never gilt to bear. As he brutally extracted the apple from its perch his mind was a whirlpool of regurgitating regrets, swirling perpetually in upon itself to be swallowed by the central struggle to forget. Biting into the apple, ah — how he immediately wished for death! For black blooded bile burst from the ripened sore he inflicted and washed slickly down his throat! Hatred screamed his desperate brain! Salvation begged his beaten heart! Damned was the world that swallowed him up, the field burning with feverish disgust for the judgment of the cruel and empty sky! He bit into the apple again and again, praying each time, though never twice the same, that to finish with the apple was to finish with his pain. But God, seeing this, laughed at the poor fool, and with each bite he ingested the turmoil worsened, and deepened his lust for escape through decay. This knight lived the longest, and died of old age.

Two is the shadow of one. Four is the shadow of three. One and three are each other's echoes, as apples and oranges are real. Eight are one, the shadows of an echo, as the tree was once only a seed, one is the son of two, daughter of zero. The turtle wins the race because home is exactly wherever the heart is. Truth uproots the fruit.

here is the source...

Here is the source with which we are concerned:

“The most honorable and just Vizier of Kent,

Libor Keplinger-Pesek II,

I know of a man who describes his features as chiseled, by which he means he has popped his own pimples, his etiquette as courteous and well-refined, by which he

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means he is an unbearable fop, and his standing as stately, by which he means he has yet to have held down on his own the responsibility of earning an income. And yet this same gentlemen has designs upon my very own daughter, who, through no dishonor of her own, though it has greatly increased the stature of her grace and her beauty, has alas been raised with no sisters, neither older nor younger, to assist her in finding her way about our world, which is unfortunately far too overpopulated by such men as are now her wretched bane.

You see sir she has thus far existed as it were, entirely unconditioned to the ways of courtship. She has never seen purpose before now to educate herself as to the matter and, as I have hinted, I fear that now it may very well be too late; she has neither had tutelage from an older sister, having experienced courtship, nor competition with a sister of her own age or less that might serve to limit and specify her desires, tastes, expectations and goals.

I can take no credit for having aided the girl when she was a child myself, sir, for I was far too preoccupied with tending to her dearly departed mother. You see, sir, and please understand now with how much shame it brings me to do so, at last and for good, I find myself unable to further deny that my late wife was somewhat less than within perfect control of her faculties. I assure you this has in no way carried on to our daughter, though I fear, the too early death of her beloved mother, and my absence during the duration of that good woman's illness from the side of our child has let her grow with insufficient discipline, giving far too much reign to that part of all people that would prefer to be an autotrophic weed than a well-groomed flower.

In such a state of abandon I fear she has been discovered by this vagabond suitor and taken him somewhat to heart, his insolent and offensive guiles falling on singularly innocent and naked ears, and thus worming their way into the mind of my most pure and benevolent joy. His character confirmed by many gentlemen of significant stature in the town from which he hails I regret to report to you sir that he is little more than a cur and a scoundrel of the lowest possible regard. It is even worse than that sir, for he is an artist, and it has come to my attention through indirect sources that he is in the unconscionable habit of painting ladies, sir, in the nude, sir.

I write this letter to you with the greatest hope filling my heart that you should, without giving great pause for consideration or allowing a remarkable quantity of time to pass, sufficient enough in which he might take leave of the town within your governance, but rather with surpassing haste and vengeful duress direct your men to seek him out and to, like the rat which he resembles both in countenance and in character, drive him forth from his vermin's den and into a sewery dungeon where such filth as he rightly belong. Sir, I do not ask this with my own soul in mind; no, for how could I? I see the purity of my remaining family held at stake in these matters, and am driven to a near fury by concern for the safety and well being of my daughter, whom I dearly love, and whose face does so tenderly resemble the face of her mother, whom I did love with all my heart. Perhaps it was that I did love her mother too much, to have allowed her only babe to wander so alarmingly astray, but yet I say to you now that I have awakened to this alarm and am as full prepared to right my daughter's misconceptions as is a weary man to react when, caught within his slumber, he is beset by a splash of freezing water.

Nothing will so alight my dank and dragging spirit as to hear a return of news from you, sir, or your finest quality of scribe, signaling me that my plea has not fallen upon the ears of a man indifferent and distant, believing, as does he who chides my daughter's honor, that his actions have no relation to the lives and doings

of his fellow men. I have taken the time, sir, to write all of this down in my sincerest belief that you are not such a degenerate yourself, and must, therefore, see from the perspective of an enlightened man the good sense of my request. As it has been heavy on my heart to write such a letter upon such a vile subject, I cannot imagine that it has been your pleasure to read, and so I offer, finally, my apologies for the circumstances necessitating this communication, and for the urgent tone of a deeply concerned father. In apologizing for its overall sentiment I also offer you my deepest gratitude for suffering it so, that you may best weigh it with the ration due a man of your esteemed position in society. I thank you for sparing your humble neighbor the moments in which you have heard my request, and pray to the last that it be meted out by you as were you I myself, that one day I could do such honor for you as you may ever ask of me, with part for part equal esteem.

The most venerable and good Doctor of Port St. Paul,
Eduard Duatte”

“The very existence of such a source pushes the work of researchers along by some fifty years, as though it were a large wave carrying us all that much closer towards the inevitable shore of historical truth. The letter’s tone is of particular importance to the current direction of study pursued by my colleagues and myself, because it so clearly reveals the mood of distrust that defined the era, and is the best documented example of a single, specific case accounting for later hostilities between Sir Eliard of Port Saint Paul, Penzington, and the Vizier of Kent, Nocksley, who had hitherto shown little interest in one another, let alone desire for conflict.

“It may likely be concluded that these two great forces of the Old World sought to unite some time during the fifty years between the writing of this letter and the writing of the next recognized document, which, as we all know, is a description of the resultant conflict by Plutarch the Elder. Because Plutarch described the conflict as “well under way” by the time of his writing, we may assume that it was initiated at a point more towards the beginning of this empty gap in records than towards its end. It may further be hypothesized that a failed attempt at unity was the cause of the outbreak due to the call for aid from one state to the other, which would have been impossible had relations between the two been as unstable or openly aggressive as they were to subsequently become. In fact, the tone proposes that, at this time, both nations were of relatively equal stature, neither having yet obtained vast quantities of the other’s wealth.

“As equals it may be proposed that they sought to establish a more cooperative relationship that had yet existed and that this, which was perhaps exploited by one side or the other in some unspecified manner, allowed increase of latent xenophobic prejudices in each nation.

“An interesting side note to the source is that Eduard Duatte’s twin sister is the well known composer Mary Euliard, who had taken the name Euliard from her husband Julius Euliard, the man who had formerly served as her brother’s medical mentor. Mary Euliard, as you may recall, is most widely recognized for her work on the zythr, or zither, an instrument for which her compositions provided renewed interest and respect due to their startling beauty and complexity. Perhaps her most popular piece of the day was “Ein Klopp Gevalscht,” a work dedicated to the siblings’ mother, who had died in childbirth before delivering Mary, necessitating her surgical removal, a process which she guardedly stated at the time had deeply affected her. It is the story of a seemingly harmless snowball fight between two sisters on a frozen lake which becomes at first a panicked barrage, and then a slowly drawn tragedy, as the one girl sees the other slip into the lake and descend beneath

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the ice. Contemporary critics had hailed Mary’s musical description of the one sister lying down upon the ice and seeing her sister beneath it, as though she were her own reflection, as perhaps the most moving melody ever achieved on a folk instrument.

“The madness from contraction of which Duatte describes his wife having died was, it is now known, an advanced form of fito-mitalysis, or cerebral poisoning due to eating a certain type of flora indigenous to the region in the contemporary north west of Penzington, today the south east of Klim’s Front Proper. The flora, Laurette’s Wort, was named after Duatte’s wife following his diagnosis of its dangerous culinary properties. This is the last act of Duatte’s life known to recorded history. It remains unknown the outcome of his request to the Vizier, and were it not for the documentation of his scientific contributions discovered as recently as forty years ago, it would have been impossible to imagine finding the source which is now in discussion. Perhaps, as this source has moved our research forward, we may look forward to discovering further of Duatte’s personal affects during the next half century, to continue filling in the details of this great, though unrecognized, man’s contributions to time and to civilization.

“Through the retrospective lens of this particular letter however, let us not lose sight of that which must remain our primary aim: the cause and affects of the Kriangeline Conflicts. Duatte’s is but one of many hundreds of lives that felt the preliminary or consequential tremors which these skirmishes engendered. Although his is a touching story, we are not overtly concerned here with being touched. Let us remember, ladies and gentlemen, that we are here to seek the truth.

“Allow me to, for a moment, wax philosophical, and try to end as I began.

“I have talked to many of my students throughout the past six months since the discovery of this source about their theories on the instigating event of the Kriangeline Conflicts. Pardoning an old man’s brief fascitiosness, those that even knew of what I spoke could pose few educated theories. Many of you might not be surprised by this, for you have grown accustomed to expecting little in return from those who come to you for intellectual assistance. But I submit to you that it made me question my own theories. Not just about the Kriangeline Conflicts or the War of the Sanguine Craters, but about all of history, and about human existence itself. For a while nothing seemed to me to make sense — why people would blow one another to shreds, why anyone would even get up out of bed, how long had this really been going on and for what ultimate reason.

“With the discovery of this document, ladies and gentlemen, we have not discovered any new truth, explaining more of our behavior to us. But, as I stated initially, I believe it allows us to probe that much further back, toward our source, at which point lies the explanation of all our behaviors. This I must believe, for I cannot allow myself the luxury given my students. I cannot suffer to spend my life doubting.”

Just at that point in the professor’s lecture, or rather, in the instant immediately following it, as the audience began to erupt into applause, the terrible event occurred. Muffled as it was by the uproar, at first nobody noticed. It appeared, merely, that the speaker, who was, to begin with, neither a young man nor one who was atop the peak of his physical prowess, was suffering some minor difficulty in retiring from the podium. Being close enough to him, though somewhat too caught up in the dazzle of the event in its moment perhaps, such is the lot that the old and infirm may share with the young and vital, I can attempt to give an account of the professor’s gestures; though please bear in mind, as I have said, there are several

factors involved outside of myself and intruding thereon that tend to corrupt to the extent of invalidation my observations.

Dr. Renard, who had been delivering the address, leaned slightly to his left, which was of course my right, as I was in the audience looking on. At the same time his face seemed to tighten and his eyes closed. After this had been going on for perhaps a full two moments or so the next man to speak, Katchebian Mestertson as I recall, arose from his seat slightly, making as if, in his mind, he had formulated the thought to assist his predecessor away from center stage and back to his seat, although he couldn't seem to decide on the best way to do this without detracting from the necessary singularity of his own first appearance before the amassed body. It was at this time that I felt the man brush by me on my right. I remember it was my right because it was the same direction in which the elderly gentleman remained inclined. But I will return to this shortly. Mr. Mestertson extended his arm towards Dr. Renard, as if to support the respected figure, but he kept his knees bent slightly so as not to fully erect himself and prematurely introduce himself to the audience. As Dr. Renard gradually neared this outstretched blockade it became obvious that some more substantial gesture would become necessary soon, but it didn't appear as though Mestertson was prepared to make it. Seeing him slumping ever more precariously out of a civil posture, and apparently recognizing the call for assistance implied by such a slackening of form even before the judge, a woman in the front row screamed. I learned later that woman was Dr. Renard's wife, Betsy, who had tended to him more and more for the past twenty years, and who, having met him when they were only twelve, was almost certainly the most qualified observer to speak of her husband's condition. The shriek partially overlapped and partially precipitated the rise into action by another prepared speaker seated nearby, the judge Ramsey II. Ramsey it was that finally caught the collapsing professor fully in his arms, and not until I witnessed this unmasculine embrace did I, following the placement of the judge's hand upon the professor's breast, notice the gathering blood stain on the old man's cotton shirt. The judge began to lower Dr. Renard towards the surface of the stage, and I could see the professor's eyes beneath the intensity of his spotlight rolled, as they were, so that they appeared to be looking in the direction of his own forehead, and slightly consumed by their lids. Mr. Mestertson was assisting him more readily at this lowered level, as it allowed him to maintain an increased amount of activity without drawing undue attention to his face, and he stooped over the fallen man with a look of condensed concern.

It was as this was happening that I began to turn my attention to the man who had shoved his way past me before. Do not ask me why I did this. At the time I was not fully aware that I was. My face, that is, my eyes, still fixed at the stage and the horror unfolding thereupon; while my body, on the other hand, and quite inexplicably to me in hindsight, began to turn around away from where my attentions remained primarily centered. It felt as though it were being carried atop the rising wave of confused rejection breaking out in the viewing pit. People were beginning to move all around in reaction to what they were seeing, without, more or less, any implied destination, nor any preconceived notion of measure or reserve. A noise was welling up at the time as well from the outraged crowd, but I cannot rightly say that I recollect this in any more than the most muted and inattentive manner.

I began to push my way through the bustling attendants, but, as they were already closely quartered while seated, any small sentiment of free or unrestricted movement amongst them while they rallied was obviously to be an impossibility. Even though I knew this I still damned myself to try. I threw my face into their

assault, and subjected my body to the barrage of their thrusting appendages. I must confess that I could not hold up long beneath such urgency and weight as their combined push presented. I was cut very deeply along the abdomen, and my blood flowed out rich and darkly. Still I fought onward. My face was slashed and immediately a sheet of my blood sluiced frighteningly crimson down before one of my eyes. I knew my appearance was ruined forever, but still I struggled against the force of the crowd. With a horrifying sound which I will never forget I heard the bone in my left arm splinter, and it dangled there helpless attached to me only by my engorged and turgid skin. But I knew. I knew that I must follow the assassin. And more than that I think I understood my greater duty. It must be this, I fantasized, which kept me leaned limply against their will, even long after I had lost all interest in catching the poor man’s killer, even long after I had any residual hope for my own survival. While all the world’s congregation pushed towards the victim, it fell upon me to carry news of this death to an old man in a tiny village somewhere along the incredibly distant border, who alone in all the province has the magical gift of writing, and who consequentially bears the sacred and ancient task of chronicling events in the single book of our sector’s history, which is in his express possession.

Karl Midi and God

1

Karl Midi was in Siberia. He had escaped. And now he was walking. He had been walking for days, maybe more than a week. All was white. All.

Karl Midi was beginning to go insane. At first he was uncertain of it. But now, after almost a week, he felt more confident in his original doubt.

Siberia was not as cold as Karl had been taught. His teachers had never been here. Karl’s footprints were the only ones. The tundra, Karl thought. That’s what they called this. Lichen. Permafrost. It crunched with every step. There wasn’t much snow. There had been a few flurries, but nothing of the scale of a Saharan sandstorm. It was actually quite a pleasant place to find oneself lost and going insane.

Karl sat on a boulder and nibbled a sandwich. He was nearing his goal and he knew it. He could feel it. Perhaps it was because the air was thinning, but his heart was beating faster. Cold winds sliced across his disheveled face.

He saw a bear. It was far away, and upwind so it didn’t notice him. It lumbered along placidly. Karl kept the sun on his back. He didn’t see any more bears.

Finally he came to the outskirts. The trees had all been flattened. The top sides had been burnt. All vegetation was exterminated. Karl walked between the trees, sometimes climbing over them. The sky was pink and shimmering.

It was several more days before Karl stood at the roof of the world. Here there was nothing but ice. It floated in white mountains on top of the perfectly still aqua marine water. The stars sat about in the heavens, which were hemmed with pink-lined purple clouds. Karl struggled to the top of the largest iceberg. It was slippery, covered in a shifting powder of snowflakes.

Karl stood at the top. Now his insanity was complete. He had come to the end of his journey. A deep, resonant tone sounded from the landscape, and the world began to tremble. Karl felt, but could not hear, his own voice rising up and merging with the world-tone. Energy, quivering like invisible heat, rose up from the horizon.

Then there was silence.

Karl and God stood before one another. Neither spoke. Neither could. There was nothing more to say. Something which should have ended in marriage had ended in violence instead. Neither could look the other in the eye. The name of the energy

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that brothered them as living, conscious beings, was Shame. Karl was guilty that he had nothing in all the world good enough to offer God. And God was guilty that, of all his kingdom, the universe, he offered nothing to Karl.

2

Then the universe began to churning and the stars stirred round in cosmic silt, the ground, the ground gave way like the back of a tired old ox and the mountains were shaken into gravel. The sea swelled into monstrous forms amidst the scattering clouds and the sun turned purple, and then red, and then black... The furthest reaches of the heavens only dreamed of in the minds of the greatest men were stretched forth upon the elastic wave-field of the continuum and displayed with disgusting obtuseness before Karl's full peeled eyes, which wept tears that were whisked away immediately by the cold winds of the ether and transported to the utmost corners of God's mind, where the terrible fists of celestial tyrants beat them over the course of ten trillion years into life forms absurd to modern science. And then our God got mad.

The vibrations which had decimated the totality of our delicate globe now carried Karl upward, and filled him with such a sense of eureka that his blood disappeared from within his veins and his heart collapsed. “At last,” his mind began shrieking as his eye-balls inflated with blood, “I understand now the force which remained unnamed by man during this concluding incarnation of civilization!” (For Karl was never much of one with words.) God revealed himself to Karl then, and smote him.

Hasn't this all been somewhat of a let-down? At last science-fiction had combined the making of psychologically-reflexive mythology with hope for an achievable technological utopia. But now we're dead. And wouldn't it have been great if.... But now you're dead. And we were meant by God and the stars to be together.... But now you're dead. And all the dreams that blew through your head.... But now you're dead. And dead is dead.

mage/priest

According to the town's priest as well as the court magician, the maidservant of the princess, so close to her highness as to have adopted her styles and mannerisms, becoming, in affect, the second princess of the realm, was evil. Now this is not the way that it was put while those who leveled such accusations mixed company with the more traditional and polite commoners; in such cases it was generally remarked by each that, “she has her darker side,” immediately after which they would look down and sip at whatever it was they might be drinking.

It ought not be imagined as the result of inattentive or indifferent confusion that just because the magician and the priest may say the same words, in the same way, may even seem to feel the same exact feelings, that they are capable of, at any given moment, so much as tolerating one another's existence. In order to better understand this it is necessary to better understand their era and their caste.

The period later recognized by history into which they each were birthed was one of considerable somnolence. The majority of the preceding couple of generations' children had been killed in pointless and relatively unpopular wars, and the survivors preferred to sleep than actively perpetuate the culture which had committed such a disappointing atrocity. One might wander, without service, all about the land and see them scattered here and there, collapsed in the midst of some inane chore, as if suddenly all the pressure of their will to continue standing had

drained like a liquid from their legs, leaving them limp. It was as if the entire nation had succumbed to narcolepsy. In any event it was the case of the remainder to phrase their reasoning and to conduct their everyday affairs by reversing the meanings of “in spite of” and “because,” or rather, more appropriately, forgetting the meaning of “because” altogether. As beings within time the magician and the priest followed this trend and thus, due to their similarities, were capable only of loathing one another.

This condition was furthered by the expectations of their personal behavior according to their social roles. By this it can only be meant that a priest is taken to be humble, a magician reclusive and secretive, and to be thus it is obvious that both must share the desire to avoid seeing in the outside world others like themselves. The priest robes himself in shame for his desires and hides from all around him who could remind him thereof; the magician cloisters himself in a perspective of superiority, mistrusting all perceived competitors.

Comprehending this environment we may begin to address the players by individual treatment.

The magician dwelt in a small room in a far corner of the castle. In order to get to it, if one should wish to go and visit him, it was impossible to avoid the use of stairs. In this zone of the castle the surliest sort of the elders were found, lavishing in their exotic debaucheries. Dogs roamed about, feeding on stray kittens; old drunk Dukes bellowed hollow insinuations; harlots meandered with difficulty from one bed chamber to the next; young assassins holed up huffing hash and on occasion opium. The caravan transporting goods to the market rumbled through, often rumbling by the magician’s window at early morning hours. Lost children huddled in shadows. Yet it was all to the magician’s liking, as it was all by his design.

It was the habit of the magician to smile with a supernatural knowledge that a few fools could have called smug. For he did not belong among the filth which surrounded him. His home was in the brilliance, or rather, the origins of his power were in the most highly concentrated darkness — a pall so somber that the crumbling ruins of the castle’s foundation could little discomfort him. He had conjured them up as a happy imagining; to him they were literally but a passing dream. The trolls that slinked about his labyrinth were minions at his mercy, and owed the life inside their flesh, the very patterns inside their blood, to his “smug” calm. The slum was his spell.

One evening while slicing meat he threw his head back, and sunk a regal laugh down to the very pits of his lungs. It is, afterall, easier to create than destroy. This rule appears inverted only when considering matters other than problems. He gave off a charm that was not altogether morbid, and was of good humor and good spirits enough to entertain. His company was, amongst the less senseless jovial members of the royal court, frequented and extensively enjoyed. Inside his keep were colored lights, games to play, tales to spin and plots to unravel, drinks to be had, and even the odd, comically inverted symbol of the masses’ loyalty and pride. Often he was known to casually and only for fun speak the ancient language of incantation among his friends, chuckling reclusively while, far away, things were created or destroyed. It cannot be said that he was not a jovial, jocular man.

On occasion, however, he awoke depressed, and on such days as those it served him well enough to drink and to sit in solitude, be it alone, his gaze fixed on nothing in particular, or in the company of others, jostled, poked and prodded by their futile merry advances. He can little be blamed for suffering such attacks of interpersonal indifference, for he was haunted by a terrible truth. His alone was the knowledge that this zone was artificially created, and its monstrous denizens only figments of his fancy. For, having built up this particular illusion of decay and dust about

himself, he was never able to share fully with his comrades in its spectacle of famine. He saw only the softness and the maleability of the material world, and this forbidden fruit tortured him; its sour taste ate at him from inside while he rested. In greater introspection than ought to belong to common men, he dreamed of new ways things could be, but, in even deeper solitude than this, doubted the strength of his sorcery to rearrange reality at the whim of his will.

The magician shared his hold with a man many believed to be a demon, despite his singular popularity. He was a gentle man, through and through, although he had been defrocked from the church for blasphemy and sacrilege. His vice was for seducing the young girls of the choir and the Sunday school, and was suspected of having deflowered many a wee, innocent virgin who, otherwise, might have been bound for service to her Lord as one of the church's good nuns. This man's visage was constantly shrouded, his form enshadowed, as if, even in the sunlight, he were contained within his own thundering midnight. His demeanor, though, reflected little such displeasure, and he was highly amicable company to those who came to be around him. In fact he was renowned even in his absence by the girls of the synagogue as the most profound and approachable wit, as well as the most romantic.

The two of them, then, the magician and his underworldly friend, were often attended by friends, and it is through them that we may make the transition between the magician and the priest. Most of these friends were also members of the royal court, although were less involved in necessary functions, being entertainers alone, and so had much spare time to float about and keep track of a significant segment of their fellows' daily doings. Several were only jesters themselves — a bard who was skilled in recreational visual conjuring, a scientist skilled at gambling, a clerk known for his drinking and his jolity, a monk who worshipped any and all pagan idols, and a philosopher, whose magic was his words, as well as a collection of various elves, sprites, witches, gnomes and simple clowns — although the magician also saw his share of more essential dignitaries — a countess of administration at the educational institution and a fellow magician, a jester who only dabbled in the black arts, preferring to specialize in the engineering of complex machines. It was through this man's former love, a Dutchess of Surreality, that one might most easily make a connection to the priest, for it was she who, one night, had brought the priest into the magician's zone of the castle, and by this act greatly disturbed him. The zone created by the magician for his own autonomous leisure the priest, with a rival group of magicians, had defaced through several public scribbles, staining it with a reminder of himself: his chosen name. The priest took as much pride in tainting the magician's territory as had the magician in conjuring it up, and this shared pride sickened both, defiling all things created by either that bore the notion of the other.

The priest no longer had a home. He had tried to have one for some while, living entirely off a fund he had established for the purpose, but this intention eventually dispersed. He came to hate property and to hate cash as the vessels of, if not the roots of, all evil in the world. It was not to be incumbent upon him to serve his fellow men in any way demanded by their status, to provide them perverse and abusive luxuries, to wallow low himself while at his expense others built monuments to themselves on high invading heaven. He grew his hair long, unkempt, his clothing unraveled about his frail limbs. He felt betrayed by the world, and embraced a bitter sort of joy, a nihilistic sort of religion that sanctified impossible equality, condemning the realities of competition in that savage market men call reality to the basest corner of a reeking brimstone Hell.

So he was reduced, or, by his secret standards, elevated to the strata of a

vagabond. He had limited his scope, he no longer cared much for the rest of the world. He stood in this spot, that spot. He walked between them, beneath the sunshine. He stood in the rain. He collected a particular odor. It didn't matter to him. The affairs of the flesh were little his concern. His duty to himself, his vow, was to uphold the quality of his own ideals. To let no amount of evidence sway his belief in the infallibility of this idea, or that. He listened, yes; but only so that he could disagree.

He hated distortions of reality the most, the irony of which need not be mentioned. His deepest and most sincere convictions lay in opposition to anything, action or chemical, that could relieve the mind of its constant consideration of the limitations placed upon it by the castle. Primary in his sermons ravaging all magic were hatred for the sins of womanhood and potions.

Womanhood, the priest argued, was a repulsive mistake of chemistry. His understanding of the bible arranged man as the product of God and woman as the product of Nature, which, despite its appearance to one trained or skilled in the art of rhetoric, did not imply to him a diametrical opposition between God and Nature. He saw God, rather, as the maker of Nature, and all attempts at society, from the earliest forms of agrarian trade to the most complex systems of economic imperialism, as the struggle of Nature to overwhelm and destroy God. God was the civilizer, but society, the priest argued, was the attempt by Satan, through women's influence over men, to replace God with a surrogate, materialistic nature, the perfect civilization — one in which men were the slaves of women. Women, he stated fervently, were the forked tongue of the devil slithering about freely within the ear of man's cities. He preached, in the furthest extreme, of the beauty of intercourse between men and the holiness of that work of art which was a fetus destroyed within a woman's womb. It was, to say the least, a philosophy as complex as it was poorly thought out, but such was the case of most religions of the day, and he had surprisingly little trouble recruiting supporters.

He also argued against the use of chemicals and potions to warp one's understandings. The priest's unique stand on females was found generally amusing by his apostles, who were all themselves misogynists by preconditioning, but the stance the priest took on this latter subject caused much greater division between those who claimed to understand him. Now, by his accounts, the priest had never used any elixirs. His opinions on the matter derived from witnessing his fellows perform experiments on themselves with them throughout his religious schooling because, at that time, there was only a single university for both priests and magicians.

As has been said before, the citizens of this era much preferred to sleep than slay. They had been using toxins as tranquilizers for quite an impressive duration before the priest happened to stumble into this world, but there was an increasing amount of argument over them. Now, of those who could ever be expected to consider using them, that is, those who suffered, who were tired of life, not those who remained well founded in their hierarchies of authority, but those who were lower down the food chain and knew it, of these there were two camps on the concern. Both were driven to maximize the fertility and potency of dreams, but the division came between those who thought that training of the mind in a sterile environment, allowing it free reign in the realms of its own thought, even forcing it to be creative in colorful ways, would produce a better brain, and those that found weakening the learned patterns of logic begat more fascinating interpretations.

The priest was firmly entrenched in that school which stated it is noble to be self-sufficient in imitation of the mighty that one may better compete with them. In so far, therefore, as the royal court did not ingest a surplus of herbs and essences to

construct this unsatisfying reality, it seemed justifiable that neither should the peasants to perfect their nightly flights of idealism. It didn't seem to bother the priest much that his argument against magic was that it only served to weaken its users and his argument against the strong and oppressive court was that it had always been populated by users of or believers in magic, whores and poisons. He felt himself more Godly to be fighting in the name of strength against the practices of all who so casually daunted and saddled him. Some of his disgruntled followers have been overheard to grumble that only a woman, perhaps a forgotten priestess, could have hurt his soul so badly that it only bleeds out broken, fragmented ideas of hate.

But this is surely enough about the priest. It stands to our purposes better now to consider the royal court, especially the princess and her maidservant.

It must be said of the court of that era that it was in a state of dismay and disarray equal to if not greater than that of the outside world. The same wars which had possessed the common folk to so ardently embrace unconsciousness in a mad quest for long lost hope had infected the court with a gradual guilt, a guilt that was slowly killing the courtiers one by one, as if it were a disease itself, dropping the revelers where they stood as surely as the Red Death ever could. There had been some small attempt to close the doors against it, but it was generally accepted that it was far too late for this. It had come to be understood by every castle official that it would be part of the course of their duties to fall dead one day for no reason. It was even explained allegorically to the children in the stories read to them by their parents at bed time. No one in the whole stronghold could claim any longer that they were unaware that they would die; and this is only unusual because it is so historically uncommon. Although it was the result of an intentional change in philosophical and scholastic policy, allowing the shameful wars to be publicly considered rather than burying the events beneath an avalanche of propaganda and glamour, it was traditionally unprecedented for a population to be so morbidly fixated on the loss of its members if their culture was not also in a steep and undeniable decline towards destruction.

But this may all be seen as the result of the sheltered life led by that society's leaders. After all, they had only been conditioned to predict their own mortality. It was an altogether different matter for them to be able to identify the same ailments, the same weakness and depressions they experienced, when they were bursting out like boobos across the face of that trash heap called culture with which they were charged creation.

The princess, to better illustrate this situation, was an artist. She did not consider herself the princess; she considered herself an artist. She did not care to dwell from rise to rest on how to solve the problems of the land. She snuck away at all times and sat the day beneath some enormous tree, attended by her servant, and considered instead the beauty of nature, blinking at the sun, shivering at the caress of the long fibers of grass, sighing at the wind. Her mind refused to acknowledge how awful the situation truly was for some people, although, by her tastes, she was far too well aware of and miserable for the suffering of others, far away. It was as if no matter where she fled she could still hear their distant cries, carried from foreign hills by the turning of the earth underneath its cape of air, and always the image of their faces screaming, weeping, filled some slight back nook inside her skull. She sat there, trying so hard to be an artist, examining with such concentration that she from time to time would contract a famously difficult aching of the face all intersections of the shapes, the lines of objects, often walking around a thing for some time simply considering how its outline interrupted or was interrupted by the

textures of its surroundings and the background, flooding her mind, her heart, her soul with lines, with patterns, with the fluid and overflowing constructions of the garden. She was never overcome by them, though; never overwhelmed as a more sensitive person should have been. Perhaps this was only because her thoughts were so constantly divided between the dull, basking substance before her and those distant, acute focal points of displeasure. If this was the case the only soul capable of answering so was the princess's maidservant.

The maidservant of the artist princess was abominably plain. She struggled to conceal this fact by bobbing along behind her master in the wake of her selection of fashionable attire, but the result was usually something merely pastiche and eclectic, lacking the elegance she saw in the wardrobe of her ruler. Whether there was much more refinement of taste in the superior woman was a matter unresolvable even by the public, for they saw so little difference between the girlish and graceless compilations of color, fabric and line upon this mere servant and the more subtly arranged and expensive ensembles sported by their liege, that the plain and even common girl whose sole task it was to wait upon her highness came to be thought of as a younger sister to her, almost a duplicate in terms of assumed taste and, by dint thereof, personality and even sovereignty.

There may also be a more insipid reason for the princess's servant being referred to as the second princess. This belief would find support in the occasional claims by both of her former suitors as regards her “darker side.” That is, it was thought by some at the time, and is still a valid enough theory today, that the maidservant was manipulating the will of the princess and bending it to better fit her own insidious and impure desires. There is little particular evidence to support this, outside her behavior towards her social attractions, because all of the details concerning her service to the princess were kept quite secret by the princess at the time and were, later, in a teary eyed fit of despair and rage it may fairly be imagined, destroyed by her as well. This act only serves to further titillate the tastes of researchers because it is nowhere explained either. That so many facts about the case have been intentionally erased inspires its applicants to invent new ones, and the very absence of these concrete occurrences allows anyone who wishes to do so.

From pictures dating to the era depicting the happy pair of females cavorting about the countryside the hypothesis has been raised that, if they were not in actuality, perhaps the two would have been more pleasurably served being lesbians. This is exactly the type of unsupportable conjecture raised due to the ambiguous character of the lesser girl. It has already been stated that the source of conflict over her nature arises from the distinct difference in her plain face and carnivalesque appearance, complicated by the testimony of her lovers as to her behavior.

According to the magician the visage of normalcy was, by historical example, the best concealment for abnormality and perversion. Whether or not he was reading this into her where it did not in fact exist due to his dire desire to find what he loved most about himself reflected back from within one as outstanding as he felt he appeared is a matter of further conjecture. Perhaps, in fact, his only interest in making this statement and coupling it with a Quixotic quest to find justification for it in her was to prove to himself that it was valid for him to employ this strategy on his own, for similar, or at least, personal, reasons.

According to the priest the maidservant constituted in and of herself no greater evil than was the annoying fate of any woman to embody, although he continued platonic relations with both her and the princess; anyone well-versed in the tastes of Plato will better understand this than one who is not. The priest did,

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however, admit when coaxed or, at the very least, listened to, that there was a jealousy on the part of the princess toward any relations carried on by her servant.

The princess herself was no virgin. There was a prince, quite attractive, a hero of some meager renown. But it does not seem impossible when considering him to see his influence on the princess and, especially, on the relationship between the two most important women in the nation as negligible or nonexistent. While he had his own entourage, his word did not go very far within the power structure of the greater court, and was barely even heard as a whisper by the peasants huddled about just outside. All may very well have admired him, even if none respected him at all. Perhaps this was his favor to the princess, and why her servant allowed this when the princess would allow so little extra for her servant. On the other hand, the affairs of a princess, even then, even there, were not the concern of a servant. Or perhaps it simply interested the servant no more what the princess did with her body than it seemed to interest the princess what was thought of the servant by the commoners.

It all comes down to the question of how the servant saw herself. Did she see the plain face in the mirror when she stepped naked from her bath, or did she only permit herself to step back and take herself in when she was made up and dressed to fit the part she had chosen? If she saw herself first and foremost as what she seemed to most to be, that is, a plain and ordinary servant, entrusted with a set of duties and rules outside of which there was no benefit from straying, then she was not to blame for the downfall of that realm which called itself her home. If, however, she felt she was the second princess in more than rumor, in more than ironic popular jest, then she ought not to be trusted, and could have been capable of things no one, not even the princess who laid her innermost demons bare and open before her, not even the magician, nor the priest, who both imagined that they understood her through and through and boasted to themselves in private of their ability to predict what she would do next, not even God in heaven, things no one, no one could have guessed.

And at last we see her in the sunshine, squatting sejan beside her sovereign, smiling a surreptitious smile, so satisfied beyond all suspicion to know the secret solution to the question she has lured us all into asking, a question with little more value than whether it will rain or shine tomorrow, when it is already understood by all that it will pour the day after that.

Mr. Smith's Shadow at the Speed of Light

Mr. Smith, the most notorious free agent on the interstellar frontier, has been issued a contract to perform one of his renowned removals on himself. Long shots of Smith's deadpan mug and anonymous raincoat perched in a lofty window or on a balcony, silhouetted architecture partly obscuring the foreground. The tense suspense of the stalking predator, the manic paranoia of the pursued prey — all this contained in Smith's dour, pale countenance, his sallow cheeks, his lipless flat mouth like an unhealing incision, his dead, lidded eyes, his unwrinkled brow, the nose of Merlin like a hawk's beak. His powder-white hands slithering around the heavy weapon, his single scope head mounted field glasses registering a rainbow of information behind a patient dark plastic lens. Finally there is movement in the cubicle he has been surveiling. Lights come on an old woman with a grocery bag in her arm and keys in her hand is moving within the window frame. With mechanical precision Mr. Smith cracks off one shot, the smell of gunpowder rides in on cold air as he breathes tightly the moment following the clenched release, the sound of broken glass the woman slumps messily to the floor. Below his breath with no trace of feeling, simply as if registering aloud, the lizard hisses, “Mum.” On top of this

there is a choked wail from the apartment and quickly another torso moves within the glass square, bending over the first body and crying out her name. Smith holds a breath and another shot snaps the air like a thick piece of dry wood, the crisp frigid air that numbs the nose and hardens the hurting ears. “Da,” says Mr. Smith to nobody. Nobody is there but him, nobody to receive his empty narrative report. He turns up the wide collar on his black coat and snuggles a hat onto his skull. He moves away from the ledge. Later, in a red phone box, he hunches over a long list on a roll of narrow milk white paper and scratches off two names. Time passes and his hunt continues; high school girlfriends, college club members, peers whom he surpassed in training, his old awol cronies, wives of lost associates, one by one Mr. Smith ceases to exist. With some he sits down and has coffee first, and they reminisce about old times. Sometimes even memories are stirred up in Mr. Smith which had long been forgotten. A very few understood why he had come and these were the hard cases for Mr. Smith. There came a time when there were no more words to be said, only the job remaining to be done. Mr. Smith felt like apologizing to these few, honorable men and excellent agents; most even let him do so, with a single crystal tear rolling down his corpse’s face he honored them, closed his eyes, and pulled the trigger. With these he didn’t feel like looking at the bloody mess afterwards, the ruined remains of mortal bodies, but he found that many of his kills he took a vindictive pleasure in. All the old bastards who had thought they were better than him? He killed them with knives and their spouses and children. Even their pets if they had any. Cut open their abdomens so their innards spilt out and they died slowly trying to catch them with their slippery sweaty hands and hold them gently without crushing them and oh, trying to pile them back into the gaping wound, pissing themselves with terror of such irreparable damage as they beheld, all their happy dreams — the terrier skinned and mutilated on the pastel Mexican pattern living room throw rug, his guts dangling up to the glass coffee table where they steamed in a red blob like tomato jelly. Oh, yes. Smith enjoyed these kills like a sweet delicacy being squeezed in drops of colorful juice from some rare, exotic fruit. Fat old bosses, the mothers of old friends, pompous snobs, sniveling toadies, bossy girls; but eventually Smith himself was the only one. The only one who knew of his own existence. He was in one of the northern provinces of Annexia and he had just killed a priest to whom he made confession. He sat down in the acid snow outside a prole bar all wood paneling and neon advertisements for cancerous products promising to make the body comfortable like never before. He went over his whole life again and again in his mind. Every face he’d ever seen was now only a mask in his memory worn by a ghost. Only one remained, and he knew it, but he was, as humans will, attempting to postpone the inevitable, even if only to prolong his agonizing hesitation. He stood up suddenly without reason to continue sitting or to stand, he moved along on a surge of frustration. Mr. Smith saw himself in the one-way window of the country roadhouse. Standing there. A corpse. The face had never looked so much like a skull, thinly draped in a pale veil of weightless flesh. How hollow his eye sockets looked to him his own eye sockets! Where were those lovely eyes that used to charm all the little girls, that devilish handsomeness that drove their pleated plaid private school skirts, white blouses and petite pig tails tittering embarrassedly away? Where the milk moustache from sharing midnight Irish warm milks with his gentle, forgiving father? All that was there was his living corpse. How like a skeleton swaddled in his thick black death shroud he looked. How like Mr. Death. Was this the way his victims saw him when he came for them as silent and spectral as their own spirit to haunt some sunny day? He had never known this face, this aspect, this harbinger of sorrow. He stood there in

the snow, frozen at the sight of this reflection as if he were coming upon a very sneaky, very dangerous opponent — not a victim, an equal, possibly a better. He was chilled in division. Mr. Smith was ice bones, blood water and frost skin in the presence of Mr. Death. Which one would kill which? Whom was meant to die? This moment stretched out so thin, long and delicate, it fractured with an icicle’s glassy snap. The contractor. Of course. The contractor knew of his existence. Smith remembered with something like relief. Of course. Smith still had to cure his contractor... still had to kill his contractor rather. Smith moves off decisively. An atmospheric shuttle, a flat-wing design, Smith’s seat is over the wing he dully watches the sun glint off its silvery flaps. An arid zone, deserts and cliffs and scorpions and one hundred and fifty degree heat. Endless stretches of crushed glass inhabitable only by animals mutated by radiation exposure. Arabs in cowboy hats; this is the crossroads, at the last civil bastion before the waste land called Death’s Kingdom. A tall glass building producing encryption hardware to protect the information books of the Terracommunications Firms, the only form of government on an Earth mostly abandoned to its own purposes. Mr. Smith dons a white coat and a clearance badge for the Dupont section. By noon he has found his way into the office of the company’s father figure, posing as a janitor he waits for the man to return from lunch, diligently mopping the marble floor. Wearing the skin of a Bengal tiger and carrying a teacup full of black coffee the Master presently appears. The Master, whose name it appears is Tom, does not seem to recognize Mr. Smith as he breaks his neck. Later Mr. Smith is riding on a subway, shooting through a tube at almost seven hundred miles per hour. It is shaking vaguely as if it is trying to compute something that does not make sense. Mr. Smith rocks slightly with the tram. His face is empty. Now there is no one but himself. He is even alone in the car. It surrounds him like the inside of a white pill, being swallowed like a capsule of morphine. In the dark plastic window like the silent roaring void of space he sees himself reflected. Mr. Death looks quite glum. Almost disappointed. Now Mr. Death is no artist. Who survives to appreciate his work? He is the dread doctor bringing the hopeless news who finds his patient dead enough already. Death has only Mr. Smith. And Mr. Smith has only Death. Together they are a truly Free Agent. Sizing one another up they ride the Ringworm into the dark maw of the throat seven hundred miles per hour. Outside at times roll by hills like white elephants; white white white as far as the eye can see, ahead a blinding flash of white the snows of Kilaminjaro. To die, Smith must *become* Death. More than being merely *unto* it, acting as it, like he had done for countless souls, he now has to merge with it, replace it with himself. He has to take his self and make it into the concept of death in order to embody it and thus to be dead. He has to become more than the sum of his parts in order to define from his own outside the ending of those parts; thus ending the obligation of the contract, and thus his reason to want to live. Thus ending the progression of events.

Mr. Smith knows there can be no ending: He cannot kill Mr. Death, nor can Mr. Death finish him. There can be no combination of Mr.s Smith and Death.

Smith cannot kill himself for he cannot find a self to kill; he recognizes his existence only in the memories of other people, now dead and his memories of himself with them not real — without them he never officially existed. Mr. Smith is already dead. He remains in existence only now in the reflection of another person, in his own reflection as an other person — as his own ghost come to haunt him on a sunny day, and he himself invisible, made real and active only by contract, now expired.

There can be no ending because completing the job is as metaphysically impossible

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as traveling at the speed of light is physically impossible. Between Thought and Being there is only action. Mr. Smith cannot *become* Mr. Death because they are always and will always be divided by a clear partition. They are separated by one single action, everywhere they are: the action of murder, which, for each second Smith could commit it, even in his imagination, in theory, even by possibility, is constantly and eternally embodied by Death, by the inherent nature of his elusive essence. Mr. Smith *becomes* murder *is* Mr. Death. But the shadow of murder is always between them; Mr. Smith cannot *become* Mr. Death. Mr. Smith can never catch up to Mr. Death because he cannot step in the same river twice. Mr. Smith is changing. Mr. Death is not; he is change itself. Mr. Death walks on water. Smith can only ever become *like* that which he is not, while Mr. Death is that very thing by definition. Mr. Death is behind and is at once inside the pane of glass across from Mr. Smith. Mr. Death is perpetually ahead of Mr. Smith by two steps, waiting for him in the next reflective surface Smith passes by after he has turned his back on Death in any other one. With every moment's action, Mr. Smith moves through himself towards Mr. Death; Smith's reflection on the horizon at sunset, casting a shadow towards him.

But Mr. Smith is not moving now. Mr. Death is not moving. The train is not moving. The river is not actually flowing. The events themselves did not progress. Only the mind. Smith is only a mind which thinks itself and, having already realized the idea of Mr. Smith, cannot ever forget it, even by destroying the external world entirely. Mr. Smith cannot kill “Mr. Smith” anymore than he can kill “Mr. Death,” or stop Mr. Death from killing him. While Smith can make himself be forgotten, he cannot keep Death from being remembered. Mr.s Smith and Death are equally and oppositely real.

Mr. Death cannot actually kill Mr. Smith because he is only an external shadow of Smith's internal being, not real and utterly dependent. Death exists for Mr. Smith only because there *is* a Mr. Smith. Mr. Death is the idea of un-Smith, and Smith is that of un-Death. Mr. Smith himself is merely a similar shadow, internally cast by his own mind as it attempts to deny its soft existence and define a solid essence. The idea of Mr. Smith is that of un-Mind, an unchanging mind, and to know his true mind is to un-know that mask, “Mr. Smith,” which it constructed to conceal and protect itself.

An ego thus divided (between what *feels* it is, what *thinks* it is, and what *must be*) is thus alone; thus free. Smith is a free agent. He experiences recognition of his own existence as cognitive dissonance: incapable of reconciling thoughts that have already been thought, he is obliged to attempt to un-remember one. Mr. Smith and Mr. Death can never meet, can never be together without glass between them; though Mr. Death can enter Mr. Smith's mind, where even Mr. Smith cannot go. A shrinking shadow cast by the future across the present as it casts a lengthening shadow across the past.

What happens next is inconsequential, the inevitable step will only be a manifestation of a thought which is already beginning to cease to exist. So long as there is one of them there must be both. They are shadows of action cast by the mind, the only true being. Each is only the reflection of the other. Mr. Death's existence for Mr. Smith proves that there is a Mr. Smith to die, who himself in turn can never choose to un-exist.

Ram and City

I am watching a ram who is butting its horns against the wall of the city. It has been doing it for several days now, and will continue, I expect, until it has either broken through or cracked its neck.

Will I not celebrate the ram, and assist it in every task of its existence; lovingly

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shall I not ease its life with an agonizingly delicate tenderness? Am I not to make its deeds my projects, and its rewards targets for my pride? Don't I wish to celebrate its birthdays? Do I love this ram?

I sit for several days and watch it. It butts its head. It backs its body up. For a moment it wavers, like a flower in the wind. Then it lurches forward and butts its head again. It does not look around at all. It does not lose its focus or its feeling of urgency and ultimate necessity. What most impresses me is the fact that it does not tire. There are moments, when it seems to pause at its nadir point, when it appears to be considering its opponent, that I expect it must surely intend to collapse back onto its haunches and expire, or at least faint dead away on the spot. But it never does. Instead it lurches forward, and butts its head against the wall.

I sit for several weeks and watch it as it attacks the impervious edifice. It never falters. It is as constant in its activity as is its victim in its foundation.

No one has ever been outside the city wall. I don't know why the ram would want to go there. The best stories are written about what lies just outside, but the majority of folks much prefer reading a plurality of possibilities than experiencing a single reality. There has been, nonetheless, a plan under consideration by the city keepers for a few generations to expand the walls of the city outward by some insignificant distance. This is not taken very seriously by anybody because we can continue to build upward. Thankfully we could probably continue building upward until our city had been raised into the sky by ten times its existing height and we would still be well sheltered by the shadow of the city wall. We mostly agree that, whatever lies just outside the walls of our city, it cannot be greater than what we possess within them. I had thought this was the feeling of all, until I saw the ram.

It stops for a moment and turns toward me. Its eyes meet my own, but it seems to be looking through me. Then it turns around, lurches forward, and butts its head against the wall. The wall gives way and I see the ram disappear through the hole. Astonished, I spring to my feet and rush over. A frigid wind slithers around my ankles as I tentatively approach the puncture. I hear the scream of a woman falling from the balcony of a tall building behind me, but I do not turn around. Her body comes to earth not far behind my own, stirring the air I breathe as she passes, but I do not turn around. A crowd, aroused by the event, begins to jostle 'round me, but still I step slowly over the final few paces separating me from where my ram has disappeared. I creep as stealthily as I can, for I feel I am in some sacred sort of spot.

I get down on my knees and hands, as if to, myself, become a ram. The wound in the city's skin flares empty white before me. I am transfixed. I must witness this. I have no choice. I have to understand.

I pass my head through the gaping halo of crumbling clay. The sky. The sky is all around me. Above me the city's flat facade reaches upward into infinite blueness. To either side it similarly extends to termination. Beneath me our city's side slopes straight downward smooth and quiet, disappearing into a soft ocean of clouds which extends to the horizon. The sun squats like a glaring white demon in the thin air.

I feel dizzy and unbalanced. My ram has vanished into the sky. The sky has swallowed up my dreams. Air floods past me to be free of the city I call my home. Hot, stale air. The crisp, cold breath of heaven licks at my face. My ram is gone. My city is revealed to be a sick and sickening attempt to deny the sky, the impossible.

There is nothing more that I can do now, for I cannot fathom any further reason to exist. So I write this story to you, to remind you, to keep your rams inside a fence.

From the encounter of Sire Thomas Todd, a freemason, with vampires:

“It is known that they [vampires] prefer to feed on the red blood cells, but that their crest includes the colors of both types of blood cell, red and white. It has been my experience that they usually have a sore somewhere upon their body, often upon the face or the hand, as around the mouth or forehead, and as upon the back of the hand or of the wrist, that they may occasion to, from time to time, taste of themselves as it were, and so are loathesome creatures socially, as they are perpetually wiping at their lips. They are often very sociable creatures nonetheless, and in a gathering of as many as one lodge full of people there could be as many as one genuine vampire, and at least two suspects. It is rumored by some when they are drunk as upon the blood which is their meal, as they may become somewhat light-headed in the company of a crowded ballroom after nursing upon their own selves for some while and done up, that the court which exists for the vampires judges on quantum superposition event of collapse in the wave function of the active awareness into concentration immediately prior to their proceedings, and upon such, as it calls them, manifestations, bases its rulings often before considering the evidence regarding the cases of those who have infringed in some way the one true law of ‘Do What Thou Wilt As Above, Do What Thou Wilt So Below.’ They are said, according to the Mistress with whom I have spoken, to, in this way, strengthen their powers of ‘reality control’ by causing the events to have unfolded in a way that is meaningful to them through disorientation of the evidence by the interaction of the electrical currents in their cerebellums and the information units stored in the letters and words of the evidence through a subjective medium of molecules.”

Sasha and Sergei

There were people who always had another point to make. Although he almost never did anything passionately, passionately was how Sergei hated these people.

Sasha was thinking about Sergei while she was washing the dinner knives. “This must be just how he masturbates,” she thought, looking down at her hand jerking the soapy sponge back and forth around the wet blade.

She had a cat named Samson, whom she had been calling Samsa for almost six months because she was feeling sorry for herself. She liked long and colorful conversations, which she could curl up in like a thick, soft quilt; Sergei had once slept naked in the cold January snow when his lover had kicked him out of their apartment. That she should feel incomplete to not know all his stories was, she realized six months ago, probably nothing more to him than a sign of her lack of self discipline.

Sergei didn’t know how to hold Samsa. She had grown since they’d met and now Sergei didn’t even know how to hold Sasha. She wanted to throw her arms around his neck, to feel tall and all grown up, but every time she interrupted his arms from encircling her shoulders he only laughed out loud, backing away, and scoffed, “what impudent boldness from one so small. Quite the tiny tyrant tonight aren’t we, my petite Napoleon?” If ever she would accuse him of not knowing how to hold her anymore now that she was taller, he would brusquely retort that it was probably she who no longer knew how to hold herself.

As Sasha performed various chores she continued to think deep thoughts. She thought about how she had time to think about doing chores while she did chores. If she thought about doing them, the act of doing them became absurd and unjustifiable. She remembered something she’d overheard once in a conversation at

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the next table: “whoever cleans it up feels responsible for the mess.” But if she thought about anything else it would only be Sergei and she would begin to get upset.

She wanted him to love her passionately, but like all men he had only been taught how to passionately hate. And she dreaded becoming one of the types of people he hated.

Like all men he hated most anyone who reminded him too much of himself. Either by nagging him and forcing him to be constantly aware of his behavioral patterns, or by just acting the same as he did; all people who reminded him of himself were boring. How could Sasha argue with that? She couldn’t accuse him of overreacting because he was sensitive about his appearance to others, even though, perhaps *especially because*, they both knew this to be the real truth of the situation. Even his most violent frustrations he attributed to boredom. What a cruelly impregnable straw man. A red herring which could never be netted; a wild goose for Sasha to chase. He gave her the will to lance, pointed her in the direction of a wind mill, and then left her to her own devices.

Like all women she was left to her own devices, perhaps too much. She had too much time she thought sometimes. Whenever Sergei would come home tiredly and she would be there in the midst of her domestic vigilance she would scorn him for having not deprived her of the free time she had to herself. He would scowl that he too had just come from spending altogether too much time alone in the world, indeed his entire life, and was in no fit state to correct his own situation, let alone to complete her pathetic life by acting out the role of some impotent ideal she cherished. God, he could be mean. As far as he was concerned, he would conclude churlishly, she had kept such ideals silent since she had been the naive little girl who had read them in some romantic classic, and it would be just as well on his account should she choose to keep them so until she lacked the living breath with which to express them. She plotted at how to get at him, get under his skin, inflame him. But it invariably seemed to roll off of him like a noxious efluvium from an eczemic. How could she even be with him she demanded of herself.

How could she be without him? “Oh what difference does it make?” She grumbled aloud. Even as she did so Sergei entered.

“Does what make?” he complained.

“Nothing darling,” Sasha beamed, “just thinking about the chores and all.”

“Whatever. Don’t tell me then. There’s certainly no reason you ought to.”

Sasha sighed as he left the room and turned on the radio. Marlene Dietrich singing in German. She breathed in deeply and contemplated the tension in her chest. She was trying to hope her way out of the argument she knew was coming.

Sergei reentered the room carrying a knife.

“Did you wash these?” His voice was as flat and dull as the knife, but Sasha caught the subtle glimmer along its edge. She knew where it was going. A lump caught in her throat.

“Yes.” She croaked, trying to appear as irritably detached from his situation as he was from hers, spiting the fact he was already overwhelming the one with the other, already jabbing in and smothering out. Where was she before he had entered? What was she thinking? “So what?”

The yellow kitchen light was behind him as he stood in the dark door frame. He could explode at any moment and fill the dark room in which Sasha stood, quavering and small. He was well beyond the limits of his physical body in terms of situation already. Already as she knew. He made as if to move. Sasha caught up her breath.

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“I’m going to cut a piece from the loaf I brought back from the market. Would you care for some? I see you’ve cleaned damn near every surface in here and if I were you I’d be starving and probably on the brink of some psychotic fantasy or other involving me or your parents.” Sasha blinked. They stood there for a couple of moments. “I’ll cut a piece for you, and you can eat it or not. If I were you I would. But you’re you, so God only knows what you’ll do. Suit yourself as you will.”

Sergei turned and the tapestry hung in the doorway fell back across it behind him. The light from the kitchen was snuffed and Sasha stood alone in the dark blue glow from beyond the white lace curtained window. She felt rather stupid, as she frequently did in Sergei’s presence. Why would she admire him as if he were smart if next to him she didn’t feel foolish? She began to move toward the other room. One of the floorboards squeaked beneath her bare foot and she froze. She stared cravenly at the yellow bordered rectangle of the tapestry defined door. Expecting attack? Silly.

She passed through into the empty room. She saw the loaf of bread on the table, with another slice cut from it and laying where it fell. She would have to scorn Sergei for not using a napkin beneath it. She choked, an arm suddenly wrapping around her neck from behind; she fell back against a man’s body and the arm pulled her in so tightly the air from her lungs was left behind. She was about to let out a scream, but the man’s hand covered her mouth. She felt his mouth draw near her ear, his warm breath on the sensitive flesh. She writhed but found her torso confined with her arms just below the elbows in a great bunch by his other sturdy arm.

“Hush my sweet butterfly,” his voice washed into her ear. It was the soft, soothing voice of her lover. “I didn’t need to use a napkin because you just washed the table, and the fresh bread leaves no crumbs.” He turned her partially around and buried his mouth in the nape of her neck. The smoldering gentleness of his caress, in contrast to the slackening rigidity of his embrace, reduced Sasha’s capacity for reason to that of a drunk little girl. She felt like stomping around and singing out loud “ich bin von kopf bis fu(sh) auf liebe eingestellt.” She melted. What point was there in all her worrying? Must she always add clue to clue, piecing together evidence, fleshing out a case to substantiate her suspicion that Sergei didn’t love her? She was as unlovable or as lovable as was he. They were human beings, holding one another now, and kissing. Nothing else mattered, and her heart flew to dizzying heights on the freedom of their shared passion. He loved her, of course. And she him.

story of a story teller

Pauline was leaning out of the cab window, framed by its yellow rigidity and also by her floppy red beret and baggy green sweater. The wind was smacking into the left side of her face and stroking the right side. In the blurred outside world which she was letting her head trail through she glimpsed a woman running up-hill like a fish swimming against a strong current. Pauline craned her neck to look.

The woman was trotting heavily in high heels and was unnaturally slim, as if constrained by an impossibly tight corset. She appeared to be panting and was incredibly red-faced, but she tromped on in a sort of dazed panic, driven by a focus distant from the young woman and, to the receding passenger of the passing taxi, altogether invisible.

Pauline shrank back into the vinyl-covered stuffing in the cab’s back seat, feeling dizzy from traveling so fast and frivolously while looking at someone arduously crawling along in the opposite direction. She felt her consciousness divided between her own body and that of the woman ever further behind her now;

as if by realizing she could have been that woman — or that that woman could have been her — and feeling a split second of empathy while in motion, Pauline saw a piece of herself get stuck to that other role, and now that piece was being stretched between the two bodies as they worked apart from each other. It was a tugging in the center of her chest, and she could feel herself losing her breath as she would have after running uphill in constrictive attire. What was worst was that this awful fatigue sank deeper and deeper in the further away she got from that woman.

She leaned forward as if to tell the driver to stop, as if she would get out and run back to that woman and take her by the arm and beg her for what was she running? But this was an absurd notion, and rather than speak, at the moment of action Pauline’s mouth went dry, her throat stopped up and her eyes rolled around in her head. What was she thinking? What was the problem? She was on her way somewhere...nowhere really...and on the way she was seized by a panic attack. There was no good reason. She had seen a woman running, so what? Hadn’t she already seen such sights as the city had to offer, and the countryside too, that such a routine occurrence shouldn’t seem so awful? Surely she could dream up a reason for the girl to have been running. Perhaps she was late for a luncheon, as Pauline herself often was. But the panic, the look of sheer exhausted terror in her eyes! No, that couldn’t have been. Pauline must have imagined it. She had somewhere to go, that was all, and was in a hurry. Wasn’t Pauline in a hurry even now? The woman must have had some good reason. Why should it even be so important?

She was trying to breathe more deeply but her eyes were still spinning from one sight to another as if they couldn’t bear to come to rest on one for long. She saw an old woman with a silver streak in her black hair waving flowers on a cobblestone street corner standing next to a pushcart overflowing with blooms. She saw a boy on a bicycle in a black, turtle-necked pull-over as he gestured to turn onto a less busy street. She felt the traffic swarming around her and felt as helpless as a little girl in a storm of locusts, the cars buzzing right up by the wide open window.

Everything was slowing down. The car was pulling up at the curb of the café. Pauline hesitated for a long moment, cringing below the throbbing colors of the world just outside, aware of the driver’s accusing stare cut from his face and pegged on the tiny mirror in the middle of the wide front windshield. She collected herself as if unprepared to have arrived and waited for the air around her head to stop stirring like syrup. She couldn’t even hear anything with her ears. The pressure in her head created only a dull roar.

She was waiting too long. She got up and stepped out onto the parched concrete. She couldn’t remember ever having been this tall. She swayed like a giant, or a new-born fawn on its twig-like legs. Her thickly pulsing head must have been the size of a pumpkin, and stuck onto her toothpick body to frighten crows, or children. She remembered her sister’s little girl with straw hair and a segmented smile of teeth and square holes, in the sunshine, warm, in a field of soft grass. She handed the cab driver his fare with an annoying awkwardness. As she turned to enter the dark door in the flat brick wall, she imagined the running young woman turning to look as she passed by in the cab; the panicked face was the beautiful face of her niece as a young lady.

Vomit rose up into Pauline’s mouth and the blood left her face like rain from a cloud. She was so dizzy she would have liked to have fainted right there onto the porch of the café, but with great effort she reached out her hand to the door jam and pulled her limp, wet cotton body inside.

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the hero, clerk, shrine and town

“This is what I was born to do!” proclaimed the hero. He grasped the sword by its hilt and began to heave it towards the rumbling sky. The stone relinquished its grasp only ever so slowly, as though it were reluctant to part with its long-time mate, struggling to cherish and prolong every single final moment. The crowd around leaned forward, eyes widening, their mouths falling agape as they inhaled their preparatory breath; they eagerly awaited the triumphant instant when it would be appropriate, perhaps for the only time in their long, dull lives, to burst into regales.

“This is what I’ve been dying to do,” mumbled the clerk beneath his breath. He nuzzled the rifle butt comfortably into the cavity of his shoulder, caressing the trigger with the inside of his narrow, trembling digit. He adjusted his glasses, which had fogged up under the stress of the moment, and mopped perspiration from his brow. In his scope squatted the hero’s smug, lantern-jawed grin. He sucked in a single, shallow gasp before shutting his eyes and convulsing his finger.

The moment snapped with a resounding clatter and the crowd’s souls, stretched out between their open mouths and the muscled upper arms of the hero, deflated with a faint stirring of the public air. The hero and the clerk both slumped down, sweat pouring down the clerk’s furrowed grimace, and blood spilling across the last leer of the hero. A snow began to lightly fall, and to this day it has not stopped, nor eased nor flurried by a single special sliver.

Perhaps it is for the best, sigh the tired city masters; after all what’s done is done. They stand around in tailed tuxedos and stove pipe hats for a while below the sacred shrine, which has been allowed to rust in the constant freeze, before they move along, to work, or, to home. It has been remarked by poets lonely enough to project and to objectify that the stone — its sword companion dangling precariously above it, suspended exclusively by the tip, gradually corroding away to a shrivel, yet immovable by mortal hand, unable to be either sink deeper into its love or be freed for once and all and rent to victory — seems sad. And it has, as such, become the town’s central monument to the spirit of its people. A few still hope another hero will come and once again bless the exhausted village; but the rest would only be uncomfortable hosting a second such attempt at transcendence of their concrete fate.

The Magician’s Assistant

In a little village near the border a young boy was inscribed under a Magician to serve as his assistant. From as early as he could remember the boy had dreamed of becoming a Magician himself, but when he had become the assistant of this great man, the only Magician in the entire region, his dreams had all been almost entirely replaced by duty. He awoke, attended the Mage as he dressed and ate, in the cellar awaited serving him throughout the sunlit hours, occasionally coming within several yards of some important alchemical text his Master was considering that day, prepared whatever meal would satiate the Great One by evening, and finally attended him to bed, serving him in the darkness if it were required of him, for it is true that all True Magicians despise both bright lights and performing. Only between errands could the boy catch a fleeting moment to imagine that one, glorious day he would himself be trained and skilled in the ancient supernatural arts; although at such breaks in his schedule the frail, thin young man was frequently too exhausted from his labors, which spun around him so that he often felt like he was swimming, becoming quite dizzy, and could only collapse, too confused and tired to think about the pride awaiting him in his increasingly distant future. Once a week the boy was allowed to kneel down by his Master’s knee as he smoked from an incredibly long

pipe before the open fire place, or in summer before the open windows, and hear a tale from the Magician’s life recounted. As part of his contract the boy was to be taught one magic trick each year, of increasing difficulty. This had yet to happen, and the boy had long ago lost all sense of time, but he assumed a year had failed to pass. His Master had made no mention of the spell, nor had the boy any time in which to communicate his unfulfilment with the outside world, his parents, or those whom had been his friends in his previous life as a mere boy, before the wondrous existence he now endured as a Magician’s assistant.

One evening, after the boy had become enough of a man that he was getting restless at night, he had the impudence to ask the Wizard if he was ever going to teach him a spell. The Mage, who had consumed some impressive quantity of port with his supper, eyed the lad with such suspicion the hope that had welled up and burst out from the boy’s heart fizzled and wilted. The boy writhed with tense humiliation beneath the piercing eyes. Finally the Magician, apparently satisfied of his dominance, belched and looked away into the distance.

“I will tell you of how I became a Magician, boy, for I think it will save you from having to ever ask me again for what you ignorantly desire.” After this he continued looking off into the horizon with narrowing eyes. Eventually they had closed altogether, and his head rolled down onto his shoulder. The boy took him to his great bed and lied him there beneath the covers.

As the boy lay awake in his tiny cot that night he tried to imagine what the magician must have been like at his age. How ambitious and eager, how he must have served and studied. He thought briefly of the Magician’s parents standing in the back of the crowd at his first public showing, holding one another and smiling silently, as if choked to tears by the immensity of their pride. He was trying to recall the faces of his own parents when sleep trotted in on an enormous black horse and swung down its blade, sheering the boy’s head from his shoulders with a single shadow.

For the following week the boy attended his Liege even more ardently than ever, coming on occasion uncalled to aid in some inconvenient obstacle, if only to meet repeatedly with harsh rebukes and stern scorn. By the end of the week the boy spent all his nights weeping in shame at the millions of ways he had perturbed the magician throughout this single span. As he curled round the magical ankles of his idol then, he could hardly keep from whimpering. He asked nothing and made no reference to the trick which he no longer deemed himself worthy to dream of.

“I suppose,” the Magician said then, “you expect to listen to me telling you some story or other.” The boy shook his head furiously without looking up, even clenching his eyes tightly closed, burning the image of his shame on the insides of his eyelids. “No, no. Do not bother to deny it, for it is beyond all doubt true. I can read your mind my little darling. I know what dirty thoughts you have. I know how you would love to serve me...”

The boy’s head was slowly rising. He let his face be exposed to his master, but kept his gaze upon the floor. He allowed the ubiquitous man to witness the confusion playing about his young brow, so furrowed and dismayed.

“Come, come now. You are not so slow as all that. You understand what I expect of you.” And it was true. The boy did know, and realized suddenly he was already moving to do it. His head was bending in toward the Wizard’s pale lap, his mouth gaping open and his timid lips trembling; he could smell the scent of a very old coin.

The Mage’s gaze was lost in the distance again, and the boy’s twinkling eyes stayed on it until the consciousness of his mentor wound back down into itself and he suddenly started and blinked. “Boy. You do not want to be a Magician,” he said.

“Infinity Inverted”

Jonathan Barlow Gee

And this is the story he told the lad then:

“My destiny was written for me in the stars thousands of years ago by my family. They sat down in the lodges that were popular at the time and they decided it would be best for the survival of their bloodline if they made our name one of a magician. In order to do this, but surely you must know already. They were a jealous clan and needed little more coaxing to act than fearing they might not be the only ones to have come upon this plan. So they embarked immediately for the unknown land where magic was, that they could bring a little back with them. They traveled in what tradition told them was the correct direction, and within several generations had finally come to the frontier. Had I started upon this journey when I was your age I would not even have reached a point where I might dare to dream of the possibility of the existence of my destination by the time I was as old as I am now. And I am nearly three hundred and fifty years old already. I have heard it said that with each generation the speed of travel is doubled, but still; one can never go directly to this distant realm. It is as far away from us everyday as it was the day before, no matter what direction we go in, and no matter how fast we move. By the time my ancestors got there the land was almost completely forgotten by all other men save for the few with whom my family had been competing. This land, this unreachable country, is very very hot, for the sun never goes down there, or at least so it is said, not for very long. It was here the story goes that my Great Great Grandfather was stung. He looked down, I have been told, and saw not an insect, but a very small negress, garbed only in a corset, with roseate crystalline wings on her shoulders. The place where her injection broke his skin became swollen almost immediately, and for the rest of his long life he suffered with feverish hallucinations, bed-ridden, in this very very hot, unreachable land. The result of the sting was Magic that would flow in my family’s blood forever, but the cost was the ability to dream. For when you already have magic, of what remains to dream? The swelling never died down in the least and, on the contrary, began to increase almost imperceptibly, and to redden, until by his demise my Great Great Grandfather was veritably gelatinous. Despite this state he managed to sire seventeen offspring after being stung by the magic, and these seventeen are the heirs of all the princes of the world. Each of his sons had seventeen sons, and these are all the head priests of the world. Each of these sons had seventeen sons and these are all the aristocrats of the world. Each of these sons had seventeen sons, of which I am one, and these are all the Magicians in the world. And none of us have ever been able to dream. Now the world is very very big, my son. So big that it will continually be further discovered until there are no longer any of us left to discover it. It is more vast than anyone has yet possibly imagined. But it is not big enough, and can never be big enough, for a single, new Magician.”

The boy didn’t cry that night in his tiny cot, which had grown immense around him as he lay awake. He drifted off gently into the shadows of sleep, his head swimming silently in millions of colors, as he dreamed not of being a Magician, but a man.

The Retreatest and the Rebel

My friend has begun to become a ghost. He is slowly disappearing everywhere he goes so that even those who have known him for years can barely recognize him. Yesterday he appeared in my study quite unexpectedly and, upon questioning, admitted to having come in a long while before, entering through the wall. It is all about vibration he attempted to explain. He simply shifts his weight through the solid object and steps inside. He tired me; it was no use telling him I couldn’t understand

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him. Shortly he began to talk of things which hadn't happened as though they were expected customs and I asked him to be quiet. Not long later I noticed he was gone.

Apparently a mutual friend of ours saw him fly. She accounts how, after shifting his weight through something solid, he seemed to have lost enough of it within the object that he now defied gravity. He floated up, himself somewhat surprised, and drifted away from the café where they were having lunch. She hasn't seen him since, although, according to the waiter, he returned later to settle the bill.

The first thing about him which became a ghost must have been his eyes. He has worn glasses for as long as I have known him and, one must suppose, for a sufficient duration previous to that as well. Maybe he has had the spectacles since birth, though no one has ever dared to ask him, nor will they ever; it is almost as bad for him as if he had wings. He does read a lot however, and this would be a clue as to why his eyes became ghosts. It is similar to his flying as a result of losing mass from passing it through inconspicuous edifices. Futility is his buoyancy.

No one seemed to notice very much when he turned as pale as dust, but now that he can fly there are a few of us who even admire him a little bit. Although never to his face, of course. His present state, which, although it makes him altogether morbid company, nonetheless amuses me; though rather in a bitter way, the more his infirmity being in my presence makes me all too aware of my own shortcoming, which I consider to be at least as abominable and embarrassing as he does his. In fact I wish I were as lucky to be a mere ghost, to have such powers as lightness of being; I am always drawn back downward into the mud by the very heaviness of my body. The misfortune my friend suffers makes me smile, compared to my own unendurable fate.

For I have begun to grow a face in the back of my head. I awoke one morning and, while burying my face in my cupped palms, discovered a lump with my finger tips; a lump growing in the back of my skull. At first I put off having it examined, as though the diagnosis would be more of a terror, or at least more of an annoyance, than the actual symptoms and, please understand, at first they were not so bad. After nearly a month, perhaps five weeks, the lump had fully developed two nostrils. I could feel short, stiff nose hairs lining the twin pug rings with my fingers. I decided it would be better not to tell a doctor then. You can surely imagine my shame.

Now the face has grown in almost entirely, to the extent that I can sense through its preceptors, and, what is far worse, the face which I am used to, the face with which I was born and grew, is slowly vanishing. At the same rate the deformity ripens, my natural visage is washed over by soft flesh, smooth as silt. My nose was the first to go, collapsing inwards on itself, followed by my nostrils occluding. I was in a restaurant at the time. I walked in with nostrils fore, and left with them aft, needless to say somewhat more hastily than I had arrived.

The last to go are my eyes, and as I sit here writing this they are already beginning to fade, the paper before me darkening, swallowing the words almost as quickly as I scribble them down. I can see better over my shoulder; but I cannot use this secondary pair to express myself, for my hands are still reversed, and it is indeed a clumsy enough process to begin with. My new eyes are blooming through weakening lids, groggily awakening, tired and confused. Everything they see is new to them, and to me through them, for colors and light are dazzling when caught in their refractive happenstance. They dream strange, incomprehensible dreams...

I wonder, about the irises: what color will they be; the windows to my new soul.

The Suicide Doctor

The suicide doctor was dying. He had known it for quite some time. In fact, he

had realized when he was still only very little that death would find him awaiting it one day. As a boy he had been read by his father, before his father had died that is, the complete stories of Franz Kafka; so he learned early on the feeling of being irretrievably lost. He sought to find his way free, but found only further nothingness, limitless nothingness, infinite nothingness. The Law, he came to understand (that is, he came to *imagine* in order to alleviate his fear of never understanding — which was, in fact, the case) was both immense and illusory: it could not be penetrated, but it must be sought. The impregnable door blocked by the unaging guard could neither be entered nor ignored. It had been made for the man from the country, if not to enter it, than to stand before it as he did.

It is necessary to mention Kafka now only because it was reading him which led the young man to become a suicide doctor. He imagined the world in Kafkaesque terms, and felt that if more people did so as well (which he mistakenly believed to be the way of humanity) then the world would not only become Kafkaesque but would become so nauseating that many proud people would rather be killed honorably than continue being worn down by complex bureaucracies and ceaseless time. Kafka's focus, the doctor imagined while still a medical student, was on the gross body, not on the grandeur of the mind, not on the splendor of the soul. It was Kafka's weariness, his physical fatigue with his environment and his status and his relationships, that defined his characters. They did not have overly complex desires, they did not strive for anything so above the mundane, though it was that they all expected convenience, or closure, or connection from the wide world that brought on their exhaustion. There was a certain blaming of the body for these meager expectations, a certain loathing of it and persecution of it for even its simplest needs that pervaded Kafka's work. Just as the Nazis blamed the Jews for what little social pull they had on the mind at work behind capital-based societies, so Kafka saw the body as something to be despised, and preferably destroyed, for its annoying functions. It was always this wasn't it, that brought the Jews low? Their ultimate agreement with their captors that, in some inexplicable way which they could not grasp or had long ago forgotten, they were guilty of some crime that was worthy of such torture. Their lack of pride. Kafka saw the world of strivation the same way Nietzsche did, but failed to impute the glory of selfishness to it; seeing instead only elaborate, incomprehensible structures of formality, and extreme physical punishment for even the slightest unintentional infraction of behavioral regulation.

It was, anyway, from Kafka that the suicide doctor learned to eradicate the body to alleviate its suffering in its environment, and by Kafka that he was likewise influenced to believe that there would soon be more and more poor workers and those employed in the service sector who would come to his office with requests based on similar reasoning. What Kafka and he both failed to count on, however, was communism: the assertion of the disheartened, the disenfranchised, the un-proud, as a group-self. The boosting of egos comprised of unions. The formulation of wild dreams of solidarity and salvation. Geist, Id, selfish lust, finally motivating the poor and hopeless. And so the suicide doctor's office was mostly empty.

It had been that way his whole life. His business was slow. That was part of his business, in much the same way the smell of fish was part of the business of being a fish monger. He went to the office expecting little, came home having gained less than that, ate nothing at all and slept dreamlessly. His life too was quite slow. He did not have much desire to go to bed with girls and he considered this a very lucky occurrence for them and their kind. Even less so because it was true, girls didn't seem to want to go to bed with him. Perhaps it was that he gave off an unattractive

aura, one of dust and formaldehyde; or perhaps it was simply no girl was interested in dating someone whose career was as stagnantly immobile as the suicide doctor's. In either case regarding them the effect regarding him remained the same, forever, as indelible as the word of God Almighty, everlasting, forever, and never changing.

But now his life was ending. Winding down like an old watch. And he was beginning to make preparations. There were so many people whom he had to call, to inform, despite the fact that he seemed to have no friends, no family, no loved ones, and would even appear to the stranger passing him on the street to be a widower. Yet he found himself involved day after day for several weeks on the phone, talking about times he could barely remember with people he hadn't seen for years, sometimes decades, and whom he knew he would never see again. How he scuttled from one side of his cluttered office to the other, trying to impose order on the ancient, crumbling documents; how he sat down on the floor hunched over a particular manuscript or other that happened to catch his wild glance and usher up some memory, how he cried at such times. Those recalled events can never come to pass again, and all those sepia days are burning inward from their edges. It remained only that he dispose of what of his life was singular, that is, what is non-reusable waste, and keep that minute proportion which would outlive him — those records whereby he would convey his life's work, his emotions, his essence, into the hands of idiot posterity, where “he” would be filed away somewhere, some immense subterranean warehouse, in a single manila folder amongst millions in drawers piled up to the ceilinged sky; where he would likely be misplaced and lost forever. Better he leave no disorganization, he reasoned, as what order he imposed in life would surely begin to entropy rapidly enough following his demise. And that is how he saw it. He did miss his life already, standing only in the long shadow of his immanent death, he surely regretted not only *losing* the things which he had had but also *choosing* the things which he had over Other, even-more-appealing-things, which he had sacrificed in a way. He mourned not only what he Was, but also what he Was Not, what, now, he never could be. But his death itself he approached with indifferent logic. Anal retentive logic even, as he felt compelled to put everything together into a unified system before he had lost his chance to do so.

But he saw himself failing. And what was worse he saw that there would be no one into whose hands he could deliver this excreted product of his whole life. The papers would, as soon as they were stacked high to be disposed of, fall over dramatically and mix themselves with those meant to be saved. And he was prepared to cry out in frustration when he inevitably realized there was no one to call out to. He would clean up the same mess repeatedly, finding the same documents each time to be less and less melancholy and more merely perturbing, and at the end it would all collapse again all over top of itself. He beat his fists against the walls in teary-eyed impotence. He cursed himself, which was ultimately all he could do, for waiting so long before beginning this task. How could he have known, though, how monumental it would prove to be? Who could have predicted the suffering he now had to endure?

Who, more imperatively, would kill him? That, he realized one morning, standing over the mess which had reconstrued itself over night, was the only issue remaining that had any real importance. The mess in his office was only something he had been using to distract himself from what he had learned during those weeks of phone calls. And hadn't he really wanted the piles to keep falling? Hadn't he subconsciously willed himself into a corner, trying to ward off that evil demon that now flew in his face? No one whom he had talked to, no one he had met in all his

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years of service, no one he had ever known in all his long, long life, no one in the entire vast and yawning world would come to his aid now, to kill him when he was dying. All those people whom he had had mercy on; where are they when he needed to be pitied, to be put out of misery himself? And all those whose friends and relatives he had killed, all those widows and orphans he had created, had long ago forgiven him. Had he not forgiven himself they asked? He hadn't time to think of such things. He had already arranged his funeral, and could not afford to pay for another one, later; how much later? How much longer would he endure this way? What new symptoms of his illness had yet to manifest? He felt consumed by his own shadow.

Curled up alone in his darkening office, gnawing on his collar: here shall we leave him.

Dick

I'm down at the docks again, watching the waves like strings of pearls rolling up blue in the moonlight. In the distance the sound of the dive where I know I'll end up again, the dive where I drink myself to death every so often. They know my face there but they don't care to know my name. The empty vodka bottle falls out of my numb hand and splashes into the water, floating up and down awhile. I can feel the world turning underneath me; or maybe I'm just drunk.

I scratch at my implants where the skin is healing over them. They bleed a little bit. They bleed alot. It doesn't matter. How could I have been so blind? So stupid? I missed every clue she ever gave me. They were right in front of me, but my mind was somewhere else. On someone else. Still her, but some other her, some perfect her. And now the real her is gone. She was more perfect than I knew but I wouldn't get it. She was too shy to come and tell me. She couldn't predict how I would react, or else just enjoyed making me guess. She had to test me to see if I was the one; and I wasn't.

This isn't going well. I haven't got any more leads. I haven't gotten a new lead in two years. The defining case of my life and I've got nothing to show for it. Some days I just sit in the office and listen to the phone ring. My secretary quit. I hadn't been able to pay her for a year anyway and now, thanks to her loyalty to me, her faith in me, she's somewhere in this city maybe sleeping on the street. But what do I care about her loyalty, her faith? She isn't the one I loved. And I wasn't the one my lover loved. So what? So I waste my life here? Washing up? Drowning in a bottle?

It doesn't matter. My problems don't matter. They aren't pretty enough or unique enough. They aren't humble enough. I'm not a great man. I'm not a common man. I'm nobody. When I'm dead the only people who remember I was ever alive are those whose lives I made worse. Even when I solve a case, the look on some poor housewife's face to find out her husband's been fucking some stewardess. It's a bitter world and nobody gets out without a scar across the surface of their heart. I don't even want to live more than half the time. It's only laziness that's gotten me this far.

I pull out my gun. Everybody has a name. Everybody does millions of things in their lives. Millions of things that don't matter to anyone. My heart is rusted. Forget this. Forget all this, I'm never doing this again. I won't have it. I fire into the night.

earful

he stroked the receiver gently, imagining her ear — the delicate folds of flesh, some stiff, others floppy. The vagina, he imagined, was, though tightly muscled, not stiff enough in a certain way. It was like a bowl of sauce that could hold onto you — but not like the refined ripples of the ear: not so finely sculpted — almost rude in its insatiable, toothless desire, incompleteness and ironically curious expression; the

ear, however, never imposed such worship or such mystery. The ear, no... the ear was ivory, carved and smoothed, and without the idea of lust — of giving; of taking... merely plastic reception — nor, by smell or suggestion, of the sea and all its uncharted depths, nor of the childish fear of falling or of enclosed places and graves (“vagina dentata”) or of not being able to adequately fill the question (“penis envy”). It was like a shell washed up from the oceanic cunt, bleached clean by the sun, and rubbed smooth by gritty brine and slick foam; the womb itself washed up like a jellyfish, stinging tendrils calling out alluringly, pissing awful colored dyes. The ear, he thought with a mild erection and a distant concentration about his forehead and cheeks, was very perfect; very perfect. It, with the eye (though, like the testes, he conceived of the eyes as wholly productive organs, seeping sugar-milk tears like stalactites and eroding out the hollow world before them, necessarily external, which only happened to be sunk into yonic sockets with hair-lined foreskin frontal sheaths rather than proudly mounted on exposed phallic stalks where they would be in constant danger the complete encapsulation from which would yet be counter to their visual purpose), are the orifices through which reality is funneled. Spirituality was mostly the prostate and the G-spot; the feeling of *deep* arousal, almost pain, over that which is overwhelmingly appealing — the hope for god, miracles and life after death; the sweaty, musty, earthy odor of shared sexuality; the helpless feeling of unbearable, unbreakable confinement; the permanence of loss; the dread of freedom; the opportunity to abuse, hurt, revenge or destroy — anything over which the adrenal gland is aroused. Reality, he thought, was more logical, less lustful, as trapped by unenforceable laws and the inevitable nature of obedience as we are: this is what pours through the rigidly opened ears, he thought, through the gelatinous yokes of the eyes, saturating the spongy brain. What he knows is a sun and an earth — but only an eye that sees a sun, an ear that hears of an “earth.” The body feels and is so aroused as to actually ache. It inflicts wounds against another body’s hips with the rhythmic thrusting of its own, just as noumenal ideas are bled forth by the lashing of the tongue within the yonic mouth. The head is another pair of hips; inside it are digesting and gestating strange notions indeed. The clitoral, phallic tongue, of course! And the beard that grows down over the mons pubis of the chin! The mouth ejaculates that which is produced within the brain, made viscous within imagery overflowing from the eyes in dreamy, milky streams, and originally fertilized by stimulating penetration of the ears! One head uses the mouth to inflict wounds upon another, the serpentine tongue lapping at the supple ridges of the ear. The physical and the lustful titillate the body, but it is intercourse with reality itself which arouses the head, and drives the mind spongy mind to wetness and edginess, to absolute distraction. Love of objects, of ideal forms which can never exist in reality, love of symbols of power and domination: is true love! is unprovable love and undying, unreal love. Is immortal love born of decision and never aging or changing. Is belief. Is deeply moving. He was going too deep he realized. He suddenly held the phone away from his flesh and looked at the ear piece through squinting, suspicious eyes. A telephone. A shell which you put your ear up to and hear, not the incomprehensible, calm waves of the ocean like God breathing, but the soft murmuring of another human, their mouth pressed flatly and resonantly against your temple. A teleological phone. “Reach out and touch someone.” The mouth breathes like an asshole, he thought in a panic, and what is pushed out between the smug, pursed lips — is shit. He smelled the ear piece. It smelled like plastic and electrolytes, which, in turn, smelled like semen.

Famil LéAire

IT was by the inconveniences of it that Famil remembered he was alive. He would remember it when he got sick and couldn't get up. He would remember it when he got a zit, or when there was just nothing to do. After masturbation it would occur to him as a headache. It occurred to him when he was hungry or when he felt like there was no one who would ever hug him.

He had heard others mention *feeling* alive, but he hadn't ever done any of the things their conversations were about, and he assumed unless he did these insane and threatening things then he might never feel alive at all. He enjoyed this prospect. He couldn't imagine it being a pleasant feeling if it was at all the same as the way he felt when he suddenly realized *he* was alive.

Like one morning, when Famil was awakening from dew sticky dreams to the rasping light of mid-morning. His face was a cobweb. Sleep peeled off his seeping eyes like a soft scab. His mouth was as moist as a cunt and all his muscles were sore. He lay there feeling like a clam uprooted from its shell until, eventually, he put one foot out from beneath his cotton blanket to test the temperature of the room. His brow was damp with perspiration but his foot was a frozen turkey wing. The blanket was wet with his drool where he clutched it up tightly to his whiskery chin. His lips were covered in paste and foul tasting. The room seemed huge and empty in the pale yellow sunlight screeching in through the wide opened window. “How can light seem so *thin*?” he demanded distastefully. He felt sickly and wretched and didn't want to get up. He wanted to go back to sleep and to stay there. The light in the room was just like somebody banging on the high keys of a piano. His head was already beginning to throb.

“No,” he told himself sternly, “I must get up. Else wise, how will the bills get paid? Eh? Who will do my work for me if I do not go? Eh?” He was struggling weakly but passionately with the coverlet. “Nobody, that's who. Ha! Would Kabalreth do it? Of course not! Nor Malkuthela, no matter what her eyes say that bitter little mouth of hers would never let itself be seen doing another person's work. Ha! I am the only man in my division who will do my work. All the others wouldn't do it for me, even if they were paid extra.” His foot fell heavily on the wood floor. “They hate me. And I could care less for any of them! All the better for them then if we must all come to work and never allow each other one day's relief. Better for them then if their lack of camaraderie means I must come in today and suffer their presence. For now they too will suffer mine!” He hated how helpless he was to this motivational drama. “I'll have my spite out on their intolerable selfishness by doling out hatred to them with the sweetest smiles. Ah, bitter syrup. Another day.”

He stopped thinking when he saw the reflection of his disheveled form hunched over the bathroom sink. The gray bags under the eyes. The black stubble dirtying the wax-like skin. His hair a nest for ugly birds. He imagined their eggs cracking on his domed skull and the goo oozing down the sides of his head and across his face. “Women used to use egg whites as makeup,” he thought dumbly. He watched his large hands fumbling with the delicate spigot and then felt the chill of the water as he saw his broad palms filling up with the stuff. He shut his eyes and brought the cold liquid up to his face with a quick tugging gesture. It beaded up and rolled off into the hair-clogged drain at the bottom of the sink the first several times he did this, but as he patiently repeated the action the water distilled the grease more and more until finally his face felt wet as well as cold. Then he was awake.

He knew the moment he was awake because it occurred to him at those times that he could not have gotten back to sleep even if he had gone back to the soft

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warmth of the bed and buried himself in the cozy bedspread for the rest of the day. He would have only gotten oily again, both too hot and too cold. He would have laid there in the glaring sunlight with his feet poking out of the bottom of the sheets and the cotton blanket pulled up around his chin and ears, with his eyes wide open, staring at the dust hovering in suspension in the steep rays of sunshine, thinking about all the work he wasn't doing and would have to do when he went back to his job. He wanted to cry thinking about the lost comfort, but there was no point. It was gone now. That was that.

He strode back into the bedroom on aching legs, the floor groaning in a way which caused him acute annoyance with every step he made. He felt now just like the light in the room. Thin and harsh. Exposed, raw, fresh but still a little tainted. The light was screaming through his wooden head just like his heart was screaming through the heavy bars of his chest. His lungs were too leathery to exhale enough. He was still holding the soft towel from the bathroom in both hands and he looked down at it. It was calm and still in the white light. “I feel alive,” he thought. “I’m alive.”

Jenny and Peter

Jenny became a writer describing the world to Peter, who was blind. She loved him because the first words he said to her were, “you must be a writer.” She was actually a clerk. They had been content for six years. Six years because it was more flattering to be called something she was not. It had always infuriated her to be told what she was. She knew what she was. She had chosen to become it. If, when she was almost twenty, she had been debased to be called a whore by her lover, it was only because she herself had consented to be so inscribed to him. But to be called a *writer* — what an inspiration!

Towards the end she had been trying to explain the class struggle to him. “When you see a fat cat,” she would begin, “the assumption isn’t that he *hunts* well, but that he’s *well fed*. By now, especially from the perspective of those whom history has forced into a submissive position, it can hardly be denied by any rational thinking person that the human animal is entirely domesticated. Therefore there can be no instinctive or inborn justifications for wage slavery. It exists as a product of conscious immorality, not natural selection.” As she would turn away from Peter she would make a repressed grunting noise, as though struggling to contain her disgust at his indifference to the ugliness of the majority of the world. Over her shoulder she would hiss, “it’s not as though a bourgeois could actually survive in the wild.” Eventually they mutually agreed to avoid each other.

Gerard she had met at a party. He was dressed like a beatnik painter in a black beret, black sunglasses, a black turtle neck and white overalls splattered with the primary colors. She watched how he stroked at his tight black goatee as he held a cigarette between pursed lips and hollowed his cheeks sucking in nicotine. “I’m a writer” she announced suddenly, upon marching up to him. “That’s great,” he sneered, “now drop your pants, bend over, and I’ll show you the secret liberal handshake.” That night he spanked her after sharing black coffee. She felt equal to him because he always asked to be hurt back in the same ways he would hurt her. In six months she was more miserable than ever, alone again because he’d fallen for a teenage Trotskyist, who wasn’t as “selfish” as she.

After that she met John the Democratic candidate. He was fun to ride around with because whenever he got cut off in traffic he would wave his fist out the window and holler, “you pompous low self-monitor!” or “petty bourgeois! Your days

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of oppression is over!” He was forced to drop out of the race though because he took the fifth amendment rather than answer a reporter who asked him if he had been popular in high school. Moments before their relationship ended later that night, John confessed to Jenny that he had been popular — but only because he ran for class president on a ticket of white supremacy and athletic empiricism. Jenny began to wonder if she would ever find a partner worthy of her eagerness to share her artistic vision.

She was considering going back to Peter, even if it meant humbling herself to the level of her former role as clerk, sharing with him only in secret the fact that she was a writer. He may not have ever seen the truth, but at least he’d never had to lie.

Denise became a painter by laying it on thick. Like life was her own royal jelly she painted the town red. By the time she became Jenny’s grandmother her hands had become so stiff from clenching life by its brushes, palettes, canvases and color tubes all they could do was tremble. It was no longer lust for experiences of life that made Denise shake like she was receiving a low current of electricity. Now she did it even when she was asleep, and had to wear a special cubicle helmet to bed to prevent her rolling over and smothering herself with her own rigid palpitations.

But Jenny still respected Denise and came to her for advice about anything important. Denise, unlike Jenny’s parents, was never too busy with work to give Jenny the feverish lectures on the value of self-interest and the importance of the work ethic which every child needs when going through their maturing phase.

Jenny asked Denise about Peter, and Denise told Jenny this: “There are a lot of Darwinians and a lot of Tsarists out there telling women that what they should want is a male provider. I happen to be one of the growing number of the female species proud to be perversions of this outmoded genetic tendency. I say, go ahead and be the masculine provider yourself, ladies! And for your pleasures as the despot take a male slave; I’m sure there are plenty who will be relieved to be so unburdened of their patriarchal responsibilities. But remember — you’re the Man now. If your ‘better half’ isn’t putting out all it takes to satiate your pleasure principle, well get rid of ‘em! How many times have we been dumped for not being whores enough? And now it’s our turn to lose our patience! Oh what a wonderful world this will be —”

To which Jenny replied, interrupting, “Grandmother, *Peter*. What about *Peter*...?”

“I think you should’ve stayed with Gerard.”

Jenny went home to Peter and soon forgot about being a writer. After all, she would never be able to write anything Peter could read, and if the rest of the world was anything like what it consistently appeared to be, nobody really cared what anyone else thought anyway, nor was there anyone, therefore, who deserved to read her thoughts just because she had had the courtesy to write them down.

Mikhail

Mikhail had found a gun in the swamp behind his cottage. It was an enormous thing, sculptured metal, so artistic it didn’t seem as though it were an instrument of murder. In fact, it seemed far too large to use. Although, one must remember, Mikhail himself was a very small boy.

The children in the sandbox had teased him on Tuesday again because he was so thin. He had gritted his teeth until tears flowed from his eyes in the blinding sepia-tone sunshine. But nobody cared. No teacher came to save him, nor any God in heaven either. It was far too comfortable in heaven for anyone to trouble themselves

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with the unpleasanties of a small boy like Mikail, or even the anguish of the enormous world. God reminded Mikail of his older brother, locked up in his smoke-filled room.

The train was going by and Mikail watched its pistoned wheels. They crushed the track beneath them, like an angry lover, but they were both so strong. Made of steel. After the train had gone by Mikail set his hand upon the tortured metal and it was so warm. He hugged it tight with both his palms and set his cheek upon it. It was so warm he smiled, a small erection blossoming in his trousers.

His mother dragged Mikail by the hand between the skyscrapers while he spun around, his face aloft, feeling insignificant and lost beneath the slender trough of sky. She bought him a little outfit cropped and colored to resemble the uniform of a sailor. He didn't want to wear it but he remembered the tracks and allowed it to be put on. His mother smiled. The world was made of metal. Mikail understood.

When he got home he ran immediately to his room, burning his knees on the carpet as he slid into position, and retrieved the shoe box from beneath his bed. Its lid unsealed with a whisper, as if it were exhaling yesterday's air. The window had been left open and the smell of freshly cut grass from the graveyard in the adjacent lot wafted in on breezes almost too light to be felt and filled up the entire room. Mikail held the gun in both of his flattened, moist palms, according to how he imagined a sacred object should be held. Delicately he ran the very tip of his index finger along the ridges between the raised steel designs, caressing the creases where metal abutted metal.

He stood for a while beside the train tracks in the early, early evening, but began to feel tired and instead decided to sit down. He chose a spot some distance away from the planks and rails, though still well within the area covered by gravel which he had been told to never enter, under any circumstances, and squatted low amongst some foliage. Shortly he could hear the whistle of a train, and, after some amount of time almost too insignificant to mention, he could hear the vibration of the engine. In fact, he could feel it.

Now bear in mind that Mikail was a small boy and, though he wore a sailor suit, there is no reason to believe that what follows is not true.

The train began passing by at an unhurried rate of speed. What it lacked in forward velocity it more than made up for in the intricacy of its internal workings. From where he sat Mikail could clearly distinguish each individual part as the entirety of this great machine scrolled by before his face. There were wheels and cogs no larger than a fairy, in some cases driving components much larger than Mikail's bed. The engine itself was the size of a house and the train continued on far longer than it would take to tour Mikail's primary gynaseum twice.

None of this was particularly unexpected, although it was leant an air of savagery by the uncomfortable whinnying of horses which were, apparently, being shipped inside the interconnected box cars by the hundreds of thousands. In one boxcar the horses were unsatisfied nearly to the brink of madness — Mikail could hear them comfortlessly tromping about and shriveled in fear beneath their unearthly, inconsolable braying up towards heaven. Hope was whipping them, driving them crazy. It was their hope, calling out futilely to a god who would never respond, which most chilled Mikail there, in the paisley shadow of the colossal train.

At about two thirty, though probably two o'clock, that is, half way through the train's daily passage which, because of the side of the tracks from where Mikail preferred to view it, blocked him from returning to his home until it was complete, Mikail watched a man jump down from the machine's skeletal steel side. From where

Mikail was situated, and due to the low angle of the sun at that hour, he saw the man as a mere silhouette, garbed, it would seem, in a wide brimmed hat and a long coat of sturdy material. As such, Mikail took him to be a cowboy, of the type he had learned in school. It seemed silly to call him a boy however, as Mikail could see plainly that this was a grownup, so he settled on referring to the stranger as Cowman in his mind.

Cowman fell quite a long way, keeping his balance in the air despite the incredible wind currents generated by the motivation mechanisms backing every wheel. Birds often followed along in the train's wake, playing about in these air waves, but there were not so many today, and none gave this man any stay. When he came to ground his legs collapsed and he curled up into a sphere that rolled back some ways from the train. Mikail repositioned himself cautiously to try and find with his eyes the spot in the brush wherein the creature had disappeared. Suddenly Cowman stood up from a spot very near Mikail, shaking off the twigs and leaves from his clothing and from his hair. Mikail could not hear him for the nearby roaring of the train, but he appeared to be mumbling something. He didn't see Mikail, and the small boy took the opportunity, with his heart frosted over and his eyes quite wide, to retreat further into his camouflage of overgrowth. After standing still and staring at the train rolling by for what seemed like an hour the man finally moved. He began stomping around in the thickets, bent over, ripping up plants by the roots. This violence sometimes came close to Mikail, but was mostly centered around a spot about fifty yards out, near where Mikail had found the pistol.

It was coming up on six thirty or seven o'clock when Mikail finally figured this out. The light was getting dim and turning amber all over. The train had ceased going by a half an hour or so before and now the buzzing of evening insects filled the still and heavy air. They surrounded Mikail's head, crawling across the skin on his arm. They reminded him of gentlemen; the stately grasshopper in his tuxedo doffing his top hat at the passing ladybug. The outspoken cicada and the party-hopping June bug swimming around in the same thin breath as slinks the nefarious cockroach, twisting his waxed moustache like a villain from antiquity. Mikail knew he should be home by now. His parents were probably worried.

In fact, when Mikail finally returned home, he found that his parents were not worried. Further, he discovered them in such a condition whereby even the thought of further concern on Mikail's part, on their own part, or on the part of anything in this tiny world was quite beyond their capacity. You see, Mikail chanced upon his parents dead.

This troubled Mikail far less than it had for him to be late for dinner. Being late for dinner, in Mikail's mind, was an inexcusable offense against the efficiency of that great machine which constituted civilization, the ultimate product of human evolution, the culmination of all struggles thus far throughout the history of mankind's tragedies, wars, old love stories, and cape and sword. On the other hand, being dead was simply the result of a particular function of nature, that much greater, still soft, still gelatinous and green machine which continually produced and sustained the steel grinding against steel of society, which produced Mikail.

Mikail burnt his knees, but not so badly, sliding down to recover the flimsy box from beneath his bed. He tossed aside the lid and revealed only the box's emptiness, which was unexpected to Mikail simply because his brain insisted it had used his hands to fill the box with some certain object it had located within the world.

And now Mikail felt with the synapses inside his skin the same currents of electricity the Cowman had felt. The perception, called fear, of the sensation, a chill, of nothing more than absence itself.

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Nature had reclaimed into its swamps, into its softest, dampest green bunches of fur, the gun Mikail had, like a foolish kitten or a child, mistakenly come to call his own. God owns all, after all, all is given to him, returned to him, as smoke, steam rising up from scalding gears, as oil dribbling down a frigid console, as men, as those pink, yellow, ruddy and brown blobs that are the virus inside their own machine, between steel, within the grinding. Nothing is relinquished to man without intention, without careful, insipid and loathsome precalculation, a sneering, hateful predetermination that finds man beneath contempt, the only conditionable object in the entire cold and empty universe.

Here there is grass and sugary thick water pulling. Here there is a great city, stacked up to the clouds and moving like an enormous, hungry clock. And here between the two, belonging more to neither, the son of one and father of the other, owner of neither, here stands man, in all his quivering, weak and frightened glory. Here stood Mikail knowing not what to do.

He lost something, he knew. But what had he lost? He could not remember. Was it ever even his? Was it ever even real? Given and taken away by a reality too complex for anyone to understand anymore, the power he had imagined deriving from this small, simple machine, an object within a mechanical world, must exist nowhere at all outside of his own mind. A power entirely without consequence is as much of a weakness as a power with uncontrollable or undesirable consequences.

Mikail felt his mind grinding against the rules he understood of the world in which he lived. He was moving forward, progressing, evolving, growing into a vague understanding of those few spokes and cogs which would control him for the rest of his existence. But he didn't want to be. He was resisting; which made it painful.

The machine was eating him up from inside out. The machine which he had leapt into; the machine which he had been dropped into. The machine that his parents seemed to own, but which was, he knew, an object in the world itself, and therefore part of the properties of god, who was only the black, unbreathable fumes rising off of the steel beast's wretched and thoroughly accursed hide. Mikail was softness, an incomplete, given up on by God and by the prettiness of nature. He was now the project of the machine; he cooperated in every action; it made it go more smoothly, even though it still hurt. Mikail required a mechanical extension of himself into the world to feel remembered affectionately by god.

A picture of himself was as real as the skin upon his face. He knew this, his soft mind held this compacted bite of insight tightly, growing tiny teeth around it, his soft mind of gum, chewing and sucking at its own liquids, drooling, now like the gaping maw of some small shark, full of frightening fangs, fangs that even scared Mikail. If only he had taken a picture of the gun, for he was already forgetting what it felt like to hold it. He understood that it had some great meaning, some meaning too great for him to ever understand; but it had summoned the suspicions and the dread of the Cowman, it had killed his parents and had disappeared into the emptiness between objects that comprises by exclusion the Godliness of nature. The gun had had some great cause much greater than Mikail's own skin, some mighty power.

As Mikail knelt there upon the carpet of his floor considering all these things the world continued turning around itself, chasing its tail, unaware of this little speck of fleshiness, and uncaring of his little problems. Somewhere out in space a cloud called God chuckled to itself as it touched its private parts. Somewhere the Cowman felt complete.

Do you understand? I hope you do, or don't; I hope you know if you do or don't. I hope you have learned that the world doesn't care, I hope you already knew that

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and are angry. I hope you have learned that the world knows you're angry; I hope you already knew that the world hates you for it. The world hates you, it doesn't want filth like you slithering across its skin and thinking. Everything you think offends God. Thought is inefficient. It is unnecessary to the evolution of our machine. Time.

Sally

Sally hated her job. It wasn't that she hated the work; she frequently found herself forgetting that she was doing work, and was surprised when the pile from which she had been withdrawing subjects was suddenly gone, equally surprised by the towering stack of completed and outgoing forms looming up over her on her other side. She thought about people while she worked, and it was these people whom she hated. It can no more be said that she hated thinking about the people than it can that she hated doing the work. She survived both by ignoring them, and directed all her mental energy toward constructing and detonating the faces of those whom she despised. Not the least of which was her own face, the face of this “Sally” herself.

Her job was a fairly simple one: to categorize by participant's name all the activities completed throughout the day. There was, on her left, a supply of reports regarding the day's activities. This pile was continually refreshed until the close of the business day, which generally preceeded the end of Sally's shift by only a matter of minutes — some time, she figured once, the average of which was between fifteen and fortyfive standard duration moments — depending on the amount of the day's affairs and how fast she could complete their remainder. Her exact duties consisted of filing into manilla folders a copy of each document that included within its main body the name of any particular soul. These manilla folders were marked with the names of each citizen and kept in a library of filing cabinets in four subbasement levels beneath the entire area of the city. Sally had an assistant who would run to the subbasement indicated by a number-set heading each document, retrieve the manilla folders marked with each name involved in the affair under consideration by the document, and return these folders to Sally. Sally inserted copies of the document neatly into the front of each folder and then put them into a pile on her right. At the end of the business day Sally's assitant went home and Sally remained behind to finish up, going down the huge, slow freight elevator to the dimly-lit dust-filled basements herself to retrieve any other files and, ultimately, to refile all of the day's extracted folders. This was not, however, the reason why Sally hated her assistant. She hated her assistant because every time she ran down to the basements and retrieved folders the action must be listed by Sally in a log-book which, at the end of the day, promptly, had to be inserted into the assistant's personal file, which, due to the order of operations, Sally had to make a special trip to the sub-basement to retrieve herself. She collected no extra salary for this, as it was part of her discipline.

Of course there were, from time to time, and lately less and less — perhaps even never again now that they were converting to a new system up top — reports sent down that included no names of people. These were the descriptions of events which involved no individual human participants, as in the case of either organizations or the large machines charged with maintaining many of the city's less civilized functions. Each of these had a file according to the name of the organization or the title of the machine. These files were kept in the fifth sublevel beneath the city proper; a level to which Sally dreaded descending and from which she fled as quickly as possible whenever forced to attend. The fifth sub-basement was an impossibly vast, empty chamber, surrounded by walls seventeen stories tall in which were filed all the pertinent names of organizations and machines. These were accessed by a

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dilapidated exoskeleton of moving catwalks and ladders barely wide or well-crafted enough to suspend Sally above the awful drop. Naturally she dreaded the installation of another secretariat exclusively for the fifth subbasement, which she knew would occur thousands of decades before the complete overhaul of the fifth subbasement filing system would ever be considered, as much, if not more so, as she dreaded having to continue filling that role on her own. Sally needed every dollar from every hour of her job as it was. Sally was saving up to buy herself a beautiful dream.

It was no ordinary, escapist flight of luxury Sally wanted so very badly. She imagined it to herself in secret, while waiting for her assistant to return from below. She dreamed of having a new body; a new face; a new nature; a new past; a new life.

Sasha saw that all writers

Sasha saw that all writers, from the most base and profane to the most eloquent and arcane, were just as stupid and clumsy as she; that all crystalline printed texts she'd ever looked on, like a child in a gothic cathedral gapes at the stained glass murals, were really as soft and mushy as skin, and that behind them there were not the pale rays of airy heaven and the thin angelic glow of the firmament, but the blood and dark syrup, the garnet and gray meats and slippery organs of the abdominal sac. She realized that all authors were just groping for new ways to romanticize the corporeal nausea of being. . . *what?* alive? human? conscious?

She remembered a frustrated phrase she had penned hurriedly in her notebook of thoughts the summer she had turned sixteen. It followed from her confusion with truth vs. interpretation, and the value of individual meaning, after reading different versions of Nietzsche's works edited by Mencken, Kaufmann, Hollingdale, Cowan, and that pining Christian Humanist Barrett. It went, in sloppy scrawl, "all translations are different, but no translator may be blamed."

It had been that summer that she had watched her boyfriend grow a beard, which he felt made him less underdeveloped and more qualified to pluck the privileged, pompous, (vile) fruits of the elite garden called 'maturity.' She begged him to shave it, and the more she begged the more empowered he felt because of the hair; until finally, by winter, they were forced to separate — all he could see in Sasha was the discontent towards him which sicklied over her eyes until it could no longer be denied, simply never spoken of, and all she could see in him was the beard. At the time she had likened it to a memory even further back, and so dream-like now, from her early childhood. She had been working with her mother, on her knees in the dark, fluffy soil, in the flower garden which always made mommy smell of sweat and soil and blooms (as opposed to daddy, who smelled like aftershave and coffee and pipe tobacco). The particular day she remembered was overexposed with sunlight, and it seemed to submerge everything in a humid aquarium full of perspiration. Her mommy was in the house and Sasha came running in on pudgy, hyperactive legs to tell her that there were weeds growing in the garden. Mommy had come out to look and Sasha jabbed her finger anxiously at the offending foliage. Her mother had patted her on the warm hair which crowned her proud, eager face and told her that they were flowers.

Years later, after breaking up with her boyfriend's beard, she had looked those buds up in a large number of horticulture books in the school library. In all of them she found them listed as weeds, and she became very angry at her mother, blaming mommy for the recent tragedy with her lover. She had never gotten to tell her mother the truth though, because mommy had been taken up by the lord while giving birth to Sasha's baby sister, who the little ten year old vowed with all her

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wounded heart to love and care for as much as her lost mother never had her, and who, despite Sasha’s whole-hearted promise, had died a scrawny, bug-eyed fetus in a humming hospital respirator like a lobster in a restaurant tank.

Sydney

Sydney had gotten it into his head one day that he could count the exact number of thoughts he had in any given situation. For example, while he took a walk one day he had fourteen separate thoughts and, while he couldn’t remember every detail of every single thought, it comforted him to know that by the end of the walk he was still capable of recalling the number fourteen.

So Sydney began to count his thoughts, which he did, ironically, without thinking very far ahead into this strategy. At first he would have the complete thought, patiently waiting for his mind to fit in every pertinent consideration, and then pounce on the thought to tag a number to it like it was a wild animal of an endangered species. Before long he was incapable of even finishing the thought before he numbered it and threw it away impatiently. But this raised a new problem; because he had begun punctuating his stream of consciousness, one thought no longer flowed into the next and, after he would angrily toss aside #3761, he would go blank for a little while, incapable of spontaneously generating a #3762. It was around this time that he began to yell at his wife and children and to kick the family dog. But the worst of it was still distantly on the horizon for Sydney.

Eventually, that is, by the time he had to be committed, Sydney had succumbed completely to the numbers. He would count the number of the thought he had just had (which was the number of the thought before that), and then have to number the act of numbering as a separate thought. But then, the act of numbering that number also deserved a number, and so he numbered that as well. But nobody understood poor Sydney nor could relieve him of his pitiable condition. They only fed him and wiped up his spittle or escorted him to and from the lavatory while Sydney, with his head hung down between his shoulders, unshaven and with his eyes wide and fixed on the infinite distance, swayed back and forth slightly and mumbled his numbers. “Three hundred forty eight thousand nine hundred and twenty three. Three hundred forty eight thousand nine hundred and twenty four. Three hundred forty eight thousand nine hundred and twenty five. Three hundred forty eight thousand nine hundred and twenty six...”

The way the rich stay so (and a better reason to feel jealous)

A respectable gentleman of some means and his well attired wife were strolling down the cobblestone street between the shallow puddles, generally enjoying one another’s company. All of a sudden and without the slightest whisper of forewarning, a horrifyingly deformed and filthy cur thrust himself into their path from the dingy shadows of an alley.

“Please, sir, grumbled this decrepit urchin, “Last month I was caught in the machine at the factory where I worked. I enjoyed my job, sir, please understand. I was the most efficient and happiest employee in the plant. I did not fall in due to clumsiness, but rather was bumped by one of the bosses as he, in a group of his fellows, was touring the floor inspecting conditions. Although I was promised full compensation for the damage done to me, good madam, I am now without the means to support myself. Neither have I a place, according to my former employer, in the job market in such a condition as this. Please, please, being good Christian souls, do not turn away one so under the oppressive heel of fortune such as myself, but, I implore

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you, lend me just as much as you see fit to afford me that I may continue to exist in this wretched and wonderful world but a while longer. If you do so I will go away most grateful, with my faith in the destiny of the human race fully and happily restored.”

“Oh,” the good wife said, not without allowing her tone to be overcome at appropriate points by annoyance, “let the poor have money, if it’s all that occurs to their vile hearts to want.”

The man, somewhat more tempered and, having lived a life without feminine shelters, accustomed to dealing with such encounters, spoke out more evenly. “No, my dear; you see — if all the poor wanted was money, than this would be that which they had, and only that which they had, and in this event they would hardly be poor, now would they. On the contrary I should think it would better entitle them to the stature of we richer few. Thus it is not money that they want, for the majority of people show little desire therefore. I believe that the subject of their yearning is more akin to that thing that we call love, though they themselves, who have so much more use for it than do we, may not know its proper name. So does it not fall to us who do, to decide how best to administer it to them?”

The esteemed gentleman withdrew a revolver from the inside pocket of his outer coat and leveled it between the beggar’s eyes. The legless and disheveled runt cringed mightily, allowing his entire form to be wracked by quivers of cowardice. He attempted to blubber out that he’d made a mistake and would gladly move along, but the good bourgeois, now caught up very much in the spirit of philosophizing, would hear none of it. Instead he continued delivering his treatise to his awe-struck and aroused companion in the most casual and concise of terms.

“Now, let us assume the perspective of our society for a moment,” he rhapsodized. “If our goal was to protect our self, as a whole, let us say, as an embodied entity, then the answer must come back with the cries of every cell, ‘destroy this leach and let us on our way!’ If, on the other hand, we say that we must protect the greater good of moral order, or the individual welfare of each constituent, it would be a better strategy to address the illness itself, in this case poverty, and cure the cripple by buying off for a while that ailment beneath which he suffers affliction.

“Now neither of these rightly serves the interest of this man, does it? As we have established his true goal is, in fact, love. The affection he had, in this case, for the job which he is now deprived. He longs for the fulfilling embrace of labor. And this, society requires of him.

“Shall we say that, should money truly be what he desired, rather than the love of society itself, he could easily enough obtain it from us. We, being logical and sane people, and moreover, as he remarks, Christians, would not, should he be the one pointing a pistol at us, hesitate long to part with our goods in case he remove from us that invisible bond above which we can hold no greater object of value. Yet we may assume that, because he does not do this, he would prefer to have peace than such conflict, and love above money. So go my good friend, and peace, if not prosperity, be with you always.”

This being said the gentleman lowered his handgun, lurched forward into a brief embrace with the stranger, and, at an unhurried, unconcerned pace, he and his lady walked away while behind them the wretch was collapsing from terror. That night the good man with his woman shared the most satisfying physical intimacy of their lives until that point and, upon seeing the viscous yellows of dawn trickling into their room, and knowing that it was true that the sun had broken the line of the horizon before either of their bodies had truly tired beneath the ceaseless chemical

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lashings of their exuberant, inventive minds, they agreed always to walk the slums, and to surround themselves with destitution, for it gave them power like unto no other drug nor ambrosia available to them at the time.