



Dreamlands

3 fictions

by Chuck Richardson

DREAMLANDS

:

3 FICTIONS

with a Ziggy Fumar Foreword

CHUCK RICHARDSON

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A Ziggy Fumar Foreword

As the astute reader undoubtedly knows by now, John Andrew Blake and myself, as well as the writer here presented, Chuck Richardson, have come to be known as “Psychedelic-Anarcho-Fictionists.” Although I would argue against such labeling, I must confess that PAF does indeed seem to describe Richardson’s work in general, and, if not, *Dreamlands* in particular.

Let me explain.

It would be a mistake if we read *Dreamlands* as a direct manifestation of Richardson’s unconscious, transcribed into a dream journal over a number of years of foggy waking moments. Richardson was awake while he wrote this book. What else should I say? Nothing, I suppose. But the art of the whole damned thing isn’t so much that it’s the dream itself re-presented, but the process of rendering it which seems somewhat symmetrical, which is to also say somewhat asymmetrical, with the way his unconscious mind might have originally went about unfolding or blooming the original experience. *Dreamlands* seems an effect resulting from behaving like its cause. Meanwhile, its totality, perhaps, seems to disagree with the original dream...functioning as a response to the stimulus antagonizing it. So one begins by jotting down the details as the sleep still crusts one’s eyelids, jotting them down then writing them over and over again until the original fungi or gist of their sensation re-emerges, the raised child of that parent, mushrooming as if it were rendered by something said in the process...somewhere down the line...back in the day, perhaps...and thar t’is, here we go...we *bast* seen the white whale.

Spike Jones Jr., according to my poker buddy Tom Pynchon, once said: “When you replace a C-sharp with a gunshot, it has to be a C-sharp gunshot or it sounds awful.”

Now, you might ask, and I hear you: How would I know if the C-sharp dream became a C-sharp text if I weren’t there with Chuck in his dream dreaming it along with him...?...or maybe I was...through the words becoming a text...It seems to me that through writing *Dreamlands*, Richardson hoped to discharge his full mind., meaning he had to find ways of undermining his innately egocentric creative process of telling the same old familiar stories about himself. And the most tried and true way to rid himself of these stale tales was the pursuit of an objective process that would only render the elements of dreams and not the details he made up or falsely re-membered, out of convenience, but a process that purposely absents them in a sometimes brutal, but always rigorous, fashion. This means his “ego” functioned as it should have, at the end, trying to put the pieces together in a way that somehow resembled a capacity to respond and feel external stimuli and what might be good and/or bad about them based on the apparent effects they seem to cause, in other words a sensibility, or the implied possibility thereof...

Consider the opening of “counterclockwise:”

The text is the unknown, or ambiguous quantity we’re seeking...The text when combined with its apparent intention (Y) equals “me.” That is, the “me” (usually the reader-writer) engaged with the text defines the text’s intention. Each “me” will likely uncover a different intent from the text when engaging it...From this formula we can also deduce that if one subtracts the text’s intention from the self, all that remains is the text...Therefore (of course), if one subtracts the text from the self what remains is pure intention. What we have here is a formula relating the text and its intention with the identity of the individual engaging with it...78

Richardson, luckily for us, seems to have been undaunted by the quixotic nature of such a task because he doesn’t take anything too seriously. To take something too seriously would imply, indeed

require, too much ego...too much insistence. Richardson is fond of saying “insist on nothing, including non-insistence.” That which is taken too seriously is absented. What’s left is a fiction-centered creative process that under-stands reality as a fictional mode methodically deployed by awareness to transmigrate itself from sense to sensibility...from flesh to spirit...from slavery to freedom.

From “Mid-December 20—:”

If your attitude is good, and there’s reason to believe it is, I mean, you’re here aren’t you...if you’re attitude is good life has no limits, experience can have no bounds, we can get outside these suits of flesh and see our human existence as a midway transition between fields of infinite pain and pleasure. Your body, E, gives you the freedom and opportunity for spiritual evolution. Human life is necessarily intense. 76

One’s world is the way one goes about looking at one’s world, and the way one looks at one’s world depends upon one’s perceived situation, and one’s perceived situation relies on the stories one’s been telling one’s self up to that point. So, one’s world is one’s ego and to change one’s ego is to change one’s world. That’s how we humans can make a heap of sense out of nothing, and *Dreamlands* seems a way of re-memembering it...how to make a heap of sense out of nothing.

From “Mid-December 20—:”

And many things are heading our way, rising from the seafloor, enlightened of their burden. The heavenly light is like a baby farting in a tub. Bubbles of joy rising and bursting as he does it again and again. The lightness is your joy. It has limited itself for your pleasure. It has densified for your feeling. And yet you feel it hiding from you with each passing evolution, each veil that covers it with a new form, and the farting continues but you’re lost in bubbles, milky ways of divine gas, and for a moment it sees itself, you seeing yourself in its translucent luster, infinite possibilities of its seminal trace are invading you, each a delight of discovery. As each bubble bursts a new one emerges, and you look and see yourself reflected upon each one, inside being something rarefied yet common. We can smell it. The bubbles burst, their voids nullified by cosmic plasma—the sea’s bombardment. The cycle of fulfillment goes round and round in the farting sea bubbles. I’m a churning bubble, the same as any other. 46

Richardson views writing [and reading] as a revolutionary act. And *Dreamlands* functions as a history of *that* revolution. For PAF to be PAF, it must *seam* various revolutions together. His rebellion—brace yourselves, gentle readers—takes the form of weaving a series of dreamscapes sewn together via uncommon, shifting [that is fluid] punctuation, syntax, grammar, etc. & et al, forming the flesh and air of the dreams' focused emotions, vibrating fictional undertones with poetic riptides wringing out the connotative ambiguities between what Richardson actually dreamt and what Chuck really wrote [sic]. *Dreamlands* renders, if nothing else, the feeling of how meaningless the human world seems outside of its context situated within the inhuman world, which includes all forms of non-human mind making up the fabric of life on Earth. No me-centered rules of behavior-writing seems adequate to capture even the slightest gist of what Richardson's pursuing in *Dreamlands*: the essence of mind behavior Itself. Yet he somehow manages to do just that, in my opinion, though I can't say exactly how:

Remember...always remember and never forget the Tibetan pacification of the Mongols. That's the plan to do it with. Everybody gets a monk's education. Nobody gets by anymore without being able to exhibit some degree of literary and philosophical creativity. No more skaters. Time to get their priorities straight. They can get started by quitting their jobs and devoting their free time to meditation. When they're awake they're to engage in festivals and dances and make traditions of them to pass their time in harmony with God.
Mid-December, 75

Yet...

What I can say is it seems Richardson's looking for a true perception and criticism of humankind's ongoing worldwide slaughter of organisms and the ripping apart of the global viscera, the planet's organic fascia or web of life. Richardson's *Dreamlands* meets the destructive and demoralizing ways of the American-Political-Economic-System head-on by committing literary sacrilege against the APES's prevailing dogma of corporate libertarianism, which seeks to re-create global, national, regional, local, spatial and personal boundaries as corporate borders [eg: incorporated

boundaries...as cells in a body...*working*], where only incorporated persons, that is *workers*, are allowed to exist, function and/or travel-learn-communicate. The rest will be expunged like alien interlopers who might do us harm...or not. Too many lurking threats could certainly be defined as a “nightmare scenario.” *Dreamlands* sounds like that mouse in the wall when you’re trying to sleep:

I hope I have my usual room. You need some sleep before you start tonight. Dreamless sleep. If only you could pray. If there was only a personal god you could believe in. Don't kid yourself. You can't. But it would be nice to pray. Nice to hope. You'll have to live with this the rest of your life. Praying only deludes you, dilutes your pain. Pushes it off on something, someone else. It's yours. It belongs to you. And you may as well get used to it. You'll be having this dream for as long as you live. You even saw it coming. You knew you'd let them down. You knew you weren't man enough to take care of them. The way they required. Not you. No. It would have been an answer to their prayers. That's not you. You're a killer. Mid-December, 70

As a work of Psychedelic-Anarcho-Fiction, *Dreamlands* should, as should *all* of Richardson’s work, if we are a species worthy of it, become as fundamental to our daily existence as cave painting and sculpture and oral traditions were in the primitive societies of our dead ancestors. Richardson doesn’t type out best sellers hoping to generate material wealth. He seams *beneath* that.

Reader, you have on this screen before you an e-text created by someone who feels the internet is a doomed Tower of Babel about to be abandoned due to babble [eg: Yogi Berra’s “Nobody goes there; it’s always too crowded”], or a Library of Alexandria situation where all the files and URLs are about to be erased by DARPA. When the string holding the sword over Damocles finally snaps, this electronic mandala will dissolve. For now, *Dreamlands* seams part of our daily fabric.

In the meantime, you might want to print this out, just in case...

Walla Walla, Washington
2011

...But the image grows blurred by trying to distinguish the outlines, as in the case of the inordinately delicate pattern of the wallpaper and the indeterminate edges of the gleaming paths made in the dust by the felt slippers, and, beyond the door, the dark vestibule where the umbrella is leaning against the coat rack, then, once past the entrance door, the series of long hallways, the spiral staircase, the door of the building with its stone stoop, and the whole city behind me.

--Alain Robbe-Grillet, In the Labrynth

My actual experience had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of a continually changing apocalypse.

--Aldous Huxley, The Doors of Perception

Digressions On A Recurring Dream

It's blistering elsewhere, but not here as two-dozen friends gather poolside. A hazy skyline shimmers a mirage, fogging via remote control dreams of glassy, urban sophistication. The illusion resonates its palpitations into pulp, swimming the couple's trust in a cultivated hereafter.

What?

I said, Do you Jonah, take this woman, Linda, to be your lawful wedded wife?

A family court judge and ace trombonist is presiding. He's sixty and serious, calmly leading the couple through the ritual as they'd rehearsed it, with the about-to-be newlyweds standing nude on the diving board, hovering over the deep end. Neither can swim, but their naked friends have rehearsed saving them.

I do.

And do you, Linda, take this man, Jonah, to be your lawful wedded husband? If so, answer I do.

She looks over Jonah, realizing she's given up hope for someone sexier. Expectations duly lowered, she imagines the one who ditched her standing in Jonah's place. He, for his part, cannot fathom his good fortune. Linda's much younger than he, more attractive, even sexy once you get to know her. She's also mysterious. He feels, much to his obvious excitement, that she's reading him like a book, her eyes perusing every fold, every gray hair, each blemish and scar—from the inside-out. This eye-to-eye exposure plainly titillates him.

I do, she answers, at last, having finished the run-on sentence fragment of material phenomena called fiancé, now husband.

I now pronounce you legal mates. Let the screwing begin, the judge declares, raising his trombone to his lips for a sonorous, sliding blow.

As practiced, Jonah and Linda wrap their arms and a leg around each other and jump into the water—a two-person cannonball setting a pool splash record.

They sink to the bottom, choking on the rush of water overcoming their kiss. The impact of two-dozen naked bodies cannon-balling into the pool reduces their panic, as they know damned well they're about to be rescued.

At least that's the way it's been rehearsed.

She's standing about twenty feet away on the other side of the serving table, bathed in blue twilight, beautiful: Blonde, tall, slim with a sweet bubble butt; young and nubile, musky with a quivering athletic body soft to touch. Arriving together on their first date, they separated to make their rounds—he to tell his friends how hot she is for him, her to tell hers how sensitive and even smart he is.

The news surprises each set of associates, who begin eyeing each other in preparation for the natural pairing up. Such is the philosophical activism of the adolescent mind—ruled by hormones musk tricks it into perceiving everything in a warm, bruised haze, alienating it from the cross of its upbringing.

Being gainfully employed at Arby's, where he's unallowed to make decisions at his minimal wage and experience, his parents feed him lots of flesh (beefening, they imagine, his football future), while praying he'll perform as desired.

If you're allergic to cows, how can you eat so many hamburgers? she's asking him in study hall. He's eating his third Big Mac, smuggled in via his voluminous sweatshirt pockets. His nickname is Beefshit, and he's proud of it.

They find themselves back where it started, at the high school, under the stars by the tennis courts.

I'm saving myself for college. If I were to stop doing that, the guy would have to be really special.

He hands her a sheet of folded up paper.

I wrote this for you.

She unwraps it and reads *Tomorrow's Such A Long Time*.

She recognizes the lyrics: her parents' favorite love song. Leaning forward, she kisses him on the cheek. Turning his head, their lips meet, then their tongues. His hand finds her breast, a sweet cupful, and they begin writhing about on the ground, limbs entwined, echoes *From Here to Eternity* sans ocean and war, vibrating under the stars.

His other hand goes for the button of her jeans, but she brushes it away...seaweed.

A four-dimensional brane appears above and behind each student when they speak, signifying his or her present life, or how their situation seems to them. Part crystal, part flame, suggesting unyielding interior anxiety despite the apparent stability of their superficial forms, the yin-yang of these images seem to be offering their associate pupils with crude alternatives, defining and acting upon each student's mind, languaging their only means of grappling with the friction of reality. Since language seems their only tool, some of them may view their problems as enabling semantic obstacles outlining whatever it seems they might know. Through precise communication that examines language as a whole within specific cultural contexts, they might imagine themselves designing intelligent, intertextual future pluralities in what they imagine might be American culture. It seems they may become middle- and high school American English teachers. And, perhaps, appearing young and idealistic they long to work with children. Acting like idealists, they imaginably enact and enforce whatever they perceive as progressive, valuing it with all their hearts. Except for

two, anyway, whose souls feel older and hearts younger than the rest, who alone scan these images from opposite ends of the sunlit classroom.

They're discussing Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, led by their professor, a sexy Piaget protégé, who's holding the attention of the room's heterosexual males and ambitious, closeted lesbians, while somewhat alienating her younger—but no less attractive—competition. The professor, wearing a snug, knee-length denim skirt, is sitting cross-legged on her desk in front of the blackboard. With a deep breath, she swings her light brown hair so it brushes over each of her pink cardigan shoulders; her posture, erect, softens as she luxuriates in a thrilling, thoughtful *hmmmm* before responding to each remark.

Are you sure? she asks, seeing a potential philosopher in each undergraduate who, according to their test scores, is deemed capable of educating themselves and others for the rest of their lives. The professor, like most of her students, is also an optimist.

I mean, we can't forget that Bettelheim hurt children and committed suicide. If your work doesn't make you stronger, and doesn't consider the developmental stage of your middle student, how efficacious is it? Bobby?

A young, dark-haired woman dressed in black—who's a bit heavy and wearing a brush cut, hoping to land a job in a West Virginia parochial school because they need her down there—looks hungrily at her professor while groping for the right words. A white hare, meanwhile, is chasing a freaked-out black bull around a high noon corral with nuns and cowboys whooping it up and laughing on the rails around the translucent bubble's perimeter, which is spinning above and behind her head. Three Chinese railroad workers in tattered clothes occupy the center of the ring. Their eyes are round with terror.

I think Bettelheim's problem was that he failed to teach to the middle and didn't take children's individual needs into consideration. For instance, not every little girl, especially the normal ones, will see themselves in the role of Little Red Riding Hood the way Bettelheim does. They won't see the wolf as their sexy father, a shape-shifting

transvestite who's lusting after his mother, their grandmother. They don't feel the least bit jealous of grandma. If the folk tale was really Freudian, wouldn't she be going home to her parents? This is all nonsense. Why are you making us talk about it? I mean, this has nothing to do with any of the children I've ever known. For instance, when I was little, I loved my mother way more than my dad. I was jealous of the attention she gave to him. That's the opposite of what Freud's talking about, right? And besides, nowhere in the text does it suggest that Little Red Riding Hood has any animus toward her grandmother. In fact, she loves her grandmother. Bettelheim sees what he wants to see and loses focus of the text itself. I don't see where this is at all useful. We'd get hung up if we taught any of this stuff to a minor, especially in West Virginia where I'm needed.

Hmmmm, the professor responds. I see your point. Anyone care to comment?

I think it's all about supremacy. The wolf represents masculine puissance and the protagonist feminine authority. I think the wolf is a seducer, much like Satan in the Garden, or Milton's Comus. His mythical role is to seduce and dominate...consume...the feminine power of the universe, said a young black man, who is always conservatively dressed, perfectly groomed. His classmates refer to him as *The Preacher*.

Above his head float two faces—one, presumably his mother's, the other a white man's. Both of them are speaking angrily, abusively. A ring of ever-wilting red and white roses is spinning around the talking heads in a counterclockwise rotation, leaving an acid-like trail forming a pink swastika as it's being sucked to the center. The interstice binding the black and white faces, upon closer inspection, is a squiggling line of marching red ants, the leader pursuing an ever-lengthening trail of honey into the unknown.

Little Red Riding Hood is really a tale about the black man, and how the black man ain't gonna take it anymore. He's not only bigger and badder, but he's trickier too, he says. *The wolf, O.J., is the protagonist. The Juice is loose.*

Some snickering from the two other black students in the class.

So you see it as racist that we typically paint the wolf as the antagonist, and the little white girl the protagonist? asks the professor, leaning forward to reveal some cleavage to *The Preacher*. *Remember, this is a white folk tradition. There weren't many black people in Germany in those days...Hmmm? Was race an issue then, and if it wasn't, is it appropriate for us to project contemporary meanings on traditional tales?*

Of course it is. You said it yourself, "a white folk tradition." That's exactly what I'm going to teach my students. That the white man's stories aren't our stories. That racism is inbred in the white...

The Preacher drifts off, then mumbles: *Jesus was a black man. They lynched him.*

Jesus was a Jew, contends a young Palestinian woman, whose mandala contains two gardens—one green, the other blue—spinning leftward, like *The Preacher's*, about its Maypole axis, strung together by spitting red flames discharging from its center, scorching the earth of each plot before being overrun by the verdant libido of the anti-soul it's attempting to consume.

The wolf is the oppressed Jew out to reclaim his homeland from its Roman conquerors. Except this time, he defeats them, or at least their women. It's sweet revenge and seems to me, metaphorically speaking, a lot like the second coming in the Book of Revelations. In the modern context, of course, the wolf is the Palestinian man, the suicide bomber. He kills himself, like Christ, to free his people. We all know too well that the wolf will not, and cannot, live happily ever after. He is a martyr. He will be hunted down and killed for being nothing more, nothing less, than a wolf. Preacher, you're right, the wolf is also the black man, the threatening mandingo out for the white man's woman. I see Little Red Riding Hood as an inspirational story with tragic implications...

Down by the creek, in the woods, projecting crescent moons, they spoon, naked, in the mosquito hum.

I need a break. Just a few minutes and I'll be ready for more, he pants into her ear.

No problem. Don't worry about it, she whispers. Cradled in his muscular arms, she feels his cock, raw, moistened, resting in her butt crack. His scrotum, pressed flat against the base of his dick, bares his perineum so it rests gently upon the softness of her ass cheek. His energy, kindling, grows.

You feel good.

Thank-you, she says, swatting a mosquito on her thigh.

In the bar, she's behaving haughtily, drinking shots and talking about the married men she's fucked. The wives she's stared down. The one who beat her up. How that wouldn't stop her. She is unafraid.

His friend buys them another drink.

What are you doing Saturday?

Going with him and his friend to the Drive-In, she says, nodding at the man, his boyhood chum, now married, who's just bought them drinks.

You fucking traitor! You knew I was going to ask her out!

He throws him against the wall.

Now, down by the creek, he's regaining his strength and begins fucking her again, doggy style, slapping bugs off her back as they buck.

His knees are bleeding with pebbles sticking in the wounds. He grinds on, however, believing someday he'll get what he wants...

I think you're all nuts, she's saying, grabbing the other old soul's interest across the room. The class grows silent.

Children that age don't think politically, nor do they view their parents sexually. The wolf is death. It comes in many forms. It takes the young and old. Your parents can't protect you from it. In fact, her parents, being absent from the fairy tale, are already dead. Children must learn to overcome their fear of death if they are to mature properly,

become responsible adults. It's not the morals that speak to children, but the natural laws. Bettelheim understood something very controversial, that terror—when properly contained by folk tales—has a role in turning children into adults. Those who never learn to cope with their gravest fears become self-destructive, either directly or indirectly, because of their undiagnosed phobias. The grim fact is children must become equipped to deal with the real world, which is full of wolves. The lesson is, for children, you can't trust someone just because they look like grandma. It's a cautionary tale about child predators. Pedophilia and other forms of child abuse didn't start yesterday. It's been around as long as we have...

Above her head, he sees a grown man inappropriately fondling an infant whose diaper he's changing. Superimposed on this image is an angel, flipping the world the bird with a big smile on her face. She also has an erection poking through her robes.

He can't help but laugh. The class, startled that someone could respond to her critique this way, stares at him. He rises from his seat, naked, and strolls across the classroom to the beautiful girl, the smiling impudent angel, who disappears with him into a crack in the space, passing through a gap in time going elsewhere...forward and up, perhaps.

Bye-bye baby bunting, Daddy's gone a hunting, for a little rabbit skin, to wrap his baby Raybie in.

The infant, struggling for each breath, wheezing through constricted bronchial tubes, listens to his mother, awake at 3 a.m., singing and rocking him, keeping her boy composed enough to breathe.

You're my chosen one...my little baby Jesus, she coos in his ear, squeezing her struggling son, cradling him in her arms. The smell of her sweater, the calm way she's speaking, the warmth of her loving body lets him relax. The attack subsides and, drifting off...

He's once again clutching the red transparent cliff—a wall of limpid, breathing flesh—he hears the under machine milling, its stainless steel gears teething a visceral hum. Even asleep, he

must cling to the life that's his for all it's worth. But he's slipping, losing traction as he exits this world which feels not yet his...not by a long shot.

Your mother and father were college students. Their parents were teachers. They were poor and loved you so much that they gave you up for adoption. They knew we could give you a better life. We were older and had more money, but they picked us as like to like. We were educated Lutherans and they knew you'd be brought up in a home just like theirs.

So when can I meet them? You're not my real mommy?

I'm your real mommy. I love you more than other mothers love their children because I really wanted you. And I chose you out of all the other babies. A real mommy is the woman who raises the baby. Not the dirty one who had sex and couldn't take responsibility for it. You're my baby.

Doesn't she want to see me? Didn't she love me?

A long silence. The boy, three, dressed like Marshall Matt Dillon, begins thinking of his soldier's outfit and an official Superman's cape, which he wears in regular intervals, depending on which show he's most recently seen. Bowling for Dollars, a local TV game show, blares with the sound of crashing pins in the background. The woman, in her late thirties, her hair gooped up with Dippity Doo and her face covered with cream, searches for the right words to tell the child, fondling Dr. Spock with nervous fingers, anxious to find the explanation for the one she loves more than life itself. Though educated, it does not occur to her to search the index for "difficult questions."

I'm sure she'd want to see you, honey, but she's dead. She died in a car accident with your father shortly after you were born. I'm the only mommy you've got. But yes, she did love you. She loved you so much she was willing to give you up so you could live a better life. You were a much loved baby Moses, set adrift by your mother knowing a life with her was worse than death itself. So she gave you up. She loved her son so much she gave him up for adoption. And I chose you.

The boy, now haunted, quietly goes outside to shoot his air rifle at imaginary Indians who would rape and kill his wife and mother and steal his three children if he let them. The afternoon will be spent seeking revenge in the weeds, consumed by the field behind his country home.

Mrs. Brady sits behind the wheel wearing a moustache and man's dark business suit. She is arguing with Shirley Partridge, who's riding shotgun and wearing that Partridge family outfit with the ruffled white blouse, black suede vest and snug fitting velvet short-shorts. Sitting in the back seat, he listens with aroused interest as his parents argue about which way to go. The 1969 Buick Sportwagon is packed to the gills with camping gear, yet hasn't left the city.

Why don't you ask someone how to get to the Thruway? asks mama Partridge, wide-eyed and innocent.

Shut up, be-otch. You were supposed to be reading the map. One more word out of you and you'll get the back of my hand.

Mrs. Brady fumbles in her left breast pocket for cigarettes. Withdrawing one, she ignites it with her Zippo then snaps the cover shut and quickly replaces it in her right side pocket.

How much longer before we get there? he innocently asks from the back seat. *I'm hungry and I have to go to the bathroom.*

The parents fall silent for a moment. Mrs. Brady snatches the map from Shirley Partridge's lap, revealing the thighs that made Mr. Kincaid stand at attention.

Take him over there and let him piss in the weeds, says Mrs. Brady.

But I have to poop, the boy says.

Reaching across the front seat to Shirley Partridge, Mrs. Brady tears the white ruffle from her blouse, exposing her beautiful breasts, the ones Danny too often ogled, enhanced by a black lace Victoria's Secret bra.

Wipe your ass with this, says Mrs. Brady, tossing it into the back seat. Shirley Partridge, tears welling up in her tender eyes, gets out of the car and leads Raymond to the weeds at the far end of the urban parking lot.

It was his want of inciting a catfight for his affection between the paternal twin sisters that, once exposed by the weaker party—his now ex-girlfriend—that had perverted their relationship, bringing it now to this poisonous brink teetering on her doorstep.

The first thing he notices is that she's put on a couple pounds in the ass. And he likes it.

What are you doing here?

I came to say I'm sorry. I'm fucked up. My head's all messed up over this adoption thing. I think one way and feel another, then when I start feeling the way I was thinking, I start thinking differently, then I feel different, and my thinking has to catch up. I don't know what I'm doing here, but I am here, so...

She steps aside and he enters her one room apartment.

I just started working at the bank. My goal is to get out of here and leave all this shit behind, she says.

He notices her strength. It wasn't there before. He reaches out to it.

I need you. Wherever you are I feel at home.

She recoils, feeling occupied.

Well, I don't need you.

It's his turn to cringe. She uses his disengagement as a chance to gain ground, throwing herself at him, wrapping her arms around his neck stiffened by anxiety and desire. She kisses him deeply as he probes the newfound folds of her tighter fitting jeans. They cease osculating and, shoving him through the door, she whispers, *Good-bye...*

Putting down his favorite book, *Curious George*, he looks up and spies her approach over the lawn. A large truck transporting mysterious substances rumbles by vibrating the bay window separating him from the outside world. She's wearing her favorite Monkees t-shirt, the one with the boys silly walking arm-in-arm down the beach. He's got a real hard-on for his babysitter. Mom's going to go get her hair done, and Curious George will play the adorable little Monkee to the loving fat girl, doing his best Davey Jones. A beetle, crossing the windowsill, meets its demise under his thumb. The crunching sound, the feeling of dominion, entices him to sing:

Hey, hey we're the Monkees, and we like to monkey around.

She knocks on the door and he listens to his mother's thunderous steps.

Hello, dear. Come on in. I'll only be gone a little while. I'm not getting it colored today.

Mother leaves and he attacks her, grinding and humping her plump pubescent thigh, an innocent puppy not yet fixed.

Unnerved by the light's unshakable extraction, his slide toward self-reliant bondage and a liberating death begins. Fighting every millimeter of the way, he's nine pounds of rage rebelling against this sudden upheaval, this suction toward the machinery and light—which is cold.

The machines are too real to imagine ripping at his flesh, removing what remains of his prior world with industrial efficiency, cleansing him of everything he's ever known.

Thus aborted and assigned his number, he falls into an anxious sleep in a new reality, dreaming of the elsewhere that's rejected him.

A blonde and two brunettes, occupying separate spaces in time, each inhabiting a unique situation—in his mind—accost him at intervals to varying degrees; each addressing peculiarities only known to their victim.

I saw you picking your nose.

Everybody does that.

What? Watch you pick your nose?

No. Pick their nose.

And eat it? Like you?

He says nothing.

I watched you. So don't act so big.

Noticing they're on the school playground, he feels the derisive presence of invisible classmates, mocking him with fingers up their noses...

Free skate Friday night, the pubescent boy is asking the second brunette if she'd like to skate with him. He's been fantasizing all week. *I Believe in Miracles (You Sexy Thing)* by Hot Chocolate, is their song the lad believes. Unfortunately, he hears it somewhat differently from prevailing interpretation.

I'd love to skate with you Ray, she says, batting her eyes at him and taking his hand. They make their way awkwardly on their skates onto the ice in the indoor arena, cluttered with kids of all ages skating in counterclockwise circles to the local Top 40 radio station.

He's not a strong skater, but plays a bit of hockey and can get buy well enough to lead her around the rink. Of course, she's skating worse than usual, depending on him. She stumbles a bit, and he catches her. The young teens find themselves embracing each other as their friends skate by, singing *Raybie and Katie, sittin' in a tree...*

Their song comes on, and Raybie, elated by the timing, feeling himself the man he hopes to become, begins singing along.

I believe in milk call, you sexy thing, you sexy thing you.

Katie straightens herself and pushes him away. Regaining his balance, he slides forward, hands outstretched before him, still singing, and she socks him in the jaw with a Jerry Korab right cross, staggering him.

Things are going terribly wrong.

What did I do? he whines, their peers skating back against the grain, encircling them to obstruct the path of the ice monitor by grabbing hold of each other's jerseys, slowing down the monitor who just happens to be the high school hockey coach, a man who Raybie longs to impress. Attempting to straighten himself, he can't help sliding toward Katie, again, who immediately grabs his Sabres hockey jersey and pulls it over his head. The next thing he knows he's being pounded repeatedly on his left temple with wicked right hooks. He can hear the others roaring their approval. The beating seems to not be slowing in any manner when, suddenly, he's released and allowed to crumple into a heaping puddle of his own freezing blood. As he regains sight, he sees his savior is an older retarded boy, Clyde Strong, whom he's be-friended on the school bus.

Raybie, beaten up by a girl and saved by a retard! You're a fuckin winner, dude!

He's not sure who said it, all he knows is the hockey coach heard it as he helped him to his feet...

After several strenuous "dates" and insane e-mails, she's finally invited him to dinner, making it seem as if he's now endured enough and should somehow be rewarded with greater intimacy. He, on the other hand, is lonely, maturing, and at a strange point where women his own age make him feel old. They seem to be aging faster than he, even if their health is much better. So Raybie often finds himself situated with a much younger woman he's trying to woo. Of course, being strange, mainstream chicks are out of the question. He thinks he wants, in the words of Leo Kottke, a "hippy chick." Not that he's a hippy, nor an anti-hippy, it's just that he finds their laid

backness much easier to deal with. He believes they tend to be less bitchy. What he's discovering, however, is that they tend to be strange, that birds of a feather flock together, and all that. At least he's no longer dining with fat chicks.

Schizophrenia's difficult to deal with. Medications only last so long and then you've got to switch them. Each has their own side effects.

They're dining on linguine and clams smothered in extra virgin olive oil. It tastes disgusting, but he's pretending it's really good. Without warning, she farts and bounces in her seat.

Ooh, shit. Diarrhea's one of those side effects, she announces, giggling. *I've got to go change my pants.*

She leaps from her chair and skips away down the hallway, not caring that the dark wet spot is easily viewed by her watchful dinner date, whose bowels begin gurgling, perhaps triggered by the foul aroma as the vision of pert, liberated breasts with large nipples and wide areolas pressing against the thin cotton fabric of her favorite t-shirt evaporates from his short-term memory. Gulping the oily clam he had in his mouth, he gingerly makes his way to his car, heading for a nearby bowling alley to take a dump of his own...

He'd asked her to go see Jaws during their confirmation class' field trip to a professional basketball game. They sat next to each other the entire time, rubbing knees and touching fingers, whether in the stands or on the bus. She was new, beautiful, and affectionate. She hadn't heard of his ice-time humiliation, and besides, since then he'd become something of a hulk. His first victim was Katie's big brother. It was intended to send the message of what I'd do to you now, be-otch. It worked, they'd become friends, but Raybie maintained his superior tone, often citing her father—a dainty, alcoholic chemist—as *next*. He still believes the words to the song *are I believe in milk call*. No one dares argue with him these days. Especially Katie.

Arriving at his Sunday School seat, he's greeted by a sheet of paper with Emily loves Raybie written all over it. Feeling confused, he takes his seat. He turns the sheet over and on the other side is a self-portrait of the artist as a nude young girl. Frightened, he crumples the sheet of paper. She enters the classroom, proudly swinging her pubescent hips and taking long teenage strides in his direction. Reaching his side, she embraces him and rubs her nose on his ear lobe. Now he can't stand up. How inappropriate for Sunday School. If he were wearing jeans, it would have been feasible. But not in his Sunday suit. Miss Pritchett has yet to arrive when Emily yanks him to his feet and leads him out of the room, down the hallway, swiftly passing other parishioners, and into the broom closet, where she opens the door, shoves him into the darkened interior, follows him, closing the door and yanking the light string hanging from the ceiling.

Emily throws her arms around Raybie's neck, kissing him. Her tongue darts out of her mouth meeting his teeth, licking them and the inside of his lips. Repulsed, he shoves her away and she falls into a stack of boxes, making a commotion. The door swings open and it's the reverend and Miss Pritchett, surrounded by their classmates who've led them to the broom closet.

He was raping me! screams Emily, inciting the religious mob—which now includes his mother—gawking at Raybie's boner.

Objects for which he had yet to acquire referent symbols, known here as trees, move by at high velocity. Whether or not it's he who's actually moving doesn't occur to him until he stops, and feels a jolt of karma agitate his tender, newborn system. His caretaker, a woman, has him over her shoulder, carrying him somewhere, some new island perhaps, yet another consciousness, another elsewhere, one more...

Awareness fading, he drifts off...

All alone am I ever since your goodbye/ All alone with just the beat of my heart/ People all around but I don't hear a sound/ Just the lonely beat of my heart...

After calling her house numerous times, insulting her father, being short with her sister, accusing her mother of lying, all because they wouldn't get her to come to the phone, he's now sitting in his car down the street from her house. It's 3 a.m. and she's yet to return. Parked under a tree, his car being dark, it's difficult to notice he's even there. He's toying with the .45 caliber automatic pistol in his lap, the one he's borrowed for self-protection since the murder of his friend. He doesn't know what he'll do when she comes home, how he'll respond if she's been with another man.

A car passes, slowing, then moves on. He fidgets with the weapon, loading and unloading the cartridge stocked with 10 rounds—in and out of the pistol's butt. A car turns the corner up ahead, its headlights, luckily for him, go out during the turn. It parks several doors away from her house, and nothing happens. No one gets out. He slams the cartridge into the butt for the last time and releases the safety. As he's reaching for the door handle, the occupants of the other car get out. It's her and she's with a guy. A large man dressed like a Republican. They walk arm-in-arm across the street, and as they enter the light of the dim street lamp, he can make out that look on her face, the one she'd worn on their first few dates, when the sex was still good for her. The pair, acting goofy, does a funny walk, reminiscent of the Monkees, while they traverse the light cone. Upon reaching the shadows, he lowers his hand and slides it into the back pocket of her tight fitting jeans.

He opens his car door and takes a knee, using the wedge between the door and the windshield frame as a brace, he steadies his aim and begins regulating his breathing, softly closing his left eye to give the right one full influence over targeting.

His prey moves up the steps, her hand sliding mischievously into his back pocket as well, causing a momentary shudder in his otherwise steady grip. She puts her arms around his neck as he embraces her around the waste. Engaging in their goodnight kiss, he slowly squeezes the trigger. The porch light, however, goes on and her father yells at her for being out so late, telling her that the guy stalking her in the shadows has been calling incessantly, that he's worried and a decent young man.

You should treat people better, he says, then, looking at the young man, *You should be careful getting involved with a woman who treats men badly, unless that's what you want. I did. Look what it got me.*

Grabbing her arm, the father pulls his daughter inside, slamming the door behind them. The porch light goes out and the hulking figure descends the porch steps. He has a beat on him, but as he enters the light cone from the street lamp, he breaks into a jog as Raybie finally squeezes off a round in his direction. The shot rings through the night. Her date stops under the street light, looking around for the source of the sound. The porch light comes back on, and the girl's father comes out onto the porch.

What was that? the young man says, calling from the middle of the street as more lights ignite the windows of neighboring houses.

For chrissake boy, that was a gunshot. Gitchyer ass in here. Jesus.

The young man, sprinting to the house and bounding up the now darkened steps, disappears into the house.

Fortunately, a side street provides a dark exit. Raybie climbs back into his car, puts it in neutral, pushes it down the conveniently shadow-ridden alley, and hears a distant siren as he starts the motor, pulling away into the night.

He loves visiting his elderly neighbors, Professor Carlos and Consuella Bardaxa, who are none too popular in these parts. Folks say they're *devil worshipping black magickteers*. Yet, whenever he can, Raybie sneaks away—as now—to visit them.

Dressed like Daniel Boone with a plastic knife in his teeth, he's crawling toward them, slithering on his belly through the weeds. The professor is wearing a gypsy's dress and bandana, with make up on his face. Carlos, appearing thus a woman before the young Dan'l, somewhat stokes his sympathy. Senora Bardaxa, on the other hand, is wearing a Pancho Villa costume. She's speaking brazenly to The Professor, who's down on all fours in the garden, puffing on a corn cob pipe, making him an even more masculine woman. Pancho Villa, however, being soft and beautiful, is still a bit rough around the edges but nonetheless more feminine than the pipe-smoking indigenous bi-spirit on the ground before him/her. Young Dan'l, of course, is totally confused.

Being deeply disturbed by what he's seeing, he creeps closer, plotting how to bring these deviant strangers into line. He'll have to be careful, for if the young braves nearby detect his presence, he won't be able to reach these medicine folk, whom he needs to persuade to use the white man's medicine to treat and save their people.

¡No planto remolachas! ¡Y esto es final! shouts Professor Carlos, clenching his pipe between his dentures and digging his freshly manicured nails into the stubborn, clay-ridden soil of their backyard garden. It hasn't rained for months.

Si hay un cielo, déjeme ponerse allí, sighs Consuella Villa, staring upward into the midday sun. Roaring crickets drown out all other sounds. Young Dan'l, sweaty, seems undeterred. He's reached the edge of the field. The pair of bi-spirits are glowing cocoons of awareness inhabiting a universe consisting of the seminal traces of locusts everywhere. The dream is a moving bi-spirit system producing weed, mushrooms, peyote...all of which Master Boone has imbibed, imitating the elderly medicine folk...his dream shifting shapes as it passes through a wormhole, bypassing the church of

freedom as an unnecessary stop on the road to bliss. The four spirits confront young Dan'l, striving to maliciously entrap him.

For the moment, there's a ray of hope, as he's not yet close to being caught...

Before making his morning cancellation, he gets out of his car and enters town, walking as slowly as he can. He's drifting toward his loss, that unconditional woman mothering him as her child.

As the sun rises, he forgets those marginalized items lurking in the shadows of the ever-present ditch. He imagines his mother there, spewing guilt upon deaf ears, opaque as ever, vanishing everything cumming impossibly at once...

Moonlight never mixed so well on human skin as it does here. Imagining he's with a Juggs girl, a centerfold for sure, Raybie's thwarted, unable to unbutton her jeans. She removes her fuchsia blouse. He touches one of her breasts and she pushes his hand away, going instead for his belt buckle, which she undoes expertly popping open the button, unzipping his jeans and dropping them with his skivvies as she shoves him back onto the bed. Diving on him with athletic agility, she baffles his virgin cock between her humormous pubescent ta-tas. He ejaculates instantly, before he can begin thrusting. His dick shrivels from the task and she giggles, swirling his man-seed into her nipples.

Don't worry, I won't tell anyone, she says, smiling.

Raybie thinks that's odd, as his intentions are to tell everyone. He didn't even have to lay a hand on her.

He begins swelling with pride as they leave the upstairs bedroom and return to the party. Grabbing a beer he tells the first person he sees.

I titty fucked her, he says, nodding in her direction. Her tits may be big, but my cock was still big enough for her to blow me as my head poked through the other side.

Raybie's got his index and forefinger pressed together, as the forefinger of his right hand slides between them, its tip poking through beyond the base knuckles.

Grace O'Reilly, a tall, Rubinesque, strawberry blonde cheerleader overhears the star outfielder's claim and joins the two varsity players.

You like sophomores? she asks, accusing Raybie of robbing the cradle. *Fifteen'll getchya twenty*, she says, smirking at him. *You big enough to try on a real woman?*

He can't believe his good fortune, and neither can his friend. Grace is one of the most sought after, and thus feared, girls in high school. She's not particularly beautiful, but much has been made about her lust for wild boys, especially among the wild boys. She's taller than every kid in school with the sole exception of her stepbrother, who's fond of telling locker room tales of crawling into bed with her.

Chain chain chai-een, a chai-ain of foo-ools.

The cheerleaders have chosen Aretha to dance to, and the jocks are leaning back against the counter in the kitchen, watching their gyrations. Grace takes Raybie by the hand and leads him outside to her car. They dive into the back seat, begin wrestling for space and position. A 1975 Grand Prix offers little freedom. She kicks the passenger side door open, her leg draped over the front seat, and they spill from the car onto the lawn. She rises to her feet and hoists Raybie with her, nearly carrying him as they jog half-naked to the vacant lot across the street. In the darkest corner furthest from the road, she lays down, spreading wide her well-worn teenage legs. Raybie falls onto her, humping away for a full fifteen seconds—longer than it takes him to run a hundred yard dash.

Proudly ejaculating for the third time tonight, and the second time ever with a girl, he jumps to his feet, pulling his pants up with one motion.

Thanks, he says, leaving Grace for the party.

His friends are never going to believe it: *I'm Fred Garvin, male prostitute. I'm Rock Quarry, do you want my auto-graph? Baa-baa-baa, baa-baa-baa, Baarb-a-rino, Vin-nie Bar-ba-rino!*

The other boys marvel at Raybie's hopeful grin as the girls knowingly giggle at his return.

The future, for some, is plain to see.

He feels her breath, damp in his ear, and is uncertain about what he's done. Confused, the sound of smacking lips and a brief snort stir him from the foot of his bed. His erection, meanwhile, compels him to grope his way into consciousness, grinding his compliant mate until her eyes open.

She's exquisite. They're married. And this seems wrong.

But who cares?

Why does it have to matter?

Mid-December 20—

Licking D's clit checking surveillance apparatus taking notes. Profit titillates your cock's narrow tipping point with strange tongue darting your management, making her work.

What's he doing.

Stirring the cous-cous. She won't be coming for awhile.

Back to business. Sky Canyon's world famous Spinal Cord Trail. The reception here's good. You've had no problem tapping his signal. Strange D should show up.

Were you followed. That light brown two-door from the Ramada to Santa Monica Boulevard was gone when you hit the PCH. You were alone up to the end of Paseo Miramar where that woman near Guthry Junction followed you a quarter mile on her cell phone, but she sat down when her conversation grew heated. It wasn't her. You had the Cord to yourself the rest of the way.

D's cunt is strange, feathers being a texture you can't embrace.

You'll want to write this down.

Look at the monitors. Remove your dick from her mouth and get working.

He's on the phone.

I wonder who it is.

Could be anyone knowing him.

You know him.

A shuts his phone. Stirring cous-cous, he checks the chicken.

At 8:45 p.m. A receives heated cell phone call. Turns off returning to cook...chicken/cous-cous. How's this help. How's it fit. Think...

Please, D. I'm working.

Your flesh feels odd. Voyeurism's shriveling your raisin. You don't know what you're thinking because I'm not feeling it anymore. It's all outside. You're getting it mediated through fucked up equipment. Sure, the picture's good but it tastes bad. So why don't you feel anything. Maybe I'm not meant to. Maybe you're meant to just sit here processing these signals. But how can I trust you. They're missing something if it's going through your fleshy paraphernalia, my prosthetic ego de-arriving us... We're nothing but kinky spies out here.

Where's A.

What did he just say. I'm not sure I heard that right. You couldn't have.

Everyone's got to become Gandhi and that's not going to happen. Where've you heard that before. He couldn't've said that. Unh-unh. No way. Dad used to say that.

So A leaves the set. I did a story here before. Was doing the same thing. What's the difference. Even the lighting's the same. A movie set and all the world's your stage. Not mine. And you can feel it watching you.

He jumps in the convertible and ploughs down Santa Monica toward Highland Avenue, just like the kid did and the chick before him. That's Hollywood. It's what you do. Life is good. The weather never changes and the earth vibrates under your feet. You don't live here because if you did you'd sweat the big one. Natives and anesthetized transplants seem unbothered. Life is good. But I'll take Miami any day. Or New York. No you wouldn't. You couldn't live in one place long enough to be satisfied anywhere. Earth's not your home. It has hurricanes. These people aren't yours.

Shit. Where have you seen that thing before. He or she was here last time, or was it in Aspen. Maybe both. It loves walking the streets, and even catches A's eye.

Either way the light's the same. And the color. That's good isn't it.

Well what's this. North Las Palmas. I heard he had a getaway apartment near Mann's, or was it Graumann's. This must be it. Wow. Right next to the AIDS Hospice. He's getting an eyeful here. Why'd he take this place. You'd think with his money he could have taken some place down the street a ways.

Wait a minute. What time is it. How'd we get from the studio here. Every time you see that bitch you lose time. Just like with the kid and that young chick before. That she-male pops up, the lighting's perfect, then the next thing you know the shadows are longer, leaning into your space. The sky's gone from pretty lemon yellow to mud puddle brown and your eyes are burning. Before that you don't even have a headache. Now you're wheezing. This is the last time I'm doing L.A.

We're being watched.

Room 5. Upper level. He's got a clear shot over the fence into the clinic. Every time he comes out that door he's got a clear look at the victims, the diseased. Why.

Some guy's greeting him. His is the front room on the upper level with a view of the street. He doesn't have to look at the sick and dying all day, only their relatives as they come and go. He sees mostly the store and intersection. A greets him halfway between their apartments, hand extended. They turn and lean on the railing overlooking the high wood fence separating the hospice courtyard from the motel walkway. If you didn't know any better, you could mistake the guy for Steven Segal. He's shorter. A's height. But he's wearing a pony tail and squints.

I can't cover this shit anymore. Why the fuck are you doing it then. It's what I do. But who are you that you do this. What are you thinking. When was the last time you shared a joint with a neighbor like that. And why are they watching you. Who are they.

Toking, they lean over the upper level railing. Clasp hands they grab each other by the shoulder. Words are exchanged, smiles and A leaves the man, entering Room 5 where he pulls the drapes and disappears.

What are you doing, senior.

No, Jose. What the fuck are you doing. Were you watching me. Let me see some I.D.

Senior, I am the manager of these apartments. I was watching you because I watch all suspicious characters around here. My name is Z. Who are you and can you prove it.

The bastard ain't flinching. Things are different under the new mayor.

I'm E. I work for The Celebrity Inquirer. Here's fifty bucks. When did A move in.

Meester, keep your money. Senorita A is none of your beezniz.

The door opens and A, or what appears to be he, emerges.

I'm going to ask you to leave or I'll call my brother-in-law. He's inside. You don't want trouble.

She descends the stairs with a bounce in her step. It's him.

Don't worry about it. I'm gone.

But you're not following A.

She skirts by in a flower dress, loose-fitting and flowing with his speed. His chin is hard, and Edward James Olmos is still standing there, pock-marked face still gleaming in the ghetto light. Kick him in the nuts. A's striding south toward Santa Monica. Don't lose her and don't stick around.

C-Carlosuh, Olmos moaning, sweating.

Freak Laundromat. The strippers from the Copa love it. A bums a smoke and is on her way to the corner bus stop. You're gonna lose her. Get some shades. That guy's selling straw hats. A t-shirt. The bus is coming. Ten bucks for the shades. I'm going to have to make do. She didn't get on. A's still there. The hat. Another ten. It will have to do. The newspaper. It's a good cover. Read. The Coastal Line's here. A's boarding. You're off.

You haven't done this in years. The kid and that young chick never took the bus. The last time was twenty years ago when you had to make auditions. Good thing you became a writer cause

you'd still be riding the bus. Obviously. Not much has changed. The people are different, but the same. Doing the same things. Concerned about the same things. Blind to it all as everything passes them by, leaving them with their pipe dreams to cuddle.

Balboa south. I'll bet he's going to Venice. No doubt. You should always doubt. He could be going to south central. USC's his alma mater. No. You should remember that. But we did get another transfer, so we're getting off somewhere. Why's he dressed like a woman.

Blow job for twenty bucks.

Go away.

No need to be rude, Mistah.

No need to solicit strangers. On a bus.

You're cute. You need a suck. You're so up tight. Ten bucks.

I don't have time today.

Where you getting off, sweetheart. I'll rub you for five.

Leave me alone.

Well fuck you then.

No. Fuck you.

Venice it is. Why is she getting off too. The rest disperse leaving us and her on the corner. A's looking at you.

This one's cheap and rude. You won't get nothin from him.

He's been following me all day. He's a reporter doing an expose.

He's uptight. You stayin here or goin to the beach.

The beach.

How bout a blow job while we wait.

Who's she addressing. A or you. Me. Is she speaking for A too. Is this what A does for fun.
Put on women's clothes and whore himself in Venice Beach. She's unzipping your...

It's early. Damn.

See ya later.

Your fly's open. That hat. The straws. And tuck that in before you get on my bus, mister.
No perversions on Line 10. This ain't no 15. Zipper up.

Everyone's watching you. They all know the untruth. Inquisitive eyes want to know. A is
among them, blending in like a nice young lady. The nun next to you isn't happy.

Are you Catholic. Get to confession.

Somehow the sun is setting. The muddy sky is changing to a bruised purple, tingeing the
spectrum just so. Yet sundown is hours away. It must be the windows.

Get yourself to church. The end is near.

She gets off, but not without one last look. Your zipper's still down. At least it's tucked in.
Your stop's approaching. Arise. Zip it.

Fuck you. What are you looking at. No one's looking at you now. Except the driver. She's
pissed.

Llll-ang-gwidge, sir.

Bitch chops the brakes just to see you lurch forward. A's smirking now but he won't be.
We're getting off.

Venice Beach. You've seen it before. Countless times. It's etched in your consciousness
forming a blurred vision of California beach freaks. The footage is nearly ubiquitous, a fuzzy Mt.
Rushmore embedded in the nation's collective consciousness—and yours. A strides quickly to the
waterfront, navigating the hippie market booths and tourists like an expert kick returner bobbing
and weaving, picking his way through a mass of would be tacklers. There's that guy in the turban,

the one roller blading and playing The Star Spangled Banner on his cheap electric guitar. He and A nod at each other, the way regulars do. A's now on the main walkway, circus central without a ring. He's dodging his way to a park bench. Some fans recognize him. Unbelievable. Without qualms he just poses for pictures with them and signs autographs.

I'm researching a role. You guys have really great eyes. I'm going to be a transvestite serial killer from space.

They're dumbstruck. Eyes wide, they're in awe. Speechless. A pats the young men on their heads and disappears up an alley between two beachfront condos, but as I approach the alley he pops out again on the other side of the north condo, approaching an old woman in a white lab coat playing electric harp, approaching her from behind. He whispers something in her ear as she plays, and Madam Curie grimly nods. The sky is red. The sun is hidden behind clouds and smog. It may as well set.

A makes his way back up the alley to Tenth Street, entering an apartment building two blocks down abutting one of the old canals. Across the street is cottage village. Built back in the day for middle class beachcombers, when the canals were alive and kicking, these shacks now house various Venice eccentrics. I had a friend lived there once. She was a grip with a big mouth when I was just starting out. She considered herself a painter and psychic. The grip thing was for money. She told you her neighbor was the kid's boyfriend and that started your career. You should drop in, but she couldn't still be there. You'll do it before you leave. See how she's doing. Give her some money. And who knows, she might just have something on A. She's the type who would, if she's still over there.

She was a good fuck.

Judas Priest. What's the Nehru suit and turban for. Bastard's waving at you. What's he so happy about. Signing autographs again.

I'm researching a role. I'm going to be playing an Indian prince of dubious birth who's come to America for enlightenment.

Posing for pictures, he pats the young women on their heads and continues toward the beach. But he stops at the PCH and doesn't cross. We're hopping another bus instead. This time it's northbound. No transfer necessary.

Malibu. It's not what most people imagine. Lining the sea are modest beach houses—each nearly touching the other, hidden from the highway by a six foot tall wooden fence perforated by garage doors. If a car should lose control it would easily penetrate filmdom's mythical inner sanctums while its contestants enjoyed their downtime. Nothing appears glamorous from the highway, several feet distant. Then there's the mountain side, where some small but upscale businesses have carved out a posh subsistence. It is to the mountains that A is headed. Ignoring his colleagues' houses, he chooses instead a footpath east, ascending vigorously through the coastal sage scrub toward the chaparral up yonder.

He's pushing you now. He's seeing how far you'll go. It's a game to him. He's in shape for the movies. You're not. But fuck him. He deserves an expose. You deserve the money and pull that brings. Peace, but fuck him. Telling this same old story's like climbing up this mountain. I'm Sisyphus, A's my boulder, my quarry. I'm pushing him up this hill and he's just showing off. He did this to the corporate executives on Kilimanjaro when he played Tarzan. Befriended by Hemingway, he agreed to lead an excursion in search of the snow leopard. He exhausted them and they abandoned their search. The consumers were unworthy of their quarry. Pray be that situation isn't applying here. Perhaps you're being led astray and will be forced once again to provide fiction for your unsuspecting nonfiction readers. We are relativists, after all. Every last one of us. We are thousands of light specks flickering in chaos, moving dots longing for connection, a pointillist's nightmare.

What requires the application of my faith now.

Steatite consists predominantly of talc. How do I know that. The soapstone bluff's receiving nary a scratch as we scramble up its smooth waxy incline toward a burnt out grove of scrub oak, chamise and sumac, where redshank shrubs are resprouting from the root crowns speckling the incinerated chaparral surrounding it. You still remember ecology class, which is sticking with you more than gym. The slope is steep, maybe 40 degrees. The oaks, unlike the chamise and sumac, are sprouting canopy leaves for the reincarnating grove. Other oaks, unprotected for reasons beyond their control, having more to do with seed dispersal, are resprouting too, albeit from the epicormic shoots of their fried descendants. But, then again, this too could be karma.

A seems to be angling for one of these points in particular. Beyond the reborn scrub oak saplings appears another grove of sycamore, bay and willow trees with a stream running through it, its canopy, having caught its evaporating moisture during the fire, has saved itself for now. Clumps of native bunchgrass hinder your trail.

What the fuck are you doing. Why are you bothering with this.

A kneels beside the stream, removing his turban, and kisses the mud. No, he's kissing a stream orchid that resembles a horned toad one foot above ground with a trillium shelter for its shrieking bud. Pink protected by a drooping yellow nose, its gaping melon-colored mouth is well guarded. You're not watching. A's washing his face in the stream, his feet. Now facing...

Jesus. That's the biggest coast live oak you've ever seen. An octopus attacking the sky. You've been here. The ceremony of fire. The wedding of cosmic father and cosmic mother. You were the details. I've been here. It leads to...

Shit. The horned lizard scurries. Rattle and freeze. To your right. Violence and nothing, a king snake strangling its rattler meal. A, too, is eating. Aromatic seeds from a California sage brush, about five feet tall, resembling a rare sunflower. How do you know its bloom is ending. How do I

know it isn't. Why else would it be here. You're eating its seeds. Bland, but you feel delicious. Because they're rejuvenating you, because you're food. And meaning.

On the other side of the live oak—it's got to be pre-Colombian—someone's erected a mandir. A red cloth drapes the makeshift temple. What is it covering. Two store boxes, one the size of a sweater and the other could hold a microwave. The lower one is made of thinner cardboard. The large one, of course, is factory grade. Why do you care. The cloth is clean, glowing crimson in a strange light. The sun has set and it seems a full moon is out, yet there's no moon. Or shouldn't be. Someone has just prepared this mandir. The cloth is clean and arrayed in eight rows four deep with statuettes on each box...Krishna and some goddess fucking. Sixty-four fuckings in all. The man is blue in each one, the women, thirty-two white goddesses of space, it seems, are open to whatever Krishna's up to. Thirty-two times Cosmic Father in a Cosmic Mother, She taking Him.

A's placing a yellow thread in the spaces between the soapstone figures, which seem to be moving as he sutures them into place on the board, humming or chanting a melody I can barely discern.

You're cheating yourself you know. Watching other people live their lives.

Nandi appears, did A put him there. He wasn't there before. Or was he. The sacred bull. Shiva's guard cow.

Shiva got it on good with Parvati last night.

Nandi, standing on the microwave box, surveys the thirty-three fuckers fucking thirty-two ways on the lower box.

Tell me about it.

A returns his turban to his head, but not before kissing the ruby pin that's holding it together in front. He plunks down Indian style before the talking bull. This isn't happening, is it. You're nuts.

Nah. But I'll tell you what the king did to the queen last night. They got going and he got rough. He didn't mean to kill her, but he did. The thing with S & M is to measure then mediate the appropriate pain threshold. Once your excitement flabbergasts your ability to fear or feel pain, well, you die happy. Or you kill happy. The secret to good sex, though, is making it last. If anybody gets killed, it's all over.

A reaches out and tips over seemingly random statues on the lower box while chanting something. The light, or its quality, is somehow changing.

Each position is a work of art. There are eight ways of making art, multiplied by eight modes of execution. The product is a divine union. You may tip them, but you cannot separate them. They are made one. Your frivolous means of toppling them is shameful. They are proud fornicators in any position. What are you.

A feeds the bull sunflower seeds from his palm, while spraying the shrine with what appears to be a milky substance. Where did that come from. You're not paying attention. A rolls forward onto his feet and removes a female human head, finely carved from German wax, from behind the larger box. It resembles someone, but who. Who is it. A uses this object to enact his favorite pieces, becoming performance art with the objects at hand. Yet we're deeply meditative. No. Since when is he and me we. But you're masturbating. Isn't he. With a totem on a burnt out landscape illuminated by a strange, heavenly object. There's nothing frivolous about this. And it's not about you. Or him. Just this or it.

Were you mistaken. The sun is setting not set. The strange light is perhaps due to the uncommon luminescence of the burnt-out mountainside. It glows, black and white, saturating what colors exist, like those of that vulgar stream orchid, with its own metallic, sulfuric and ashen tinge behind its pinkness. A is facing the ocean, the forgotten water expanding beyond the horizon to our

backs. He is sitting silently under the naked bough of a singed tree, a somewhat dissimilar soul amid its arboreal brethren.

Behold the sea transformed, a giant liquid screen made blank in preparation for your projections, our prayers...Is A speaking for you.

I'm OK with it. Let him speak. In silence. We need not hear, but listen. The waves are flickering, static across the screen. White noise dying into a hum that straightens the churning surf, reforming it into ordered tasks as something from the sky descends into it, resembling a sparkler with hurricane spinning arms of light swirling around it. The ocean seems to be lit from the bottom up, offering a depth of perception uncommon to your eyes. The divine is involving itself in the base of things. God's at the bottom, the glowing root...the volcanic seed.

And many things are heading our way, rising from the seafloor, enlightened of their burden. The heavenly light is like a baby farting in a tub. Bubbles of joy rising and bursting as he does it again and again. The lightness is your joy. It has limited itself for your pleasure. It has densified for your feeling. And yet you feel it hiding from you with each passing evolution, each veil that covers it with a new form, and the farting continues but you're lost in bubbles, milky ways of divine gas, and for a moment it sees itself, you seeing yourself in its translucent luster, infinite possibilities of its seminal trace are invading you, each a delight of discovery. As each bubble bursts a new one emerges, and you look and see yourself reflected upon each one, inside being something rarefied yet common. We can smell it. The bubbles burst, their voids nullified by cosmic plasma—the sea's bombardment. The cycle of fulfillment goes round and round in the farting sea bubbles. I'm a churning bubble, the same as any other.

You feel yourself condensed by the realization. I'm sufficient now. You're heavy. A load sinking back into your body, your existence. The sun's set. But that light exists. No moon. Yet here it is. Incarnated in these your bodies. Your body. The one you're wearing. With love and mercy you

are pulled to your left, and feel your basic assumptions ejected from within you to populate the world; the dark ocean you no longer see, roils to your right. What you once held good is now alien to you. Thank God. Thank A. Thank your work. I thank you for being alive. For sharing this with me.

You're welcome.

A's leaving. We're going down the mountain now. You should be exhausted. But you're alive and have quite a road ahead. The light seems more focused now. A full moon has appeared. A is spray painting a left-facing swastika on a sand painting. It looks like a mandala, but I'm not sure. The swastika's in the opposite direction of the Nazi's. Why do you know that. It's not the moon, but it has been the source of your light. A's waving to it. The bright cone shoots out from an orifice in the disk's epicenter, bathing him.

He's gone. Your trip is over. Everything's as it was. Color. Smog. Darkness. Traffic down the coastline below. The lights of oil rigs twinkle the horizon. For the first time today you're alone.

I feel like shit and don't blame you. Your hoop is broken. But you'll figure things out. You'll come up with something. Deadline guarantees it.

The tall gray one produces unspeakable pleasures with its gash. Its vulvic grip increasing the friction. Its scaly multi-jointed fingers illuminating vibrations, dexterities prone to excitement.

Others are watching, impregnating the act. Are its screams of pleasure any less genuine if it embellishes them to further arouse its silent audience.

Pleasing the browns and grays enables the pornography to continue.

A phone is ringing.

Hello.

A. Is that you. Did I wake you. I'm sorry, I always forget about the time zones. How's my boy.

Dad.

A, are you alright. You sound strange. Are you on the oxycontin again. Didn't I tell you what they did to Rush. But you don't listen to me. You just take the drugs and you'll pay for it. Like Elvis. They'll find you dead on your toilet. I'll be destroyed. How will I live after that.

Dad.

You're killing me, you know that? My blood pressure's 580 over 990. They're reading about you in the checkout lines. Why can't you settle down and get married. They got you with one girl after another and you're on those drugs and they're going to find you dead on your toilet and everybody's going to be pointing their fingers at this actress and that model and I'll just know you did it to yourself. And all those reporters will be stalking me, I won't be able to shake them. You brought this all on yourself. You're such a disappointment to me.

He slapped her and she fell to the ground, twisting and writhing to elude him. She catches her blouse on the poker iron by the fireplace, tearing it away to expose her Victoria's Secret support bra. She climbs to her feet, using the poker for support, warming herself by the blaze. He takes a step forward as she withdraws the poker from its mantle, brandishing it over head.

You back away, she croaks.

Cut! Get her another cough drop. J, you picked a fine time to lose your voice. This is costing us, dear.

A young man runs up to her with a pair of Vicks 44s already unwrapped. She pops them into her mouth and chews. A minute later she's clearing her throat.

OK, we'll pick it up where J raises the poker. Remember A, you're not tentative or reticent, just slow. You've been injured, mortally. But the one thing you really want before you die is to kill J.

Action!

You! Back away! I said back away!

You're finally going to get what you deserve, you crazy fucking bitch.

J raises the poker a bit higher, then, screaming, attacks A, who promptly pulls a tiny Derringer from his breast coat pocket, plugging J between the eyes. She's stopped in her tracks, gives her killer a quizzical look, then falls forward onto the mattress in front of her. Everyone cheers and A picks her up, hugging and kissing her.

We're going to win Oscars for this, I know it! Another Guildstein and Guildstern Production has wrapped filming! See you at the party!

Dad. We just wrapped at 3 a.m. I've been working all week finishing this film. It's going to be really good. J's brilliant.

That's who they're linking you with. Is she Chicano. By God she looks white or something.

Third generation Italian-American. Graduated from Julliard.

Was busted for drugs and assault numerous times. She beat up her maid. It was on Inside Edition. Are you with her because she has drugs.

No Dad. I'm not really with her, only in the movies. She's a co-worker. Why'd you call.

I called because I know you're in trouble. What am I supposed to do. What kind of father wouldn't call his son if he were in trouble. That's what Father's do, boy.

Exactly why I'll never be a good father, Dad. I'll leave that to the coaches. In fact, I'll probably donate my sperm and take the egg of my choice and produce a zygote in a test tube and plant it in my gardener's wife. She'll carry my baby and raise it. That way he'll be naturally bilingual.

I'll send him to the best private schools and provide all the connections he'll need to have an easy and productive life. You should be proud Dad, I'm a famous movie star. I'm a man in complete control of his life, not like you were with Mom and us.

X chose Ben's Place on Santa Monica for lunch. They met at one.

Where were you Sunday afternoon. I was looking for you. A, is something wrong. You have to be somewhere at a certain time.

No. That's the problem. I'm losing time.

What do you mean.

I don't know. The last thing I remember Sunday is wrapping up around noon. I left my trailer and that's it.

You had a black out. Were you drinking or something.

No. I smoked a joint to clear my head from the shoot. That's it. We finished, I went to my trailer, changed, smoked, came down the steps and poof, nothing. I came around that night or early Monday up in Sky Canyon, on the grassy section of Mulholland. I was spray painting a swastika over that popular Buddhist painting. There was an extremely bright light over my head that allowed me to see what I was doing. I felt like I was being watched when I realized what was happening. I dropped the can and looked around, but saw nobody. For some reason, I didn't think about the light until the next day. The light followed me all the way down Mulholland to Malibu. I slept in the park the rest of the night and took a bus home in the morning.

Don't you have a shoot this afternoon.

Not for three hours.

How can you act like this.

How can I not act. It's all acting. It's all one big act. You get up in the morning and go through the day. If you're lucky you go to bed that night. One foot in front of the other doing your job just to get through it.

You need to see somebody.

I will. Once we wrap. That should be Thursday. Friday I'll call my therapist.

When does your next job start.

Three weeks.

Oh, A. How could I have raised such a child. That's not the way people do it. They do it the hard way because life is meant to be hard. They own it through their own blood, sweat and tears. Life's a gamble and they play the game. When are you going to take some responsibility for yourself and get cleaned up.

Dad, I haven't touched anything since re-hab.

What are all these reports of you walking naked through Sky Canyon. What am I supposed to tell the guys when they ask if it's true you've been abducted by aliens. It's one thing if The Celebrity Inquisitor is saying you said that, but quite another when you blab it to Deborah Norville on Inside Edition. Y was over from across the street watching it with me. I was never so embarrassed in my whole life.

I've heard that before. What about the time I showed my ass on national TV during the Stanley Cup. Remember, Elton John paid my fine. No such thing as bad publicity, Dad.

But you meant it, boy. I know you. It's the same story you've been telling everyone since the sixth grade. You only tell it when you're having an episode. You've been having lots of episodes.

It's the pressure, Daddy. They expect too much from me. They won't leave me alone. So I have these mini explosions all the time.

Whom are they son.

Everybody. Nobody will leave me alone. You won't leave me alone. J's the only one who leaves me alone.

Is her sleeping with you a way of leaving you alone.

You know what I mean.

No, A. I don't. I don't know what you mean. You're in that phase of the cycle again, boy. That's why I'm calling. I want you to go see Doc what's his name, your therapist. Get some of that risperdol or whatever it is again and get your head cleared out. Have you been sleeping.

I was when you called. You woke me and I was getting caught up for what I lost working this week. I'm exhausted. I'll call him, promise. Now let me go back to sleep.

If you promise. Do you promise.

Promise.

Well, good night A. Sleep tight. Sweet Dreams, boy.

Prey birds instinctually know the shapes of their predators.

I'm lost. A café.

Take a chick in the barnyard when it's first hatched.

Who is this guy and why's he talking to you. There's D. Did she come here with you or him.

If you take a plywood cutout that looks like a falcon on one side and a goose on the other, you'll see what I mean.

Who's D speaking with. Looks like a sixty-year-old hippie. Whatever happened to no shoes, no service.

Pull it across the yard one way, and the chicks will scramble for cover. They know death when they see it. Pull it the other way, and they just keep feeding. It's just a goose, ya know.

Who's the goose and who's the falcon around here. You're feeling like one of those chicks. You ain't what you used to be. You can't even keep track of time. You can't even follow one event from another. Time is muck and space is tender. My lines are bent, zigging and zagging. Is this really happening. How can I test it. Where's A. That's what you're here for. A. Where is he. Something's happening, but...

Here's your Monte Cristo with salad.

Food. Hungry. Eating will make things better. Right. You'll eat and watch D talk to the hippie. Are they talking about me. She keeps nodding over here. The guy keeps looking at you. This is a good sandwich for four-fifty. Here they come.

E, this is Sam. He's been up here since the sixties.

You don't know who this guy is. They're waiting to be introduced.

I'm Benjamin. Sam. And D.

They're shaking hands. You don't know them. You barely know D. I'm shaking hands.

Action imprisons the world unless it's done in sacrifice. Freed from attachment, perform action as sacrifice.

What.

D joins them. Sam doesn't, leaving satisfied I'm all the wiser for meeting him. You know the type. He's not in your league. He's a nobody. But who are you, really. You're afraid of what isn't here, ignorant of what's happening.



Doubt.

Taking Route 1 north from Santa Monica looking for Sunset Boulevard. A reporter doing an expose taps certain signals hovering over a hospice courtyard, voyeurism shriveling his raisin, raising your doubts.

Zip it. The grip has a big mouth.

Researching a role you taste like feathers. In shape for the movies we met in ecology class where I learned it's not about you, though you were thankful for my being alive. My deadline

guarantees the volcanic seed yet to be written. We're still riding the bus. Her electric harp's vibrating the ground we tread on. But Judas Priest doubts it.

Sunset Boulevard. Left onto Paseo Miramar. Steep. Veer right on Resolano and right again back to Miramar. Right.

Placing a yellow thread. Something's happening here. Cosmic father in the mouth of cosmic mother. A good writer writing an octopus that's attacking the sky. Chicks in the barnyard tip over seemingly random statuettes.

The road's ending where the park begins. The canyon's descending where the peak leaves off.

You know the untruth of posh subsistence, mediated by fucked up equipment. You know death when I see it. What are you. Who are you and can you prove it.

My hoop is broken. We're falling into the canyon, stopping at each tiny cliff garden in the crumbling sandstone as we go. Lush chaparral anomalies where pockets of moisture have collected. I was the details. Did she cum with you or him. Why do we care. They are relativists after all, doing an Indian prince in the streets.

Bouncing close to the bottom, ricocheting to the right blended with a lovely waterfall. Feeling delicious, the flower dress requires your application of faith, a proud Gender-X fornicator ritalined without doubt.

If everyone were Gandhi, struck dumb without shoes or service. But fuck, peace them.

Guthry Falls. Got away. A job to do but not now. We're a milky substance, managing apartments. Babies fart outside in their tubs. We're churning bubbles.

Of doubt.

You are the demon heart beneath my bland exterior. We are the peculiar between us. It discerns our degree of realism and probability. But she doubts it.

I wish you'd just wake up. Or go home.

Were you mistaken. Sometimes the GPS goes out. A problem with the unit, no doubt. At least D's with them. Her signal's loud and clear. You weren't mistaken. They're going to Frederick's. They're turning left off Cahuenga. Looks like I'm getting them again. Good. You're in business.

Madonna's dildo's under the glass by the main register.

That's D. No response.

You're going to love this place. A real exhibition of unmentionables. Phil Spector's rhinestone thong.

A giggle. It sounds like J. There they are. The car's pulling up to the curb about a block away. D's the first one out. It's best when you're eyeballing them. Surveillance apparatus is designed with certain ideas in mind. You get what you're looking for. The naked eye sees what the equipment might not. Or maybe you'll smell or touch something. Unmitigated sensitivity. The warmth of the glowing root, but it begs: who are you that you do this.

Some fans approach them on the curb. They're signing autographs and D's pushing them away the best she can.

Easy folks. They're real. Just like you and me. They'll bruise. Be careful. Back off. Jerk.

A pats each one on the head as J finishes signing her name to their appendage. D's pulling them away as A's palm cups their crown.

Earth's not your home.

Who said that. What are you talking about.

You're all just chicks in the barnyard. Run.

The bag lady's accosting them. She's seeing something we're not.

Inquisitive eyes want to know.

A's beginning to appear nervous. J's glancing at her, but D's not going to put up with it. She hands the woman some money.

You're a spy.

D pushes the woman in the direction of the corner. The fans are beginning to watch. A and J take advantage of the distraction and enter the store. D's pushing the woman to the ground. An angry fan shoves D. She isn't taking it and slugs the woman in the stomach. Leaving the doubled-over victim, she heads to the store.

Are you all right.

Give them both more money. They've got to drop this. Leave it alone.

Were you followed.

That's A. She's caught up with them. Just take it. Here's my card. Call me if there's a problem.

Those consumers were unworthy of their quarry.

There they are. In back. J's emerging from the fitting room.

I'll tell you what the king did to the queen last night.

Jesus. She's in a black see-through nighty. A thong. Jesus. You should remember that. This could be their karma. Sexy is as sexy does.

I'll rub you for five.

A's all over her. D's picking up the sound of it. Good God.

You know him.

It's a fan. She's asking D. A's occupied.

You're welcome.

All eyes are on J. The look on her face. A is welcome.

I was followed.

A and J don't care. You're the only one who does.

Studio Wardrobe.

Why not.

J disappears into the fitting room. A signs another autograph, patting his bewildered fan on the head.

Was that J.

She doesn't sign autographs.

I've heard.

The fan leaves. J emerges in her flower dress from the fitting room. Smiling, she grabs A by the hand and leads him past. D is in their wake. She sees you but you must not notice. Wink. Nod. They don't even care. Into the waiting car. The fans are still here.

Is that your car. They're going over to Studio Wardrobe. Take me there and you'll get to watch them all day.

The couple agrees. He's heavy and so is she. White, most likely Protestant. From Iowa or some place. They came here to play Celebrity Inquisitor.

I'm E.

They know you.

We've seen you on Inside Edition. Can we have your autograph.

Of course, but they're leaving. I'll sign it in your car.

How about a picture.

In the car.

Autographs. Pictures. Smiling and polite. Getting what you need from them.

They're getting out. Pull over. You can park across the street.

Why would they shop here.

The woman gets out of the car with you, leaving her husband to park it. It's Highland Avenue and won't be easy. More fans. A and J stop as usual. Sign. A pats them on the head. They smile appreciatively. One lady's walking away rubbing her head like she'll never wash her hair again. A patted it with his sweaty palm. The Methodist woman from Iowa beside you is feeling the top of her head, too, with her mouth slightly open, eyes wide. A and J enter the store followed by their fans. D picks up the voice of an approaching clerk, but you can't hear what she says.

A texture you can't embrace.

Was that J. She's stroking a pancho. Her face is twisted. She puts it down and leads A, with D in tow, the fans following. You're fine where you are. She's with them now. You point at her so her husband can see. They're not watching you now.

Did you ever go shopping with Uma.

She was a good fuck.

Did he say that. The fans are laughing. One woman, however, is blushing and unamused. Life is good. This will be something. The woman's approaching them. They're making eye contact. She's extending her hand. What is it. A takes it and signs it. He pats her on the head. She leaves, looking at the floor, smiling bashfully. You're not watching.

Who's the goose and who's the falcon around here.

It's that homeless woman. She's going through a pile of used sweaters. Why's she talking to you. Why isn't she accosting them. Because you made nice to her. Give her some more money. J's looking at you.

Shadows are leaning into your space.

What. Is she a man. Is the light changing or is it me. Who is this woman. Why this store, this intersection.

Where did that come from.

D's at her side. Thank God. Get her away. What did he just say. A's yelling something to D.
J's still looking at you. That woman.

Tell me about it.

Tell her about what. D's taking her away. She's not fighting it, but D's letting her stop. She's pulling something from a bag in her buggy. She had to check it at the door. Now she's pulling something from it. We're all watching. The traffic is passing outside. The sunshine's making her dark by the front window. It's a female human head. She looks familiar.

Put that back in the bag or it will melt.

The clerk, as always, is proving helpful.

Nothing but kinky spies out here.

The woman exits the store, making it abundantly clear her last remark was meant for A and J.

She was a good fuck.

The clerk closes the door behind her, muting the invasive traffic and smog.

Do you have a bloodstained t-shirt with bullet holes and anything previously owned by Pat Sajak.

Yes, sir, we most certainly do.

I'll take them. You can wrap them and send them to my office. The receptionist will pay you.

What about some Janis Joplin bell bottoms.

We have those.

Puke stained.

Yes.

Ditto. Wrap em and ship em. He'll pay.

Where was that place with the Roy Buchanan bootlegs?

Hollywood. Just west of Las Palmas.

The place with the gramophone in the window.

The fans are listening. Jesus. They'll follow us everywhere. Pains in the asses. Why don't you feel anything. Just numbness. They're going back to where they just were. Closer to your car. Take the bus and beat the crowd. Or walk. D won't go out of range if you time it right.

As The Record Turns on Hollywood Boulevard sucks. A pretentious little place snotty enough to bring back memories of high school, especially if you were rich. It has a marble floor you love stomping your smokes out on and oakwood cabinets where you stick your gum or worse. It's Citizen Kane's parlor and you're armed with a Swiss army knife. A very stylish little man stands guard, defending the furniture. This pretentious little prick will watch you while you wait.

No smoking, sir.

I'm not lighting it. Only sucking it.

No sucking, please.

How bout stroking, or fondling like this.

Sir, you'll have to take that outside.

A and J walk in with about thirty tourists and other assorted riff raff in their wake. Javier or whatever no longer has time for you. Yet...

Your fly's open. Fine thing for a sixty-year-old hippie.

They walk by and Jorge looks like he's gone for good. D's cutting him off at the turn.

Steatite consists predominantly of talc. That's where the powder comes from. That's why my powder's going to be called Steamite, it's a play on steatite, which consists predominantly of talc.

That's a fucking fan. A and J are listening like he's the most important person in the world.

Let us think about it, dear.

That was J. She's cool. Warm.

I'll sign this to whom?

Jerr Rod.

Jared.

No, Jerr Rod.

Spell that.

J-e-r-r. R-o-d. Jerr Rod.

There then. You go on about your way there, Jared. Be nice.

A pats him on the head and D shoves him along. But Jerr Rod isn't having it. He shoves D to the floor and pulls a large revolver from inside his denim jacket. He pulls the trigger. BANG. A flag pops out. A is wetting his pants, J's breasts are leaking. She's not wearing a bra. D is holding hers.

It loves walking the streets. You're cheating yourself you know. Is this what you do for fun.

For a minute everybody looks like they're frozen in German wax. The fan leaves, slithering across the marble floor leaving a trail of dark satisfaction.

That was my sacrifice.

Was she a man or a woman. Could anyone tell. Remaining wherewithal propels them next door. The fans have cooled. Near-death experience has sent them packing. Like you. This time you'll wait outside. Smoke a cigarette. Unwind. Think about it. You know you're being watched.

Someone's in the chaparral up yonder, on the terrace, watching you. The skin you're wearing's under observation.

What are you doing, senor. We can smell it.

Put out the cigarette. Why don't they complain about the smog. Where's their truck.

Your flesh feels odd.

That must have been a clerk, or was it J. Talking to D, no doubt. Or no. The sky's changing.
That woman who's been accosting them all day's approaching from Sunset Boulevard. In the cart
she's pushing, a red cloth is draping a makeshift temple.

A left-facing swastika. That means something different from the Nazi symbol. It's big in
India or something. This one's from Madagascar and was part of this trading route. I can look it up
for you.

The clerk.

Please, do.

That was D. I hear mumbling. Are A and J in there.

Strippers from the Copa love it.

Laughter. That's them. No doubt.

Yet, like them, we're deeply meditative.

What are they talking about. You should go see. This is nonsense. D should say something.
Here they come.

I need a vanilla tea latte.

And I need to be seen. My agent says we need some buzz to boost the indy we're doing.

D's full of shit. A and J can't be buying it. Can they. A crowd will definitely be there. They
seem no worse for the wear. In fact, they're having fun. Each position is a work of art.

Things are different under the new mayor.

To: Debbie Norville
From: Les Trent
Subject: J Alien Abduction Interview
Date: 12/21/20--

Deb,

Here's the x-script you wanted. Still waiting word from legal re: liability. Have edited out the most contentious items and references to products competing with advertisers. Still needs a go-over. That's you girl.

Waiting,

L

What would you do if you were a famous celebrity and you were kidnapped by aliens from another world? And it wasn't your genes they wanted, but your charisma? Stay tuned for the answer to that and much more Inside Edition after the break. I'm Les Trent.

LEVI'S COMMERCIAL. RIGHT BACK.

Imagine you were in love with a handsome, successful man and you climbed into your BMW and began the trip to his luxurious home somewhere in the mountains of Sky Canyon. You expect it to be a typical ten minute cruise up the highway and an adventuresome jig up Mulholland [*cut from Les to car footage, turning up Mulholland*]. You expect it to be a night like any other in the historic getaway canyon for the stars, but you'd be wrong. I'm Les Trent.

You'd be especially wrong if you were an Academy Award nominated bad girl actress named J, who claims she was abducted by aliens from this spot. To our amazement, we discovered that J's been kidnapped before, and the aliens have given her a mission, Debrah.

HERE, DEB, YOU'LL ASK ME WHAT I'VE LEARNED.

Debrah, what I learned couldn't be more shocking. This is the interview, uncut, that I had with J just earlier today. Les Trent, reporting.

LT: J, you say you were abducted by aliens and taken aboard a UFO the other night on your way to A's house in Sky Canyon. You also claim you've been taken many times before, and that each time the experience was sexual, but the last time, the other night, you were also given a mission. Is this correct, and if so, what's the nature of the mission?

J: No, I was taken on my way home from a house A's renting in Sky Canyon. I knew from the time I got in my car to go home that that would be one of those nights.

LT: Those nights?

J: One of those nights they take me.

LT: First, who are they? Second, where do they take you?

J: They're here from the Pleiades. They've been here all along. They mixed their genetic materials with several species of ape, then genetically modified the results until they came up with us. When they come get me, it's usually to harvest some ova. They take me out to their ship. It's usually harbored just outside the atmosphere.

LT: Are these aliens like us? What do they look like? Are they like what we see portrayed in the movies? Are they superior to us? A threat?

J: Calm down, Les. The only thing that's about to change is your awareness. But then that's everything, isn't it? [laughs]

LT: [Laughing]. Tell me.

J: They look like anything they want. A lot of celebrities actually do come from the stars. So, yeah, they're sort of like what you see portrayed in the movies, or better, what you see portraying in the movies. Are they superior to us? Well, they are us, or we are them. They've just been around longer, had some good luck, and have much more experience than we do. They're only a threat if you're a skyrope cutter, a cosmic ladder cruncher.

LT: *What?*

J: *Let me put it this way. The only people who have anything to worry about are those who are actively threatening their investments. They're going to be taken out. My job, and A's, is to try and get the rope cutters to change their minds, have a change of heart, before it's too late for them.*

LT: *What about the rest of us?*

J: *That all depends upon where your allegiances lie. If you're with the investment wreckers, an enabler of theirs, you're liable to get it. If you're with the human beings and other creatures on the planet, chances are you'll do OK. Odds are if you're neither you run the risk of becoming collateral damage. You're deer in the headlights and there's nothing I can do for you. All I can do is tell the driver full speed ahead, it's not your fault.*

LT: *That sounds pretty harsh.*

J: *That's just the way it is. The unvarnished truth always seems harsh to the uninitiated. I hope you get your act together soon, Les, or you're going to be in trouble. You're a deer in the headlights, dear. Shooh. Move along.*

LT: *We have to take a quick break. I'm Les Trent with J. We'll be right back.*

COMMERCIAL BREAK

We're back with J, who's been telling us some pretty amazing things. The Prized co-star, who has a long history of drug and alcohol abuse, and several stints at remote spas while being treated for exhaustion, and who once attempted suicide in the arms of hard rocker Bobbie C., has gone cold turkey and is telling us how to save ourselves from an alien invasion.

J: *There seems to be some dispute among them about what to do with us. One group says we should be quarantined, another group says we should be aggressively re-programmed, yet another wants to drop us and leave us to our own resources, and a fourth wants to maintain the status quo.*

LT: Are the aliens aware of our terrorist problems, and that getting our act together isn't completely up to us? Once we've won the war on terror, won't that make everything better? Why don't they help us find Osama bin Laden?

J: They're not on the side of the United States. Not one faction supports what our country is doing. That's the one thing they're all in agreement on, the Earth can't become a member of the cosmic community until the United States is put in its place. Once it's a humbled nation, things will move forward.

LT: Are you saying the aliens are going to defeat the United States of America in war?

J: No. That won't be necessary. The U.S. will defeat itself shortly. The world doesn't need alien help in dealing with its American problem.

LT: Will we be enslaved or worse?

J: No, you'll be set free. You're enslaved now, but don't know it. There's nothing worse than being a slave and not knowing it. Americans have been slaves for more than a hundred years. You should be happy. Your liberation's at hand.

LT: What do they have against us? What have we done that's so bad?

J: The answer's obvious and right under your nose. Your mystification, the sincerity of that question, is the answer itself. I'd pity you if I had the energy.

What could have happened to make J so bitter. Watch tomorrow night's Inside Edition as we take a look at her turbulent life from child star to convicted criminal to Oscar-nominated actress to alien species diplomat.

After the break we'll be joined by Rep. Lucy Jones, one Florida Republican who's not shy about her stint on Political Prisoner Break, a new reality show that's taking America by storm. Stay tuned, we'll be right back.

Les Trent, reporting.

The inning's over and it's time to run the errand. It's warm and the sun's shining. You feel yourself a ghost, drifting.

You wanna hot dog before you go.

No thanks.

The garage and driveway are crowded with yardsalers, sunlight speckles the lawn, sparking as leaves and branches blow.

How about some apple pie?

No thanks.

The lady across the street is always feeding you. You're in the bosom of your existence. Your mother and sister's family are getting rid of lots of old stuff. You smoked a joint with her boyfriend in the backyard. Open faces and laughter.

Your Chevy's old, but reliable. You like her. She's the best car you've ever had. You carry your warmth into the driver's seat. You're a glowing ghost, containing heat by some mysterious sadness. The car, as always, starts right up when you turn the key.

You check the rear view mirrors. You see your neighbor at her grill and her family at the picnic table. Holiday shoppers are peripherally traversing your lawn. And you start backing up.

As you begin turning the wheel, you feel it slightly jerk, and some resistance causes you to put on the gas. You power over the box that you didn't see behind the car. It's stuck under the carriage and experience tells you the best thing to do is keep going, so you give it more gas.

As expected, you free the car of its obstacle and back into the street. But your sister's screaming and people are looking and creeping, some on tip toe, to L. He's lying on the ground where the car had just been. Lifeless. You'll bury him on his third birthday.

Plane wheels screech, incessant dinging. A jerking motion. LA. You feel yourself still behind the wheel. A killer. A killer of things you love. Without a family. You're sick, but at least you have a job to do. Six months is long enough. The Inquisitor's sent you out here to track a deeply troubled actor and his little actress girlfriend for a week. You've already done her so it shouldn't be hard. Wake up and forget about it. Shit happens. Why you. Why not you. Why L. Why not L. Why not your sister, why not your mother's only grandchild. Why not. Why are you exempt. Get off it. If A's really a paranoid schizophrenic and J's gone as bad as everyone says, this'll be juicy. Forget about it and get to work.

Deplaning and the attendant, shifting odors. Smog mingling with jet fuel and stale cabin air. Nauseated, beads of sweat moisten your upper lip and forehead. Fluorescence from the concourse mingles with dirty sunlight filing through the boarding ramp windows. Expectant faces in the terminal search each figure with familiarity. You feel their alien eyes probing you, fondling your inside the way your family should. Again, though awake, you're a ghost. Lost on assignment nowhere. Each pair of eyes ultimately rejecting you.

Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Hare.

Tambourines and left coast weirdoes garbed in orange. Krishnas were so seventies. You'd think they'd've disappeared in this day and age. Why are they focusing on you. Why doesn't anyone else seem to matter. Are you really awake. They act like your family. These aren't your people.

If I am in your thought, by my grace you will transcend all dangers. So says Krishna.

They're dancing in a circle around you. This woman before you won't let you go.

But if you are deafened by individuality, you will be lost.

Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Hare.

Get away from me. I'm not interested.

Your resolve is futile.

I'm busy. I don't have time for this. Excuse me. Don't make me get rude.

You are bound to your own action...Even against your will you must do what delusion now makes you refuse.

Get away from me.

Be threatening.

Security.

Why is she still following me. Where'd the other ones go.

The Airport Ramada.

She's getting into the cab behind you.

I want you to lose the cab that's following us. The Celebrity Inquisitor will pay whatever it costs.

Aye-aye, Sahib.

Never mind. They just pulled off. Get me to the Ramada.

Aye-aye, Sahib.

I hope I have my usual room. You need some sleep before you start tonight. Dreamless sleep. If only you could pray. If there was only a personal god you could believe in. Don't kid yourself. You can't. But it would be nice to pray. Nice to hope. You'll have to live with this the rest of your life. Praying only deludes you, dilutes your pain. Pushes it off on something, someone else. It's yours. It belongs to you. And you may as well get used to it. You'll be having this dream for as long as you live. You even saw it coming. You knew you'd let them down. You knew you weren't man enough to take care of them. The way they required. Not you. No. It would have been an answer to their prayers. That's not you. You're a killer.

Room 316.

Thanks. Isn't 111 available. No biggie. 316 it is.

A view of the airport and freeway. Nice. You've got six hours until your dinner appointment.
Sleep.

Hi, I'm D. We met earlier. At the airport.

Indeed.

What's she doing here. Where's her get-up. She's beautiful. Nice ass. Tits.

Dolly's inside waiting. She says you can use the house. No charge. A and J are paying enough for the night.

How does she know this. What did she say her name was.

Let Otis take the keys. Since when did the Inquisitor start making its writers rent Cavaliers. I mean, Chevies are good cars and all, but...

Her ass makes my heart swing.

You'll like the food. All vegan. But if you want fish or chicken we can get it. The Sagebrook was built in the 1930s by Clark Kent. It burned down in the fifties and set the whole valley on fire. Never found his body.

Right this way, Ma'am. Sir.

A fine dining establishment in the middle of nowhere.

It burned again in the seventies when a lightning strike set the grove of scrub oak ablaze that surrounds this place. But last year, the flames went all around it and didn't do a thing. Flame retardant materials. Thank your local chemist.

She really talks a lot. Is that Keith and Lori Partridge making out in the corner. Fucking camera's in the car.

Is something wrong, dear. Dolly's at her usual table in the back. It has a wonderful vantage point, the sound of the creek, the mountain breeze, lights of the oil rigs out at sea. You'll love it.

Dolly is not an attractive woman. She reminds you of the old drunk lady across the street from you growing up. She's smoking a cigarette. Blonde wig, blue eye shadow, fake pearls and the voice of a frog. If someone changed the oil in this old battle axe a million leaks would be found.

Well, hello Dolly. Nice to meet you.

And so nice to meet you, E. You're a charming man. Not at all what D described. Shame on you darling. You're a naughty, naughty girl. You could learn a thing or two about reporting from this fella. He's a pro. Watch and learn, love. Watch and learn.

They're placing you right next to her. Your knees are touching. Is that her thigh. Not bad for an old dame. She pulls a Virginia Slim SuperSlim Light 100 from her rhinestone purse, twinkling under the patio lanterns.

You want.

She offers you a smoke. There's her thigh again.

No, thank-you.

This is the beginning of the end of something. I know it. But what.

My entire house is bugged and under video surveillance. I have nothing to hide and everything to reveal.

She's surprisingly attractive, sucking the tip of that skinny cigarette, absorbed in herself, blinking. I like her. Your dick's getting hard.

D will give you the remote control and receivers when we leave.

Are they simple to operate.

My dear man. Of course they are. Now let me tell you what you're going to see and what it is that you're going to be writing about.

Humor her. That's always the best way. Sunset Boulevard. Her knee's rubbing my thigh. What are you going to do. Listen, you bastard. I can't. Concentrate. You fucking idiot. Hard over Carol Channing. This is the beginning of the end.

But first I've got to tell you about what got us here, sweetheart. You've really got to listen, dear.

She's batting her elongated eyelashes, swinging her strapless shoulders ever so lightly. In the moonlight under patio lanterns. Is that Joanie and Cha Chi over there.

A long time ago, when today's events were being set into motion, the land was ruled by kings. The first seven came down to rule on a magic ladder that was hanging in outer space. Don't laugh, it's true. When they died, they'd climb back up the ladder and another one would climb down. In between, down here on earth, chaos reigned. Earthlings would send messengers up the ladder to see what was going on, and the messengers would come back down and tell them, and help make the chaos bearable until a new king descended and straightened things out. Got it. Are you following me. Good.

Things went on that way for seven kings, my dear E. For seven full reigns this process worked well. People could cope with chaos if they had reliable news. But the eighth king, he was crazy. He chopped down the magic ladder, cut the enchanted rope hanging in the sky, out of fear his subjects would flee to heaven rather than be ruled by him. His actions, his undisciplined mind and brutish nature, ruined it for the kings that followed him, who had to derive their power from Earth—the constituency from which they were derived. No one has had a clue what is happening up above anymore. Sky burials are nixed for land burials, vultures for pyramids and tombs. And so we fall, and many of us are stranded.

Dolly extinguishes her cigarette and sips her wine, slowly savoring everyone's undivided focus. You almost expect the other patrons to chime in with some chorus, as they too are listening. Is that Dylan dining with Dharma and Greg. I don't think so. What.

I'm sorry, what.

That's Dylan over there. He's having chicken. Dharma's doing salad, Greg soup. They all have breadsticks.

D, go over and join them, dear. E and I will finish our talk alone.

Dolly, are you sure.

Go. We'll be here.

I wish I could go with her. Too bad I can't stand up. Everybody's looking. You're the stranger. Why would Dylan photograph me.

Can I have your autograph.

I'm eating. I don't do autographs when I'm eating. Go away.

Why does Dylan want my autograph.

Aw, c'mon.

OK.

D's a shaman. She's been assisting the transient order.

What.

She's the one who's helping re-build the ladder. She's the one who's inviting a new king's descent, who's rolling out the red carpet for his imminent arrival. She's already secured the cooperation of the folks elsewhere, and now with your help will try to manage the oncoming transition. Until now she's been a voice in the wilderness. Now she's completing her journey. She's got chaos under her belt, a sheathed sword to be drawn when threatened or held when surrendered to. A warrior messenger, she stands before you, a gateway to eternity.

You should create a sacred pattern between you, symbolically healing the revolt occurring in the human family itself at this very moment. Become their evolution to enlightenment and fulfill them by expropriating nobility for all by depriving private armies a profitable mission.

Waiter. More Cabernet Sauvignon.

Dolly has everyone's attention. She's making eye contact with each person on the terrace. The waiter pours another glass of wine and she lights another Virginia Slim Super Slim Light 100. She takes a deep drag, then blows—langorous, meditative, Garbo/Dietrich/Bette Davis...No. Carol Channing. Dolly. Wooing a crowd. Turning us into believers. She rubs her knee on your thigh. I'm still hard.

Batting her long dark eyelashes, she begins speaking.

Remember...always remember and never forget the Tibetan pacification of the Mongols. That's the plan to do it with. Everybody gets a monk's education. Nobody gets by anymore without being able to exhibit some degree of literary and philosophical creativity. No more skaters. Time to get their priorities straight. They can get started by quitting their jobs and devoting their free time to meditation. When they're awake they're to engage in festivals and dances and make traditions of them to pass their time in harmony with God.

They're not going to like that. I'm not going to like it.

You will. You'll learn and they will. It's easier than you think. Once you start going there you'll send psychonauts out ahead of you, shamen like D, who will explore the inner frontiers of consciousness itself, with and beyond its various transformations, seeing everything as an interconnected mental state in which the field is pure spirit.

All goodness has to do with spiritual productivity. Evil has to do with spiritual inefficiency. All obstacles to spiritual growth are evil, and therefore our primary concern is the world of inner experience.

This is insane. Dolly...D...please. You can't be serious. Lighten up.

You're feeling your car lurch, L caught under the carriage. You step on it, twisting the veering wheel.

Death is a doorway. It can be worse than fatal if you're unprepared, or heading in the wrong direction. If your inertia's sending you in the wrong direction, look out. We're giving you an opportunity to get on track. If your attitude is good, and there's reason to believe it is, I mean, you're here aren't you...if your attitude is good life has no limits, experience can have no bounds, we can get outside these suits of flesh and see our human existence as a midway transition between fields of infinite pain and pleasure. Your body, E, gives you the freedom and opportunity for spiritual evolution. Human life is necessarily intense.

I mean, right?

counterclockwise

$X+Y=Me.$

X =The text. The text is the unknown, or ambiguous quantity we're seeking.

The text when combined with its apparent intention (Y) equals "me." That is, the "me" (usually the reader-writer) engaged with the text defines the text's intention. Each "me" will likely uncover a different intent from the text when engaging it.

From this formula we can also deduce that if one subtracts the text's intention from the self, all that remains is the text.

Therefore (of course), if one subtracts the text from the self what remains is pure intention.

What we have here is a formula relating the text and its intention with the identity of the individual engaging with it:

*I grew tired of my family
and emigrated
but they followed*

*I grew weary of my animality
and became sophisticated
yet still farted after meals*

*I grew somnolent in God
nurturing a fiend
but wickedness was too much work*

*I did not know you
or myself, so
my conquest was imperiled*

*I was ignorant of This
and my occupations were
unfinished and demanding*

*So finally, growing tired of growing
fatigued I became artificial, a drink*

*overwhelming the world
And disappeared*

The dog and I hike an empty path, the dark charging us with alarm. You and your pussycat pilot twain pregnant structures, the sun shining within each of you illuminating your doleful serenity.

I adore the mutt and perceive its lust my own. You spurn your kitty and cheapen your act, citing the alternative.

It defecates near a refuse bin in the rear way, unique among the innumerable lanes we've been haunting. She micturates behind a decimated building, the one edifice we haven't shunned.

The path's commotion feels far away. A lull, alien to the boulevard, seems an undesired waste of night. Voters cavort blithely, enlightened by shop windows and greed. Outsiders mime sorrow, dimmed by clouds of creosote and repulsion.

We abide in the dimness, floating indecisions, me and my pooch.

They drift into the radiance, tinkling eclectic somethings-or-other despite *not* knowing nothing, neither felines nor you.

J'adore le chien, et tu la chatte deteste.

We quietly piss together. Divided, they defiantly shit. I worry about what will happen to my dog. You, on the other hand, see yourself composing music to please the pussy you're obsessing over.

He's a diminutive dreaming wad of sandstone colored irrelevance lying near a palmetto by the pier, lit under a street lamp as I guard him. She's abundant, the honeyed fiber exceeding her seed in the eye of the storm, obscuring the fact her cat's playing violently beneath her.

He stirs and we abandon the green for the concourse of neon-lit roaming, rummaging for something, anything, but nothing is here.

She slips off, sleeping, as we enter from an alley, from a place of glum shadow squatting, of

lingering despite the nothingness, knowing something is elsewhere...in here, perhaps.

First, it's daylight. I feel it's summer. I'm not thinking or awake.

You're ousted, minus your kitty, in a clear light outside some lady's cubicle, for misplacing two enormous, short-haired cats and a couple of adults who now feel free to forge their mature banalities off-air beyond the dim corridor, sunk by deep joy, of course.

As parents and pets we battle, University trained yet vanquished nonetheless, and confused. I can't find my back pages anymore after achieving too much as a mere word-being there.

We descend, circling Main Street in the gloom of too many alleys, overhearing peddlers scheming hopefully, claiming they've just gussied up the square. They're geared to gloriously impound it with a myriad of faithful rites, baptizing it a convenient commercial zone for hard-working consumers.

Traffic will bulge and boom, they cackle.

Thankfully, I'm as invisible to the peddlers as the ghost of something forever absent, hoarding their unknowable ignorance, the transparent deliria they will no longer deposit. Emerging from the radiance, I cede all but my *self*. Their senses feel quickly littered. And you feel violated.

A young woman roves with us briefly yielding her notions of the puzzling metal objects we keep coming across.

She evaporates in the shadows, taking them with her.

Its mind feels abruptly emptied. I feel alone, but you're finding yourself in your sexuality, weeping over cocktails. You'll never again surrender the elsewheres alien to you, rising from your realm of silence to bark down at the street below and its menagerie of humanoid beasts, seeming all def to dis and dat.

We're going to seal and drape her, mute her dint and spew her from our sac into a less

morbid furtherance.

You lament how we catch her. So I feel impelled, with the mutt, to exit obscurity and enter a strange man's condo. He has two rather tiny, hirsute dogs and a pair of androgynous, cherubic-faced children. We watch television in a well-lit room buoyant with happiness as the kids and canids play.

Enfin, je perceivus la nuit partout.

Here you sense materiality is summer, vis-à-vis oblivion.

*Mission exposed
revealing how flash seekers
revisit their starkness
having assassinated
nobody*

*Those with a need to know
who knew the undeed
must disappear*

Dark horse sprouts vanilla frosting full of ice-lightening from invisible bobbing lamp bulbs projecting visions from somewhere behind and above me threatening nothing more than their unobservability.

I personify kinetic stillness vibrating juices with thought:

To lease or to purchase? I have the cash for the purchase, but why not save the cash and rent the car?

I want to own my own new car now. I want to own my own new car. I couldn't own my own new car before, but now I can.

I now have the cash to own one, but why not save the cash and rent the nice new car now? To lease or purchase my nice new car? To lease or purchase it?

Now, if I lease it, I'll have more cash, but won't own my own new car now. I want my own new cash and my own new car. Now I want to own my own new things including my own nice new car, but I also want to keep the cash I got now. I want to own my own nice new things now. But I also want the cash I got.

Now:

The bulbs behind me illuminate her and the bar. Everything's covered with vanilla paste, and Mr. Oui-Oui's still frothing at the mouth. Milk flies everywhere bathing stools, wreath and corner post.

She continues trying to help me decide. It seems she has a stake in the matter. Despite all her blonde-haired cuteness and Midwestern charm, she's a femme fatale on commission.

Never before has such a spewing of health emerged from Mr. Oui-Oui, grasped tightly in my fist.

Reality appears as an old color film from the sixties. The hues are faded and gouges appear where sky and her flesh were once depicted. The t-t-t-t-t-t-t of the projector rattles lightly in my ears, animating objects that move like squirrels.

Outside the open door of the cabin, the sunlight beyond fails to molest my inner space; the bright world's luminescence forms trees and butterflies in mid-day sunshine, echoing the silence and dust of my dimness.

Never before in my story has so much frosting come from Mr. Oui-Oui, and he's still at it. He's in love with the object. It's pure joy:

To lease or to purchase?

He's in love with the object.

To lease or to purchase?

It's pure joy:

*The way between
the same place
she said, among
the tongue, here
where survival or
extinction become*

*War, the same way
where always
there is
Tao there is*

*Tongue, then
loss*

Awareness dissolves the pregnant dismissal of eternal visions, suspecting The Gadget of seaming Itself. Musing sweetens and mollifies our pubic extensions into liquid prayer, the vaporous feeling of brio swelling to cork our G-spot: that catholic murkiness punctuated by screaming commodities moaned in neon.

The creatures above us are full. An acclivity.

Greyiness grinds everywhere.

Mom and Pop live elsewhere beyond the vertex. Saints nor siblings nowhere below a nadir.

Darkness above, light below. And vice versa, depending on...

The Pampas. Underside contrivances grate hungrily. The peculiar radiance gleams lavishly on minions expunged by tattle.

My assemblage of vacuity and dimness are bounds sketched in neon feeling themselves
scraped bare by the metallic backhoe, the dense vibration of machinery braying, substance scratching
claws down my soul's exit ramp:

Will without depth known. But they're in the muck beyond the mountaintop. You're flowing
from lake level. I crave my parents' return and comfort from this torment.

The freak, a corporate clothed septuagenarian, gaily exits his macho many floors above his
infantile feebleness.

An infant-suckling in swaddling clothes snares the acclivity in dread, bearing monstrous
force.

You repel your issue, quitting for that nagging indulgence.

I'm cleaving to edge of tier.

So, we're in the lamp in the blindness of the deep.

Queasiness of pit, unfathomed:

Nauseated, I dangle over the unprobed abyss fully aware that meaning has been permanently
dismissed. Things are only thoughts of themselves, clinging to nothingness in the existence.

Commerce enlightens our void.

A truly frightened child possesses great power.

Normality is defined by the statistical average. Only mother can take that away.

Nothing exists beneath the bottom.

Hope aspiring images in the heavens, on the ethereal steppe, to shine down on the lost and
peculiar:

Meditation sweetens your flesh and sensuality, setting off flashbulbs in the deep.

The bloodthirsty gods are drunk and have left us hanging here—the poor, unfortunate, misbegotten wretches of their capricious orgies.

Our true parents exist beyond the Milky Way.

Hypocrites become who they believe they are, escaping reality.

Heaven's down there somewhere if shit rolls down hill, Hell's gotta be up. No one shits in Heaven.

There's a lake forming at the foot of the river, and I can smell you rising from it.

I am emptiness and form, tangled in ignorant sentience, gooseflesh erodes my sensitivity.

Will without deception known:

*She—this pried-
open radiance—this dalliance
inciting that foreign sun
the wispy strumming where
somberness lies*

*This indulgence
not all yours
or theirs or mine
but hours spent
actively intensely
fucking inebriately
liberally fornicating*

Being specific for silly men

*Being vanity
a smile on the half-breath
coldly existing
which no longer
compels*

Obliging

I'm trudging clockwise round a sunlit city block focusing on rifts in the sidewalk. A hip high red brick wall segregates my orbit from the blacktop that dips to a bare drain hole at its core. Cars and vans are parked in intermittent spaces around it. It's autumn, and an exotic glow glitters the lowering air.

At the corner, I turn right and march nether a tree branch, something of a curbside bower, its green epicurean leaves whisk the crest of my skull as I stride below them.

It's summertime. The structure soars to my right on the other edge of the parking lot, molesting a heavy sky. Now there seem seven foot high wrought iron bars bursting from the waist high brick wall separating the walkway from the parking lot. I attain the gate and the stall where the attendant, a nattily dressed black man in a starched, military pressed security guard uniform nods at me when I go by. I smile and wave. As I do, I see myself decked out in a gray business suit. I discern the plastic squeaking of Florsheim wingtips beneath me on the sidewalk. Pits of concrete nettle the soles of my feet. As I mark my apparel, I gulp. My Adam's apple is restrained from its alfresco distension, garroted by a Jerry Garcia necktie. I motioned with my right hand because in my left hand I'm carrying a briefcase. My God: I'm carting a briefcase.

I persist in my clockwise ambulation of the block by turning right anew at the next bend and begin closing in on the structure I've been curiously avoiding. Its small grass lawn rimmed with potted flowers enlivens its uniglass foyer. I enter through a revolving glass door and detect its counterclockwise rotation. Gazing down a corridor to my right I see the sun shining velvety sapphire hues through glass walls from the streets and sky beyond. A ubiquitous glow warms the lobby as dust flits charmingly along the separated sun beams. It's hard to judge, in toto, from whence the radiance dawns.

An old ally hails me and we take a stroll around the ground floor of the skyscraper. Outside light illuminates our counterclockwise rotation about the building. I tell my friend I need a job. We

both know I'm not qualified. I don't even know geometry, for God's sake. I tell my friend I'm an akuta, that what I don't know about draftsmanship, I can make up for on the main frame fixing big ones down at the plant. He grins and shakes my hand.

We're back at the spinning glass doors. An even older friend, a kid I used to call Dutch Boy, now dressed in a beige business suit and brown tie emerges from where my escort emerged when I entered the building. He ignores me and continues his clockwise rotation around the interior base of the structure.

Dutch Boy, I yell, but he's deaf.

I realize I'm no longer holding my briefcase, but an invisible pole instead. It's very hard, and seems to defy gravity. I begin raising and lowering it as I please while watching Dutch Boy disappear down the corridor to my left. I shake hands with my escort throughout the whole ordeal.

When I turn back to him, I notice he's no longer my escort, but a blond-haired, blue-eyed Adonis, smiling faintly and asking me, sincerely, if I really wanted to do this. I notice he's naked and I feel attracted to him. As I start speaking to him, a strange man, tall with black plastic framed glasses, brown suit and brown brush cut rushes up to me, hand extended. The way everyone's responding, in formal panic, he's the boss. He pumps my hand and leads me out of the erection through the counterclockwise spinning glass doors. He's very jovial.

So, you want to be a draftsman, do you?

I'll be the best damned draftsman you've ever seen, I say.

He laughs.

Not today, son. Not today.

We're the same age.

You're funny, he calls after me, as I begin my counterclockwise rotation back around the block, at the base of the towering skyscraper, from whence I came.

I'm alone on the sidewalk until Adonis, still naked, exits the building. Somehow, he's threatening and repulsive in the daylight.

Say it. Say it, he taunts, quietly but mercilessly. *You want to hold it. You want to hold it in your hand. You want to stick it up your arse, don't you?*

I wave my invisible wand at him.

He laughs derisively.

I flee down the street...

*In combat
one vies with
what's been established
and prevails through heresy.*

*Whatever:
Now that's a tedious theme!*

Motoring north in my worn out, decaying automobile, I turn right onto a one lane asphalt roadway as I attain the lake. The cerulean surges thrash and chasten the rim to my left. The cattails in the bog to my right swing low the lashing whip of the northerlies. Eastward, my car tames a modest slope. There's a road off to the right, heading into the marshes. This time, however, I don't take it. The next thing I know I'm heading west again. Somehow, my car gets turned around, or maybe the world spun counterclockwise beneath it as if it were the north pole, and now, as I go downhill, I see a beach full of sleepers and swimmers through isochronal oak trees, at peace with the coming storm. The bulk of swimmers are waist deep in water holding their hands out before them like zombies as the waves crash against their backs. A minority of dim dots dip smoothly beyond them in the fluid tempest. I dream of sleepers dreaming me as we snooze on our beds and beaches.

They seem dark skinned, but it's impossible to tell what color they really are, especially in this light. They are all curiously clothed in pale earth tone t-shirts, even those in the water. The littoral is divided into sections by segments of trees sown into earthen piles that jut out into the lake. The marsh remains unsegregated, though roads seem to scar its belly with stone and blacktop. There is no sun and it's cold, but I feel a strange urge to join the swimmers. I too will remain dressed. There's something holy about swimming here, yet my dip is not to be. I abandon the littoral road, turning left to retrace my way southbound to an earlier locale:

The village. There's something I need to do here. I get out of my car and enter an old dilapidated building on a deserted street corner. There's no one around. A southerly gust swirls old newspapers about the street and sidewalk. The signal in the crossway's swaying to and fro in the gale, swinging neath an abhorrent lemon sky. I enter the building. Its wooden floor is dirty, but not one board creaks from the weight of my steps. The wood could just as well be stone for all its silence. To my right lies customer service, a room accustomed to queues. One must descend three steps to attain its level. There's a long, dark brown counter there, with glass block windows set high up in the white walls behind it. The room's colors lie in a spectrum between dark brown and white, appearing fuzzy in the dull illumination.

The next chamber resembles a gallery. Empty glass top tables contain no artifacts. I sense that myself and this structure are the only true relics here. I migrate from the room to the corridor, which gets narrower and bends to the left. At its end, a door opens wide, emitting light. I enter a cage and it dips abruptly to the left. About ten feet down is the floor. A custodian watches me oddly. Somehow, I'm not surprised to see him there. He's almost expected and smiles as if he knows me. I feel I've been caught. I think I know him also, but I've never seen him before. Then I note that this is a crumbling auditorium with red, blue and gray seats torn asunder, knives having eviscerated the

cushions. Trash is strewn about the seats. On the floor below, a ruined podium stands. It seems someone gave a speech and a mosh pit broke out. I feel it was me, somehow, who gave the speech. I give great speeches. Suddenly, the auditorium begins filling with murmuring young people. Students? Is someone finally going to hear me?

The whole building is astir. It's no longer an artifact. It's a living, breathing bureaucratic machine. It's not just a school, auditorium or museum. It may be village hall.

I exit the hold and return to the corridor I was in before. Except now, I'm not at the end of a hallway that bends to the left and stops. It's a major corridor that keeps on going until it reaches the building's other externality.

I exit the cage and turn left down the portion of the corridor that did not seem to exist before, and end up entering a small, cramped office.

Brusque old women with blue and silver coiffed hair wear horn-rimmed glasses that slide down their noses as they work behind the counter, less than an arm's length away from their cigarettes, coffee and doughnuts.

Fat chicks crowd round, pushing and shoving each other to feed off their elders.

I elbow my way through the soft sea to a blue haired matron.

I'd like to work here.

There's no jobs for the likes of you, she spits.

She'd make a good judge and executioner if she weren't so busy here.

I leave and go out to where I parked my car, but now there's a bridge by it. The bridge crosses some rapids to the south. The road on the other side disappears into a tangled forest.

Young boys hang around my car with nothing else much better to do. They throw rocks into the rapids and occasionally kick at my tires. They have short hair, white t-shirts, round pink tummies, and short pants that go down to their knees.

I ask them a garbled question, and they point to the other side of the bridge as if they understand perfectly.

I say something else and they laugh.

What I'm looking for isn't here, but I like this place anyway. I'm comfortable here, but still get into my car.

Moments later, I'm crossing the bridge:

*The moon fits like skin
if your heart is the sun.*

Mind is that dim stitching

A relation.

Which ruler has the Tao?

The boulevard beyond looks burlesque in a spherical reflection, bending space like Escher's globe. You haven't fouled the sable bike; it's your Harley, yet it isn't.

An interior circuit seems inactive beyond the cube's obscure substance, marking the rhythm by which it chucks tact.

I've been washing a white car; mine, but not my Escort.

The Japanese elm's naked branches seem enlisted as asymmetric frames for splintered, distant actualities. We weather nature, our bliss ignoring you, glowing in the harvest moonshine, leafy peduncles alien to creamy matters vis-à-vis the firm or nighing image we commonly refer to as "me."

They squat in their gloom, observing me leer at them, debunked in gray sunlight. I'm not finished washing my car, and my opposition swells.

We trim our bosom:

None huge, one dead, zero black, double true. Gladness wanes.

They wear windbreakers:

One blue, one red, two white, one yellow. They seem to be diverting me.

Five of us endure on a picnic board in the driveway, mooning you. We are their focus.

Five of them perch in lawn chairs in the garage, facing me. I can't get my work done. Their lips stir, but I shall not do their bidding. Pop hoists his tin of ale at me and they all gape at him, tittering consent. My father's there, but who are the rest of them? I suppose one of them is my mother, but the only thing I know for sure is that the bricks, and my house, yes; this is my driveway and my house, or my mother's house, I live here, and the garage is filled with ghosts who pass judgment on me as they succeed in distracting me from the simple chore at hand:

The white car won't come clean!

Existent colleagues! Our subject is here! Our ears freeze, and we're no longer obeying.

Mom frees me of her glass of wine, those of us invisible to her weep in discord.

In fact, it's gone. You impart an exotic, pinched idiocy to us. I take in a wide angle assessment of them. Dead neighbors? Your mother's here, and what isn't she after all?

A paranoid sickliness dawns as the only abstraction in your sensibility, your children and co-workers stand glaring outside screaming coherent truths that sound strange to you.

The red brick garage seems to be the only tangible article in sight. Obscured by mist, or mistified, my parents and neighbors mutter garbled bromides about me.

We stockpile their dubious knowable blindnesses alien to you. They partake a special unknowable view of me.

You can give your play a start. You feel many of us aren't your father, and that many things you're unaware of—like the garage's occupants...

Or the driveway, no, that isn't your garage or address, and your father's address, you'll die there, or the bricks ain't emptied without bodies that keep an open mind about you after we fail at focusing you on a complex theme to come:

A black bike will go dirty!

A cryptic shape prods my ass out of the driveway.

Nobody hasn't held your bike east of a street with no walls standing.

Someone's motored my conveyance westward to the driveway two doors down.

One isn't moving here within one's self, beyond others.

Is this my ex-car ossuary? It's a womb for your future sorrows!

His home has green siding. He's heading there, oblivious to my swelling anger.

The young woman minus sable skin, strange to the alley's naked black aliens, appears ambivalent entering the ambiguous street, returning from her foreign land.

It's parked there by a shiny dark gray F-150, behind the old lime green '69 Buick Sport Wagon.

Her yard ain't nothing her bike ain't from.

A familiar man with snowy whiskers, one of the garage's white frocked denizens, has left the garage, and seems homeward bound.

She can't be Minnifred Mugrump.

His dwelling's where my car's sitting.

Her street has no brown interior. She leaves here, curious about your contracting peace.

How dare he? She dares!

He must be Wilfred Mugrump.

The concrete abstraction you sense leads you away from your street.

The garage's occupants warn me telepathically that it's Cassady's turn to wash his car as

some outsiders conceal the fact that nothing's really pure.

The driveway is no longer mine. Every path is invariably hers. I've lost my spot to Neal Cassady. You ain't drained without focused rhapsody. He can whip me, but doesn't. Your meat hasn't scorned you (or your pure ebon hog) as worthy, deflating you into bliss.

He's too concerned with his '57 Chevy. She can't fail you, but does. My ghosts have deemed me and my dirty white car unworthy, and it makes me madder than hell.

You crave not to hurl your chaste machine, musing vainly or sweetly, and elsewhere emerges from the time you weren't squatting in dark delight, eased from your folly, suffering as a worthy spirit for those with plenty.

I'm filled with nebulous rage.

You detest life because nobody's alive enough to love you, or dead enough to hate you.

I want to kill, but everyone's already dead to me, mocking me.

You didn't get your beat from Old Bull Hubbard.

Neal washes his car obliviously in the autumn grayness, chewing a toothpick with the sleeves of his white t-shirt rolled up onto his shoulders exposing his cord-like biceps.

Old Bull omnisciently coats your motorcycles in seedtime semen, swallowing the pistol barrel in a gray pinstriped business suit that buries his skeletal form.

I intend to fetch my unclean car, feeling embarrassed and dirty, but every direction I go leads to the place I'm at, standing white with rage and frustrated in my task, judged unworthy of execution by those without need.

She neglects her Harley:

*Do you hear
the sadness*

in what you did

*How it crumpled the form
dehydrating that bloom
in your palm's resentment*

*How, like a nugget's fugue,
it slid on moist pavement
the way a crutch drops*

*At the end
the configurations of response
are inexhaustible*

You're hired. Right this way. Take your shoes off. Put on these. You have to wear this.

I put on the strange white booties and lab coat.

Are you disinfected? Sit here with the others and wait.

I wait. The others sit similarly dressed in silence waiting at the long conference table in the center of the main office area. Cubicles are divided into units by rug covered dividers like cow pens. Moo. Ferns are everywhere, photos of loved ones stare at vacant desks. The senior staff is in a meeting down the hallway behind air sealed glass doors. At the end of the corridor I see some of them sitting around a table. Each time I move someone new comes out to tell me to sit still.

Lunchtime: The glass doors unseal themselves with a swoosh. We pass through them and turn left. We enter the cafeteria in single file and grab plastic trays and silverware. The cafeteria is opposite the room in which the big shots are meeting. We're served red jello. I take mine out to where I was sitting before, but somehow I lose my portion. Perhaps someone took it from me. I don't know. It just disappeared. I turn around and return to the cafeteria. I tell the Latino serving the jello that I lost mine.

It's my sister's, he says.

I turn to leave and I'm accosted by a tall buxom brunette who's dismissed herself from the

meeting. It's her turn.

I lost my jello, I tell her.

It's his sister's. Go sit down.

I return to my seat hungry. I'm beginning to wonder what the nature of this work is. No longer able to contain my curiosity, I start to rise from my seat. The glass doors open and the brunette comes out. I'm her special project now.

Please, remain seated.

I sit back down and she returns to her meeting. Now my curiosity is turning into impatience. I want to know what I'm doing here. I can't just leave because my shoes and coat are behind the sealed glass doors. I decide that I've had enough. I get up from my seat and approach the glass doors. Much to my surprise they part with a swoosh, and I enter the sanctified area. As I bend over to pick up my shoes, I look down the hallway. The meeting is still going on. As I don my shoes the brunette returns.

What are you doing?

Tell Jim, I assume that's who it is who hired me, but, in fact, I've no idea who did, but anyway, tell Jim I quit.

The brunette looks at me like I'm crazy to be leaving such a great job.

I know I just started, but I'm uncomfortable here, I say while tying my laces.

I turn to measure the brunette's response, but she's gone. I exit the glass doors and pass the long conference table where my colleagues sit silently eating their red jello in white lab coats and booties. They look at me as if I'm nuts, but I feel the ferns know otherwise. I have the sense to know I'm leaving a real opportunity behind, but I just can't stand it anymore.

I leave the building, entering the sunshine, relieved to be free of the situation. The sun's shining, and I'm happy that I quit. Sanity, or whatever seems to pass for it, slowly returns:

*The wound plows
sinking the cave*

*A fabulous pool of health
gropes for white flour*

Waking up, stretching, scratching the dog's belly, yawning, I gaze at myself in the mirror:
five-feet-ten-inches tall and two-hundred-fifty-pounds of bulbous sex and flesh appeal, carting
around the abused mind of a fucking idiot, whose dharma has him smiling at himself in obscurity.

I hear blood rushing through my ears, passing like frost in daylight, glowing in its own aural
brightness, calling me from beyond. Elsewhere a siren beckons me to join the world.

I look out the window and see brown water, as if from a canal, pouring through my
neighbor's garage across the street. It's flowing into Vermont Avenue, which now seems a river.
Each driveway from every house supplies water to the growing torrent. Soon, the yards are filling,
the water rises to the height of cellar windows.

And a liquid calmness seduces me.

I turn from the window as the siren calls:

*I am news
radiantly sinking
eating you shyly
at your harshest*

*While stars splash
like anthems deep
in your offense
of forgetting me*

*If you linger
I'll detain you*

*If you provoke me
you will not win*

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