

INTERFERING  
WITH  
DIVINITIES

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*Published by*  
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Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.







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*I have no sympathy for those of faith  
that only question their god in the face of tragedy.*  
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# PROLOGUE

MONDAY 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2020

Walking out from the enormous caverns of the hypogeum, I glared at the tall tugboat silhouetted against the morning sky. The Norwegians had fled with the Swiss and his dog, abandoning the vessel that had brought me to this ancient place. Making my way along the walkway carved out of the vertical cliff, I shivered bitterly. The water from my swim had soaked into my clothes that were now freezing stiff in the arctic air. Thankfully the doors on the boat weren't locked as I took shelter and searched for blankets. Once wrapped up warmly, I sat exhausted in the towering bridge and pressed the trigger on my small GPS locator. I had no idea how far north I had actually been taken, or even if the floatplane could land anywhere nearby.

The hollow sounds coming from this fjord that stretching into that cave system, echoed with the jaws of hell that had risen out of the frozen sea last night. Whether the world had come to an end or not, I wanted nothing more than to disappear into the obscurity of my own worthlessness. All I had seen here meant nothing to everything out there.

# SALZBURG

SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

I'd never seen so much Louis Vuitton luggage as those four kids had brought into the hotel lobby that night. Waiting on a sofa off to one side of the front desk, I watched suspiciously from behind two elderly ladies as those four, in all their long layers of winter style, filled both elevators. I then strolled over to the young receptionists in their traditional uniforms and ordered a taxi to the airport for tomorrow morning. Heading out into the chilled streets, I glanced to my left at the lit-up Hohensalzburg Fortress as I continued straight toward the river and my final appointment.

Less than ten minutes later, I had crossed a pedestrian bridge, and at 7:25pm arrived at a lovely neoclassical house below a tall-steepled church west of the old town.

"Shalom," I said quietly, as the old rabbi opened his door. He smiled heartily while the frigid breeze blew his long white beard against his orthodox attire. Welcoming me in, he led the way through his warm home full of family photos. The rabbi stood next to a big dining table where I spontaneously decided to get his opinion on the small stone tablet, "What do you make of this?"

"Fascinating," he muttered, pulling out his spectacles.

I never let the stone out of my hand.

"Is this what you really wanted to talk about?" he asked.

"No," I whispered, glaring into his tiny eyes. "I came with a gift."

The rabbi tilted his head as I placed the black-cloth-wrapped item on the polished tabletop. He unfolded it without hesitation and examined the thin vial, "Fascinating. Very Fascinating. I'll gladly add it to my collection."

The old rabbi, however, didn't open the vial itself. I cocked an eyebrow at my stooped host, smirked, and grunted to myself, "Huh. How about that."

I then turned and immediately walked out as church bells rang down the valley. Zipping up my jacket, I wandered along the wide footpath toward the silhouetted spires of Mozart's hometown. You can't win them all. So, he hadn't opened my gift, so fucking what! This proved nothing! This, and all my travels hadn't validated any of my ludicrous accusations. And I felt nothing. Nothing but the need to do more than just curse their inadequacies.

Suddenly two men walked over from the tree-line! A giant blonde slammed his shoulder into my chest, spinning me into an armlock! The older guy then grabbed my jaw as he sneered something in Italian!

"I know you," I snarled.

"And I know what you did to the doctor!" he stated furiously.

"Really?! That cunt was very much alive when I left him!"

"Quiet now!" the bald Italian barked, as he slapped my face, before the blonde giant dragged me away from the lamplight – when rapid footfalls tore up the gravel and, in an instant, I was sprung free! Two Sudanese men wrestled and quickly overpowered the Italians securing them in painful headlocks.

"This isn't Strasbourg!" one of the black men yelled, struggling with his captive. "They're expecting answers in Berlin!"

Stumbling backward onto the path, I shook my head in utter frustration. How many had been following me on this so-called quiet weekend away?! Glancing back at the old rabbi's home, I could see that the lights were still on. Had he left the vial unopened because he knew what it was? Or was he just lucky? Who fucking knows! Maybe he would open it later. Maybe he never would. Maybe none of this shit mattered – unless I took care of it myself!

Spitting and swearing to myself, I eventually reached another pedestrian bridge. I couldn't see anyone pursuing me as I scanned the riverside.

At 8pm I went directly to the bar on the top floor of my big hotel. I needed a fucking coffee! I couldn't sleep with so much running through my overwrought head. So, I pulled out my notebook and caught up with the day's punctual travels and unforeseen encounters.

I eventually realized, an hour later, that for a Sunday night, this place was humming. As I glanced around the glass divider between the bar and restaurant, I discovered, to my growing disgust, that those four kids now sat at the table behind my back and were all staring at me.

Packing up, I passed the waiter and ordered my third cappuccino before I entered the restaurant-side. The four kids remained seated as I took a spare chair and sat myself down at the end of their table. First thing, I picked up a

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copy of *Walden*, by Thoreau, and flipped through the pages.

“He’s barmy!” the slick boy in Tom Ford glasses gasped.

“Looking rather cheesed off, there,” the other, more overtly homosexual of the boys spoke up.

Taking a deep breath, I continued examining the book.

“Actually, you know, this is a private...,” the skinny girl with long platinum hair started, but went quiet once I glared my fuming impatience into her wet eyes.

But then the small brunette opened her lips, “*Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? Declare if thou knowest it all.*”

Thumping the table with my fist, I hissed at that meat, “The fuck are you playing at?!”

“Easy,” Beatles-Hair-Boy whispered, as the others moved uncomfortably in their chairs. Their whole image seemed far too sophisticated for their age. But then again, these were kids of the Instagram-era, always portraying an air of manicured intention, chic motivation, and constantly on-brand with their orchestrated identities of inerrant nonchalance. Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy’s perfect fringe was combed to one side over his British complexion where he sat hunched in a bespoke charcoal suit and flared his nostrils at random intervals. Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl had half of her hair up in a knot. She had freckles on her narrow nose between Slavic eyes, and her perky tits were still definable beneath countless layers of white and beige. Beatles-Hair-Boy was chubbier than the thick lens of his glasses which he fiddled with constantly. A hint of a mustache above his pouting lips made him seem even more prepubescent than the others. Though, the scarab tattoo between his collarbones suggested different.

“We’re here for the same thing as you,” Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy softly asserted.

“I fucking doubt that!” I snapped back, focusing on the brunette with her curly hazel-locks framing her golden glasses, pointy nose, and heart-shaped face. Her tweed vest was the same brown as her pupils which now remained below her downcast lashes.

“The same thing as you,” the boy repeated, glancing around his peers. “We’re all here on this earth trying to put the pieces together.”

“And what fucking pieces are you talking about, huh?!” I demanded,



leaning aggressively on the table, and getting right up in that kid's face. "Elaborate!"

"Who does this geezer think he is, anyway?" Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl scoffed. "Fuck's sake!"

"Look, perhaps you're confused," Beatles-Hair-Boy suggested, with a meek expression.

"What fucking pieces are you attempting to put together?!" I sneered, boiling with revulsion toward these English brats. "Be fucking specific!"

"Grim!" Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy muttered, stroking his own lean face, as he looked up while the waiter placed my cappuccino on the table. The boy then stuttered, concentrating on his words, "Well, you see, it's an ostensibly private matter."

I didn't budge.

"But of course, in all fairness, if you must know," he cautiously continued, though a little too eagerly. "We're somewhat conducting an historic investigation. Looking into the military service of our grandparents during the Second World War."

With a sardonic smile, I reached for the sugar. Fucking kids with their fashionable atonement for just a little of that copious white-guilt.

"No! I want to know!" Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl chirped, yanking her arm free from Hazel-Locks-Girl. "So then, what brings a crass individual such as yourself to a place like this?! What's your story?!"

"The coffee!" I stated, raising my cup.

"We have no reason to!" she sneered at the smaller female across the table from her. "We have no reason to justify ourselves to this... person! You sat down at our table! No one invited you! What gives you the gall to make presumptions about anything?!"

Her voice flinched a few times, but she had let herself be heard while the others sank into their chairs.

"It's all bullshit, you know," I said, tossing the book onto the table, nearly knocking over a glass of wine. "This retarded fucking idea of consciousness existing outside of the brain! Fuck this age-old delusion of any sort of immortal soul or spirituality of any fucking kind! Fuck this transcendentalist bullshit! We are meat! A crude, base material! Meat! Nothing more! I can cut off your arms, cut off your fucking legs, and replace your fucking heart with a fucking pig's! I can burn one hundred percent of your skin, blind you, stab your ear drums, chop off your fucking nose, and rip out your fucking tongue! And yet your cognitive abilities will continue functioning despite the severe

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physical compromises to all five senses! However, if I lobotomized your gray matter, or, you know what, if you just drink enough of this alcohol shit, then your very personality and ability to fucking communicate, comprehend, and even fucking breathe will forever become irreversibly fucking damaged! Not altered – fucking damaged! Permanently!”

“Jesus Christ,” someone whispered.

“Meat! Fucking meat!” I said, scowling at that skinny bitch.

“Is that all I mean to you?!” she replied.

“No,” I conceded, finishing my coffee. “You... this fucking meat... you also exist as an object in my mind. And there I’ll fucking perceive you not as you’d like to be remembered, but as however the fuck I want to see you! And there, in my mind, you’ll be used and abused as a whore for my hateful sexual depravities. Over and over and over again I’ll disrespect your memory. Until one fucking day, I finally fucking forget that you ever even fucking existed! You must understand that you’re not you to me. You’re whatever I lust for you to be. Beyond that, your fragile fucking meat means little more than another disappointing dinner that gets less appetizing with every fucking bite!”

“If you’re such a hardline cynic, then what of that which inspires?” Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy defiantly proposed. “What of love?”

“Fuck off, child!” I slammed my hand flat on the tabletop causing all the cutlery to jump! “What is the norm?! Happy romantic couples?! Or hordes of miserable fucking cunts?! And you better get your fucking answer right!”

“A real Pre-Raphaelite!” Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl jeered.

“Fuck this idolizing the cravings of the flesh! I want obsessive infatuation to the neurotic point of demented psychosis! The kind of warped fixation that only compulsive stalkers truly revel in. We’re all fucking predators! Prey is the personified victim of our desire! And that target is meat! And meat must be eaten! Or else it fucking spoils!”

“Thank the lord no one’s taking your dating advice,” Beatles-Hair-Boy chuckled.

“Fucking dating gurus are just an extension of all this spiritual tourism! Always listing the attributes to avoid in others, while dancing around how to effectively change from being one of these so-called negative-personality-types yourself! Dating and spiritual gurus are all selling the same snake-oil of self-loathing wrapped up in the jargon of fake-it-till-you-make-it into something you’ll never fucking be: someone else! Someone other than a piece of fucking shit!”

“This bloke!” Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl gasped.

“Ultimately, all this bullshit advice fails consistently, because you can’t transmute human fucking excrement into gold, no matter what Dolce & Gabbana you dress it up in! Self-acclaimed gurus never have actionable methods for becoming the unattainable Ubermensch, because final solutions wouldn’t serve to maintain their endless passive-aggressive-income. Fuck the idiocy of falling in love! And fuck the stupidity of any concept of fucking spirituality! It’s all a fucking hustle! You’re either ripping someone off with your bullshit doctrine, or you’re the one getting fucked over like the dumb little fuck you are!” I stopped, scanned the table, and then just continued. “We’re all fucked in the head, but if you allow yourself to buy into any of this bullshit, then I hope you fucking suffer every pathetic fucking day of your insignificant fucking life, until you, thankfully, fuck right off and die!”

Looking out the floor-to-ceiling windows on my right, I glared at the surrounding rooftops of this pretty little town. The kids sat in silence while the rest of the bustling establishment went on as if everything that I had just said didn’t mean a fucking thing.

“They fucking tell kids to get an education and be a good team player – but settle down and act your age. Mostly, however, they tell you not to really grow up! You hear it everywhere! They fucking tell adults to have faith in the system and play the game – but settle down and stay young at heart,” I snarled bitterly toward a wealthy patron at another table in a two-thousand-euro Prada blazer with Nikes. “Look at all these fucking ambassadors of goodwill, click-bait-thirsty for as much fucking attention as they can accumulate until they reach that sweet spot of having enough fuck-you-approval ratings to the point of becoming uncancelable. But for the vast majority of these maggots of mankind in this rotten and festering wound of civilization in this corpse of a fucking planet, they won’t become shit but the shit they were born as! So, you find scapegoats in every little fucking aspect of your shit lives, reverting to the petty fucking children you always were at heart! All of you regurgitating the same dumb shit about love and spirituality like you only just discovered that pornography was invented yesterday – whether it aligns with your politics or not! Fucking adults, grown ass fucking adults, talking the lamest bullshit that even five-year-olds roll their fucking eyes at! You see it everywhere! Incredibly smartass fucks falling for the most egocentric con of all time: that you matter! You see all these apparent fucking geniuses down on their fucking knees worshipping the god of vanity every-fucking-day every-fucking-where! The most influential people that ever fucking

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lived still think that they fucking matter in the face of all the contradictory evidence – that we're already fucking dead! And if you respect any of them, no matter who they are, telling you how the world works, then you're clearly and irrevocably fucked in the head!"

And then I suddenly became aware of how enthralled those four kids were. None of them were posturing or attempting to maintain their feeble image of righteous superiority. Now they all watched on with jaw's slack and pupils dilated. It fucking disgusted me! How quickly the activist abandons their convictions once presented with an overwhelming confrontation to their never challenged one-dimensional ideology. Their lack of gumption to strike me down made them all seem even smaller obstacles than ever before.

"Schopenhauer! Every depressed teen's favorite self-validating philosopher of would-be doom!" I sneered, grabbing the book again and shaking it madly in the air. "Foucault! Every queer-curious kid's anti-establishment anti-hero, leading the way with his fuck-the-man train of thought for the thoughtless thought-leaders toeing the very line that they're supposedly breaking free from! No matter how well-read you claim to be, all the great minds in the world ain't shit if you can't apply any of their esoteric fucking wisdom to this piece of shit practical world when the Russians decide to invade your theoretically protected fucking borders!"

Finally, they all spoke up. Overlapping voices of outrage came to the defense of their beloved authors. Decrying my position with excessive amounts of highfalutin language, overtly empathic metaphors, and an unnecessary emphasis on how fucking sensual everything was. Sometimes they got misty-eyed as they moaned on about some tedious allegorical shit that just made me want to throttle them and scream into their fucking ears, get to the fucking point! They all seemed so determined to prove how detached they were from their teenage years. It was fucking wretched how embarrassed they were of their own youthful mistakes. Talking in third-person like the truly pedantic and immature children they all clearly still were. The pretense of self-awareness and the hypersensitive abhorrence toward their fine-tuned self-consciousness was as grating on the nerves as their posh British accents. The one thing worse was that they were only ever a sentence away from reminding each other of their lauded childhood traumas along with their exulted psychological disorders.

After someone had waxed-poetic in mockery of the gate-keepers of nihilism, Beatles-Hair-Boy said something without interruption from the others, "It may be well and good knowing it's all been figured out by

distinguished scholars, but as soon as I get a quiet moment to myself I'm immediately swamped with this feeling. This feeling of arduous lassitude. A boundless sense of frivolousness. Therefore, I hurry to busy myself. Busy myself with as many books as possible. Before this detestable foreboding completely exhausts me from within. Before it happens again."

For a while everyone sat still.

"The definition of imposter syndrome is inaccurate," I said, focusing on that boy's desolation. "It's a fucking reality-check! The world is absolutely fucking meaningless! All rationalizations are excuses for being born into a losing battle. All these fucking pacifists protesting the fucking war are in fact signaling to the elect to stay the fuck out of it. Ultimately, they don't want to get involved! They scream peace but won't fight for it!"

"That's simply not true!" Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl spoke up, with a distressed expression. "We're bringing our unified values to the table and standing up to Putin!"

"Bullshit!" I snapped. "If all these protesting fucking countries in NATO and the UN actually wanted to help the Ukraine then they wouldn't be anti-war, they'd all be openly fucking pro-war! They'd send their fucking troops to stand side by side with the Ukrainian underdogs and fight back! But they aren't, are they! Not a single one of these bleeding-heart fucking countries has declared war with Russia! Because the people have had their voices heard. And those fucking voices want to stay well the fuck out of it! Yeah, you'll all support those poor fucking Ukrainians, but from a good safe voyeuristic fucking distance! And let's not forget with plausible deniability when they realize how much Russia has Europe by the gas-supply-balls! So, keep yourself busy from your fucking 'arduous lassitude' with peaceful protests, culture-war-politics, and pussy-footing around the issue – while, as some distinguished fucking scholar once said: *We live in a wondrous time in which the strong are weak because of their scruples and the weak grow strong because of their audacity!*"

"You're wrong!" Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy grunted. "What true evil have you ever faced?"

I locked eyes on that little shit.

"How many ghosts chase your heels?" that defiant kid demanded. "How often have you stood in the presence of the unearthly?"

"None of that shit's real!" I hissed. "Grow the fuck up!"

*"The fool said in his heart: There is no God. Sometimes this is a sign of the end and of death. Sometimes of the beginning and of life. As soon as man*

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*feels that God is not, he suddenly comprehends the frightful horror and the wild folly of human temporal existence, and when he has comprehended this, he awakes, perhaps not to the ultimate knowledge but to the penultimate. Was it not so with Nietzsche, Spinoza, Pascal, Luther, Augustine, even with St. Paul?"* Hazel-Locks-Girl murmured.

"Does she ever not speak in quotations?" I asked Beatles-Hair-Boy, before I scowled at that petite brunette and asked, "And what devils have you slept with, huh?!"

"I think you should leave," Hazel-Locks-Girl stated from her end of the table.

"Wait a moment!" Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy insisted with a frown. "Are you saying that you're nothing more than a stone-cold iconoclast?! A brutal pragmatist devoid of an ounce of compassion for those less fortunate?! So, are you saying there's naught besides flesh and bone reductionism?! Is that it?! Does that sum up your position?! If so, we've misjudged your objectives something beyond measure! And we are in fact the ones that have erred and been led astray!"

With that, I sat back, slowly studying those four kids, before I calmly asked, "What exactly have you seen?"

Both girls looked at each other cautiously. Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy crossed his arms and stared at the table. It was the more effeminate boy who gradually spoke with glazed over eyes, "We all saw it. We saw our own transfiguration. A light. A radiant light. A light that spoke to us. It made a promise. It would heal us. And it did. It came to us. That light. Like gold. If only we obeyed. If we did what it asked of us, we will be..."

"Don't," Hazel-Locks-Girl whimpered, touching the boy's hand.

He paused, smiled anxiously, and then nodded as he continued. "Sacrifices had to be offered. Sacrifices as penance. Sacrifices as proof for proof in return."

"It spoke to you?!" I asked viciously.

"That light. It filled the air. It appeared before us," the kid continued. "Golden incandescent light. It was alive. It moved so inconceivably. Like nothing I've seen. There, above us, that light, it spoke through us."

"We all saw it," Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl said.

"We demonstrated our faith," Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy added. "And it came back to us."

"How?" I asked, slipping a steak knife into my sleeve. While those four dwelled on their group recollection. But they volunteered nothing more and

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were seemingly still struggling to process something that not one of them was capable to articulating.

“You should leave.”

# BERLIN

TUESDAY 1<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2021

It was just after midnight when, for the first time in five months, I sat on the floor of my flat and closed my eyes.

The passageway in the east wall between the windows immediately opened before me. Out came spilling hundreds of black serpents, and then one of those pale, intestine-like worm-bodied devils slithered through the black orifice. That gray humanoid slowly held up the severed head of a white-haired old man. Turning the rotten object, the devil's bony fingers sunk into the skull with a cracking sound. That creature then bit into the stump of a neck and blew into the upside-down throat like a musical instrument. Barely audible over the swarming serpents in the dark, a whisper emerged from the dead man's mouth, "Ein Palast in der Hölle."

These devils had finally found a way of communicating with me – but why in German, for fuck's sake?!

"Für die Vorfahren, die sich entschieden haben zu bleiben."

WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JUNE 2021

*"Almost all the world's democracies were penalized for curbing their citizens' freedoms. 65 out of 75 democracies had their scores downgraded on this indicator,"* found a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit, due to the Corona restrictions of 2020. Only 8.4% of the world's population had a full democracy.



FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

Last year's lockdown officially ended today, so I invited a group of friends to my local cafe for our first social gathering. Sitting outside and taking over more than a few tables, everyone had a great time catching up with a lovely view of the beautiful sunset.

Just before midnight, Melina began talking about how damaging the lockdowns had been for the tourism industry that she had previously worked for. She believed that Germany should have done a hard lockdown like they did in China. Admitting that she wouldn't mind surrendering her freedoms if it fixed the problem.

"You're endorsing totalitarianism," I replied, with a smile. "You know there's a difference between choosing to give up your human rights, verse being told that you must comply? But the question is, if our inalienable rights have so easily been abandoned, will restoring confidence in their integrity be just as easily achieved?"

"Yes, because darling, we're in a state of emergency," Melina sniggered.

"During a state of emergency your principles should stand up to the test! Either you have principles that stay strong when times are tough, or they're merely fashionable window-dressing," I said, watching people pass by on the busy intersection. "If your principles are ignored when they're no longer convenient, it proves that you have no conviction. What does the German Ordinance to Protect the Population from Infection explicitly state? Paragraph 26, Restriction of Fundamental Rights of the German Constitution. This ordinance restricts the rights of Article 2, Personal Freedoms. Article 8, Freedom of Assembly. Article 11, Freedom of Movement. Article 13, Inviolability of the Home. Every time this Ordinance expires, it gets extended! You make your laws your prison!"

She merely laughed with an obnoxious tone, like it wasn't a big deal. After all, she was the one who had lost her job and had been living off her savings for the last year. But she didn't care about the economic harm to the industry, she was only annoyed by the inconvenience of not going on vacation every month in order to maintain her all-year-round natural tan.

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Scanning across the cluster of tables, I noticed how the two girls that I'd recently dated, Bettina and Ulla, were now sitting together. I hadn't expected them both to show up or get along quite so well.

Nigel then leaned in from my other side, "You do realize, that one day a girl you're seeing will invite you over for a honey-trap. You do know that, don't you?"

"Honey-trap?" Melina frowned.

"Where they lure you in with the offer of sexual escapades, only to then murder you before you know what happened!"

"That's my retirement policy!" I confessed, with a smile. But watching my Spanish friend, Dario, holding hands with his new Russian girlfriend was just too much intimacy for one evening, so I stood and bid everyone a goodnight.

Walking home in the warm air, I glared at the flocks of Berliners celebrating their newfound freedoms – as if they actually believed that their government wasn't going to take it all away again at the drop of a hat. I wanted to smash a claw-hammer into the fucking eyes of all those compliant cunts that were just following orders! Where were all the luminaries that weren't just conspiracy theorists? And again, I was reminded of Emmanuel's last words that had lived rent-free in my mind for the last six months. That nagging, off-the-cuff comment of his.

Shortly, when I got home, I found texts from both Bettina and Ulla. I ignored them and the works of the flesh. Whenever a girl told me how much they liked spending time with me, I wanted to pin them down and punch them in the fucking mouth and show them just how wrong they were! But striking a masochist left me feeling nothing. I might as well be cutting down a tree. What influence do any of us have? I then remembered the priest from Porto. So, I took a sheet of paper and wrote to Father Lucus, asking if he had ever met a truly holy man. Emmanuel was right, I had never really looked for one.

But halfway through writing, I screwed up the letter! Fuck this shit! No matter whom I spoke to or where I roamed, there were no answers for idiots like me!

SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

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*“Democratic environments and institutions are in mutually reinforcing decline,”* was stated at the Council of Europe. *“2020 has been a disastrous year for human rights in Europe. While, increasingly, commitment to upholding human rights standards has been faltering all over the continent for several years, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the erosion of the democratic fabric of our society, on which protection of human rights ultimately depends.”*

MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

While chatting about my trip to Würzburg last year, Bettina and I sat on her balcony in the evening sun. She then said that my writing reminded her of Kafka.

“Not a fan,” I shrugged. “The guy clearly had issues.”

Bettina burst into laughter.

“I can’t relate to his inability to stand up to his own fucking father.”

“You could be a little more diplomatic,” Bettina suggested. “Showing up unannounced on someone’s doorstep puts people on the defensive. I’m only surprised more people don’t call the cops on you. Why not try doing what I did while studying. Tell them you’re writing a thesis and need some first-hand research from people in the field. That way, when you approach them, they know you have some kind of legitimate reason for making an appointment.”

She was a smart one, alright. There was a reason I liked her. And once I got home, I finished what I was writing to Father Lucas, telling him that I was doing a paper on theodicy.

FRIDAY 11<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

After a full week of working on my near complete art series, *Cult of The*

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*Offensive*, and socializing every night, I caught the U-bahn home from a riverside restaurant. I was one station from my stop, listening to Gojira, *Pray*, when I saw a cute girl with big curly hair staring at me as she exited the train. The impulse to get up and follow her soft meat home spiked my bloodstream.

No! I clenched my jaw and watched her walk across the platform as the doors closed. But what was I waiting for? No one was watching me anymore. Not according to my lawyer.

SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

At 1am, I sat on my floor. Another worm-bodied devil came crawling out of the passageway as if it had been waiting there since the last time. This creature, however, had a different human head in its hands. It too blew into the severed throat like a flute. But this fat bald head spoke up in an unknown language. At least with the first attempt at spoken communication, I had understood most of the German. This, though, was completely foreign to me.

The pale devil seemed frustrated at my lack of response. So, it dug its fingers deeper into the face. Knuckle-deep. But just then, long black limbs reached out of the primeval passageway as a horse-size insectile entity stepped over the ugly one in front of me. This armor-plated menace reared up with its grotesque jaws stretching wide open above me – until I opened my eyes alone in my flat.

I sat on my floor for a while, remembering the devil that had made writing appear in that grotto of a cave last year. They were aware that I couldn't read it, and now they were attempting another form of communication. Yet, it appeared as though not all of them were pleased about this idea. I then thought of my unfulfilled plans for a stone circle. A circle of thirty-three obelisks. If these worm-bodied devils possessed some form of intelligence and there were plenty of them, then maybe they could become the beasts of burden that I could use to build my own designs. My own slaves. We're all damned and going to die. Better to accept the inevitable and establish yourself in hell before your life's work becomes just another bonfire of the vanities.



## Interfering With Divinities

WEDNESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> JUNE 2021

I left the studio this evening just as a girl next door also stepped outside. Walking ahead of me, she wore tight jeans and a crop-top while listening to headphones. It would be so easy to follow her into a quiet part of the neighborhood. I could picture her naked and could feel her little waist in my palms. But then I saw my hands on her throat as I sodomized her against a wall. I wanted to cut her head clean off while my dick was still deep inside her.

No! I turned the corner and headed home. The plan was simple: keep a low profile. I'm dating girls again and being a nice guy. Look, I'm normal. Perfectly normal.

A few minutes later, I slammed my door shut and immediately sat in the center of my floor. I closed my eyes while facing the east wall. This time five worm-bodied devils came spilling into my flat from the passageway. Each one had a human head in their clutches. All at once they blew into their throats, and multiple languages croaked hoarsely into the dark. Finally, I recognized English, and pointed at the winner. The others crowded close to the gray devil with the English voice, and I tilted my head as it whispered, "They're starving for the fat of the children of man."

As it repeated this statement, I glanced aside, grabbing a pen and some paper from my desk. I then proceeded to sketch a crude elevation of a circle of obelisks. Holding up the image, I glared into each of those five pairs of inhuman black eyes. The deformed devils slowly leaned in, still clinging to the decapitated heads, as I told them, "Build this!"

THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

After work, Bettina took me to the *Dark Matter* exhibition. We then went to her friend's birthday drinks at a gay bar. There, she made the observation that in a group setting I became the class-clown. I winked and replied, "Only

when the conversation bores me.”

I went home alone and was getting into bed after 1am, when I heard rustling outside my open windows. Initially, I had assumed that it was a bird in the ivy that covered the building, but it soon got louder. Closer. Getting out of bed, I leaned out the window into the cool air. There, a black goat stood sideways, perpendicular to the wall, defying gravity. It stared back at me, and I noticed the wound in the top of its skull between those sharp horns. This was the same fucker from Loch Ness. The goat then tiptoed around my window before stepping over to the edge of the north side of the building and disappearing around the corner.

SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

I was returning from Burroughs’s place at around midnight, when a little Asian girl in a tight miniskirt walked ahead of me. Instantly, I was overwhelmed with the urge to grab her long ponytail and yank her between the parked cars where I’d slit her throat. She could then bleed out facedown into the gutter. Once drained, I could easily carry her body upstairs for dissection and desecration.

No! I clenched my fists and crossed the quiet street toward my front door. Upstairs, I stepped inside my flat and reached for the light switch when I found a giant devil filling the room. It was so big that despite crouching it still had to hunch over while its elephant-size head gnawed on the carcass of some other unrecognizable monstrosity. Behind this giant, the entire east wall was gone. Stretching off in that direction was a dark lake dotted with random dead trees. Suddenly a massive arm was heaved at me, and I was smashed back against the doorframe! I was then grabbed and slammed like a wet rag into the wall as that malicious thing loomed closer! Its breath was hot and rancid between thick blood-wet tusks. Butchered flesh hung from its massive jaws. Its jagged horns were nearly as wide as its broad shoulders that were as rough as stone. But its glistening eyes looked into mine as the shock from the two impacts quickly passed, and I sneered, “Get out!”

This infernal animal of brutal means responded by pounding me back into the wall one more time. Its blackened paw pinning my chest in place.

## Interfering With Divinities

“The fuck out of here!” I hissed viciously, pushing myself forward. Slowly, I overcame the strength of this devil. A shriek howled from the swamp to the east, and finally that big son of a bitch reluctantly retreated.

Cracking my neck from side to side, I shook off this typical encounter. It wasn't the first of this kind of disrespectful intrusion and it wouldn't be the last. Watching that devil drag the remains of its meal out of my flat and into the water, I scanned the distance where more shrill voices echoed in the night. I'd never seen this particular cunt before, but like Nefertiti II had said, I had enemies. Besides, I didn't have any control over these things. I barely had control over myself. Just like, I didn't need to agree with the things I thought to think of them. Protecting yourself with holy relics didn't stop people. Just as protecting yourself with reason didn't stop devils. And protecting yourself with those very demons didn't stop the great indifference of the universe. Man could go where devils couldn't. But only very few were willing to go where all others wouldn't.

MONDAY 28<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021

When I got home in the evening, I spotted something on my glossy white floor below the east wall. It was the burnt idol that I had dug up outside of Porto last year. Glancing around my clean flat from where I crouched, I wondered why it had been moved. Had the tusked-devil from last night placed it here? But why? What the fuck was it insinuating?

So, I sat on the floor facing east. Closing my eyes, I was then standing knee-deep in that cold swamp water. Enormous dead trees rose like columns out of that calm lake. Mist faded to nothingness in the surrounding night. Surveying that desolate environment, I saw movement. That giant devil was lurking among a mass of roots below a nearby tree. I stood still and watched as the creature gradually approached on all fours. Waiting until it stood up on its hind legs before me, at a height of about six meters, I braced myself in case it struck me down again. However, it slowly held out its right paw. I too made a similar gesture, holding out the burnt idol. Opening its huge talons, the giant devil revealed a black snake-size leech that began levitating above its palm. I then remembered the spell that I had made in Porto. My proposition.





## Interfering With Divinities

So, I asked, “Where?!”

THURSDAY 1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2021

Tonight, a group of friends and I went to the Z-Bar for its re-opening. I wanted to support those that had supported me in the past.

After shits and giggles, Mara, Bettina, and I walked to the U-bahn. There, three security guards were talking to a drunk guy who had fallen asleep on a bench. We had 9 minutes until the next train, so Bettina was about to show me an artist’s Instagram page on her phone – when suddenly the bleating voice of some young gay guy came marching past us! His berating made it clear to everyone on the platform that these fascist thugs had no right victimizing this poor unfortunate homeless man. However, this was not another George Floyd scenario.

I ignored the little drama queen, but heard a guard inform the kid that he should write a formal complaint to their company, and then they strolled away as the bum shuffled off in the opposite direction. The scrawny guy in his obligatory Berghain black trench coat, beanie, and tight pants scoffed when Bettina decided to get involved. She attempted to calm him, admitting how frustrating it was but explained that the guards were under contract to throw out anyone loitering in the stations.

“No!” he yapped. “Why are you defending their actions?! What do you do?!”

“I’m a teacher,” she stated, neglecting to mention her own history as a bouncer.

“Okay, fine! You teach that to your kids, not to me!” he asserted, pointing his angry finger in the face of the tall blonde. “I can’t believe you’re supporting this kind of unacceptable behavior! How dare you!”

I rolled my eyes, looking away. How many drunk girls have I known that just had to thrust themselves into situations with the vain hopes of defusing them, only to make it worse. After all, common-sense doesn’t work on those with the insolence of a social-media up-bringing. But if I didn’t get involved now, then I’d be the lame asshole that just passively watched on. Clenching my jaw under my medical mask, I scowled back at Bettina as that gay guy

now stood right in front of me. Both of them were incapable of seeing eye to eye despite everyone's so-called best intentions.

"Did you see that?!" he abruptly snapped at me. "Did you see what happened?!"

"No," I said, glaring at that twenty-something-year-old prick.

"Well, then don't talk to me!" he said, full of arrogance, adrenaline, and most likely a shit-load of speed. "They had no right physically assaulting that man like that!"

"Physical confrontations happen!" I snarled back. "Welcome to reality!"

"It's unacceptable!"

"Tell it to someone who gives a fuck!" I barked. "And that ain't me!"

"That's simply appalling if you think in a civilized society this sort of thing should be tolerated without question!"

"Are you American?" I asked.

"What?" he stuttered.

"Are. You. American?"

"No. No, I'm not."

"You sure sound like an American! You really fucking do!"

"Well, okay. Good!"

"You think that's something to be fucking proud of?! Do you?! Really?!"

How quickly this little shit shriveled below my hateful tone of voice, revealing this pathetic fucking fagot for the fucking pussy he actually was. Yet his smug attitude was still running on autopilot despite having suddenly lost his bravado. "Come on, this sort of aggression has no place oppressing those without the power to stand up for themselves!"

"And whom exactly is being aggressive in this fucking interaction right now?! You fucking come over here and start preaching to those who aren't even involved! Making accusations and talking to us like we're the ones to blame for your failure to save the fucking day, you miserable fucking loser! You're the only one with the fucking problem here! So fuck off! Fuck off with your self-righteous indignation, motherfucker! Fuck right off!"

Bettina then put her palm on my chest as the gay guy nodded and awkwardly backed away – right as the train pulled into the station. I never took my eyes off that cunt until the girls pulled me into the carriage.

## Interfering With Divinities

Switching off the lights, I was about to get into bed, but instead, walked over and opened the window. Climbing onto the edge, I crawled outside – where gravity flipped sideways, and I looked face to face with that black goat on the ivy-coated wall. As I stood up, I found that we were now under a great overhanging slab of rock far above a big lake. Beyond the distant shores, an enormous mountain range was backlit by a deep red glow from the overcast night sky. That scarlet haze came from the other side of the sharp summits. It wasn't the dwindling remnants of a sunset. More like storm clouds above a vast forest fire.

Suddenly a tiny devil began screaming at my feet! I slammed my heel upon its head like a boiled egg and kicked its twitching body aside! The goat and I then trekked down to the vast waters as red lightning flashed and echoed in the surrounding mountains.

TUESDAY 6<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

I finally had my follow-up MRI today. It had been over a year since my first one after two chronic series of unprecedented blind-spot migraines.

Lying in that loud cylinder again, I returned my focus to Jessie as I had done during the first MRI. However, this time, instead of visualizing my plan for her ritualistic torture and execution, I just saw how I'd now break into her place, butcher, and desecrate her precious fucking meat right then and there.

I'd beat her horribly with my bare fists! Stab her countless times all over! Throw her across her lounge! Gut her before slitting her throat while face to face! Tie her hair up to the chandelier so that she hung in place while I bashed her face in with a hammer! Hack her limbs off and chop her ribcage apart with a hatchet! Snap her spine and empty her pelvis before cutting her head off from whatever remained of her body! Place her tattered skull within her hip bones, coat her mutilated expression with her intestines, and then stomp on that fucking mess! I visualized washing my hands and finally cutting a piece of meat from her ass to fry up later for dinner.



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Once the MRI was done, I was left with a sour feeling of disenchantment. Jessie's death would have been meaningless now. It served no greater purpose. Just violence. Just beautiful fucking violence. Her worthlessness made abhorrent, just like my thoughts. But this MRI would never capture these things that I saw. Just like last time.

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That evening as I lay in bed, I was staring out the windows when I heard hooves. The goat peered inside, so I grabbed a black sheet and climbed out the window.

It was raining on the mountainside. Steep cliffs rose into the night as the goat and I marched up what seemed like a path that had been carved into the rock a thousand years ago.

We hiked upward for a long time before we came to a deep crack in the mountain that dropped off to my left. The redness in the sky stretched further above, now saturating everything in a bloody tone. Except, whatever lurked below in that steep gorge remained absolutely blackened. From time to time, I saw great shapes move within the shadows down there. Undefined forms collided into one another and tearing each other apart. The heavy impacts were accompanied by dreadful screams from savage jaws. All the while, a rumbling howl echoed over the looming mountains from far away. The goat continued further upward, and we walked side by side.

FRIDAY 9<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

It was Friday night and I wanted to see no one. But I went out anyway. Returning to the canal for the first time since last year, I wondered why. Perhaps out of habit, perhaps out of curiosity. There were no lights on in Jessie's flat, so I sat at a nearby cafe and read *Black Mass*, by John Gray. There, the blonde waitress kept looking over at me. Overhearing the girl behind the bar call her name, I looked away as I finished my coffee. I wanted to cut her head off.

At 9:30pm, I followed the waitress once she left work. There were still no lights on at Jessie's place. An hour later, I stood in the rain in the outer suburbs of southern Berlin. No one saw me outside the building of the



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waitress. She might live on the ground floor if the doorbells were an accurate indicator. Though, you never could be sure half of the time. I slowly circled the building but couldn't spot her inside any of the lit-up windows.

SUNDAY 11<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

While watching a documentary about the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp in 1945, I took note when they mentioned that the commander of the camp fled to Castle Itter. He was supposedly on his way to the Nazi's mythical last stand in the Tyrolean Alps, at the Alpine Redoubt. Not far from Castle Itter, was Lake Chiemsee, where a golden cauldron was dumped during the last days of the Second World War. The cauldron came from Castle Wewelsburg, the center of Himmler's cult of the SS. After the cauldron and other artifacts were evacuated, the castle was meant to be destroyed by the 38<sup>th</sup> SS Grenadier division, with the title of: Nibelungen.

I sat back and stared into space wondering if any of these coincidences had something to do with Mr. Juggernaut and the Intrepid Supremacy. Are they building a redoubt in the alps or finishing what the Nazi's had started? Or was this more word-salad bullshit strung together by my synchronicity suspectable brain?!

Switching off the lights, I sat on the floor in the quiet. It was funny that I kept existing. I should have been dead by now. Should have died long ago. Something should have stopped me. But still, I kept existing. Even in the calm serenity of a peaceful Sunday night, I could feel the violence under the skin of my palms. It was all that I wanted. And this patience, I hated it. I wanted more of what I had had. And why not. No one stopped me before. I suffered no consequences. What was I waiting for? A reason? Fuck that! Violence never needed an excuse!

Looking up, I was in a wasteland of swamp lakes and rock formations. From one of those murky ponds, surfaced a worm-bodied devil. It slithered closer as I stood up, but I was distracted by a hill of stone with its top sheered flat and its vertical sides reaching at least twenty meters out of the water. It was the only dominant feature in this basin surrounded by gray mountains. As I studied this fifty-meter-wide rock, I watched dozens of gray

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devils quarrying the top. They were doing it! They were actually building my design! However, in a fit of resentment, I grabbed that fucking nearby creature by its neck and yelled into its oily black eyes, “What’s the fucking point?! There’s no meat here to plant below the stones! What the fuck will any of this shit accomplish?!”

Shoving that fucking devil away from me, I spat at the sight of that construction. I then saw hundreds of other worm-bodied devils, as well as many more disfigured creatures rise from pits in the rock and stare back at me. Translucent shadow figures also appeared upon the flat platform. They all just stared at me.

“Show me the meat of this land, and I’ll feed it to you!” I yelled. “But what’s the fucking point?! I already brought you through! I fucking completed the birthing ritual! And nothing! Fucking nothing! You fucks did nothing! I brought you into the world of man so that you could go forth and desecrate! But what did you achieve?! What?! Huh?! What’s the fucking point?! Why are you even listening to me?! You don’t understand a word I’m saying!”

Opening my eyes where I sat on the floor, I slowly got up and opened the window. The trees in the courtyard were as silent as the night. Climbing outside, I found the black goat waiting for me. The moment we took our first step, a downpouring of rain and a blanket of heat attacked us! The very ground emanated warmth beneath my bare feet. Fire! Huge red flames suddenly towered above us. Shielding my eyes, I saw the goat scowling at my hesitation. The flames on this mountainside then recoiled and withdrew as if by command. However, the valley ahead still burned, though to a much lesser extent than my initial impression. Scanning the rugged peaks, I watched more enormous fires reaching upward like solar flares into the storm clouds.

The further the goat led, the more the flames would retreat from our presence, only regaining their lost territory once we passed through this unholy ground.

Finally, much later, the gigantic fires ahead of us also faded away, revealing the ruins of a small circular colonnade. One golden flame lingered in the midst of the headless pillars. It continued burning unaffected as we approached. This fire stretched as tall as a man, and yet it appeared to have no source of fuel. Barren stone lay below. That fire then showed us a sign within its glow. A vision of a bleak field of rotting flesh. Pale and discolored bodies had melted into one another. It was an endless landscape of rancid decay. These skeletal forms, however, breathed. This mass-grave was alive. A hideous state of collective putrefaction. And how I adored the sight.



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When I eventually opened my eyes, it was late, well after midnight, and I was extremely dehydrated. I soon got into bed exhausted, finding it interesting that there actually was a place that burned. Of all my time spent in the realm of death and sin, I had never seen anything exactly like this before. When right then, in the dark, I heard a CRACK! Then a chewing sound. Looking up from my bed, I saw in the dim light that the giant tusked-devil was hunched over and eating something that was still alive. I ignored it, rolled over, and went to sleep.

I awoke a few hours later – that devil still watching me.

TUESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

Returning from the studio this hot and humid evening, I discovered a letter in my mailbox. It was from Father Lucus. Taking it with me to an Indian restaurant, I read it while sitting outside waiting for my dinner. He said that my letter had been slowly forwarded from Porto to his current residence at a monastery in Santiago de Compostela. He was on a sort of sabbatical as he put it. But he admitted that it felt more like probation. He didn't elaborate. From what he said, I couldn't tell if he was still teaching. He soon got around to my question, by saying that men were not meant to be holy, we're flawed. We may lean toward the essence of the divine, but it was not fully attainable, not in this lifetime.

WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

Tonight, I needed some air. I had been busy working to finish my new art series. It was the perfect example of why the Charlie Hebdo massacre was warranted. I was creating art-crime. But then I remembered, no one gave a fuck what I did. So, I took the train and bus on a different route south to the home of the blonde waitress. Circling her building, I found most of the lights

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off. I photographed her loose front door and its lock. As much as I wanted to get inside, I wasn't sure if my wire could open this kind of modern doorframe. I then slowly backed into the trees next to the neighbor. Standing in the pitch black, I glared at that ordinary apartment building, wondering when the sun would rise and what time the waitress would switch on her lights.

FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

After I had a fresh haircut, Bettina picked me up from the studio and we went to Victoria Park for my 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of living in Germany. I still found that there were places like this that I had never known about.

We had coffee and wandered down the canal toward Jessie's flat. It had been exactly a year since my plans for her had failed. Thinking of her hips, I wondered, why not try again. Just for the fuck of it. But then Bettina's questions distracted me. I had been telling her about the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, that centered on the boy Jesus and how many people he had killed – and then the next thing I knew, we had walked by Jessie's place, and I hadn't even looked up. That time had passed.

SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

I slept in today, recovering from billiards with friends late last night. When I left my flat at 2pm, I saw someone standing outside the front door of the building. I could see a ponytail through the misty glass. Defne looked up from her phone with those big brown eyes that glistened wetly above her slowly parting lips that wanted to speak – but I just glared at her apprehension. Waiting all of five seconds, I walked on my way.

Stepping up to the studio's front door a minute later, I glanced back down the footpath as Defne quietly stopped. I stood there and tilted my head, examining her slumped posture. She wore a pleated mini skirt, short

jacket, and thick-soled sneakers. When girls wore knee-high socks around me, I knew that they were signaling that they knew what I liked and that they wanted me to like them.

“You okay?” I finally asked.

She just shook her head. I loved how intensely black her hair was in the bright sunlight.

Pushing the door, I held it open as that Muslim teen came inside. I switched on the kettle before opening my office where Defne came and sat on the sofa. However, when I pulled my chair back from my desk, I discovered a package sitting there. Opening this unexpected gift, I was pleasantly surprised to find that Bettina must have left this here yesterday. It was *The Complete Fiction*, of H. P. Lovecraft. Recently, when we had been at an English bookstore, I had pointed out that I should get around to reading his works. Inside was a note that referred to when a close friend of hers had been talking about suicide, “*Thank you for being there the other night. I really appreciated it.*”

Turning back to little Defne, I looked down at how meek she now appeared in comparison to our last encounter. All her hubris had evaporated, and her anxious smile betrayed her age. So, I sat on my chair and placed the heavy book on the desk as I asked, “What’s up, kid?”

Defne then burst into nervous laughter as tears rolled down both of her cheeks.

I watched on as she hunched over before spilling her guts. Apparently, she had been in a relationship with the son of her father’s best friend, but he just broke up with her so that he could start dating some beautiful blonde German.

Scanning over her lack of a hijab, I wondered why, of all people, she was telling me this.

She eventually asked in a fragile voice, “Do you think I’m pretty?”

Clenching my jaw, I stared into her bloodshot eyes as I replied, “I think you look hurt.”

And the tears welled up again under her thick black mascara.

“Look, kid. There’s no quick fix. Break ups suck. That’s just a fact. All you can do is distract yourself until enough time has passed, and you’ve cried yourself raw and burnt out every last fiber of your broken heart by screaming your fucking lungs dry. And if it’s worse than that, then I’m afraid the news ain’t any better. If you’re questioning the very meaning of everything, well then, your fucked. Because no one gives a shit about your existential crisis about no one giving a fuck about your existential crisis,” I said softly, as I watched her eyes lose focus. “Remember, people talking about needing

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love are no different than children desperate for a mother's tit to suck. Sniveling! Juvenile! Pathetic! Dependency on an ideal other obviously leads to that fucking cliché of disappointment from failing to grasp the fucking unobtainable. Yet this pattern reoccurs every fucking generation and countless times in each idiot's own experience while they're perpetually pretending that they'll never repeat the same mistakes their friends and fucking family have made. Yet they do! They do repeat these mistakes! Over and over! The same broken heart bullshit growing pains whether the love's requited or not! I can tell you it sucks! I can tell you to distract yourself! But that doesn't fucking help you right now! Right now you're suffering a pain like nothing else you've ever had to endure your entire fucking life. And believe me, it gets worse! You'll hate everything and everyone, and you'll sell every scrap of your fucking integrity for just a quiet moment free from all this fucking torment, but it'll never fucking come! No rest nor return to how things once were. Because people want what they want, and then we discard each other once those needs are met or not! We're all alone temporarily interacting with strangers until we die alone. It sucks! That's all I know. It fucking sucks. It really fucking does."

Defne listened with a scared expression above her sad lips.

"Remember, Kant's categorical imperatives don't exist! You must be morally superior, while your adversaries must be pure fucking scum! Truth plays no part! No part in anything!" I snarled, leaning closer as I continued. "YOU MUST TALK SELFLESS BUT YOU MUST ACT SELFISH!"

Birds chirped outside.

"Most importantly, remember," I said gently, sitting back. "The best revenge is looking good. Remember that. No one gives a fuck about your pain. No one. So just look good while you bury that shit deep down inside until it grows into a tumor that fucking kills you. Because we're all going to die miserably one day. May as well milk it for all it's worth while you're in your fucking prime. And kid, you know, you're looking fucking fine."

That evening, I went out west and met Melina at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel with her little Russian friend Aniska. I enjoyed her unwavering eye-contact at the bar, but I loved her ass in those slick black tights even more.

Back in their hotel room, Aniska pulled on her knee-high boots, and I smiled lying back on that massive bed. Melina then started laughing about her latest break up and his toxic-masculinity. Toxic in comparison to what?! After she tolerated his shit for months, she finally ended it to which he then cried

like a little bitch for three hours at her place. And she just gloated over his regret. Yeah, sure, and it was only his toxic-masculinity that was the problem. Yeah, right! But I kept my mouth shut. Arguments were self-sabotage when in expensive hotel rooms with two tipsy blondes. And yet every girl was the same piece of meat just with interchangeable faces depending on what made me cum. Sadistic sexual games had no limits, but these two had nothing new to offer from their bruised flesh. I just wanted to get up and leave, but there was that craving in my chest that demanded that I possess them, that I consume them, that I made them all mine!

It was after 2am when I walked out of the lobby and received a text from Defne, "*Thanks for being kind.*"

MONDAY 19<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

Getting home just before midnight, I opened my window and crawled outside.

I was immediately blinded by a golden blast of flames! Then I slid! I was upon a near vertical cliff. Barely grasping ahold of the rocks, I clung on as vast fires roared far below. The mountains burned in a black and scarlet distance consumed by a violent haze. Again, I noticed that there was no obvious source of fuel for these all-encompassing fires which produced no smoke. The heat, however, scorched my face, and the rock that I held burned my hands.

A crumbling chunk of stone then tumbled past me. When I looked up, the black goat glared back down. Exhaling, the animal snarled – and with that, the encroaching flames slowly retreated from our proximity. I watched as those fires extinguished themselves and twisted unnaturally as if reluctantly crawling backward. The more that inferno withdrew, the more pillars of a ruined city were exposed. An endless sprawl of temples crowned this entire ridge. Surveying the reddened horizon, I spotted a different kind of movement. An immense shape rose behind another mountain. It was the spine of some colossal serpent. My line of sight then shifted to the left, further along this cliff. Out there, a huge spike extended from the valley wall over that formerly burning chasm. Impaled through the chest was a giant devil with molten lava for flesh. That creature was as tall as a five-story building and yet it was hung

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out to dry. Melting rock dripped from its feet into the depth.

The goat had continued along the cliff face toward the giant, that eventually turned its deformed head toward us. Hissing, the goat addressed the beast, which in turn replied with the voice of a volcano! The clouds in the night sky then became a blaze with explosions, while embers swept across the mountain side like hail!

TUESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

I received a second letter from Father Lucus today. Initially, he apologized for dismissing my earnest inquiry. Said he was under a lot of pressure at the moment and had been separated from the others. He then got to the point, stating that there was a Jesuit priest in Strasbourg, Father Theophilus. He lived in the heart of the old city, on the riverside. Lucus simply said that he was the holiest man that he had ever met.

Great. Another old guy in another distant town. What the fuck could I possibly learn from this prick?! But then again, what had I expected? Even if God himself looked down upon the things that I had done and the places I had gone, he too would wonder where the fuck I was going with all this shit.

FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY 2021

I went to bed late, but as soon as I lay down, I heard the chewing of huge teeth on broken bones. The tusked-devil crouched in the dark of my room eating something that gasped and choked.

A twenty-foot-long centipede-like thing then came crawling across my ceiling. Snapping its jaws above me, it curled about itself and remained looming there while I went straight to sleep. I would have plenty of time for these fucks once my current art series was finished.

MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

Leaving the studio at 11:30pm, I saw dozens of shadow figures on the empty humid streets.

The stairwell in my building was packed full of so many shadows that it was like walking upstairs without the lights on. However, stepping into my flat, I found that there were none of them inside. But upon opening my blinds – fire!

That ruined city burned as I climbed out into an archetypal vision of hades. The black goat came from behind a towering statue that was so damaged it was unidentifiable. Once the goat was close enough, I caught that animal by its horns. “What is this fucking place?! Show me something! What the fuck are you trying to tell me?!”

The goat then began grunting before its very breath grabbed my wrists! I was shoved backward and lifted off the ground, levitating! The goat growled with a gurgling sound. My eyes suddenly stung as my arms were stretched out by some unseen force. There, I saw the wind! I could see it! The air peeled open! I saw the goat’s breath! A translucent black mass of organic flesh-like membranes extending from the animal’s snout. The goat itself was now changing into something less familiar and more hideous. Looking away, I saw that the distant flames no longer glowed but were undulating muscles of nothing I formally understood as life, and yet they were alive! The sky was in fact teeming with tangible entities like the oceans if the water itself was made of hostile monstrosities.

But I’d seen this before. There was no revelation in this gruesome disclosure. Whether or not the black goat knew this, it still left me hanging there to witness the brutally sublime nature of how futile my entire existence truly was.

“More!” I finally yelled at that goatish thing below, feeling the air now like broken glass in my throat. “Show me more!”

That biological abomination of a gelatinous extremity that had materialized and revealed how it was holding me up, then swarmed over my entire body like a massive hand of seaweed and simply crushed me into a fucking ball!

Opening my eyes in my flat, I stared out the open window into the

## Interfering With Divinities

blackness beyond. I could still see those writhing forms that also remained hidden to this world. There, I was reminded of that old Swiss guy and his dog. I wondered if this was how he had come up with his theory on dark matter. But then again, how many other realms lay beneath even the ghosts of hell?

WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

I awoke to the news that Joey Jordison had died. Death was always a reminder to reflect. I thought of his influence on my decision to buy a drum kit twenty years ago. How many years had I beat my anger in that snare? How much art had I created listening to his drums? And yet now, where was I? With the same anger unresolved, and Joey dead. What had I left to achieve before I too never beat a drum again? I used to work on my art just to fill in the time until something better came along. But when it did, I realized that working on the great art was far more fulfilling.

FRIDAY 30<sup>th</sup> JULY 2021

I finished my new art series today, *Cult of The Offensive*. However, the Fata Morgana Galerie recently became a Covid test station, so my plans for an exhibition with all sixty of my propaganda artworks wouldn't happen anytime soon.

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This evening, Bettina led me on a walk across town. We arrived at the Church of the Sacred Heart at 8pm, where, to my surprise, an old friend of hers opened the door.

Three weeks ago, Bettina and I had been pondering the original mechanics of a church organ, after this friend of hers had text her. She had then arranged for me to meet him tonight. Bettina said that Tordis was a bit of a musical genius and had been reading sheet music since the age of six.



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Tordis took us on a tour of the catholic church and told a story of how the crypt was used as a bomb shelter during the Second World War. He pointed to a section of the wall where a bomb had actually penetrated the building but became lodged in the masonry, directly above the entrance to the crypt. They called it a miracle. Though, no divine intervention saved the priest who was caught smuggling jews out of the country and thus died in a camp himself.

Taking us up to the massive pipe organ, Tordis talked about his time studying in Paris. When he was eighteen, his instructor had the keys to Notre Dame and let him play the organ after hours. Tordis then became visibly saddened when he recalled the day that Notre Dame had caught fire. Now he had the keys to multiple churches across Berlin. Showing us through the 6000 pipes, he revealed the two double-bed-size bellows with peddles that originally powered the instrument. These days, of course, an insulated motor provided the air supply. It was all fascinating to me, these things I had never thought about before, revealed firsthand.

Bettina then turned the pages as Tordis gave us a private concert. Standing there, looking down at the empty church as that booming organ filled the space, which amplified the sound, I thought of my plans for the circle of obelisks. Turning toward Bettina and Tordis, I knew I was a fool in the company of those far wiser. Those devils should have found someone smarter to communicate with. Unless, of course, they knew my limits and just needed a useful idiot.

## SUNDAY 1<sup>st</sup> AUGUST 2021

According to *HyperNormalisation*, by Adam Curtis, Putin was an advocate of Vladislav Surkov's non-linear warfare. The goal not being the defeat of anyone but to cause destabilization. Religion and politics were the same. Why should you believe this over that? There was hypocrisy on both sides. After all, those that decided whom were to be beheaded during The Terror of the French Revolution called themselves the Committee of Public Safety.

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MONDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> AUGUST 2021

Getting into bed tonight, I suddenly heard rustling outside my open windows. Something then leapt across the room, pinning me down as it sank claws into my torso before I was lifted into the air! There, it ripped open my ribcage in one ruthless movement! I crashed back down onto my mattress – only to find that I was unharmed and alone. This was just another impatient devil wanting my blood.

TUESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST 2021

This evening, Defne came to my place in her black hijab and thick mascara. She thanked me again for letting her take a nap on the sofa at the studio, and then she straight out asked me, “Would you fuck me right now?”

I slowly pulled that nineteen-year-old up close and whispered, “Only anal.”

She squinted but turned away as she began undressing. I told her to keep the hijab on. Pushing me onto a chair, she got on top and gradually sat on my erection. It didn’t take long before her pained expression turned to pleasure. I didn’t care if she faked it, not after I came deep inside her tight ass.

Once we got dressed, she spoke for a while about her mundane depression. It bored me, so I grabbed and stripped her naked again. This time, I lay her over my sofa sodomizing her violently as I glared into her aching eyes. She wasn’t faking anything as I came deeper than before.

Later, I went to Gendarmenmarkt to clear my head. I crossed Museum Island on the way. There, the Humboldt Forum’s facade was looking beautiful now that the scaffolding had been removed, but this shell of a palace wasn’t built for the likes of me. Some of the best advice I had ever received in my formative years was from my older brother. I had been in one of my bad moods, when he had said that I should see how kids were living who actually had it tough. Immediately, I had hated his dismissal of my own state of mind.

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I soon, however, came to appreciate the lesson in perspective: everyone else mattered more than me! But if I meant nothing in the grand scheme of things, then I needed to make my own plans.

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I sat on the floor facing east once I got home.

Looking up, I stood upon that stone base which had now been cut perfectly flat in the middle of the lake. Thirty-three square holes surrounded this wide circular space where I walked and examined the excellent work done by the worm-bodied devils. But when I turned, I found that the previously vacant center now had some creature standing there. This devil looked part tree and held onto a large broken shard of a glass-like stone. Approaching it, I looked into the oddly angled crystal, and saw a gaunt inhuman face scowling back at me. The rain that then fell highlighted an aspect that I hadn't noticed before. The surface of this huge stone platform was carved with intricate geometrical lines that linked the thirty-three pits. Was this yet more evidence of an intelligence beyond that of mere animals?

THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

I finished work early, so text an old ex who was visiting town, but she said that she was busy with her special friend – now that she had given herself permission to have an extra-marital affair. But soon she text back, saying that her fuck-buddy just had a bike accident. She said that she would be free after driving him to the hospital.

She then came straight to my place, and I suggested that I take photos. Without hesitation, she stripped and got on my bed with that salacious smirk of hers.

Later, we went for drinks, and she laughed about how a month ago she would have never let me take nudes of her ever again. I then proposed that if her husband was cool with her fucking anyone else but me, then could I at least eat a banana? She frowned, confused. So, I specified eating it out of her asshole. She laughed and said never!

We reminisced about our breakup at Loch Ness in 2013, and how she then met her husband. Looking at the state of their relationship, I now knew that

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I had made the right decision back then. She asked about why I had bought a Bible before we separated at Edinburgh? Simple, I shrugged. I had wanted to desecrate something holy. She admired how committed I was at following through with my ideas, no matter how obscene. Raising my glass, I wondered how long it would take before I got to eat that banana.

### SATURDAY 7<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

Finally, after a year and a half, another ex, blondie, had time for a coffee. Looking extra bleached in her cute blue and white striped dress, she seemed shy as I complimented her on how good she was looking. Reluctantly, she admitted that it was her thirty-fifth birthday in two weeks. I was slightly taken aback and had thought that she was older than twenty-five when we had dated.

Walking through Mitte in the lovely afternoon sun, I suggested that she model for me again. She, however, said she didn't want any more digital photographs of her but offered to take analogue nudes herself and then send me prints. You should never underestimate the ego's greed for being seen as desirable.

### SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

Matching with some girl on Bumble, I invited her to a friend's acoustic gig outside Zum Starcken August tonight. She pulled up in her smart car, while I sat outside with a group of friends. After a brief introduction, we went for dinner, and then drinks at another cozy bar. She said that she was currently in the middle of writing a paper on the narcissism of real estate. It was a fascinating conversation with an astute young professional who clearly had expertise in a subject that I had never heard of before. But those were always the most engaging interactions. As the evening drew on, I found myself

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wondering why the fuck I was dating girls again? Was I addicted to this? Or was this the narcissism of sexual real estate?

Once she drove me home, all I could think about was writing a letter to the priest in Strasbourg. But I wrote nothing. Because I was a fucking sinner and already knew the truth. There were no holy men in this world that was only full of fucking sin.

TUESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

At 7:30pm, I impatiently sat on my floor and closed my eyes.

Echoes of whispers drifted in the darkness with sounds of distant animals. The light from a candle then came from my right where a pale worm-bodied devil lurked. It slowly pointed further to my right.

Following that tunnel, I heard those grunting howls grow ever louder. A vast subterranean cavern soon stretched out below where a blue glow came from a mist in the distance. There, thousands of blackened creatures were savagely attacking one another. I scanned that huge space and noticed that even the cave walls were covered in vicious insects dismembering each other. Everything was tearing itself apart.

Then a loud shriek hailed over that cacophony. The masses of mutilated devils turned their hideous snouts in my direction. All of a sudden, that entire swarm stampeded my way! An avalanche of furious forms came surging up the rocky incline toward my perch with murderous hands reaching for my throat, and I wanted them! I wanted them all! I wanted them to fucking obliterate every fucking atom in my worthless fucking existence. But instead, I sneered under my breath, "Heel!"

In an abrupt change of their snarling hostility, that entire mob lurched to a halt like waves crashing into another swell of overwhelming violence! That ferocious noise was deafening as they lashed out at one another! Yet I knelt and reached down so that I could stroke the tumorous face of the closest demon.

"I understand," I whispered, looking across all those clashing bodies. My hand cupped the jaws of that malicious devil as I looked into its vile eyes. More and more rabid beasts then climbed on top of others until I was

## Interfering With Divinities

completely encapsulated with that blood-thirsty enormity. Of all thing, this I understood.

FRIDAY 13<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

On the train home, after catching up with Elisabeth, I fixated upon a little girl in a tiny red dress that I had followed since the platform at Eberswalder Strasse. She now stood across the carriage from me. Her inebriated eyes would often linger on my pupils before she glanced away. Studying her, I liked how cheaply this meat was presented. Her white sneakers were scuffed, her black belt was draped loosely over her shoulder, and her messy blonde hair was a travesty of what she had probably spent hours preparing before going out on the town. Maybe she was eighteen, but clearly couldn't handle what she had drunk. I needed to change trains at Alexander Platz but saw that she followed and again we stood facing each other in the next train. This time I focused on the curves of her hips and how petite her figure was. Watching her lose balance each time the train stopped at a station, I pictured myself picking up her small body and slamming her into a wall! I wanted to shove her over the seats and rip off that dress as I sodomized her sweet round ass! I wanted to beat her senseless, pound her bloody, and feel her flesh under the impacts of my knuckles! I wanted to choke her in my bare hands, crush her slender little neck, and throttle that meat to death! I wanted to fuck her raw and kill her just as violently! Mostly, though, I wanted her in excruciating pain! Then I wanted to carry her home, butcher her supple carcass, and keep bits and pieces in glass jars. Christ, I just remembered that I hadn't eaten today.

SATURDAY 14<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

It had been five months since Trudka had gotten into a relationship with a

cop. I had always enjoyed how willing she had been to play my games, and I especially liked how she smiled while I stared into her eyes. We had our fun for a couple of months, during which I introduced her to my friend the Italian witch who had pierced her for a body-suspensions. Trudka seemed to have found that profoundly liberating. Despite being a cabaret dancer in her mid-twenties who would frequent clubs like KitKat and Insomnia, she still sent me text like, “*Every time I read your messages, I get aroused and yet shy at the same time.*”

Trudka had modeled for a fetish photographer who was having an exhibition today, so she had invited me to catch up. Between live performances of body-artists, we sat outside in the evening sun and chatted. She had started studying at medical school in order to become a nurse. After all, the entertainment business had ground to a halt during the lockdowns. Now that the restrictions were easing, however, she was considering quitting the course. I understood that dancing had always been a core part of her life, but I reminded her that lockdowns came back last year and probably would again. So, I casually suggested that she continued studying at least until her exams next year. She nodded and seemed to appreciate my rational opinion. Though, once I asked about her family that I knew she was extremely close with, she laughed about how her brother was now applying to join the police. The irony of her former participation in Antifa and her past distrust of the authorities was not lost on her. She was a clever kid, and I told her that I was proud of her goals.

Hugging her goodbye, I headed across town for dinner with another ex, but on the way, I recalled one of the explicit homework videos that Trudka had made for me to the sound of Two Feet, *Had Some Drinks*.

A few hours later, I was walking home, when I passed a parked car next to the Asian restaurant on the corner of the street. A young Turkish guy with a short beard and baseball cap looked up from behind the wheel. His eyes and mouth gaped moronically. I knew this cunt. A former associate of Lev. One of the idiots that had arranged the Syrian honor-killing last year.

Continuing along the street, I clenched the big bottle of water in my hand, hoping that he hadn't recognized me.

“Fischer!” someone then yelled out.

Sneering, I slowly turned around at the next intersection onto my street. Two casually dressed average-looking fuckheads came strolling toward me speaking Turkish.

“English!” I snarled.

## Interfering With Divinities

“Fischer?” one guy repeated.

I glared back at him impatiently.

“Moment, moment,” he said, before muttering with his buddy, both of them with perfectly faded haircuts. That car then came creeping up next to us where we stood outside the local kiosk. One guy opened the trunk, and I assumed I was about to get a bullet in the head. But no. Instead, the guy rummaging through the packages in the trunk, pulled out a new burner and held it out as he grunted, “We call you, okay!”

Slowly taking the phone, I scowled back at the skinny driver. His bulging eyes then began blinking in a manic fit as he nodded anxiously, “Respect!”

I took a step closer to the two young guys on the curb. They both glanced around and then immediately got into their vehicle, and I watched them cruise away. Taking my time, I walked the long way around my block. I removed the sim card before returning home, making sure I wasn’t being followed. Going straight to the basement, I left the burner in the hidden compartment in the wall.

MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

This evening, I put one of my desks in my basement, making more space in my flat. I then sat in the barren center of my room facing east as I closed my eyes.

Standing on the solid stone platform in that swampland, I found that it was a hive of activity. Thirty-three pale slabs of towering rock hung in midair above the thirty-three pits. Hundreds of worm-bodied devils clung to the free-floating stones. Their endless intestine-like tails were like scaffolding about the suspended objects. They were carving them into obelisks fifteen-meters tall. The bottom of the stones had been cut into four-sided diamond-like points that would fit perfectly into the pits below. I was peering into one of them when a distant noise came roaring. All the workers turned their macabre heads toward the overcast clouds that consumed extensive portions of the mountains. Nothing, however, emerged from the distance. So, those sickly devils gradually returned to their chiseling. Some of them were marking the finished surface of one obelisk with glyphs that didn’t look at all



familiar. None of them seemed to notice me as I walked around, inspecting their concerted effort as I stepped over that chaotic lattice of sluggish tails crisscrossing the platform. Returning to the center, I sat and closed my eyes.

I was in a black cave. Water trickled everywhere. I then heard breathing. It came from big lungs. Waiting, I stared into the utter darkness, but nothing appeared nor approached. I slowly sat on the wet rock and closed my eyes.

Looking up, I stood in a gray place thick with mist. The ground was rough with sandy stones that stretched into a dead calm lake which faded into the fog. I stayed where I was, scanning the limited surroundings but there was nothing out there. Just a bleak expanse of a primordial wasteland. I remained there for a while, finding only indifference. All I had achieved meant nothing here. Here I was as little more than this meat. And yet I would always have things to do. Things that I gave myself to do by myself.

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Later that night, I couldn't stand being inside, so went for a walk in the rain. I should have been relaxing! I should have gone on vacation! There was nothing I had to do! And yet, all I wanted was to smash in the face of some pretty little cunt! A thousand girls having orgasms at once was nothing compared to the voice of one girl's horror at being stabbed with my knife!

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It was almost midnight when I switched off my lights and crawled into my big white bed – when screams filled my flat! I couldn't see anything as my eyes hadn't yet adjusted. That shrieking man cried out in agony with all his strength only a few feet away, but I couldn't see a thing. However, the crunching and chewing on bones drew my eyes upward. Spread out above was some daunting thing with wings that stretched out over the entire ceiling. This blackened shape was eating the man who shrieked terrified but called out no words for help, just screamed in torment. So, I grabbed my pants that I have just discarded. Opening the sheath on my belt, I then reached intuitively into that looming shadow and slit the man's throat!

"I'm trying to fucking sleep here!" I declared, as blood sprayed across my bear arms. The head of that creature twisted upon a long neck as the man in its grasp went as limp as he was silent. Switching on the bathroom light so that I could clean up, I saw my-topless-self in the mirror: my knife in hand, but no blood anywhere.

## Interfering With Divinities

TUESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

Since I had been spending more and more time in the realm of death and sin, I had decided to formalize the space that I sat while communing with profanity. I cut a big black sheet into a two-meter-square and spent a few hours painting concentric circles on it including my current sigils within the lines. Placing four thick candles upon this unholy circle, I found this ritual unnecessary, and yet somehow applicable. After all, why should anyone take you seriously if you didn't.

Dwelling on the futility of my last series of art, with how it changed nothing and received absolutely no human recognition, I reminded myself that it had always and would always be that way. You work on your great art, you build your empire, and you redefine yourself, and yet none of it mattered! The only lesson learned was that all your efforts amounted to nothing, but you wouldn't believe it until looking back at the ruins! Ultimately, I knew that these things done alone in the dark were what I valued. Art was simply a way of collating experience. But only the devils that had been busy with my plans knew exactly what needed to be done next.

WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

It was also raining in the realm of death and sin this evening. The stone circle of obelisks had been polished to a pearl-like surface where they hung in the air. Several worm-bodied devils still worked on some of the finer engravings about the edge of the platform. Kneeling, I touched the wet stone. It was as smooth as glass, even where the intricate glyphs were cut. It then dawned on me what it meant to direct others. All these years, I had slaved away on my work alone, and yet in a fraction of the time these devils had built a temple.

Standing there, I looked up in disgust at the storm clouds. If God, the universe, and deep time was beyond human comprehension then why should I even attempt to grasp the very concept of Ein Sof. Quis ut Deus? I would never live to see the edge of space-time, just as I would never grasp

enlightenment as anything more than human delusion. There was no personal salvation, merely a few worthless moments of perceiving how ugly the nature of the world truly was before we were all macerated.

Sitting in the midst of the unfinished circle of obelisks, I closed my eyes.

I immediately stood in chest-deep water. Dead trees surrounded the murky swamp. The water directly in front of me then broke open! I lunged backward, but more forms rose all around me! They were huge slugs, black and snarling blindly! Then the water burst aside as monstrous jaws swept past me and clamped onto one of the enormous slugs! Struggling to keep my head above the water, I saw that it was the tusked-devil tearing the slugs to shreds. Once I found my footing in the mud and undertow, I looked up at that giant creature as I spoke with absolute clarity, "Show me where they are!"

SATURDAY 28<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

It had been a few months since Zoe had randomly text me that she had been a bad girl and needed some punishment. I had wanted to cane her big ass with my wooden spoon more often, but today she finally wrote, *"What should I say, if I don't feel like it? Should I force myself just to please you? I guess you don't want that either. I'm sorry I can't help you with that urge though. I did enjoy it, but it was like a special time I needed it. I really like you as a friend! So please don't be disappointed or mad."*

Masochists were never enough to quell my demands for butchery.

Despite my foul mood this evening, I went for drinks with Ulla. I had ignored her previous invitations but reminded myself to get the fuck outside for some fresh air. Bettina and others were also at the Ostkreuz bar. However, during the next hour, Ulla had decided to apply her social-work psychology skills and find the root cause of my less-than-jovial state of mind. I kept telling her that I knew my mood would improve sooner or later, but she just kept pushing with her analytical questions upon sarcastic critiques – so I snapped.

"Recently, a lot of people have been calling me the most honest person they know. Every time it makes me want to fucking puke! It's a fucking lie! There's only deception and illusion. I'm just a piece of shit, like everyone.

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And I've also been called a good guy a lot. But no. I'm clearly not! Anyone who says this is either sucking up or fucking ill informed! Or like you right now, sniggering because you know that I'm just like you: a smug piece of fucking shit. You and all those fucking people that talk about everyone being on a spectrum are always the first to judge others in black and white terms. Any cunt preaching 'understanding' is always the least willing to fucking understand! Fuck empathy! Sheer self-indulgent ego-fantasy! No one fucking knows what's going through anyone else's fucking head! Empathy is fucking bullshit! And if you want to sit right here in front of me and claim to universalize what's going on in my head right now, then your assumptions should go take a good hard look in the fucking mirror! Most people don't even know what the fuck they're thinking little own that most basic of questions, of knowing what it is that they actually fucking want! Most people just want to suck their own fucking dick all day long! I'm as attracted to hedonists as I am to heroin junkies. Addicts without ambition beyond the next fix, uttering gibberish platitudes as justifications. I'm sick of dating girls with their mundane lives of materialistic tedium! It fucking disgusts me! I want to get the fuck away from the trappings of their socially glorified present-tense escapism-obsession! These same fucking cow-eyed cunts lack the self-awareness of their self-sabotage with absolutely nothing on their fucking horizon. It's a fucking revolting world of ironic fucking retards without the capacity for questioning their own fucking compliance with a lifetime of status-quo-acceptable contradictions. If you're not pro this abuse, then you must be pro their abuse! Our abuse is legit, while their abuse is a fucking hate-crime! One man's violence is publicly masturbated over, while another is deemed as rape, and yet secretly adored behind the privacy of your own medical-mask-covered smirk! Fucking principles are merely a filter that we use as excuses to fool the masses, and which we make exceptions for when we're faced with what we truly fucking want! Gutless self-congratulatory whores are all we are! According to all my exes, I make a shit boyfriend! That's why I haven't pursued a serious relationship in the last five fucking years. And then I had mistakenly considered myself to make a half decent friend. But just the other day one of these so-called friends of mine admitted how fucking terrible I am for criticizing her apathetic self-pity that's she's been wallowing in for the last two fucking years! So, all I am is someone to complain about and complain to! With friends like mine nagging me, my enemies better up their fucking game! When I think of all the years of unresolved hatred and frustrations vented through my art, I'm fucking

astounded that there's anything human left inside of me at all! Though, I remind myself, what is a human but a fucking piece of shit! So, I'm fine! Nothing's wrong! Nothing at all! There's just shit! And that's fucking life! So fucking what! We're in a city full of fucking nobodies that will never amount to a fucking thing! You, me, and everyone in this stinking fucking piece of shit bar! Self-expression is a childish non-sense that should get fucking beaten out of every dumbfuck that thinks they have a fucking voice! Fuck trying to make a difference! Fuck empathy! And fuck existing in the first place! But here we are, so fuck it! It's fine! It's all perfectly fine! Nothing fucking matters, so who gives a shit! There is no real power beyond that which you fool yourself into believing!"

"How can you hold these absolute beliefs of yours?!" Ulla gasped, looking utterly appalled.

"Forty-three-fucking-years of living in this fucking plain of hideous fucking existence, that's how!"

"But what makes you happy? What's stopping you from following your bliss?"

"Happiness is a fucking ejaculation!" I snarled. "Know your audience! You're not talking to one of these fucking man-babies in the room! Grow the fuck up and ask an adult fucking question!"

"Whoa. Okay, you're getting really aggressive," Ulla said, leaning back. "I need you to take a breath and relax, okay."

I just sat glaring at her condescending tone that reminded me of Doctor Mother-Of-All-Cunts back in the secure ward of the hospital. Soon, however, I was asked to leave under the guise that this was actually a girl's night out. Walking home, I took a mental note: don't socialize when feeling anti-social. After all, I didn't know anyone more negative than the predatory animosity of my own bitter irreverence when I had a point to prove.

SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2021

The rain was pouring this evening, as I sat and closed my eyes in the unholy circle.

A violent storm howled over the stone platform. Without warning,

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hundreds of worm-bodied devils attacked me! Dragged aside, I was then unceremoniously thrown into one of the square pits – where I splashed into the freezing rainwater that half-filled it! I thrashed about furiously too deep to reach the upper edge –

Suddenly opening my eyes, I felt as if I had just been electrocuted. I was back in my flat and annoyed by whatever the fuck had just happened. So, I closed my eyes again.

But again, I was set upon by a rush of pale hands on that wide platform. This time, however, I glanced around as I was swept away in the crowd, and I saw that one obelisk was no longer suspended in midair with all the rest. I was then thrown abruptly into another flooded pit! Looking straight up as I surfaced, I glared at the bottom of the levitating obelisk and knew what was going to happen. It dropped –

I opened my eyes. Taking a moment, I glanced around my dark flat in the golden candlelight as the pain soon disappeared. I was to be the sacrifice anointing each obelisk! So, I closed my eyes.

This time, I walked toward the next pit before the devils closed in. Now, I was willing to go. Thirty-three obelisks. Thirty-three times I would be crushed below the weight of those huge stones. Slowly the devils realized I wanted this, and stopped reaching, though they still gestured toward the appropriate pit. Many of them were chanting in a deep drone-like hum. Impatient, I began shoving the devils out of my fucking way. I was counting each time I opened my eyes before returning to the realm of death and sin. After the twentieth obelisk dropped, I started to see movement in the black stone surrounding me within the pits. It wasn't just the water reflecting. I hurried back after each execution, needing to see more. There were forms in the darkness coming from inside the stone of the platform itself. Massive black serpents! I saw them coiling upon one another like planets rubbing shoulder. The gale force winds were increasing every time I returned, and the hoarse vocal cords of the devils were becoming screams like apes in a frenzy. The final vision I saw was of my own arm reaching for that serpent-consumed abyss, except, my arm itself was a serpent of vastly catastrophic proportions –

I closed my eyes once more.

Expecting to be led toward another pit, I found myself scanning the now complete stone circle of obelisks. All thirty-three were firmly set in place. I turned where I stood in the dead center of the platform surrounded by shrieking devils. The builders, as loud as they were, slowly withdrew, and an ominous noise then came from above. The clouds flashed as forked lightning

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revealed more of those gigantic headless black serpents that infested the entire hemisphere. Sitting, I pressed both palms down upon the stone – when Amaimon appeared through the rain before me. I had nothing but respect for that thing.

I sat in the rain for a while, listening to those god-size entities wrestling in the sky. The temple was whole. But what other great feats could I get these devils to achieve? They seemed to lack direction, but when concentrated, they exceeded my expectations. I was then reminded of that sinking ship in the North Sea that had given birth to Cetus. How exactly had the Norwegians brought such a beast into the world of man? There was still so much more work to be done. So much more to learn.

Gradually opening my eyes in my flat, I remained alone in the unholy circle for quite a while even though the cold had come back with me. I then caught sight of a dark shape to my right. Tilting my head, I found the black goat staring at me. I watched as that animal faded to smoke before I focused on other atrocities and knew that they would inevitably lead to greater and greater conceptions yet to be conceived.

WEDNESDAY 1<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

Tonight, after cleaning my flat and washing all that female DNA from the white floor, I got into bed and read some Lovecraft.

Half an hour later, I was about to get up and brush my teeth, when I heard the rush of a hundred screams coming from above! The ceiling was gone. An endless shaft of stone stretched upward to where bodies fell! Dozens of skinned people dropped like bloody hail! I had no chance of running before I was buried alive.

THURSDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

## Interfering With Divinities

I received another letter today from Father Lucus. It was long and rambling. He had taken a vow of silence, so clearly needed to vent. Eventually, he mentioned my interests and suggested that I study comparative religions in the eternal city. This was the only time he attempted anything like proselytizing to me. He talked about Rome again and how much he wished to return to a place on the hill looking over the city from the west.

I didn't know why he kept writing to me, but I really should visit Rome one day, just to see the heart of the Roman empire. Then, of course, I should also check out Istanbul. And if Pandemonium existed, I'd go there too.

Sitting at my desk, I suddenly caught sight of something in the corner of my eye. The black goat! But it vanished once I turned. Shaking my head, I sat on the floor and closed my eyes.

I was upon a darkened mountain top blasted with gales. A tall stone stronghold stood before me. The massive front gates lay wide open, but there was only a fallen pillar crossing the chasm of a bottomless moat. On the other side, the black goat walked into the fort. I hurried after it, entering a big courtyard with towering walls casting an impenetrable shadow on half the bones of a long dead giant. A stark tower rose to my left, with a steep staircase leading up to that windowless silhouette. The black goat climbed the weather-worn steps, and I followed in the direction of faint screams. Once inside the tower, the stairs turned toward the left and continued straight up. Passageways branched off into golden cave-like chambers where fire and mutilation tempted me. Those glimpses of violence were as grotesque as the creatures within were at tormenting one another. It was like looking into meatgrinders full of blood-soaked scorpions slowly being minced, as leeches and centipedes were thrown into the mix. Gravity seemed irrelevant to the butchery that came from all angles. From the obliteration of one inhuman abomination, crawled forth another fully formed devil that ripped into whatever vulgar force had torn into it. However, the clattering of the goat's hooves in the pitch-black stairway distracted me and I ventured further up into the unseen. The steps finally turned to the right into a series of narrow passageways that I crept along before emerging upon a desolated expanse at the summit of the tower. The stone was so rough and uneven that it felt as if the goat and I were standing upon one of the many mountains that surrounded us. Peering over the edge, I saw how high we had climbed from the courtyard far below with its walls only seeming straight from a distance. The goat stood near to what could have been battlements a thousand years ago and stared out at the thick clouds. It was dark but not night. A large lake lay far below this





## Interfering With Divinities

castle's precarious location. Everything else was obscured by the weather.

A short time past before a deep roar echoed in the fog-covered distance. The black goat and I shared a glance. That innocuous animal had thoughts behind those corporeal eyes, and it seemed like it expected something from me. I, however, shook my head as I sneered, "The fuck is out there?!"

Another loud howl then came from behind us like an explosion! Twisting around, I found gigantic wings stretched above the tower from a great dragon already perched upon the tower itself!

Opening my eyes in my white flat, I snarled to myself, "What in the fuck does any of this shit mean?! Nothing! It doesn't mean anything! None of it means a fucking thing! I'm too fucking stupid! Spell it out to me, for fucks sake!"

### SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

The ginger from Leipzig came to visit me for the weekend. After dinner, she confessed how I made her feel both special and not special at all. I agreed. She was right. And I was proud of her. No one mattered. Yet, when she was with me, she was the only one. For now. Though, when the moment passed, we would both move on and be left with nothing but disgust. We cum, we go. To say otherwise was a lie. But we all know how much girls love a good tease. So, she would cum again and we would pretend like we both gave a fuck.

### TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

Today, I finally had my follow-up appointment with the neurologist. She compared last year's MRI with this year's, and her official diagnosis was that the unknown 'white-matter-lesions' in my cerebral cortex hadn't changed so there wasn't anything to be concerned with.

I was then asked to remove my pants and lay down as she pulled over a monitor connected to a long needle that she then inserted into my left quadricep and right shin. Once I tensed my leg, a wave file, like a radio signal, was displayed on the monitor, showing that my strength was excellent. Therefore, despite having an extremely high enzyme count in my skeletal muscles, the levels also hadn't changed in the last year. The doctor said that it was, like the spots in my brain, an anomaly that was normal for me.

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In the evening, I lit the four candles and sat within the unholy circle.

As soon as I closed my eyes, I was swept up in mayhem –

I shook my head and opened my eyes after being immediately struck down. So, I closed my eyes again.

Slaughter! Black churning anarchy! And I was ripped to pieces –

Looking up from the floor, I scanned the candles with annoyance as the pain quickly faded, and then I closed my eyes.

Again, I was amidst a riot of carnage! The circle of obelisks was utterly overrun by an infestation of shrieking disorder! All I got was a brief glimpse of innumerable black devils climbing over one another as they brutalized everything! I didn't last more than a few moments of that savagery before I was torn apart like I weighed nothing –

Determined to find out what had become of the temple, I returned again.

All I saw was darkness in the pouring rain. Talons thrashed as frenzied jaws clamped upon my body! I was then cut in two and my upper torso was thrown into the deluge! While I was momentarily airborne, I saw that even the obelisks were covered in swarms of belligerent devils –

I closed my eyes again.

During the next vision, my decapitated head was cast into the air. I saw massive black worms rising from the surrounding lake –

Shaking my head, I closed my eyes.

The next time, I actually managed to shove aside a distracted beast, and I realized that they weren't even aware of my presence. Each time that I had been struck down it was simply because I had gotten in the way of their vicious throes. Thousands of hideous black devils of infinite variety had seemingly made claim to that which I had thought was mine –

Sitting on the floor in the candlelight, I wondered what had caused this? Was this a repeat of the magickal sinkhole that I had accidently created? Had the temple attracted these devils? Or was this inevitable? You can take a walk in the woods, but sooner or later the woods were going to kill you. After all,

## Interfering With Divinities

what the fuck did I know about navigating my way through hell?!

-

Later, I went out for a stroll to clear my head. I remembered the loneliness of living in Tokyo. That feeling of disconnection despite the vastness of the city. How little had changed in the last twenty-three years. I had only grown more embittered. As soon as things started making sense, chaos would rip it all to shreds again. There was a constant war within my thoughts. And yet I was the conflict! I then thought of how Terence McKenna had described the entities that he had seen when he took DMT: *“Autonomous fragments of psychic energy that have temporarily escaped the controlling power of the ego.”* Was that all that I saw in my visions? Yet that didn’t account for anything! It was just a definition of fluff without any actual explanation. The MRI seemed to have implied that I wasn’t brain-damaged, though that didn’t excuse my fucking idiocy! I was no better than the uninspired homeless or the hardened criminal. There were no answers to my thoughts that weren’t any wiser than the drunk, the junkie, or the loser that never made anything of themselves. I was the layman in touch with nothing but a relentless hatred, while the upper echelons of humanity lived in the delusion of normality. And yet all those fucking intellectuals that fraternized with academics pontificating with esteemed experts in their fields of theoretical sciences would also die without any fucking resolution. It was all meaningless chaos! It was as I was: chaos! Yeah? And? So fucking what?!

Walking down Frankfurter Allee, I came to the local pizza joint. When I glanced inside, a stool was suddenly thrown over the counter! From listening to Rob Zombie, *The Triumph of King Freak*, I pulled out my earbuds and watched some old punk kicking the walls like a fucking lunatic! The friendly Turkish guy who often served me, was now pleading with the punk as I stepped inside. That old cunt, however, instantly turned and lunged at me with a beer bottle in hand! I grabbed the nearest stool and shoved it straight into his fucking chest! The punk stumbled backward, but I advanced faster, smashing the heavy stool into his tattooed face! Falling, that prick landed on his ass. I then slammed the side of the stool into his skull before I kicked the bottle out of his limp grasp! Immediately, I stomped on his fucking head over and over – until I suddenly stopped myself. Self-awareness crept up the back of my neck as I remember that I wasn’t alone. Security cameras were watching. Shaking with anger, I could feel a fevered rage in my blood stream that demanded I kick his fucking brains in! I clenched my fists, though, swaying slightly as I trembled with frustration. Glancing at the one and only

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pizza guy behind the counter, I watched him smile nervously. He then raised his palms like he was gesturing for me to calm down. Tight-lipped, I turned and walked out.

Taking a side street and then down the passageway between buildings, I soon sunk into the dark. I had to get away from people. Finding a secluded spot surrounded by big trash bins, I slammed my fists into myself as I ground my head against a piss-stinking wall! I wanted to kill something! I needed to!

And then they surrounded me. A dozen shadow figures stood in a close circle. Incensed, I grabbed one of them by the throat and shoved it away! I actually caught ahold of its translucent form. The thing had mass! I felt it in my hand despite its appearance of black smoke. But that discovery just aggravated me even more. Storming off, I marched through courtyards and back alleys, keeping off the main streets until I was almost home.

Charging upstairs, I was abruptly confronted by something resembling a tree growing out of the wall next to my door. Branch-like limbs stretched out and filled the stairwell, while in the center of those prolific arms was a snout that might have been some kind of face. Driving through the branches, I reached for the door, but the multitude of boney black arms lifted me off the stairs and I was discarded back down to the lower landing! Thumping against the wall, I looked up only to find that I was alone again.

Stepping into my flat, I was attacked by a mad rush of skinned men and women! Countless bloody hands clawed at my face and stabbed at my entire existence, smothering me below the sheer weight of so many bodies!

But once again, I suddenly found myself alone in my flat. With all this violence in my mind I knew that if I didn't get it out it would drive me mad. Or had it already?

FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

This evening I had time to kill before birthday drinks with an ex, so I went to Museum Island. The Festival of Lights had begun, so the Berliner Dom was lit with modern art projections as crowds mingled on the open grass. As I walked by, I considered following a random girl home and butchering her. Violent thoughts begat violent thoughts. Which in turn demanded that I act.

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But I continued walking. Why make plans and work on anything when it was all fruitless?!

I soon wandered up the stairs in front of the Alte Nationalgalerie. On the first landing, I leaned against the banister and simply enjoyed the humid air as I stared past the colonnades at the back of the Pergamonmuseum. The scaffolding covering half of the building looked the same as it had when I returned from Turkey in 2017. I wondered how the ancient city of Pergamon had thrived on clear nights like Berlin did now. But one day this place too would lay in ruins – again!

I then caught sight of movement to my left. At first, I thought a cat had jumped upon the lichen-speckled balustrade. But as I slowly turned, I was confronted with a tiny devil crouching there. Its skinny body was like a black and hairless monkey. However, with six insect-like limbs and a featureless tumor for a head. Without eyes, mouth, or any orifice at all. After studying this odd creature that seemed content waiting there, I reached out. This monkey-devil then raised one of its spindly legs and pointed up toward the gallery. Scanning the pillars of that neoclassical temple, I saw only the stone façade that was lit by spotlights.

The little creature became agitated and scratched its dagger-like extremities upon the wide banister. It then scurried up the stairs beyond the fence. Once it reached the pillars, it stopped and looked back as if anticipating that I would follow. I didn't. The agile little critter quickly sprung further along the banister below the pillars. Again, it pointed an outstretched limb toward the western side of the building. Disinterested, I turned away and walked down into the dark gardens.

SATURDAY 11<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

While at the art markets this afternoon, next to the Bode Museum, I bought some books on architecture.

On the U-bahn home, I noticed an exceptionally cute girl sitting nearby. Even with her medical mask on, I still wanted to taste her face. Long straight brown hair was parted in the middle either side of her big blue eyes. Her psychedelic shirt and loose pants gave her a summer-of-love vibe, but I was





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only thinking of brutally sodomizing her as she stared back at me.

Walking to the tram stop, I soon found that she too stepped onto the platform. As she slowly approached, I admired her excellent hip-to-waist ratio before I noticed her unmasked face. She was beautiful. Maybe eighteen and clearly not from around here. Fresh meat looking to sin. Unfortunately, she walked by and continued down the street. I watched her go, then jumped on the tram. But with a violent impulse, I got off at the next stop and marched back toward her. However, despite scanning both sides of Warschauer Strasse, I never saw her again.

### SUNDAY 12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

This evening, I laid out the black sheet with the unholy circle, lit the four big candles, and sat in silence facing the east.

Looking up, I presumed I'd be butchered again. I, however, found myself alone in the center of the obelisks – what was left of them. Those once immaculately carved stone slabs were now chewed up and ground down. All thirty-three obelisks had been reduced to crooked monoliths of uneven height. The surface of the platform was no longer glassy, but rough and torn up with deep gouges. The former pearly shine of the stone was now dull and stained with fuck knows what.

Turning, I saw a massive black worm slowly writhing in the surrounding lake. The mountains were quiet while the clouds thundered faintly from afar. Nothing cared nor noticed that I was there. And I shook my head gently. What had I expected?! If you build a temple in hell, then of course it was going to get desecrated. It was only natural. Upon that thought, I reevaluated the circle of ruined obelisks and found them somewhat more befitting. Now they were as much a part of this realm of death and sin as anything was. This was meant to be. Glory was fleeting. Only shadows remained. But the foundations were strong. Strong and deep-seated.

### WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021



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Today, I booked my flight to Rome. It would be the first time that I left the city all year. So, I text Malloy and asked for recommendations. He said to do the Vatican tour, and then mentioned that he had recently become a Master Mason. I congratulated him but he said it wasn't a blessing. Saying that he had no choice in the matter. Whatever that meant.

I then wrote a letter to Father Lucus, asking if he had suggestions for things to do in the city that he had spoken so highly of.

Until I left for Rome, I made plans with various girls about town in order to busy my lecherous hands and keep my growing disgust at bay.

-

It was raining when I went out for dinner. Staring at the downpour on the streets, I quietly watched how the great indifference of the universe waited for me to rot. These visions of mine were nothing but self-imposed psychosis. They affected no one else. But they did still influence my course of action.

After eating, I took a couple of trains across town to the apartment building of the waitress from the canal. Unfortunately, the wire that I had brought wouldn't open her front door. Glaring calmly at the ground floor windows, I slowly walked away. The world was still unchanged by my puny endeavors.

FRIDAY 17<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

While having dinner with Vida, she felt like elaborating on why she was no longer comfortable modeling nude. Two months ago, she had been raped. She recalled all the events leading up to, during, and after the incident without the slightest emotional tremor to her voice. And I had no reaction to any of it. The rapist being just another super complimentary over-achiever into the spiritually enlightened movement of sexual-liberation and body-positivity, while spewing every Woke catch-phrase trending on Twitter at the moment.

At the end of her story, I told her that there were three definitive actions in which I believed that the individual ultimately had to choose for themselves.

1. Reporting rape. 2. Having an abortion. 3. Committing suicide. I could see

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the pros and cons on both sides. Vida had decided not to report it. What she had hoped my reaction would be was not even something I cared to think twice about.

SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

On my way home, after Burroughs and I had gone to see *Dune*, I received a text from Defne. She was in the middle of having a panic attack and asked if I could pick her up.

Arriving in Tempelhof, not far from the old airport, I found Defne was now laughing with three young guys. She immediately told me to fuck off and the boys all sniggered. Clenching my jaw, I forced myself to walk away before I opened my fucking mouth.

However, Defne quickly ran over, explaining that those three fuckheads had thought that I was her uncle. Laughing it off, she gave me a hug as my blood boiled and I just stared straight over her head – when something ran by on the footpath. I thought it was some leaves in the wind, but realized it was that same little monkey-devil from the Alte Nationalgalerie. It rushed around a corner without waiting. Annoyed, I walked after it. I saw on the next street was a gate into a courtyard where the creature scurried inside. Calling out after me, Defne was confused. I ignored her and marched into the courtyard where a side door into an old building slowly swung open. This led to stairs that dropped down into a basement. I was about to enter when the young girl grabbed my arm. Ripping myself free, I continued down without a word as a light came on. The monkey-devil scuttled further along the basement passageways as I followed. Until, around a bend, I came to a standstill. There, a wooden gate was secured with a deadbolt that suddenly fell to the concrete floor. I was reaching but didn't even touch the gate when it creaked open by itself, revealing a door similar to an old bank vault. It too clanked and then gradually opened.

“How are you doing that?” Defne whispered, as she clung to the back of my arm.

Putting my elbow into the edge of the thick steel door, I levered it wider, exposing another narrow staircase going much deeper.

“I’m not going down there!” Defne insisted, backing away.

“Fuck off then!” I snarled, before descending into the black.

A sizzling lightbulb came to life as another gate groaned while it opened in front of that crouching monkey-devil. A second, interior door then joined the first and slowly swung aside. The creature hurried into a subbasement full of dust-smothered trash, shelves, and lockers. Peering inside, I couldn’t see anything of interest in that dim light. That ugly critter then drew my attention by tapping its talon-like arm upon a glass case. Side-stepping crates and stacks of small wooden boxes, I found an unremarkable bird carcass within a glass case sitting on a shelf in a now open glass cabinet. I picked up the small case while scowling at the faceless creature that had begun retreating into the shadows. Nodding my head, I then threw the bird case onto the floor!

In the brief echo from the shattered glass, I was lifted off my feet and slammed into the low ceiling like a bomb had just detonated! But the force was unnatural, and I slid horizontally and was then shoved back against a wall! The shrieking of multiple animals then filled the subbasement! A stench of rotten meat was like a punch to the face, and gravity abruptly returned me to the floor. Staggering to my feet, I looked up as several hideous entities stomped about the space and clung to the walls while all screaming in demented tones! Their flesh was revoltingly pinkish and emaciated while their snouts snapped at me with hungry fangs. These hunchbacked devils then attacked and flung me to the floor where paws pounded into my chest! My arms and legs were yanked at, and I was sure they were about to crush my ribcage – when several of them were wrenched away squealing! The light faded in and out, but as I sat up the rest of those devils scattered to the edges of that confined space. The shrieking became even more frenzied. Furious, I punched at a crate! I wanted them to fucking kill me! Instead, though, I saw that the tusked-devil stood filling the other side of the subbasement. It was eating two of these freshly liberated demons. Another of those hunched abominations attacked, but the larger beast knocked it down and then bit its head clean off! I saw the remaining four howl something dreadful, before evaporating into the very ceiling. The stink was intolerable, so I shoved any furniture out of my fucking way and stumbled for the door. The tusked-devil finished its meal, while the monkey-devil tilted its head at me from upon a cabinet as I walked out.



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TUESDAY 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

On the train back from the dentist, where I had been told that I would lose a second tooth this year, I sat surprised there weren't other physical side effects from all of my recent misadventures. I was soon distracted by a girl who sat across from me. Dressed adorably in a red jacket and mini skirt, her look was topped off with perfectly straight blonde hair. However, despite her chic clothes and makeup, she wore brand new black steel-caps with notably white laces. When she finally made eye-contact, I said, "I like your boots."

She looked around shyly.

We both changed trains and I followed her to the U-bahn station, where she stood nearby on the platform and smiled from under her medical mask. So, I asked her name. Cute little Ally twisted as she glanced away before giving me her number. As she stepped onto the train, she asked if I was coming, but I walked away. This was already my stop.

FRIDAY 24<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

After dinner and drinks with an old ex and other friends, I arrived home after 2am to a nasty smell in the entrance of my building. That unmistakable stench of burnt bone! It was coming from the half-open door to the massage parlor on the ground floor. I then heard groaning, so I knocked on the door as I eased it open. There, the old Russian lady of the house sat on the blood-stained floor. Her short white hair that was always perfectly styled, was now a sweaty mess. Blood ran from her nose to her smeared lipstick.

"You okay?" I quietly asked, from the doorway.

She appeared to be in shock but gave that beaming smile that she consistently had whenever we happened to pass each other over the years. Once she started speaking Russian, I just shook my head and shrugged. That was when I noticed the legs of a man extending from another doorway in that cozy space.

"Need a hand?" I offered, then tried in German, "Kann ich helfen?"

## Interfering With Divinities

The lady of the house sighed, smiled, and then nodded, “Please.”

Stepping inside, I peered around the corner and found that the legs were actually cut off, along with the torso’s arms and head that lay in a bloody mess. She had made a terrible job of it. It had done the trick, but the cutting was crude and inconsistent. Though, now wasn’t the time for criticism, as I remarked, “Sehr schön.”

The lady of the house tilted her head coyly in the amber light.

Suddenly the front door of the building opened! The woman looked horrified. So, I lunged pulling the parlor door shut – when someone grabbed onto it! I rammed my shoulder into the doorframe, but whomever was out there was stronger. The door was slowly dragged open. My Chucks slid as I used all my force to pull the door back. Then a hand clamped onto me! Scrambling, I clung to the thick wrist entering the parlor, as my right hand reached for the back of my belt. I wasn’t going to stop this guy with my bare hands alone. Just as the door swung wide open, I stabbed my knife straight into his fat gut! He was unaffected and my shoes slid backward as both of his brutal hands locked around my throat! So, I pushed the blade harder into his looming form. Pushing deeper and up under his ribs. But he kept moving forward as if my knife merely seemed to piss him off. When my foot then slid back against the wall, I braced myself. I grabbed my right forearm with my left hand, focusing all my height into a force that punctured into that unstoppable man. Suddenly the knife and my entire right hand slipped inside his gut! He finally had a reaction and leaned over sideways. With an awkward jerk, he thumped me on the side of my head before he lurched back out the door. I snarled dropping to my knees with blood splattering all over the floor. Glancing back, I found that the lady of the house had vanished. I was fucking irate that she hadn’t helped, and I was about to yell out for her when she came rushing from another room with a butcher’s knife in hand. Mumbling to herself in Russian, she stormed through the entrance, pointing the weapon at the blood trail on the tiles. I paused for a moment, looking back at the dismembered body and wondered what I’d gotten myself into.

The old woman jogged down the street using her phone’s flashlight to track the blood. Soon, she stopped in front of a parked car among the others. I scanned the sleeping buildings without any lights on before I approached.

The fat guy was now sitting behind the wheel of the car with his door still partially open. Walking closer, I saw the lady of the house open the door wider before viciously hacking into his throat! She seemed to have some well-established injustice compelling her savagery, and I watched on

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with a hateful smirk. Once she stood back, we shared a moment of sadistic contentment. That delicious satisfaction of violence carried out to its climax. The utter domination of your prey. She then took his keys, closed the door, and we went back inside.

I climbed the stairs and cleaned up in my flat. Pulling on my gloves, I grabbed some duct-tape and trash bags. I then returned to the massage parlor.

We wrapped up the first body parts separately and dumped them in the second guy's car. His body was stuffed into two bags where he sat and then shoved onto the passenger's side. We never bothered trying to communicate with words. Fortunately, we had great chemistry together.

Afterward, she indicated where the mops and buckets were, I washed down the floor while she drove off in the car. As efficient as we were, this shit was just too close to home, literally. But fuck it, I'm a good neighbor!

SATURDAY 25<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

I had arranged a date with Ally this afternoon, but while passing through the entrance of my building I checked that I hadn't missed any bloodstains. All the shutters were still down on the massage parlor, but it was the weekend, so I thought nothing of it.

However, Ally stood me up. Once I left my local cafe and took a stroll with my discontentment, I knew that another girl had no solutions to life's meaninglessness. There was no fulfillment. Not from art nor from girls. Yet I persisted. Continuously pursuing this incessant demand to create and destroy. More. I always wanted more. More worthless shit. Though, what else was there to do? I knew that I wasn't invulnerable to corruption of every kind, and therefore sought temptation so that it could beat me down into something hardened to every sin.

SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

## Interfering With Divinities

At 6am, I awoke to a rustling outside my windows. It was still dark as I got up and reached for the lamp. There, perched on my windowsill was a rather proud looking falcon. It glared back at me, and I noticed strange little cuffs on its ankles. At first, I didn't understand how it had gotten through the thick ivy covering the building. But when I reached for a book to bludgeon the bird to death with, the falcon ducked and dived between the creepers and disappeared. It seemed odd, but I went straight back to bed.

-

The German elections were held today. I had assumed from the current political discourse that the AFD would definitely gain at least 25% in parliament. However, no. They dropped from 12% to 10%. It looked as though Olaf Scholz would become the next chancellor. He had been the former Finance Minister, the one who had said at the start of 2020, "*We can afford this crisis.*"

-

I felt like pushing my luck this evening, so went to my local pizza joint. The guy who had been working when the drunk punk had smashed up the place wasn't there.

While I stood outside waiting for my order, the owner of the kiosk next door spotted me and came over with arms wide open. He hugged me tight and then slapped my shoulders. Wincing, I listened as he spoke in German with his thick Turkish accent. He noticed my uneasy expression and slapped my shoulders once more, "All good, brother! Thank you, my friend!"

MONDAY 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

I received a call from my defense lawyer this morning. He said that Rosswald had been reassigned to Dresden. My patience this year seemed to have worked. But his failure only disgusted me. My first impulse was to show up on his fucking doorstep just to mock that piece of shit. However, I knew that my phone and I would always be tracked, just like everyone.



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TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

Finally, the Baptist and I found time to meet at his practice room. I automatically reassembled the spare drum kit so that it felt comfortable for my lanky frame. Yet once the Baptist cranked up the amps and kicked on the reverb, I found that I could barely fumble through half-forgotten rhythms and transitions. It was all so awkwardly familiar. How I'd missed beating the shit out of the drums these last sixteen years. There were moments during our hour-long jam when the groove came back to me. But ultimately, I couldn't keep it together.

As I walked away, I already wanted more, and considered buying myself a new kit. But no! Drums had always been a mere sublimation for the underlying violence in my fists.

WEDNESDAY 29<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

The shutters at the massage parlor finally opened again today. With the lights on it looked like business as usual. I could respect the lady of the house for getting on with it. She reminded me of a quote from David Fincher, "*I never wanted to be the guy victimized by other people's laziness.*"

THURSDAY 30<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

After my dentist appointment where I had my second tooth removed, I dropped by my flat at midday. In the small courtyard, the owner of the massage parlor was having a cigarette with another old lady. Smiling, we nodded as we had done a thousand other times. She seemed no different. Just

## Interfering With Divinities

like nothing affected me.

### FRIDAY 1<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 2021

Another letter from Father Lucus came today. He suggested that I meet with an old colleague of his in Rome: Father Lodovico. There was no need of making an appointment as he always welcomed anyone at any time. Lucus ended by saying that Lodovico was a man of greater faith than himself, *“I wouldn't call him 'holy', but I consider him a friend.”*

People came and went from our lives all the time as we only share brief moments together. But if these fleeting engagements were not entertaining or enlightening, then they were simply a waste of time. I would meet this priest in Rome. And like the girls I'd been recently dating, if he didn't hold my curiosity, then I'd walk away and never see him again, like none of them ever existed.

### SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2021

I got home just after 1am and found a fox sitting outside my building. It was perched right on the front step like it owned the fucking place. Lowering my keys as I approached, that little shit then trotted off past me, not giving a fuck. I stood and watched it go. Nature strolling the streets seemed so unnatural.

### TUESDAY 5<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

This evening, before heading to Kreuzberg for Melina's birthday drinks,

I walked to the statue of Saint George and the Dragon. Stroking my hand across its pedestal, I stepped up to the railing above the river. Immediately, the black water swirled as large serpents surfaced. Other forms arose out of the river and slid up the stone wall to my feet. As these entities curled up around me, I wondered if I had brought them out of the water or if their interest in me was self-centered? No! These fucking things weren't even real! Despite feeling the solid metal railing vibrate as those slithering creatures slowly surrounded and cocooned me, I knew it was all in my stupid fucking head! Even if there was someone else on that deserted riverside, no one would see this shit. Therefore, I was the cause of their appearance. Watching the water drip from their black flesh, I took a moment to appreciate the detail of these delusions. But soon more surfaced. Bigger shapes eased up out of the Spree. Giant ebony pillars like massive bones came reaching up as inhospitable things swam among those protrusions. Some of the creatures were too large for the shallow depth of the river to hide any longer and climbed the buildings on the other side. However, it was the river itself I focused upon. I couldn't reconcile my relationship with water. It scared the shit out of me, and yet I loved it. I wanted to be near it despite knowing that it was going to kill me one day. Because nothing else would.

Turning, I walked further along the footpath. Those devils slowly retreated beneath the calm waters as the river once again became barren of my vile thoughts. I soon approached Mühlendamm Bridge with the two lion statues above the stairs to the underpass. There, two figures stood staring directly back at me. An old woman, tall and thin in a smart business suit was accompanied by an even taller black guy, also in a bespoke suit. They both eyeballed me menacingly as I silently passed them and pulled out my earbuds. Listening to Tricky, *The Only Way*, I walked by the homeless in their sleeping bags under the bridge and knew that in a few weeks I would be strolling down the side of the Tiber. Another ancient city where I simply didn't need to exist. All your accomplishments put things in perspective once your greatest achievements were left on the wayside and you found yourself alone again and still alive. You then kept challenging yourself for the one simple hope: that this next goal would kill you so that you didn't have to keep on going.

WEDNESDAY 6<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

## Interfering With Divinities

I sat in the unholy circle tonight and closed my eyes.

Three enormous animals wrestled in the distance, slamming each other into the side of an erupting volcano! Destroying the crater, they toppled inside causing a massive landslide as the mountain broke apart! I glanced around and found some blackened creature the size of a bull also watching that spectacle. As scarlet lightning cracked the wind-driven skies, I shook my head. What the fuck was I doing here?! Why the fuck am I anywhere whether my eyes were open or shut?!

Sitting up in my flat, I reminded myself what I wanted and closed my eyes again.

I stood chest-deep in that swamp as it poured with rain. Scanning the random trees sticking out of the gray water, I saw something move right next to me. The big tusked-devil arose restlessly and scowled across its dismal surroundings. It was chewing on something that looked like a horse's leg and seemed not at all interested in my presence. This fucking thing just wanted to eat other devils all day long.

Annoyed, I opened my eyes. I then wondered what had happened to the other four devils that had escaped that subbasement? So, I closed my eyes even more focused.

There was a dense mist in this nightscape, where I found myself standing among a Doric colonnade next to an old stone bridge. I spotted a figure standing out in the middle of a gentle river that dropped away into u-shaped terraces. It was one of those semi-transparent shadows in the silhouette of a man. The water, however, parted around this devil as if it had a physical effect on the world. While we stared at each other, the figure faded away and the river resumed its course.

Opening my eyes, I shook my head. How much control did I actually have over these fucking visions? Sometimes they showed me exactly what I was looking for. But mostly they seemed completely random snapshots of hell.

THURSDAY 7<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021



## Interfering With Divinities

After work, I headed down my street to a construction site. I grabbed one of the piled-up cobble stones, slipped it into a plastic bag, and walked away. A girl then came jogging toward me in knee-high socks. As she passed, we made eye-contact and I thought to myself, what a wonderful world!

I only had to go around the corner to the studio but was reminded just how heavy stone really fucking was. Once cleaned, it would make a primitive butcher's altar. I could already see myself decapitating that jogger as I laid her neck upon the chopping block. Raw meat was pure nudity.

### SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

On my way to the studio this morning, I noticed this young guy with greasy hair hanging around the corner kiosk. I had seen him there several times in the past few weeks, ever since the night that those Turkish guys had handed me a new burner. The way he dressed and how he carried himself made me suspicious as if this kid was some kind of scout. Was I paranoid or was it a pattern?

-

Aniska came to the studio this afternoon wanting to learn how to draw three-dimensional objects. So, I gave her some basic lessons in how to sketch a plan with two side elevations, and from that into an isometric image. She seemed to grasp the rudiments and was eager to practice.

Afterward, she modeled for a photography series I was starting, in which I wanted to test my own skill with a camera. What was visual art but practice in preparation for a greater art.

### MONDAY 11<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

I awoke suddenly this morning to a subtle scratching sound. Sitting up, I

Bruce Stirling John Knox

stared at my door thinking that there was someone in the entrance. But then I saw movement to my left. Outside the window, behind the closed blinds something moved. It crept further along until a white cat stepped up to the open window where it stared in at me.

My alarm then went off. Hitting snooze, I glanced back at the window, but the cat was gone.

THURSDAY 14<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

Ally wrote to me today saying that she was back in town, as if I gave a fuck!

-

This evening, I met up with my friend Lewis and we had a good four hour catch up as he had been State-side ever since the start of Corona. While reminiscing on our hypochondriac friends that seemed to have only just realized that they too will one day die, we chatted about having a disciplined diet. The logic of the anorexic was easy for us to understand. When we had so little power in this world, the least we could do was control what we put in our faces. However, at the end of the night, Lewis mentioned a nugget of wisdom that I had never heard before. He said that for his entire life his inner monologue spoke to himself like he was a piece of shit. Now he was attempting to speak to himself with respect. Like how he spoke to someone like me.

-

Later, Ally wrote again, adding that she had been visiting family in Poland. Like that was any excuse for her behavior!

# R O M E

TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

The Pyramid of Caius Cestius was the first monument that I laid eyes upon as the airport bus entered Rome. The Arch of Constantine stood further along the street with the Colosseum beneath a perfect blue sky. I soon walked from the main station and came to the first of many obelisks. Spotting another, I headed in its direction where I found myself atop the Spanish Steps. The city was much bigger than I had pictured, but I was in no rush and casually wandered through the ornate streets toward the spires of St. Peter's. Reaching the river, I got my first good look at the largest Basilica in the world. Early autumn in Rome was fucking beautiful. This entire city was a work of art.

My guest house was next to the colonnades of St. Peter's Square along the fortified wall of Passetto di Borgo. After dropping off my bag, I took a stroll around the entire Vatican. I sat on some steps at the far side where I watched a skinny girl and her daddy come hiking upward. What a wholesome sight. She stared hard into my eyes as they passed by. It only took a couple of hours, until I lost count of how many of these impudent little catholic girls I had seen being escorted by their clean-cut white-collar fathers.

At 5pm, I followed the fortified wall to Castel Sant'Angelo, the former Mausoleum of Hadrian. I had no idea that the Romans built such grand tombs, and I wondered if it was an attempt at rivaling those of Egypt. With the golden sunset casting a warm glow on the flat treetops and tiled roofs, I rested next to the river and soaked up that peaceful atmosphere.

Walking past St. Peter's again, I admired these creations of man. Why would I ever bother working on another piece of art when there have already been empires of beauty greater than anything I could ever conceive. This world didn't need me.

After dinner, I went back to St. Peter's Square and sat below the obelisk





## Interfering With Divinities

as bells rang out for 8pm. The place was lit elegantly, and I loved the epic scale of everything. I was impressed by how immaculately maintained the colonnades were kept. However, once the statues above the square became silhouettes, I couldn't help being reminded of all the blackened figures that I had seen watching me for years.

I was turning to leave, when I found a full moon staring down at me east of Via della Conciliazione. It was an omen, a light illuminating an abundance beyond myself.

WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

The first thing that I did today was take a moment to enjoy the sight of the morning sun upon St. Peter's. I then walked around to the entrance of the Vatican Museum while listening to Lowrider, *Pipe Rider*. The buildings themselves were just as exquisite as the exhibitions. And of course, there were plenty more of those decent daddies with their precious little girls. *The School of Athens*, by Raphael was smaller than I had assumed. And by the time that I reached the Sistine Chapel, I had been so saturated in biblical art, that those frescos seemed no more remarkable than anything else I had spent the last two hours gazing at.

The gardens were gorgeous in the crisp morning air, and I loved listening to the birds as I stared at the massive dome of St. Peter's. I was glad that I had come here, despite my apprehensions about just wasting my time. Like when I went to Jerusalem, I was a heathen in a holy land, but no one knew, not even God. So, I enjoyed the quiet gardens, admiring the beauty of its sublime nature as it framed the pinnacle of baroque architecture.

I spent the afternoon wandering through the city on the eastside of the river, from the obelisk at Piazza del Popolo to the Altar of the Fatherland. And that monument impressed me with its gleaming white stairs, stark white pillars, and stoic white statues. Climbing to the colonnade at the summit, I surveyed the whole city. But I suddenly found myself surrounded by young couples and I wondered if I had ever been in love at all. These recent years of debauchery had left me jaded to the idea of tolerating another's pettiness

for any length of time.

Heading west, I cut through the back streets until I came up on the rear of the Pantheon. There were simply too many tourists waiting to get inside. So, I saluted the obelisk and continued to Piazza Navona. I quietly walked past the obelisk in the fountain and headed straight into the narrow streets.

In less than a minute, at 3pm, I stood outside a decrepit residence. The stone was dark brown with crumbling plaster. Thick iron bars covered the ground floor windows and all the shutters were closed above. A sleek black Audi was the only car parked on this hushed street where a young guy in a tailored suit sat behind the wheel. We exchanged scowls, as I pushed through the huge half-open door. An arched passageway led to a courtyard teeming with tropical plants. Curious, I wandered into the midst of that small jungle. Creepers hung from the surrounding balconies and thick foliage shrouded a fountain on the other side. Discolored statues hid among the overgrown trees, and then I spotted a bald man with furious eyes. The vicious barking that spat from his mouth, however, wasn't directed at me. Yet the moment he became aware of my presence he bit his tongue. Dressed in an excellent suit, he turned toward me and paused, before leaning close to another man who was seated with his back to me. Some menacing words were added before the bald Italian marched away eyeballing me as he went. I said nothing and just watched him go. My attention was then drawn by the sound of the other guy weeping as he sat hunched over.

"Father Lodovico?" I asked, stepping closer.

The disheveled priest slowly twisted around as I approached.

"Are you Father Lodovico?"

"Yes, yes," he uttered weakly, tears trickling from his bloodshot eyes. "Yes, I am."

"Father Lucas told me about you."

"Lucas?"

"From Porto."

"Lucas. Ah, huh. Yes. Lucas," Lodovico whispered, tucking away a pair of baby shoes into his black gown. He looked absolutely exhausted as he murmured, "And how may I be of service?"

"I'm writing a paper."

"Yes?"

"A paper on theodicy."

"What are you implying?" the forty-year-old priest croaked defensively.

"Implying?"

## Interfering With Divinities

“How could I help it?”

Glancing at the splashing fountain in that shadow-cast courtyard, I took a deep breath of the damp air before saying, “We’re all put in morally compromised positions, until inevitably, even God himself appears corrupt.”

Father Lodovico paused and seemed to put some serious thought into his next words, “We are all casting stones.”

“Some are worse than others,” I sneered. “And John was wrong. No one ever admits their guilt in the midst of their sin. If there was an ounce of truth to the story, Jesus would have also been cast down and stoned right there and then.”

A long stillness lingered as the birds sung on the rooftops. When I looked back at the priest, fresh tears were rolling down to his beard. He then smiled tragically as he whispered, “Let’s do this tomorrow. Tomorrow night, at 7pm. Then we can get to the end of it all.”

-

In only two or three turns, I found myself next to the river. But I wasn’t alone. There was an endless supply of kids hiding their Electra complex beneath their pleated skirts while holding hands with the infallible fiat of their daddy’s Augustinian authority. So, I took the stairs down to the water’s edge where no one walked. However, on the way down, the stench of piss was soon accompanied by pieces of human shit on the steps. It wasn’t a surprise that no one ventured down here. On the wide riverside, I came across the campsites of Rome’s homeless under one of the many bridges. I was heading in the direction of St. Peter’s when something slid down the steep wall from the street above. The hideous monkey-devil slammed into the pavement but quickly scrambled across my path in broad daylight. That faceless monstrosity stamped its dagger-like limbs in an attempt at gaining my attention before it scampered into the shadow of the stone bridge. There, it tore into a pile of abandoned clothes. The creature disappeared under the trash and then suddenly emerged and cleared aside the junk revealing something buried under it all. I didn’t recognize what I was looking at as the small object was leaked in some blackened crud. With no intention of touching it, I leaned closer but then I spotted a shoe. And then a leg. And its body. Someone was lying face-down under all that garbage. Perhaps he was just taking a nap. But I doubted it. The little monkey-devil then whacked its front legs together as it gestured toward the trinket that it had dug out. Crouching down, I realized it was an egg-sized urn. I knew better than to simply open it there and then. So, using my medical mask, I wrapped it up and took it away.

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After dinner, I sat under the colonnades in St. Peter's square as the bells tolled 8pm. I then watched a video that the tattooed blonde from Kassel had sent me. Obedient girls always brought out my cruelty. She was just another troubled kid that needed direction. So, I had given her a homework assignment. I told her to make a video standing with her back to the camera, and then, while slowly bending over, pull down her panties, grab her ass with both hands, and spread it wide open. She did exactly that, and then I knew that there was no end to the ways in which she would humiliate herself for me.

Putting my phone away, I thought of another form of delayed gratification: keeping this new cursed object for myself. My conspiring little mind then began percolating with insidious contempt. Only the idea of God could stop me from my plans, but that concept wasn't a factor of concern. If God struck me down right here in the Holy See, I wouldn't blame him. But he never fucking did!

#### THURSDAY 21<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 2021

There's a reason why I admire catholic tradition over protestant, and that was exemplified by St. Peter's Basilica. I took a guided tour to the top of the dome at 8am this morning for a spectacular view. Once inside, the legendary scale of the opulent interior took a few moments for my eyes to comprehend. Considering the age of the structure and the state of its preservation, I had to give respect to the power of Christ for motivating men into building such affirmations of admiration. Of course, the protestants were right about one thing: all this glory to God was decadence. You didn't need a priest class for a direct relationship with the godhead.

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By midday I walked toward that slaughterhouse where the real deity of all mankind had been worshipped with an insatiable bloodlust: the colosseum.

I eventually wandered toward the river and found it remarkably quiet around there. Listening to Jerry Cantrell, *Castaway*, I could see myself returning to this town. Wearing a black blazer, shirt, and jeans, it looked like

## Interfering With Divinities

I fit in here. Except my black Chucks gave the game away that I wasn't a member of one of the many gangs of foreign priests, nuns, or monks. I had always found a perverse pleasure in being surrounded by those of morally upstanding constitutions. Because if you looked just a little bit deeper into their eyes, they all failed to live up to their own standards.

After living the dream of eating pizza with a view of the Vatican, I headed to Father Lodovico's place. I liked how busy the streets were with crowded restaurants and people from all over the world going about their business. Crossing a bridge, I soon submerged into the quiet alleyways and arrived right on time at 7pm.

Pushing open the front door, I entered that cold black garden. The sky was fading to indigo above the courtyard where the clattering from neighbors echoed. I almost didn't see Lodovico at first, as he sat in the dark next to the fountain.

"Shall we go inside," he whispered.

"But it's so nice out tonight," I said, noticing his dirty hands.

"I'm ready to make my confession."

"Are you, now?"

"Do you like my little oasis?" Lodovico muttered, with his head slumped where he sat. "Some years ago, I took a retreat. Into the desert. The Taklamakan Desert. I had grown up with a fascination for maps. Geographically, the Tarim Basin, surrounded by mountains but open to the east, seemed the most reasonable location for the biblical Eden. But what I discovered was a boundless emptiness. Awful heat and fierce cold. A place of complete despair. Destitution with no end. What once had been Eden, is now truly a great scar on the face of the Earth. I've never been the same since. It's unforgivable. I had hoped I was wrong. But that hope was slain upon the revelation that none are beyond reproach."

With that, Lodovico stood and walked down a small staircase and went inside. I followed fumbling in the dark as we descended deeper than any basement needed to be. Gas lanterns sat on the floor of that ancient cellar with its exposed beams and crooked masonry.

"There's a child murderer in Rome," Lodovico spoke with conviction, as I entered that cavern of vaulted ceilings and saw strange medical equipment on the far side. The solemn priest stared at me before falling into a deep pit in the bare soil!

"What in the fuck?" I frowned, watching as the priest then reached up

and pulled a plank of wood to one side at ground level. That then released a precarious pile of jagged rocks. The avalanche of rubble crashed down upon Lodovico but he stood tall with arms by his sides! The bombardment was brief but deafening, and yet I doubted that anyone on the street would have heard a sound. I lowered my shielding arm as the dust slowly settled. Now, Lodovico was buried up to his shoulders in tightly packed debris. His face had been battered and was bleeding badly.

“I did it. I did it and cannot ask for absolution from any but the devil. I must pay but I cannot live with these torments any longer,” he groaned, glancing around shamefully at his carefully prepared design, before staring at one more stack of smaller rocks. “Some must be put to death, and I am one of them.”

“By stoning?! Seriously?! You’ve known me all of five minutes and this is what you expect?!”

“I begged the Lord for an end to my suffering and he sent you.”

“Man, you wouldn’t believe how fucking far off base you are. I’m just looking for a holy man.”

“The Lord brought you here, right to my door,” Lodovico whispered calmly. “You need to seek luminaries, not men.”

“There’s no such thing, you fuck! There are no celestial beings or heavenly council to consult! There’s only the works of man!”

“You cannot see that which you’ve turned your back on.”

“I’ve looked in every fucking direction under the sun, and then some!”

“Have you?”

At that, I glanced away.

“Put me to death!” Lodovico murmured, as his tears mixed with blood and dust. “Please.”

“You’re right, you know,” I sneered bitterly as I took a knee next to the priest’s head. “There’s no forgiveness here nor anywhere. No penance. No indulgences. No purgatory. Nothing!”

“Salzburg,” he gasped weakly, “If, in your heart of hearts, you seek the holy, then go with God. In Salzburg there’s a Rabbi, Herr Geithner. He’s not hard to find. Tell him you doubt the apostles. He will speak with you.”

Disgusted, I groaned and shook my head. “You just committed suicide. You know what that means, right?”

Lodovico smiled for the first time as more tears flowed.

Looking around the barely lit cellar, I noticed several stainless-steel cabinets on the far wall and an old school hospital bed next to a dripping sink.



## Interfering With Divinities

Considering the tainted image of the catholic church around the child abuse scandals, I wondered what kind of Mengele-experiments on kids this guy had been up to. “Listen, I can dig you out of there, right now. Or I can walk away. And then, slowly, with every breath you exhale, your ribs will contract until these rocks suffocate you to death. It’s up to you.”

Lodovico looked sadly into my eyes.

“What’ll it be, sunshine?”

“The devil’s temptation.”

Sighing, I stood up and walked out of the cellar and slowly upstairs. Lodovico never called for help. Passing through the overgrown courtyard, I emerged onto that quiet back street. I paused at the sight of my dusty hands but heard running water around the corner. There, I found an open tap pouring into a drain. I washed my hands clean while taking a deep breath of that crisp evening air. It had been exactly twenty minutes since I had arrived here but now my mood was so much worse. I came looking forward to a stimulating conversation, however, I had just left a broken man to his own demise.

I walked back to St. Peter’s like I had known the route since forever. Sitting under the white pillars, I heard the bells strike 8pm for a third night. It was another beautiful evening alone. Now that I’d seen Rome, I knew I would have to travel further east and find out what had become of old Constantinople. I had recently heard an argument against the very idea that the Cathars ever even existed. That, what we understood of who the Cathars were, was just a romantic construct of historical distortion. But of course. All traditions started from a basic concept that evolved into a convoluted and completely unrecognizable substitution. Looking at St. Peter’s, I knew that Jesus himself would feel as much at home here as the current Pope did.



# BERLIN

MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

I saw a child on the street today desperately trying to tell her mother something traumatic. The futility of her inability to articulate just how despondent she truly felt by her limited vocabulary left her stricken with disappointment. A frustration that would resonate for the rest of her life. How disheartening it was facing the lack of recognition in others at just how intense a sadness can permeate every infinitesimal aspect of a moment. We fumble at describing these emotions that we ourselves struggle to understand.

TUESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

While making dinner in my small kitchen, I noticed something in the corner of my eye. The monkey-devil was perched outside the window among the ivy. I ignored it and turned up the volume of Dope, *Fuck Tha Police*.

-

At 7pm, I returned to the studio where I met Vida who had decided to model again for my candle-lit photography series. The golden light was just as beautiful upon her pale skin as it was reflecting off the wet tatters of raw meat next to her.

-

I was later sitting on my floor at home thinking about the architecture of those ruined cities in the burning mountains. How similar they were to ancient Greco-Roman temples.

## Interfering With Divinities

After closing my eyes, I found myself standing on the edge of a vast cliff overlooking a grand valley. A thick blanket of fog filled the gray landscape. Then the ground shook! A deep rumbling came from something enormous stirring beyond the low clouds. Great black shapes surfaced through the mist. More and more forms began writhing throughout the valley. As I braced my footing, unable to make out what was happening in the distance, I saw the black goat standing to my left. We shared a glance at each other but focused our attention back on that indistinct yet awe-inspiring sight. Eventually, other parts of that titan rose above the fog and into the clouds.

“What is that out there?” I asked. “And why do you appear as a goat? Do you even speak?”

The animal just blinked at me before returning its gaze to that daunting abomination that climbed into the sky. Watching that vast creature stretch miles high, I thought of the biblical notion of how God’s spoken word had given rise to all creation itself. Could the damned speak the language of God? Or was Telford right, and the ability of verbalizing yourself was impeded by the very nature of this realm. And yet I just spoke to the goat! Though, did it even understand me?

I opened my eyes in my flat and was immediately confronted with the monkey-devil crouching in front of me. It really was an ugly little fucker. I glared back at its tumor of a head, and slowly that critter backed away into the passage between the windows. Watching it scurry into the darkness, I wondered if it would continue showing me the locations of every imprisoned devil wherever I went? If so, I could collect them for release at my discretion. I wouldn’t repeat the incident in the subbasement. After all, never waste a good curse when you have one.

THURSDAY 28<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2021

After leaving friends at a bar in Mitte, I crossed the Weidendammer Bridge and stared at the Bode Museum. There was nothing to look forward to. Nothing to achieve. There was just this ever-present state of witnessing the meaninglessness of all these fucking people around me.

Walking listlessly, I stopped at the Unter den Linder intersection. A fox

then ran down the street from Brandenburg Gate and straight up to a black Mercedes waiting at the lights. The passenger's side door opened, and the fox jumped inside. Crossing the street, I glared at the young black guy behind the wheel. I turned toward the stairs down to the U-bahn station but as I descended the back window of the Mercedes opened. There, that same old woman from the riverside scowled back at me.

Arriving in my neighborhood, I passed the local kiosk and spotted that some fucking fox standing in the middle of the crossroads. We stared at one another before it started walking toward my building, so I followed. All I wondered was who had I pissed off this time? Why were they sending animals to taunt me? Or were these just some more insignificant coincidences that meant absolutely nothing but bullshit. My phone then buzzed with a new message. I read it on my doorstep, noticing that the fox didn't wait around. The message was from the Kassel blonde. She asked why I liked hurting people. Walking inside, I wrote back, "Why do you like being hurt?"

SUNDAY 31<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 2021

After a late night at a Halloween party with friends, I awoke at midday dehydrated and needing a coffee. I left the blonde sleeping while I showered. Once sitting at my desk with my feet on the bottom of the bed, I watched that tattooed girl sit up with something important that she wanted to say, "I'm afraid that I'll return to Kassel and never meet someone who enjoys seeing others in pain. So, I want you to hurt me. I want you to seriously hurt me."

Sipping on my coffee, I nodded, "Go have a shower and I'll sort you out."

She had driven to Berlin on Friday night, and we had then fornicated before socializing. But like most girls, she was insecure about how much she could trust me. I knew this game. There was no need to push someone like her. As the fear of missing out would always bring them back for more.

Turning up the music of Not My God, *The Underneath*, I tied and blindfolded her face-down with her arms stretched up to the head of the bed. I then opened my drawer and placed a selection of belts, paddles, and canes on the desk. Of course, I included my favorite wooden spoon. For the next 45 minutes, I whipped her bare ass until it was hot red and badly bruised. Her

## Interfering With Divinities

knees began trembling where she was bent over the bottom of the bed when she finally said that she couldn't take any more. Standing back, I loved her slender body shape and how almost every square inch of her was covered in ink. I then rolled her onto her back and licked her fake tits that I had enjoyed ramming my erection between on the previous nights. With her arms still bound above her head, she was defenseless, naked, and beaten. I then placed my right hand on her throat as my left held her forehead down, and there I choked her like the worthless fucking meat that she was! Crushing her neck, I snarled above her gaping mouth. She gagged while I pushed down harder and harder –

No! I'm not doing this! Not here! So, I slowly released her, as she gasped, "Du quälst mich!"

"What?" I frowned, removing her blindfold.

"You torture me," she murmured, with her eyes unfocused as she finally smiled. I could fuck a girl for as long as it took to make them gush all over my white floor, but they wouldn't be satisfied until they got what they really needed: to fucking suffer!

MONDAY 1<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

Ally wrote asking my opinion on certain conservative commentators. Of course, she did. So, I told her that I didn't need to follow their political cult of personality in order to see the value in understanding their logic. I could agree with those that condemned my lifestyle, as long as I kept my secrets to myself. Ally seemed happy with my answers, and then she disappeared again.

WEDNESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

At lunch I went out to buy even more candles for my photo series, when that black Mercedes pulled up in front of me. The back door opened, and that

smug fox jumped out and stared up at me. Standing on the curb below a clear blue sky, I glared at the black guy behind the wheel. Fuck it. I climbed in and was driven way out west.

We eventually pulled into the private driveway of a big old neoclassical house in a wealthy area that I'd never been to before. The tall black guy led me into the Art Deco interior. In the big lounge that white cat scowled as I found the host standing with her back to me. The old woman in her chic suit stared out to the garden as she spoke up, "How did you get in?"

"Ah, through the front door."

"How did you open the cellar?!"

"Excuse me?"

"You broke the seal! You let them out! You took what you had no right to!"

And then I understood as I and glanced at a falcon on its perch.

"You'll return what you owe!"

"They're gone. Evaporated into the ether. Never to be seen again."

"They're all over you!"

I just scanned the gold-framed paintings on the walls and turned my back on that woman.

"You will return what you owe!"

"And put them in a cage again?!"

"That's our duty!"

"Regardless of whatever the fuck that means, you're never getting some of them back. At least three were eaten alive before they had a chance to run."

"By what?!"

"Something worse."

"You survived!"

"Because it showed me where they were."

"You'll return what you owe!" the old woman insisted, finally turning around. "Or you'll go in their place!"

Glancing at the big black guy in the doorway, I didn't appreciate the woman's tone.

"Despite what you're abetting, you will comply!" the German woman scorned in her faultless English. "Legally, we have enough evidence for your arrest!"

Clenching my jaw, I took a moment to contain my anger before I hissed through my teeth, "What makes you think I have any way of finding them?!"

"What do you see?" the woman asked, twisting back toward the autumn

## Interfering With Divinities

view. Following her line of sight, I slowly approached, but the wide garden was merely covered in the dead leaves from the huge trees. The host then opened the glass door, crossed the patio, and walked down the stone steps into a terraced section in the center of the garden. Scanning that charming backyard, I saw sphinxes on either side of the steps, ivy covering most of the house, and someone standing in the upstairs window. There were classical colonnades on both sides of the garden leading to a lake, and a big sculpture in the center of a fountain by the water's edge. The woman stopped next to a thigh-high statue in the middle of the grounds. There, she repeated herself, "What do you see?"

I glanced across the distant shoreline of private estates with upscale mansions. Then I glared at the stern-faced woman. The small statue next to her was a weather-worn old man in robes holding several manuscripts. Squinting, I focused on the plinth and noticed the beginning of a gable at the bottom, as I asked, "Is that a tomb?"

"What's down there?!"

I wanted to grab that scrawny bitch, drag her over to the lake, and shove her head under. However, I didn't fancy my chances against the young black guy.

"What's down there?! What's kept inside?! What do you see?!"

"Listen, lady, I don't have x-ray fucking eyeballs!"

"You see them! You saw them! What do you see now?!"

"The fuck's down there?!"

"Insolent!" the old woman sneered, almost walking off but quickly restrained herself. "If you can dig it up... it will lead you to what you owe."

"What is it? Why's it buried? Why's the whole fucking tomb buried?"

"Why do you think?!"

Shaking my head, I backed away, "If there's one thing I hate more than your screeching fucking voice, its digging fucking holes!"

"Then you'll be crucified in the cellar, kept alive with feeding tubes, and flayed every Sunday for atonement!"

It was how softly she had stated this threat that made me take her seriously.

"You'll join the female from the night you broke in."

With that, I instantly walked inside the house. The black guy, falcon, and cat watched me exit the front door. Once out on the street, I phoned Defne. No answer. I tried again and again all the way to the nearest train.

-

I spent the rest of the afternoon going over this unexpected development.

Was Defne actually missing? I hadn't seen her since that night in the subbasement. Was she being tortured? Who the fuck was this old woman and her sidekick? And what kind of fucked-up shit were they into?

No! It's bullshit! They're bluffing! Defne would be perfectly fine. She was just ghosting me again.

However, I needed some leverage, so went into my basement, grabbed the new burner, and made a quick call.

-

At 10:30pm, I left my phone at home but took the burner down to the intersection where a car picked me up. The young Turkish guy drove me across town without question. He seemed anxious, but I was too preoccupied with my fuming spite to give a fuck.

Once we reached the lakeside house, I told him to return in three hours. I quietly walked up the driveway while pulling down my baseball cap. This was going to end one of two ways, but at least I was ready this time.

Soon the black guy let me in and led the way to a dimly lit parlor.

"So, you want me to collect those I set free, and whatever's under your garden's going to help me find them, right?!" I summarized, as the old woman remained seated on a sofa. "How do I know the girl's still alive?"

"Alive, yes."

"I'll do it, but you're going to let the girl go after I dig up your fucking backyard."

"Why didn't you go to the cellar this afternoon and try to break her out yourself?"

"That's not how it works! I don't control these fucking animals!"

"You knew exactly what you were doing!"

"If you don't let her go after I dig up whatever the fuck I'm looking for, I'll come back here with a dozen Turkish guys and torch this entire fucking place to the ground! You included!"

"Why don't you try that right now?"

"Because I'm trying real fucking hard to clean up my fucking image!"

"And yet you unleashed devils without the slightest hesitation!"

I stood still just shaking my head.

"Why are you pretending to care about this female? You could demand for her release tonight, but you're willing to leave her where she is."

"Where's the shovel?!" I replied, knowing that I would never finish tonight, but the longer I waited the colder and harder the ground was going to get. "Let's fucking do this!"

## Interfering With Divinities

I dug for two hours in the freezing night before I was exhausted and chilled to the core. Though, I'd barely scratched the surface. Clearing the leaves around the statue, I had only carved out a wide trench along the edge of the gabled roof of the tomb about a foot deep. This was going to take forever! I fucking hated this shit!

THURSDAY 4<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

My main concern was that I was going to get blamed for whatever happened to Defne. Those three brats in her family would probably point the finger at me again. But it all depended on when Defne was abducted. If it was the night I went into the subbasement, then our text messages linked me to her disappearance. Though, I couldn't be certain for how long she had been missing, and that fucking annoyed me. Besides, she shouldn't be held accountable for my deeds. This was bullshit!

At 7:30pm, I changed into my dirty work clothes and headed back to the lakeside house. It took an hour in public transport to get there, and it was still raining. The black guy led me around the side of the building and there I slipped into the rubber boots and gloves that had already been provided. Despite my aching muscles and hands, I picked up the shovel out of sheer curiosity. I never saw the old woman that night but there was movement in the upstairs window again. Loathing every moment of being there, I couldn't deny wanting to know what was buried. I gave myself an hour to get as much done as physically possible. The rain had, as I had hoped, softened the soil. But it was also a sloppy mess. The trench was ankle-deep in muddy water and my raincoat did little to keep me dry as soon sweat lined the insides. I made it all the way down to the top of the entablature. The rain washed the dirt from the pediment revealing an elaborate frieze. On both sides of the pediment's gable were the statues of very German-looking eagles. This buried temple-fashioned tomb was about four-meters wide. Of course, I dug deepest in the middle where the entrance would be. I finally gave up once the water got so deep it that began filling my rubber boots. Staring at the mud, I knew that it was going to take days or even weeks before I reached the interior. My worry



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was that the inside of the tomb had also been packed with dirt. But then what exactly would I find?

FRIDAY 5<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

After watching *The French Dispatch*, with Vida, I walked her home from the Kino International at 9pm. I considered heading across town to continue digging, but my feelings about the situation had changed. Defne wasn't my fucking responsibility! In fact, the idea of her mutilation made me smile. So, I went for pizza instead.

While standing outside, waiting for my order to-go, the guy from the kiosk came out with a big hug and handshake. I told him that I was planning on visiting Istanbul in two weeks. There were friends of his family there and he said that they would gladly show me around. Thanking him, I told him not to worry. He insisted, though, and pulled out one of several phones saying that I at least had to visit a guy who made some of the sweetest candy in the whole city. Taking out my phone, I took down his number. I was told that Selim would be expecting to hear from me.

SATURDAY 6<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

I awoke early for no reason, and it annoyed me. So, I got up and went to the lakeside house. I began digging before there were any lights on inside. The trench still wasn't very deep but the pile of dirt was getting ominous. I fucking hated digging! I hated it as a kid, and I hated it now! Despite how much I had looked forward to helping my father butcher the sheep, the hole-digging to bury the entrails was the worst part. My hands were getting blistered despite the gloves and what the fuck did I get for it?! Defne should fucking rot! I didn't need this shit! So, I threw the shovel across the yard and walked away.

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## Interfering With Divinities

In the cold afternoon, after a hot shower, I headed to my local cafe. I sat outside staring at how most of the trees on the street had lost all their leaves. Thinking seriously about it, I knew I should just take a crowbar to the lakeside house and bash in the old woman's skull. But who was upstairs? There were too many unknown factors for me to make a decent plan. Then I noticed the owner of the cafe on his phone with a desperate face. I remembered when Defne came to the studio with her big sad eyes. Finishing my latte, I looked away. I could have just told the owner where he could find Defne. However, that would incriminate me. So, I could try and set her free by myself. Except, I really didn't want to. If you believed in the lie of human value, then you would suffer fools.

SUNDAY 7<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

Again, I woke up early. I got up reluctantly and went straight to the lakeside house. Picking up the shovel from when I had discarded it yesterday, I continued digging in the icy morning air.

I had reached the bottom of the entablature when the old woman appeared behind me. Dressed in another sleek business suit, she held up her iPhone with a video playing. I stood in the trench with the shovel in both hands as I watched a clip of the young black guy whipping the naked body of little Defne where she was bound to a crucifix. The camera angle was from a distance but as she was flogged, her moans reminded me of when I had sodomized her. I looked up at the old woman with her hair in a tight bun and I smiled. Lowering the phone, she seemed confused by my reaction. I was sure she was showing me a live-stream. So, I smacked the phone clean out of her grasp and swung the shovel at that skinny cunt! It missed. Staggering backward with surprising speed, she looked shocked as I climbed out of the trench. She then grabbed a pendant upon her loose necklace and held it up in some futile defense – when suddenly the falcon smashed into the side of my head! Spinning sideways, it felt like I'd been struck with a brick. I looked up just in time as that murderous bird attacked again – but I cut it down with one swipe from the shovel! The fox then leaped from the patio as the woman retreated inside. I drove the bladed shovel straight through the fox's

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open jaws and deep into its fucking chest! The shriek from the small animal faded as quickly as its twitching, and I ripped the shovel from its splintered body. When I saw the white cat just sit there watching as I marched inside, I grabbed that passive witness and stomped its fucking neck under my boot!

The once reserved old woman was now muttering inanities in German as she continued backward through the poorly lit house. Still holding the shovel in both gloved hands, I inhaled slowly and savored this moment. Yet she kept reciting something to herself as her free hand grasped at the front door. I raised the blood-dripping shovel above my head. Meek words from that woman couldn't stop the insatiable Bark in me!

When abruptly, the shovel was wrenched right out of my very hands! Twisting, I found a big man stooped upon the main staircase. He had a face like a loaf of bread: long, pock marked, and overly tanned. With white hair and sideburns, this guy had aged as poorly as his posture. His broad shoulders were slumped forward like a hunchback, and yet regardless of how much he looked like a cripple, his thick limbs maintained a lethal potential.

Upon this intervention, I simply grabbed the front door and walked out leaving that elderly couple behind.

-

I got home by 10am and checked my phone finding that the mother of two in Poland who randomly flirted with me had sent more videos inserting her buttplugs. Ignoring the messages, I just wanted someone to fucking hurt! There was that other Polish girl, little Ally, but just the thought of that flaky little shit filled me with disgust!

-

This evening, I found myself wandering through the light rain along the canal on the other side of the hospital. I kept returning here with contradictions in my head. No! I had escaped that place! Why should I ever imprison myself?!

MONDAY 8<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

An Australian friend wrote to me this evening. She wanted me to strip her naked, tie her up, and then whip her ass. Whip her hard. Real fucking hard.

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But she didn't want to bleed because she said that she was just a fragile little girl. So, I told her I would choke her instead. But not to death because I already ate today.

These were the games that we played. These fucking games with these fucking kids. They were as necessary as eating and breathing. And yet, this was the death of symbolism. There was only action. No deeper truth beyond the meat.

I decided not to dig tonight, and ended up sitting on my floor, no candles or unholy circle. Just staring at nothing. However, when I put my palms flat beside me, hundreds of serpents rose out of the very floor! The black goat soon stepped up from behind me. I ignored it as the east wall became translucent. Out there, I saw a valley in the distance. A great fire burned upon the mountain ranges where more ruins stood.

"Why are you showing me this?" I whispered to the goat. "What am I meant to do with any of this shit? Just fuck off!"

The goat remained where it was.

So, I closed my eyes.

In the blackness I began moving. I fell. Forward. Fell into an emptiness. A vast space. And after a time, I crashed into the midst of a swarm of serpents slithering in every direction of that abyss. Worms coiling upon one another. Both enormous and microscopic. Everything was wet and writhing in that void of extreme black. An infinite life of endless violence. It was part of me. A hatred for all things.

Eventually, I sat back and found my hands resting on my knees, my fingers spread wide with the palms upward. I wanted to torture things and keep my trophies. The heads of pretty meat. A library of false idols. The disgrace of wise men was knowing that they were fools in sheep's clothing. There was no one that I looked favorably upon. All that was human was meant for the chopping block. There was only anger to hold on to. Hatred clarified the ugliness. Avalanches of holocaust victims couldn't crush my contempt for all creation. I wanted tectonic plates turning upside-down as the sun itself stomped on my fucking head! There wasn't anything out there. Nothing in this land or beyond the seas. There was no enlightenment and no condolences for anyone. I couldn't relate to the wrath of gods, for it just wasn't enough! There was only the great indifference of the universe. An endless kingdom of primordial elements oblivious to everything. I hoped only for war to come. For I was of this world. The passageway and the spokesman. I was the mouth

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of hell. Through me, all desecration was born. For the word of the devil gave life to all the abominations that God couldn't even conceive of. I am therefore I curse.

TUESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

I arrived at the lakeside house at 9pm and noticed something new wrapped under a tarpaulin on the side of the garden. The young black guy in his charcoal suit came out onto the patio and scowled at me for a while as I began digging. When he went inside, he switched off the outside lights. I kept digging in the dark. My work clothes grew heavy with clumps of mud as I cleared under the entablature. It seemed like the whole portico was filled with dirt. Maybe there was a door that kept the landfill out from the interior of the tomb. But if the door opened outward, then I'd have to excavate the entire entrance.

I didn't get anywhere close to answering these nagging questions when I called it a night at 10pm.

THURSDAY 11<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

I received a letter from Father Lucus today. Bracing myself, I was rather surprised that at no point did he mention Rome or what had happened to Father Lodovico. What he had to say, however, was far more unexpected. During his time in Spain, while working parttime in a stable, he spent the rest of his waking hours in an archive. He was reading his way through a stockpile of old manuscripts that should have been destroyed a few hundred years ago. While he rambled on at length about books that I had never heard of, he eventually focused on one in particular. It was written by a wandering moor who had travelled from Africa into Spain where he developed some kind of unique ceremony. Lucus then became even more ambiguous in his letter. The

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moor was attempting to contact something. But what exactly, Lucus seemed unwilling to state.

Annoyed by his vague message, I immediately wrote back. Asking him why he was even reading such forbidden books if he was such a fucking coward! Spit it out, you fuck!

I posted the letter on my way to the lakeside house at 7pm.

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To my hesitant relief, I found, that there wasn't a door on the tomb. I lay on my side and reached into the gap that I had cleared. With my penlight, I could see that the interior of the tomb was completely empty.

I left at 9pm, with a shitload of digging left to do before I could crawl inside.

-

The lady of the house from the massage parlor was having a cigarette in the courtyard when I got home. She saw how filthy I was, and asked in her broken English, "You okay?"

I smiled and nodded as I walked by.

"Come out tonight. Tonight. Me and you," she called, standing up. "Party tonight."

Pausing at the door to the staircase, I glanced around before asking, "When?"

I had a quick shower and while still half wet, laid down the black sheet and lit the candles. Sitting in the unholy circle, I wanted to know if I could see inside the buried tomb.

At first, I found myself in what appeared to be a cathedral. However, it was an endless hall with innumerable transepts made purely of arches that stretched upward forever. Snow fell as I moved forward. But then I heard footsteps. Bare feet on the cold stone floor. Something then swung from above! The long fleshy intestine-like tail from a worm-bodied devil nearly knocked me off my feet. That gray creature slithered around a massive column as its bony fingers clung to a human head. It blew into the throat as a sickly voice moaned, "Don't!"

And then I saw a girl. She stepped into that great hall and stopped. Upon spotting me, she spun and ran. Naked and pale with long brown hair, she darted down another passageway. I sprinted after her. Though, when I came to a big round hole in the floor, I slowed to a walk. The girl huddled in the shadows on the other side of the shaft that dropped away into more echoing arches below. She peered back at me with her messy hair concealing her face.

“Where am I?” the girl abruptly gasped. “Where is this place?”

The dread in her voice was gorgeous, and I wanted nothing more than to bludgeon her face with my fucking knuckles. She didn’t wait around though. Not once the worm-bodied devil crept up behind me. She dashed away like a frantic gazelle.

Sitting on the floor of my flat, I wondered who this kid was and why was she asking me questions? Closing my eyes again, I concentrated on how I felt in her presence.

I was then in that colonnade next the river with the u-shaped terraces. Slowly that shadow figure materialized in the water and turned toward me. I had no fucking idea where this river was or why that devil stood out there, but the girl clearly wasn’t here.

Closing my eyes for a third time on my floor, I focused on the discovery that the buried tomb wasn’t full of dirt.

A blast of heat scorched my back as I shielded my face from a burning red glow! I was in a stone chamber with blank walls. Turning toward the heat, I faced a doorway leading onto a balcony looking out to an inferno-engulfed city. The black goat wasn’t with me this time to tame the fires, so I clung to the edge of the doorframe admiring that ruthless destruction. But the flames weren’t demolishing the ruins. Again, I saw nothing to fuel these unnatural fires, only blackened stone where these unrelenting flames seemed to dwell in perpetual fury.

-

At midnight, I went downstairs and met the lady of the house. She was even more dolled-up than usual and looked anxious as she waited on the curb for the Uber.

In the car, she stared out the window as she spoke, “Lots of nice girls tonight.”

I didn’t reply, my thoughts were lingering on this evening’s visions.

We arrived somewhere west, near the Kudamm. Then up an elevator we went all the way to a penthouse party. She wasn’t kidding, there were plenty of barely legal pros and even more square-jawed young Russian guys in hideous designer shirts.

My friendly neighbor had business to conduct with a sullen looking guy in another room. So, I got a Red Bull and stood on the balcony scanning the nice street. Every now and then as I moved about the place, several big shitheads that were obviously security would eyeball me.

When my neighbor returned, she sat seductively on the armrest of the

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huge sofa that I had ended up lounging on. She leaned closer while glancing around the dancing teens and asked, “Who are you?”

“Why?” I replied, with a smirk.

She sat up straight, smiled, and then gently nodded, “You stay?”

“No, I’m with you,” I said, as we stood. That was when an old bald guy approached with two of his casually dressed security. This prick had a head like a deflated rugby ball and hands like granite. He grunted something at me in a language that definitely wasn’t Russian. Glaring back into his puny eyes, I waited in silence until he slowly let us pass.

Getting into another Uber, my neighbor attempted to explain her problems with Romanian people-traffickers, but it was nearly impossible following her accent and poor grammar. She made one thing clear, that her business entailed more than just the massage parlor in my building. Apparently, she had set up franchises across the city. Her respectable establishments, however, were under attack. One by one they were being taken over by the Romanians. Yet she seemed confident that she would gain control of her assets once again, despite the financial troubles stemming from the pandemic. I glanced out the window, having heard of other sex-workers that had barely survived the lockdowns. The knock-on effects of governments thinking that they could save the world through draconian restriction was coming back to fuck us all.

SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

Despite having a late night at an Irish pub, I dragged myself out of bed in the blinding morning light and headed across town. It was a cold and cloudy day while I sat on an iron set of stairs in that courtyard. The Mercedes was parked in the shade. I stared patiently at the door to the subbasement where, eventually, the tall black guy exited. With a tormented expression, he appeared in a disheveled state. He paused once he spotted me, before turning to lock the heavy door.

“How you holding up there, sunshine?” I asked, from where I sat.

He glanced around nervously as he moved toward his vehicle in that dismal space of broken windows and crumbling brick walls.

“You know, if you like,” I offered. “I’ll beat the shit out of her for you.”



Twisting away from the car, that distressed young guy suddenly approached demanding to know, “Are you even a man?!”

“Who fucking knows,” I said with a smirk, as I stood face to face with him. He was as lean as me, but a little taller. And yet, all I saw in his eyes was apprehension.

Without another word, he backed away. I too headed toward the street. Looking over my shoulder at the door to the subbasement, I knew that I would enter the buried tomb this week. But not today.

MONDAY 15<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

I arrived at the lakeside house at 9:30pm, and it was particularly freezing. It took sometime digging before I finally began warming up.

“Why do you dig?” the black guy suddenly asked, looming behind me. I ignored him, and he repeated himself but with more desperation, “Why?! Why do you dig?!”

“Good fucking question!” I snarled, continuing with my work. “Get back to me when you have a fucking answer you like.”

After an hour, I finally cleared the hole enough so that I could climb between two Corinthian columns into the tomb’s portico. I scanned the wall of dirt with my pen-light. Counting four columns wide on the east-facing entrance and two deep. Those six pillars were only visible at their detailed capitals. Entering the high-ceilinged tomb, I found it, as expected, completely empty. The only feature in that chamber was a niche in each of the far corners. What an utter waste of my fucking time!

A noise then began rumbling. I could feel it vibrating in the stone under my boots. It was a motor. And it was coming from above! Turning, I lunged for the cavity in the dirt – just as an avalanche of soil poured down! A fucking tractor was filling in the trench with one unstoppable movement! I climbed manically up into the falling mud, as I screamed, “You fuck!”

The loose dirt crashed over my head, and I was barely able to retreat from its clutches, though, I dropped my torch in doing so. The dread of losing my only source of light instantly prioritized the situation. Snatching up my small pen-light, I backed away from the tumbling soil. In another moment, I heard

## Interfering With Divinities

a loud THUD!

I had no phone as I never brought it here, and no one knew anything about this place. So, I was trapped and had let myself be buried alive. The image of Father Lodovico's own self-imposed punishment flashed over my mind. But I was enraged! Fuck this shit! I then threw myself at the wall of fresh dirt. Clawing at the crumbling soil, I sneered furiously while digging upward until I drove my right hand deep into that blackened shit! My arm was shoulder-deep and the side of my face was pressed hard against the mud when my fingertips scratched at the bottom of a metal sheet. All hope drained out of my lungs as I realized what that THUD had been. I nearly dislocated my arm pulling it out of the now compact dirt. Fingers raw and throbbing. I should have brought the shovel down with me. I should have checked what was under that tarpaulin. I should have never begun digging this fucking hole in the first place. I couldn't fucking believe that, of all the ways to die, this was it. Never to be found. Even if someone got into my flat and read my notebooks, I never wrote down this exact location. Face it, I had been fooled like the fucking idiot I'd always been.

Surveying the ceiling, I looked about that stark chamber. Four by six meters long. The niche on the left corner held nothing, but to my shock, the one on the righthand-side revealed a narrow staircase leading further underground. So, down I went into that absolute silence.

As I turned my pen-light, I was presented with a space slightly larger than the one above. Instead of barren walls, down here was a colonnade and behind the pillars was a path that circled this chamber. However, here was a tomb of imperial opulence. The entire structure was built of black marble with gold trim. Dozens of life-size statues of old men were also carved from the black stone, leading my eyes down the central aisle to a polished black sarcophagus. There, two huge obsidian bull heads with golden horns were crowned with big black eagles. Their wings were spread out and heads turned toward the flat surface of the thick lid of that ominous sarcophagus. Behind, were four black iron horses all reared up on their hind legs. Countless candlestands and golden chests surrounded the space behind the statues and in front of the colonnades. Capitalized script in German was chiseled into every surface. Upon the very floor and ceiling was an endless text. Beyond the pillars, an intricate frieze surrounded the tomb while statues of feudal guardians stood in the four corners. Dozens of ornate lanterns hung from the stone beams above. Everything was aligned symmetrically.

After carefully walking around the outer colonnade, I sat in the center

of the floor facing the sarcophagus. Facing east. If I was going to die there, at least I was surrounded by this arcane beauty. Resting the pen-light on the floor in front of me, I admired the tomb, wondering who exactly was interred here. I could have grabbed an item from one of the chests and attempted to dig my way out. However, based on the time that it had taken to get in here, I knew that I would run out of oxygen long before I reached the surface. So, I closed my eyes and listened to the deep ambiance of my blood pressure.

I was then standing in a desert below a night sky. Silhouette mountains on either side of me. An Arab in loose robes was crouching on the ground not far ahead. Approaching him, I found a puddle in the sand. The young, bearded Arab slowly gestured for me to come closer. Taking a knee, I realized that it was in fact a shallow pool of mercury. Then, in that shimmering surface, an image gradually emerged.

A girl sat below a big tree next to an old stone church at night. I recognized her. She was the same brown-haired girl who'd questioned me in that other vision. Suddenly looking up, she saw me standing near the church, so she scrambled to her feet. That was when something howled in the surrounding fields of tall crops. More threatening shrieks came from other directions. The girl was terrified and then ran for the church just before black shapes burst out of the crops –

I looked up as gentle hands held onto mine. The big shimmering eyes of Arpi stared back at me in that tomb. I hadn't thought of this Armenian girl since seeing her cling to a cliff face in the realm of death and sin. Now she sat naked in front of me holding my palms. Her dark hair was filthy, and tears rolled down her cheeks as her lips moved as if she wanted to speak. A tapping then came from behind her, and she simply faded right out of my hands. Looking through the space where that dead girl had just sat, I noticed how the sarcophagus actually looked more like an altar. The tapping echoed from my right, where, sitting below a statue, was that same Arab from the desert vision. He had a long walking staff and quietly tapped the floor with it. His pale blue eyes looked calmly at me but soon gazed back to the floor. We sat there for a long time.

The chilled air matched my core temperature as I pictured myself dehydrating to death. Although, it seemed odd to me. I had, for most of my life, assumed I'd die in some horribly violent fashion. Or worse still, drown.

I think I passed out a few times where I sat hunched over. Each time that I awoke, I was surprised to find myself still alive. But I kept returning to a vision of the burning sky over Loch Ness.

## Interfering With Divinities

A rumbling then aroused my frozen senses. With an aching neck, I slowly sat back. Glancing around the shadows, I saw that the Arab was gone. I grabbed my pen-light and struggled to my feet when I spotted something on top of the sarcophagus. It was a small ivory idol. Shaking the drowsiness from my head, I realized that the noise was coming from above. I snatched the small carving but in doing so saw something reflected in the polished surface of the sarcophagus. A giant head loomed behind the four horses. Backing away from that distorted face with its ash-like skin, I suddenly shuddered from a BOOM!

Metal on stone thundered throughout that confined space. Twisting, as my torch flickered, I saw two more of those giant humanoids squatting either side of the stairs. Long spears were held menacingly in their hands as they tilted their heads. Another BOOM came as one spear struck the wall! I just glared back at them and clenched my jaw as I marched straight up the stairs.

With a third BOOM, I tripped and slammed into the wall at the top of the staircase! There, I caught a glimpse of light coming from the entrance!

BOOM!

I climbed madly up and out of the freshly excavated trench. Grabbing ahold of the bucket from a small digger, I was then pulled clear of that fucking tomb. I crashed onto the garden gulping in the crystal-clear morning air. There was a misty haze upon the lake and the indigo sky was still quiet. However, the digger's lights flared behind me as the young black guy filled in the trench once again.

Eventually, I rose to my feet and faced the house. The old woman stood on the patio with a black shawl over her head with her silver hair down for the first time. There was a big steel plate lying on the ground that the digger was now shunting over the turned-up soil. Fuming with indignation, I stepped closer to the woman as I slowly held up the small figurine. It was in the style of a medieval dragon standing upon the heads of four other demons. She then opened her palm revealing a similar ivory idol but more elaborate with many more characters carved into a shape that seemed to have no top nor bottom.

"Let the girl go," I hissed, exhausted but focused. "I'll have someone pick her up."

The old woman just watched as I collected my dew-soaked shoes and jacket, before she called out, "What did you see?"

# ISTANBUL

FRIDAY 19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

I hadn't felt the population density of a city like Istanbul since Tokyo. This place was alive and kicking. The humid view south, across the Golden Horn inlet was lined with beautiful mosques. As dusk fell, I casually walked all the way to my hotel right next to the Hagia Sophia. Everywhere smelt like food. Despite how distinctly foreign this ancient city felt, I was constantly distracted by wondering what the fuck I was doing there. I should be dead. However, there I was, another nobody in a strange land, wandering in the shadows of empires that had come and gone. I wanted to see, so I came and saw. I needed to relax, and yet I refused to.

SATURDAY 20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

It wasn't until I was on a boat again and traveling out into the brilliant blue Bosphorus that I remembered how much I loved being on the water. I had arranged this three-hour tour last night once I had checked into my hotel. Moving to the bow, I pulled out my earbuds and listened to Jugurtha, *Ipermaho*, while watching the seafoam full of jelly fish. I scanned over the pale hills of that sprawling city with its elegant minarets and swarms of gulls in the cool breeze. Glacial cargo ships, bobbing fishing boats, and our modest vessel passed below enormous bridges connecting Asia to Europe. The silhouette of a grand mosque stood on the summit of the eastern coast and the steep walls of a medieval castle clung to the west. Istanbul was a rather large



fucking city. And as I gazed through the other passengers, I spotted a cute Indian girl sitting alone on this rooftop deck. I, however, was enjoying the music and the nostalgic motion of the waves too much for engaging in idle chit chat. As the tour continued, the salt air cured my foul mood and I finally lost myself in the present moment.

Once the tour returned to the Eminönü Harborside, of course, I started a conversation with the Indian girl. I was obliged to after she let down her long dark hair. While sitting together in the back of the minibus, I learned that the sassy twenty-eight-year-old Aarna had been raised in Mumbai, educated in Paris, and was currently working in Brighton as a perfumer. She had a great nose for it, as well as full lips, and those absolutely stunning eyes. After she alluded to having just escaped a long-term relationship of being bored to death, she had begun this exploration of Turkey, though was primarily focusing on the spas. I liked her proper English accent drenched in constant sarcasm.

We exchanged contact details before Aarna was dropped off at her hotel. That meant I was the last guy on the minibus, so I climbed up to the front. The young Afghan tour guide shook my hand and then translated the humorous conversation between him and the old Turkish driver. I needed to remind myself that I was a humanist. Misanthropy would always remain at the core of my being, but it was the laughter and the romantic in me that kept suicide from the door.

-  
Relaxing on the balcony, I put my feet on the balustrade and stared out to sea. I noticed that the hotel was built right against the southern fortified wall of the Topkapi Palace. There, I listened to a speech from Putin, *“I repeat, this is nothing new; in the 1920s, the so-called Soviet Kulturtraegers also invented some newspeak believing they were creating a new consciousness and changing values that way. And, as I have already said, they made such a mess it still makes one shudder at times. Not to mention some truly monstrous things when children are taught from an early age that a boy can easily become a girl and vice versa. That is, the teachers actually impose on them a choice we all supposedly have. They do so while shutting the parents out of the process and forcing the child to make decisions that upend their entire life. They do not even bother to consult with child psychologists. Is a child at this age even capable of making decisions of this kind?”*

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An American friend, Ralph, had text me last night, saying that he was also

## Interfering With Divinities

here visiting his old buddy, Zed. While wandering all the way back across to Taksim Square to meet them, I considered Putin's words as nothing but typical conservatism. In a Muslim country like this, traditional values were par for the course. Though, people in the west had a tendency for forgetting that the vast majority of the human population did in fact live conventionally.

I was slick with sweat when I met up with the two Americans in the busy square. They then led the way to a rooftop restaurant for a Georgian dinner. It was a small world when you could run into friends in far off places.

After dinner, I once again walked all the way back to my hotel. It was impossible catching a taxi in the barely crawling traffic. Never in my life had I seen so many people fishing off the side of bridges as I had in this town.

-

At 9pm, I arrived at my hotel where I received a message that Aarna was going to join a pub-crawl. How British of her. That meant I had just one thing left to do, so I headed out into the warm night alone.

I soon found the tiny pastry store on the southern side of the peninsular at 10pm. That was where I met Selim, the old friend of the kiosk owner from Berlin. The stocky guy welcomed me in, and we chatted briefly before customers suddenly filled the place.

Sitting outside the store on a tiny chair, I sipped on a shot glass of chai tea. An eldering guy also sat there watching the kids cruise by in their cars. He must have heard me chat with the store owner, as he soon began speaking in English. We talked about the architecture of the mosques and the influence of Rome. He then told me about Akbar the Great, and how universal ideas crossed borders. Regardless of who had the idea if it worked it worked. He often brought up Sufism, and kept repeating, Tawhid Ilahi. And something about a divine monotheism.

At one point he went quiet, and his thick eyelids closed. Flipping his string of beads in his hand, he then said, "Old men are not wise through age. Age itself does not mean you have learned anything."

For a while, we both sat and watched the traffic, before I asked if he knew of any holy men?

He took a long time before he replied, "The Christian concept of Grace is another universal. God's Grace. It keeps us looking for meaning. Helps us resist temptation. Keeps us going despite the weight of the world."

I stared at his black eyes, as he spoke about a man in Ghent. A mullah by the name of Ahmet. The frail old chap then abruptly stood and shuffled off down the street without a goodbye.



Sitting on the tiny chair, I wondered what the psychological definition of 'grace' would be. Selim eventually took a seat and asked why I looked so troubled?

"I'm fine," I replied, thinking of that dreadful realization I that had faced once I knew that I couldn't dig my way out of that tomb.

"No, you're not," he said seriously. "But you are not by yourself."

Sneering, I thanked him in my terrible Turkish, shook his hand, and then walked away. I'm fine! Tears began creeping around my eyes but not for long. I deserved no sympathy! There was nothing to be forgiven when forgiveness was a fucking lie! I punched my chest in the dark back streets and reminded myself that I was fine! Perfectly fine! I felt nothing! Nothing but hatred! Self-hatred was what made us real!

#### SUNDAY 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

Aarna was hungover and wearing her big black sunglasses when she arrived at the front gate of the Hagia Sophia at 11:30am. Neither of us had ever been into a mosque before but I had warned her to bring a bag for her shoes. However, she first wrapped a scarf over her head as the crowd shuffled inside. We were both suddenly full of questions. My first being based on the observation that the pattern on the carpet was slightly askew to the floor plan. Was it indicating toward Mecca? Then we wondered why all the writing was in Arabic and not Turkish? I knew that the place was originally built as a Byzantine cathedral before the Ottoman's converted it to a mosque, but were its multiple domes the architype for all mosques built after it? While standing over an exposed section of the stone floor that was roped off, I paused and suggested that it was an omphalos. Aarna had had enough of our guessing so pulled out her phone and opened Wikipedia. Right as she began reading through the first paragraph, a young Muslim woman in a full hijab and medical mask walked straight toward us. To our relief, she was a volunteer and answered all our questions with the friendliest voice. I was correct, the carpet and the niche in the southern-eastern wall faced Mecca. The Quran was only written in Arabic, and most Turks only spoke Arabic while reading the Quran. As for my question about the architecture being the model for all

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other mosques, she simply said no. Aarna looked nervous as kids ran around. To which the volunteer stated that children were always free to roam as you didn't want to restrain them so that they grew up with any bad associations toward the mosque. The volunteer then gave us a pamphlet on the family-tree of Muhammad and finally had a question for us, "May I ask, do you know what 'Islam' means?"

"Submission," I replied.

She gasped and laughed, "Yes! You're the very first person I've asked who knew that!"

Aarna also looked surprised and was clearly in need of hydration. So, we thanked our lovely guide who hoped our first impression of a mosque was a good one. She then recommended that we check out the Suleymaniye Mosque which had a fantastic view over the city.

Putting our shoes back on, we headed to a restaurant for lunch. I only had one final site on my short list of things to do, and that was see the Obelisk of Theodosius which wasn't far away. While Aarna joked about her father and our incongruent accents, we decided to wander through the city to this other mosque and then eventually get dinner together. I liked her laidback attitude, her hilarious sense of humor, and her face was the prettiest thing in town.

After passing the obelisk, as well as the Column of Constantine, we headed through a bazaar packed with stalls and people, until finally reaching the Suleymaniye Mosque gardens with its scenic view over the harbor. Aarna needed a quick powernap, so we rested under a tree. There, I enjoyed the blue sky next to that grand building while thinking about how close I had come to not living this long. Spending time with a beautiful girl had definitely elevated my mood. This entire trip was a very different experience compared to my time in Rome. Yet, as I scanned my surroundings, I remembered what the volunteer had said about the Quran being kept in Arabic. It was an attempt at solving the communication problem. It might avoid mistranslations but not reinterpretation. And if the word of God himself could be misunderstood, then what chance did we fucking humans have?

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Aarna and I had returned to our respective hotels before meeting at a cozy restaurant that I had suggested. We rendezvoused at 6:30pm and discovered a glass floor looking down into the ruined foundations of a Byzantine palace. Sitting on beanbags, we chatted and laughed about relationships, philosophy, and everything in between. I found her quite disarming. She would continue traveling across Turkey to yet another spa tomorrow, while I headed back

home. During our flirtatious innuendos and not so subtle sexual double-entendres, it seemed that we were both attracted to each other. However, her exhaustion was clearly evident. After dinner, we investigated the ruins below before taking a brief stroll in the cool evening air. I told her to come visit me in Berlin, and then we parted ways at the Obelisk of Theodosius.

Wandering past the Hagia Sophia for the umpteenth time while heading to my hotel, I realized it was only 9:30pm. I continued down the street, following the fortified wall. In only a couple of minutes, I stood on the waterfront. The black shoreline reminded me of my youth. Sitting on a bench, listening to Metallica, *King Nothing*, I stared across the water at the city lights in a purple haze. I was alone again. Just me and the water. Women were great distractions and a source of rejuvenation, but they were by no means a reason for compromise, nor did they hold any solutions to anything. The same could be said for anyone when idealizing another. Only alone could thoughts formulate into a systematic-procedure. Have your fun, but sooner rather than later, the great work must continue.

Heading back up the hill, I noticed one of the many stray cats. It was staring across the street – at the monkey-devil crouched in the shadows. I stopped and scowled down at that little fucker, before eventually gesturing for it to lead the way. It then scuttled off on its pointy limbs down the twisted back streets. Up and around uneven paths it went until we climbed some broken steps and along a private walkway under low-hanging vines. There, we stopped in a narrow space between a derelict building and a cliff-like wall at the bottom of another abandoned place on top of the hill. That secluded wall was made of blocks and bricks from different centuries. In a deep-set gap among the stones, that ugly monkey-devil began clawing, hacking, and digging. Several more felines joined, and we watched on in silence.

It only took a few minutes until I was surrounded by dozens of curious cats, and then the tiny devil retreated from the hole in the wall. I glanced about the quiet night and up at the barred windows on the building above, before taking a knee. Peering into that excavated cavity, I saw a lot of ash and loose dirt within. I pulled on my leather gloves and slowly reached inside. Cautiously, I retrieved a small cup-sized bowl. It sat snugly in my palm as I brushed aside the ash revealing a piece of primitive pottery covered in script. At first, I thought it was Greek, but it was something else.

The impatient monkey-devil suddenly began stomping its six little legs, stirring up the cats into a hissing frenzy. Looking at that creature, I watched it lunge threateningly at my ankles. I then held out the bowl, and the monkey-

devil immediately hunched and scampered away into the night. Was this another example of a power greater than these devils? The felines, however, all went quiet again and stared up at me. I fucking hated cats.

# BERLIN

THURSDAY 25<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

This evening, I had arranged to meet some friends at the Christmas market at Gendarmenmarkt. The first markets for two years of Corona lockdowns. However, as soon as I arrived, I got my first migraine blind-spot since Porto in 2020.

We were still waiting in the queue, thirty minutes later, when my vision returned. I didn't let it dampen the festive spirits of the group, but as I mingled in the crowd, I knew that one day death would come just as unexpectedly. There had been no warning signs, no symptoms, nothing to indicate this blindness. The reminder motivated me. I still had things to do. There was plenty of Cain for the raising.

FRIDAY 26<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

On my way out for dinner, I ran into the lady of the house in the courtyard. She smiled and asked if I wanted to join her at another party. Unfortunately, I already had a ticket to the movies at 10:15pm. She looked disappointed. I said that if I got out by midnight, then I'd come along. She almost blushed.

When I got back to my flat, I continued texting with Aarna while listening to Béla Bartók, *Romanian Folk Dances, Sz 56: 111. Pe-loc – Andante*. That was until I heard a soft scraping sound. Glancing sideways, I watched the small ivory idol slowly rotate on my desktop. I reached over and stopped it. Picking it up, I examined the crude carving of the dragon and demons. I

## Interfering With Divinities

placed it back on my desk, and again, it gradually began moving of its own accord.

Rolling out the black sheet, I placed the four candles on the unholy circle and sat in the dark. I laid the ivory idol on the floor in front of me and saw the passageway between the east windows appear. There, I spotted a foot. Someone lurked in the shadows of the cave. I sat patiently, glaring into the passageway. Slowly, a small figure peered around the edge. It was the same girl that I'd seen twice before. She looked directly into my eyes, before abruptly turning to run.

I remained where I sat. Who the fuck was this kid? Why was she spying on me? And how? Snatching the idol, I then sprinted down the cave-like passageway. I followed the slapping sounds of the girl's bare feet on the wet stone. Racing through the narrow twisting tunnel, I quickly gained on her. When suddenly we raced out and onto the side of a blackened mountain. Strong winds and low clouds clashed with the rugged peaks. Continuing, the girl ran right to the edge of a cliff before turning – and gasped in terror at the sight of my presence. She backed away, naked and cold as she scanned that barren slope. That was when I raised the small ivory idol toward the girl. Defensively, she held up both arms – before all four of those devils from the subbasement leaped past me and smashed into the girl! She screamed in agony as the creatures ripped her apart while they all tumbled off the cliff! Stepping over to the edge, I found a scarred landscape of endless crevasses below where only the girl's piercing shrieks lingered.

Sitting on my floor, I focused on this strange girl and closed my eyes.

I immediately stood chest-deep in utterly freezing water. The pounding current drove me backward as I glanced furiously around. There were stone buildings above, and I briefly caught sight of the u-shaped terraces in the river upstream. An ominous roar then came from above and echoed all around the river! Struggling with my footing and barely keeping my nose above the water, I saw that translucent shadow figure next to me. It stood firm while I was slowly pushed away. That was when I became aware of a giant form rising into the rain and blotting out the clouds with the black of great wings. I was then overwhelmed by the current and swallowed beneath the river.

Shivering, I rubbed my arms where I sat on the floor, until the candle flames began flickering. I felt the air in the room move as something invisible walked around me. The circle I sat within wasn't protective but still whatever was in my flat wouldn't cross the line. I listened as it stepped carefully past each candle, while I wondered why some devils showed themselves openly

with all their hideous deformities, and yet others still hid. Or was it that snooping girl again? No, these footfalls had more weight. I quickly blew out the four big candles and waited there in the pitch black. Let's both play in the dark. But nothing came of it. Fucking chickenshit!

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On my way to the theater, I received a message from the Australian girl who had been asking for some light spanking again. But I told her I was busy.

Once I got out from *The Last Duel*, it was 1am. The film had been a long slow burn. When I got back to my place, the massage parlor was locked up and the lady of the house had already left.

Good. I needed a decent night's sleep.

#### SATURDAY 27<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

I received a letter from Father Lucus today, saying that he was worried that the manuscript that he was reading actually worked. Whatever that meant. So, he had asked an old friend in Paris, René, to confirm the authenticity of the moor in the records at the National Library. Though, why the French would know what happened in Spain, Lucus didn't say. He did, however, repeat that his fear was growing every time that he read from the book. Clearly, he was suffering from delusions of paranoia, as he insisted that the birds were all watching him.

-  
While wandering through Mitte in the late afternoon, I matched on a dating app with a twenty-nine-year-old blonde going by the name of Adele. She got right to the point and was looking for someone to humiliate her. But first she grilled me with a spiel of questions about my lifegoals and professional achievements. Eventually, she seemed satisfied that I met her stringent hypergamous criteria for a mature match. I then invited her over to my place, and she agreed in her clinical tone. At that point, I was right at the Eberswalder Strasse intersection, and knew that here I could catch the tram directly back to my neighborhood. I was crossing the street when I glanced at the bakery Zeit Für Brot, and a delicious idea came to mind.

I got home at 8pm, and Adele arrived shortly after. She was beautiful,

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in a basic bitch kind of way, with her straight blonde hair & Other Stories trench coat, Ralph Lauren pumps, and Valentino handbag. That dry demeanor of hers was as dispassionate as her overly intrusive texting had been, as she now explained her motivation. She had just ended a long-term relationship of blah, blah, fucking blah. Said she was sick of guys who were too worried that they might hurt her to try anything risky. Not to mention those that simply couldn't think of any possible way of belittling her, to her face at least. I told her to stop talking. Did she really think I had the slightest interest in any of her tedious complaints. I then showed her the two Cinna-buns with white chocolate and raspberry, while telling her exactly what I was going to do to her. She looked shocked and annoyed but listened and slowly nodded.

I sat back and watched her strip naked. Pushing her head to the floor as she knelt, I held her ass up while I gave her a nice warm enema. Returning from the bathroom after the third flush, she squatted facing me as I took a knee. I liked the apprehension in her previously condescending scowl. Inserting two fingers into her asshole, I inspected how clean she was. She then resumed the head-down ass-up position. This time I ripped pieces from the first sticky bun and stuffed them deep into her rectum. It smelt fucking tasty. Once the entire bun filled her colon, she returned to a squat. I glared hard into her dull eyes as I placed my right hand under her ass and told her to shit out the bun. Squirming, she finally looked genuinely uncomfortable. So, I grabbed her throat with my left hand and demanded with absolute intolerance that she fucking shit into my fucking hand right fucking now, you worthless fucking cunt! And she did so. I took that first chunk of expelled Cinna-bun and placed it in her open mouth. Looking at her insolent expression, I noticed how her nail polish complimented her pearl earrings. I took another piece of discharged bun and shoved it deep into her gaping mouth with two fingers. Gulping it down, she sucked on my digits while I squeezed her throat and told her to keep looking into my fucking eyes.

To her credit, she did shit out and swallow every last piece. A posture of true shame had replaced her attitude of brazen disillusionment when she walked out the door, not saying a word. I stayed on the floor and ate the second bun, knowing that I'd never see her again.

And I was correct. After washing my sticky fingers, I found that she had already unmatched me. So, I wrote to Aarna, *"I'd enjoy blindfolding you, slowly stripping you naked, and then whipping your ass while you're bent over my bed."*

She soon replied, *"That escalated very quickly."*



Bruce Stirling John Knox

TUESDAY 30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021

I was given my booster vaccine today. After having caught Corona in 2020, I only required a single shot in order to be seen as fully vaccinated, and yet, it had only been six months since that first shot, and we already required a booster. So, I asked the doctor how often we needed these shots? He literally shrugged and said that they just didn't know. I thanked him for extending most of my basic human rights for maybe six more months. Returning to society, I felt glazed in a superficial pride for remaining a morally complicit citizen in my dedication to giving a fuck about this security-theater.

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This evening, despite anticipating a fucking headache from the booster, I paid a visit on my nice little English friend, Elisabeth. Upon arriving, I simply asked how she was doing? To which she burst into tears and buried her head in my chest. I stood holding her firmly as she cried for a long time.

We eventually sat on the sofa where she wept some more. Listening to her cry, I slowly caressed her spine. She said that she was overwhelmed with work and life and stress and her fragile health and her worsening sleep patterns.

“Shit adds up,” I quietly remarked.

Elisabeth smiled and sat back, as I suggested ordering pizza, watching a movie, and just taking it easy. So, we did exactly that. During which, we joked and laughed, and finally she relaxed.

Before leaving, I said that she needed to address all the issues she had already identified. She agreed and I gave her a long hard hug goodnight.

Walking onto the street, I had one of those rare moments when I wondered if I was a good person? No! I just knew what it felt like being totally fucked without anyone on your side.

WEDNESDAY 1<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2021

## Interfering With Divinities

Going to bed, I opened a window so that I could hear the storm as it wrestled with the trees. However, I then crawled outside, and the world went sideways as rain began pouring over the realm of death and sin. I was standing in a large pit surrounded by the roots of the towering dead trees above. In the faint light, I realized that within the roots was a nest of sodden devils. Their hostile eyes watching me. Stepping closer to one creature, I studied its inhuman snout as it snarled at me. I sneered back, grabbing its wet head! The devil hissed and suddenly I was grabbed by a dozen hands and dragged into their den where I was ripped to pieces –

I looked out my window and saw more of those same blackened devils clinging to the outside of the building. While they continued staring at me, I stepped back, welcoming them in.

THURSDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 2021

After watching *The House of Gucci*, at the theater with friends, I arrived home at midnight.

Before switching on my lights, I saw the tusked-devil crouching in my flat and breathing impatiently. I slowly approached until that ominous beast abruptly vomited on the floor! It then pushed a talon through its rancid puke, separating an object and sliding it across the white shiny floor toward me. It was a string of rosary beads made of iron. Frowning, I looked back at that giant demon. Was this the very devil that I had released in Porto? That would explain its interest in me. If so, look at how much it had grown in the last year!

The monkey-devil then leapt down from the larger animal's shoulder, and I heard my front door open by itself. I followed that little critter as it went directly down to the basement. There, the deadbolt popped open and the door to my storage unit slowly swung open. The monkey-devil scurried inside and tapped at the brick wall. It knew where I had hidden the urn from Rome and the bowl from Istanbul. Raising my index finger to my lips, I whispered, "Soon. But first, I need one more."

SATURDAY 4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

Felicity asked me to come over and film her smothered in black oil as a teaser for her new performance. Afterward, we went to Zum Starken August for a drink, and there we ran into Elisabeth. She was there supporting a friend who was about to do a burlesque show. Despite already having plans to meet Ally at 8pm, I stayed. One of Elisabeth's friends soon offered his flat as a location for our Christmas dinner gathering that Felicity and I had already been discussing.

After the performance, I said my goodbyes and hugged Elisabeth. She thanked me again for the other night. Saying that she wouldn't even be out this evening if it wasn't for me. I shook my head and winked, "No worries."

It was 9pm when I left the bar and was crossing the street to the U-bahn, when that Mercedes pulled up. Two tall black guys stepped out. Glancing inside, I saw that same guy that had beaten Defne behind the wheel.

He drove us to Wedding, and no one said a word. Entering a typical rundown apartment building, I soon found the place was even more of a shithole inside. Despite the state of the place, there were plenty of African women wearing colorful headdresses gathered in the stairwell. It seemed like a refugee shelter. Everyone eyeballed my presence, and I scowled back at them. Upstairs, we were met by three more men in a wretched flat with barely any furniture and boarded up windows. The one guy I knew the most then pulled on thick rubber gloves and opened a large plastic crate. He lifted up a live piglet as he stared at me and said, "Return what you owe!"

Another well-dressed young black guy, also with gloves, then took the squirming piglet.

"Return what you owe, or this will be you!"

Those two men then went about pinning the piglet to the tabletop with duct-tape around its limbs. Suddenly they produced two small, curved blades and proceeded to skin the animal alive! The shrieks rang out endlessly against those blank walls. As I watched them work, I could tell that they had done this before.

Once the task at hand was complete, one of them stepped closer with

## Interfering With Divinities

sweat on his brow, and repeated, “Return what you owe.”

I ignored his somber demeanor and walked over to that filthy table pulling out my own knife. The men all lurched away. I, however, just cut that screeching animal’s fucking head clean off! Shutting it the fuck up! Running my fingertips through the pooling blood, I then turned back to those six men where I held out my bloody hand – and they all jolted backward! Pausing, I watched their reaction and asked, “Where exactly are you guys from?”

Luckily, Ally’s place was in Pankow, so not too far from that pigsty in Wedding. Arriving at 10pm, I found that I had been invited to a flat party full of nicely dressed young adults. Unfortunately, the first thing Ally said to me was, “I want you to meet my boyfriend!”

Great. That explained a lot.

He was a good-looking twenty-something-year-old with the perfect haircut and a strong handshake. Oddly enough, he seemed overly enthusiastic about meeting me. While I smiled, and looked him in the eyes, I thought, dude, I only came here to fuck your girl. But fuck it. After immediately writing off Ally, I decided to make the most of the evening. I grabbed a Red Bull and jumped into conversations with random kids in other rooms, not giving a shit what I said to anyone.

I was in the kitchen, washing the dried pig’s blood off my knife, when Ally’s boyfriend came in to get a drink. Leaning against the countertop, he asked for my opinion on Belarus. No one noticed what I was doing. Drying my black knife, I turned and said, “Ask the Polish.”

Instantly, the kitchen went quiet before bursting into laughter. The boyfriend slapped my shoulder, shaking his head, “We’re all Polish here!”

“Seriously?” I frowned.

Leaning in with a drunken smirk, the young guy added, “In a manner of speaking, yes.”

“Well, then. In a manner of speaking, if I was Polish, I’d say the EU are a bunch of hypocritical cunts over Belarus.”

Again, the kitchen quietened down.

“The fucking EU welcomes refugees and economic migrants for fucking years without question. And whenever regular Joe raises concerns over such an unsustainable policy he gets labeled as Nazi scum. But the fucking moment Lukashenko does exactly what Erdoğan’s been threatening to do – by weaponizing these masses of migrants and sending them into the so-called welcoming arms of the West – then the EU about-faces and bleats on

about exploitation and human rights violations!” I snarled viciously. “Get the fuck out of here! Human rights?! Yeah, fucking right! Look how much we’ve valued our fucking basic rights in the last two fucking years! Borders of convenience! Fucking hypocrites! Where the fuck were the Polish border patrols in 2016?! Where was the integrity of a nation’s rights to close its borders before Covid?!”

All those average-looking boys had gone silent and watched on, but all I felt was disgust.

“I won’t be surprised if Poland’s the next Brexit, after all the imposed pressure from the EU,” I stated, pouring myself a glass of water from the tap. “And then Poland will find a friend in Russia. As they say, politics makes strange bedfellows. Though, not so fucking different once religion’s taken into account.”

That started a loud volley of opinions from everyone, to which I just walked out of the kitchen. I grabbed my jacket from a pile in a bedroom and noticed a framed poster with the words in bold, “*Ein Volk ein Führer ein Ja.*” Ally looked across the corridor as I opened the front door. Winking, I pointed my index finger at her as I left that tidy party of neat little Identitarians.

It was after midnight by the time I arrived at the lakeside house. I kept knocking on the front door until that old man from upstairs came down. Without hesitation, I marched into that dark mansion and headed to the back door with its view over the gardens. When the old guy finally joined me with his sour expression, I gestured out to where I had dug up the tomb. Tapping bluntly on the glass I demanded to know, “Was! Ist! Das!”

The big guy lifted his broad chin, revealing a thick scar on his throat. He paused, turned, and then reached for the stereo on a huge bookshelf. Pointing at me, he then pointed at the floor before switching on some soft radio voices.

I waited, confused.

He pointed back at me, but this time pointed at the buried tomb and then cranked up the volume!

SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

## Interfering With Divinities

While working at the studio this afternoon, I received a phone call from Father Lucus. The guy sounded drunk. He was breathing hard and sobbing. Eventually, he managed to get to grips with himself. He stuttered with a trembling voice explaining that he had continued reading passages from that old manuscript. Insisting that just now, while he had been reading, the entire library had gone as dark as night. He said that he had run out into the morning sun, where again, the birds were all watching him.

As he gasped and wept some more, I quietly asked what the fuck he was worried about?

Lucus then admitted that I had inspired him to follow his curiosity. Saying that I may not be a man of faith, but that he believed my determination in seeking the prime source of truth was of the utmost purity.

“Ah, yeah. Okay, sure,” I shook my head, looking out the window at the crows in the trees. “What the fuck’s so special about this book, anyway?”

He said that it was an unorthodox rite written in the 9<sup>th</sup> century by, what he called, this wandering moor. The manuscript itself had elaborate instructions on how to build an altar which was intended to assist in the communication with one of the antediluvian patriarchs. He said that there needed to be ten altars positioned around the main one. There, you were supposedly able to talk directly with none other than Methuselah.

“Wait,” I paused. “Are you saying you’ve made these altars?”

“I wouldn’t dare!”

“So, what’s the problem? You haven’t done anything.”

Lucus just continued breathing through his teeth.

“Can you even speak ancient Hebrew, or Aramaic, or whatever fucking language they spoke back then?” I asked, with a growing bitterness to my tone. “Getting in contact with these fucking beings is one thing but fucking understanding them, that something else!”

“I just want to see with my own eyes,” Lucus croaked into the phone. “Want to come face to face with them.”

“You know,” I whispered. “Chances are, it’s a devil you’ll end up dealing with.”

He wept again, and my patience was running out. Then he took a sudden deep breath, “We must keep this to ourselves! We must! Heresy is heresy!”

“Like I have anyone to tell.”

His sobbing made me hold the phone away in repulsion.

“Just stop!” I snarled brutally. “Stop reading this fucking book! You don’t have to fucking continue! Put it back where you fucking found the thing!”

Bruce Stirling John Knox

Repent and then get on with your fucking day! You know, you can just stop!”

“Oh, heavens be,” he murmured. “You surely understand, I cannot! Not now. It’s too late. Too late to stop.”

The line went dead as I glared at my phone. Was Lucus a fucking drama queen or having a perfectly reasonable reaction? But then again, what the fuck did I know about him? Turning back to my workstation, I decided to book a trip to Paris and meet this René character. I felt like it was prudent to do some background research myself.

TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

On the way to another Christmas market this evening, I realized that it had been a week since hearing from Aarna. *“So, have we gone too far with our chatting?”*

She responded immediately with, *“I think so. I’m not sure when it got weird for me though. I’m aware I engaged, but I think I might be a bit too tame for this kind of conversation.”*

THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

I got a message from Defne today. She wanted to meet at 4pm. So, I took a late lunch break and headed to Museum Island. She stood with crutches under the falling snow in front of the Berliner Dom. Her thick overcoat looked warm, but without her usual heavy makeup she seemed pale with dark rings under her eyes. Watching me slowly approach, she suddenly burst into tears. I gently hugged her, and she squeezed me tight, so I increased the pressure.

She slowly relaxed. Rubbing her face, she said that she wanted to apologize. I didn’t understand. Frowning, she was sorry for the way her cousins and her had treated me last year. I played ignorant, asking why? Shaking her head, she said nothing for a long time, before quietly admitting

## Interfering With Divinities

that she had recently been abducted and held captive for a month. I said nothing but gave her another long hug.

A car then pulled up next to us and she limped over to it.

Listening to Nine Inch Nails, *Somewhat Damaged*, I walked through the snow in the dim afternoon light, not knowing how I felt about the situation. She apologized to me and yet it was my fault that this had happened. I was to blame. But I didn't feel bad. She survived. What more could I have done? Called the cops, dug faster, or tried to set her free myself? But I didn't. I didn't help her any more than I imprisoned her. Though, she was changed now, and whatever she made of her new trajectory was up to her. The question was, would she learn from the experience or just become another victim for the rest of her fucking life? Only time would tell. But fuck it. Who gives a shit what I think, what I feel, or what any of this fucking means! It's all just fucking chaos dressed up in post-hoc rationalizations!

FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

Today, I finished writing the script for the third volume of my picture book *Uncle Fingers – E Is for Attribution Error*.

I later went out to the theater and saw the new *Ghostbusters*, before meeting the lady of the house. Together, we caught an Uber across town to another Russian party.

While she conducted business with some more hard-looking Romanians, I wandered about the party. A skinny girl was getting her wrists tied to a ring hanging from the ceiling, and a guy passed a cane around. A pair of teenage girls took turns whipping her bare ass. Then a young blonde Russian douchebag with an obscenely open shirt came into the room grinning. He snatched the cane from the girls and swung it about drunkenly before he caught sight of me. Without hesitation, he handed me the thin cane.

Looking at the girl standing there with her tight dress hiked up around her waist, I examined the pink marks left by the other two. I glared at the crowd standing too close, that all instinctively backed off. They could see my arms had a much greater swing. I then proceeded to whip that little girl until she bled. Crying out in Russian, her voice annoyed me. I spun her where she



hung and grabbed her throat. Choking her, I stared into those vacant fucking eyeballs until her squirming became more frantic – when the lady of the house suddenly grabbed my arm!

Leaving the party, we exited the elevator as my neighbor spoke in her thick accent, “What your father teach you, huh?!”

The wind was freezing outside as I glared menacingly back at that old woman, “He taught me that an animal shouldn’t be made to suffer.”

SUNDAY 12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

This evening, I walked the empty wet streets of my neighborhood thinking. I had felt only a fleeting moment of accomplishment upon finishing the new script for *Uncle Fingers*. A few hours of satisfaction toward being constructive was quickly replaced with the reality that no one gave a fuck, and the world was unaffected. Just like every deed done. No one mattered and we were all replaceable. After decades of art and girls, I was left with only a sour taste. It wasn’t worth the effort. Looking up at the golden lights in the surrounding buildings, I knew that the tedium of normality was the highest achievement that society had for man. Yet it was all so fucking pointless, but still, we played this fucking game. Perpetuating our longevity for another couple of years, though, for what exactly?! Living for the sake of living. However, I was very much aware that this lucky streak in my professional life wouldn’t last. Maybe I had a few more good years left, and then it would be time to think about that retirement policy: under the water. This quiet life that I’d been pursuing since Norway, seemed to have worked. I had successfully submerged into the obscurity of my own insignificance, and I hadn’t heard any more from my lawyer. The authorities seemed to have moved on. After all, I was an innocent nice guy and ultimately a fucking nobody.

When I looked up again, I suddenly realized that the black street had been replaced with a vast field of muddy tar. Where the city had once been, now rocky hills looming in the barely lit distance. Turning, I found a large creature standing next to me in the sludge. This disfigured organism then reached into the slime and picked up the dead carcass of a dog-sized devil. It then pressed the other being against the backside of its left hand where the smaller

## Interfering With Divinities

animal immediately came back to life. That tall thing then began grunting with something like laughter. I backed away as I saw the smaller creature in its hand grow into a completely different monstrosity as it hung upside-down like it was in a birthing sack. As much as I wanted to see what this devil might become, a far-off scream caught my absolute attention, “RUN!”

The mud slowly started moving as other things began surfacing.

“RUN!” cried the familiar female voice. So, I moved. And then the tar began to boil. I ran harder. Ran on all fours. I ran impossibly fast. Galloping as some kind of four-legged animal, I was no longer human!

And then I stepped up to my front door.

MONDAY 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

Ally came over to my place at 9:30pm. I didn't particularly want to see her again, so asked what exactly she wanted?! She smirked and acted coy before trying to enter. Putting my arm across the doorway, I refused this cunt's shit-testing. She then admitted how much she loved her boyfriend, but she was young and wanted to experience new things that he wasn't interested in trying. Now that he had met me, she explained, she felt safer knowing that if I went too far, he knew who I was. She then asked in her sweetest voice, “Can you keep a secret?”

Lowering my arm, I let her in. Ally took a seat on the sofa while I went straight into the kitchen, telling her what I was going to do to her. There, I collected the baby-oil and a couple of clean towels. She giggled in anticipation. Slowly stripping Ally naked where she stood, I gave her the oil and she rubbed it all over herself. I sat on the floor leaning back against the bed and watched that petite girl glisten wetly in my warm flat. Plenty of oil dripped on the towels spread across the floor. I told her to turn around and oil up her nice round ass. As she did so, I pulled out my erection and oiled it up too. I told her to start fingering her asshole and she slowly complied. As she turned around, her other hand smeared oil down her legs and then back up and deep between her ass cheeks. I told her to get on her knees and bring her ass back closer to me. Smelling tasty, she shimmied backward. I fixated on the subtle sounds of her fingertips slipping inside herself. One finger, then

two at a time, then just the middle one, then two even deeper. The skin at the outside corner of a girl's eye always reminded me of the skin on their tailbone above their anus. Closer. I wanted her closer. And then she knelt right above my dick as I jerked off over myself! I wanted to grab that ass and crush it beneath my hands, but I refused to touch that little fuck.

Ally smiled as she coiled around and lay on the towels. Licking the cum off my stomach, she never stopped staring into my eyes. After a while of silence, she invited me to another social gathering this weekend. But I told her that I'd be in Paris. Tilting her cute little head as I continued fingerfucking her, she suggested that I meet Lorina, a good friend of hers living there.

"Sure, why not," I said, removing my fingers. "Now get out."

Ally left at 10:30pm, while I still lay on the floor. Suddenly I noticed the eyes of the black goat peering through the blinds. I grabbed a black sheet, opened the window, and crawled outside.

Once again gravity turned sideways, and I found that the ivy outside my second floor flat were now long dead roots on the ground of a vast passageway of daunting stone arches. The goat and I walked to the end where I looked over the edge of a sheer cliff toward an inhospitable landscape of fog-drenched mountains. Scanning back up at the facade of the structure, I saw that it stretched into darkness in either direction. That was when I noticed that the goat had vanished. Wrapping the big sheet around myself, I wandered through various chambers in that massive building of gigantic proportions. It was cold but not freezing, and a breeze howled through thousands of tall slits that constituted windows on the cliff-side of that abandoned ruin. The distant screams of men soon drew me away from the only light and I headed deeper inward. A red glow emanated from where the agonized voices came from, and I crept closer to a giant fireplace. The scarlet flames silhouetted a huge slab of stone that appeared to serve as a dining table. Surrounding it, upon monolith thrones, was a dozen devils reclining as they ate the shrieking old men. Men that seemed like the size of roast chicken in comparison to those feasting beasts. One hideously inhuman demon became aware of my approach and eyed me from its relaxed posture. That thing was all limbs and grotesquely leaking body parts. Suddenly, another four-meter-tall creature snatched me up and I was slammed upon that chopping block of a table. A huge dagger pinned me down through the left side of my ribs! My body lurched and tensed up, though more from shock than pain. The entire surface of the table was the scene of a mass execution. Half-eaten bodies were piled up, and there I lay on a slick coating of rancid blood and chunks of fatty tissues.

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The devil at the head of the table reached with a blackened paw toward my uplifted head – but it paused. All those grunting fiends abruptly went quiet and stopped feeding. One devil crushed a mutilated man in order to shut him up. And then I heard a tapping. I tilted my head with several of the giants as we listened. A soft tapping. Echoes rattled throughout other vacant chambers. The tapping of hoofs. However, it wasn't coming from the floor, but across the ceiling. I stared at the upside-down black goat before making eye-contact with another looming devil. That was when a strange croaking noise made us both look toward the fire. It was a reverberating sound, like a drone, but almost making words. The flames that then exploded out and consumed the entire hall, screamed as they came! In that moment of illumination, I saw just how ornate the stonework of the enormous ceiling was. The goat and other devils, however, remained unaffected. While my flesh was torn from every bone, and the entire dining table was wiped clean!

# PARIS

FRIDAY 17<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

Stepping out of the Metro at 6:30pm, I stood right where I met my brother's family for the first time in 2019. Notre Dame loomed nearby directly below a full moon, and I thought of how it had hung over Rome and all the other countries I had been to. The moon was always there watching. Cold, distant, and indifferent.

My hotel was just ten minutes south of the Seine. After dropping off my bag, I took a stroll on this busy Friday night in Paris during the Christmas season. I crossed onto the westside of the island and stared at the site that Malloy had pointed out where the Templar, Jacques de Molay had been executed in 1314. As I continued by, I spotted what I thought was the monkey-devil clinging to the railing. I ignored it and headed along the northside of the river toward the Louvre. Paris was fucking beautiful at night. Wandering into the grounds, I did in fact see the monkey-devil hanging from the windows of the Louvre's southern wing. It wasn't surprising. Of all the places in the world harboring cursed objects, Paris should definitely have more than its fair share. There were too many people around to entertain the notion of following that deformed little guide, so I walked away toward the Luxor Obelisk. However, it was covered in scaffolding, so I headed back along the river, listening to Agnes Obel, *Chord Left*.

Leaning against the stone banister, I stared at the island and all those spires. There, on the east end of the east island, I spotted the monkey-devil again. It scampered down to the water's edge. But having had enough of the cold air, I walked toward Notre Dame and back to my hotel. On my way, I stared at that impatient creature. I understood that there was a lot to uncover in this charming town, and yet I couldn't freely enter these museums with all their security cameras watching. However, that reminded me of the first



time that I had ever seen the monkey-devil. So, what was hidden in the Alte Nationalgalerie of Berlin? I still needed one more object for my little plan, but right now my mind was focused on other things. Thinking of desecrating the flesh of young girls and leaving beheaded bodies out in the open, I wanted to display my great art as proudly as all the monuments filling this city. Though, I knew that these trophies and devils were for my eyes only.

SATURDAY 18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

I should have died seven years ago today. However, I woke up to a chilled blue sky outside my fifth-floor hotel room. I then recalled 2011, when I was here working on a job and first started chatting with the eighteen-year-old France girl Amelia. All of these places were contaminated with my memories.

Walking up the quiet streets, I soon arrived at the Pantheon just as it opened. Paris was fucking beautiful in the morning. The building was an excellent piece of neoclassical architecture with its great columns and a towering dome. Inside, the revolutionary statues gave me pause. From what had once been a basilica, it was now a national monument. It might not have served its original purpose but at least it still had one. After I paid my respects to Voltaire, I continued on to my appointment.

Wandering along the river, listening to Heather Nova, *Not Only Human*, I realized how little I knew about this town. It took nearly an hour to reach the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The four towering blocks were iconic, however, it was frustrating trying to find the front door. I was running out of time as 1pm was quickly approaching while I circled that massive structure. When I finally took the stairs down to the elusive entrance, some girl gasped and spun away from me. Confused, I watched her run through the front door as if fleeing from my sight.

Heading straight to the information desk, I asked where the rare books department was. The polite staff asked if I had a confirmation notice with the permission to access the downstairs research level. Saying that I was just meeting a guy there, I was pointed toward the elevators, but I was only allowed a regular day-pass. Fortunately, René soon recognized me in the main lobby. He was a sixty-year-old little guy with short gray hair and beard. His

## Interfering With Divinities

grizzled eyes scowled at me from behind thick black glasses as he suggested that we talk at the library cafe.

“Only the pure of heart can bear witness to the glory of God,” René said as soon as we shed our winter coats.

“That how you’d describe Lucus?” I asked, raising my coffee.

*“There will be some who abandon the faith to false inspirations, and doctrines taught by the devils.”* René whispered. *“1 Timothy 4:1.”*

“What did you find out about this wandering moor?” I inquired, getting right to the point. “That’s all Lucus wants to know, nothing insidious.”

“How did you come to know of Father Lucus?”

“We’re just friends. Met in Porto last year. He’s a jovial chap.”

“Blessed are the pure of heart.”

I just sipped on my coffee.

“No one’s pure of heart without God. So, purify your heart. Purify yourself through repentance.”

“The last time someone said that, they wanted me to drown myself in the waters of Norway.”

“What’s your interest in Lucus?”

I glanced out the huge windows at the forested courtyard, before saying, “We share a certain curiosity. I want to meet holy men. Not religious men. Holy fucking men! Lucus made some suggestions. You know, he seems like a smart guy. And now that he’s been locked in isolation, he’s kept himself busy. So, we’ve been encouraging each other. There’s plenty to do when you’re looking for it.”

René became annoyed and glanced at his wristwatch.

“How do you guys know each other?”

“From the military.”

“He was in the army?”

“The medical corps. It was a long time ago.”

“You’ve kept in touch ever since?”

René crossed his arms and shifted in his chair.

“How would you describe Lucus?” I asked, smiling with my most laid-back tone of voice. “You trust him?”

“He’s one of the most well-read people I’ve ever known,” René stated, but caught his voice and went quiet. “That’s the problem. He reads too much. Reads things that lead to no good.”

“Hey, what’s the worst that could happen?” I grinned viciously.

“Persistence hunting!” René sneered. “Some books keep wearing down



their prey long after they're read."

"Their prey?" I asked.

"This wandering moor, this man, he was not pure of heart," René whispered. "Yes, I found records of him. He was executed in Marseille for pagan worship and heresy."

"You think Lucus is the overly impressionable sort?"

After a long thoughtful pause, René drank his coffee and said, "I don't know. We are all susceptible to corruption. And those that question too much easily forget their fortitude."

"What exactly did you find down there in the rare books?"

"A Dominican monk in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was assigned the responsibility of copying decomposing records while as a scribe in Marseille. The records showed that this moor was caught in a town just north: Manosque. There, he had been talking to rocks and worshipping a cliff as if it was a deity. He was soon burned as a heretic."

"Is that it? No details about why he was worshipping a cliff? Was there anything special about it?"

"The only other detail the records noted, was that a deacon from Toulouse protested the execution. But by the time he arrived it was too late."

Slowly walking back to the entrance, René said that I should read the works of Flavius Josephus and specifically mentioned Maimonides and his book, *The Guide for The Perplexed*. Upon shaking my hand, he finally asked, "Do you know what Teshuvah is?"

"Nope."

"Then you should learn."

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This evening, I walked back onto the island where Lorina and I had planned to meet at 7pm in front of the Palais de Justice. I was early, but she was already there with a skinny Greyhound on a leash. Her long black trench coat matched her smoothly parted brown hair. Being Ally's friend, I initially thought that she was Polish. In fact, she was a true-school Parisian. Like Ally, though, she was an overly self-assured twenty-three-year-old.

We walked along the northside of the island and she started the conversation on the topic of the upcoming election. To which I admitted knowing very little. She then began a promotional campaign for some candidate by the name of Éric Zemmour. Once she ran out of breath, I barely mentioned my visit to the Pantheon, and she instantly went on another monologue about the importance of French Nationalism, the ideals of the Enlightenment, and how

## Interfering With Divinities

the sun shone out of the ass of France itself. I just walked side by side with this tall girl, smiling quietly to myself, wondering what she had to prove.

“You think it’s wrong to take pride in the history of your own people?” she eventually threw me a loaded bone.

Looking at this gorgeous female, I quoted Saul Alinsky, *“Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules. You can kill them with this, for they can no more obey their own rules than the Christian church can live up to Christianity.”*

“There, you are of a political persuasion,” Lorina pointed out and seemed pleased with herself.

“If you want to change the system, you do it from within, and play the fucking game. Or you’re the mob like these yellow-vest protesters. Mock revolutionaries! Democracy is smart enough to allow the masses to piss and moan, but ultimately, they’ll change nothing. And even when they actually overthrow the powers that be, what fucking happens? Cut-throat demagogues or straight-out thugs fill the void and the downtrodden get trodden the fuck back down! Look at that,” I said pointing to the N on one of the bridges. “Napoleon’s still treated like a fucking hero, but how quickly the monarchy sat back on its fucking throne. All this protesting brings temporary disruption and merely fucking panders to the delusions of the disillusioned!”

Lorina dismissed my opinion as self-defeating pessimism. So, I listened to her impassioned cry to save the spirit of the French, but mostly I enjoyed the view. When we reached the backside of Notre Dame, I interrupted her speech with, “I was here as sunset. Paris really is fucking beautiful whatever the time.”

With a scowl of irritation, Lorina slowly turned away.

“Shame that Berlin doesn’t look quite so nice. But then again, it went to war and paid for that shit with years of carpet bombing! Paris wouldn’t look this fucking pretty if it too stepped up to the fucking bat. That reminds me of Rome and Istanbul. How beautiful they too must have once been. But one day, all these immaculate Corinthian columns will stand as ruins like those at Pergamon. All the fucking ideals of a republic are just that, fucking ideals! However, ideals alone won’t keep your fucking power structure in place! You can go to war over your French nationalism all you like. But your own fucking face won’t look so fucking cute after a severe fucking beating, will it! So, ask yourself is it worth it? Are you politicking for the sake of politicking or are you in fact greedy for a taste of that almighty fucking power that you deem so corruptible and treacherous?! Yeah, look at you. You want to get

on top. You want to rule this fucking place. That's fucking fine with me, sunshine. But don't act all coy and shit and pretend like you're not one of the very fucking elitist scum that you're claiming to stand up against!"

"Now I see why Ally likes you," Lorina smiled, as we reached the east end of the east island. Gesturing across the bridge to the expensive neighborhoods, she looked me in the eye and said, "That's my place."

"You live here?"

"This was just my dog's evening walk."

Not appreciating the insinuation, I zipped up my jacket and turned away as I hissed, "Have yourself a lovely evening."

"Would you like to come in?"

"No, I'm good."

SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

I had the whole day to kill before my flight, so I headed to the Eiffel Tower and then up to the cloudy view from Sacré-Coeur. It was a dreary day in Paris, and I hadn't seen the monkey-devil once. Maybe I had pissed off that little fucker. Looking over the damp city, I felt less than satisfied that I had learned anything useful about Father Lucus. If he could indeed contact divine beings, then I had a few questions of my own. I'd put them to the fucking test and tempt fate one more fucking time. But mostly, I wanted to fucking know if there was really anything worth being afraid of.

# BERLIN

TUESDAY 21<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2021

I felt like getting some Christmas cake to have with my lunchtime coffee, but on my way out of the studio I spotted one of the black guy on the corner of the street. Staring directly at me, he watched as I passed by. I glared back as I turned the corner and continued toward the supermarket. On my way back, I found the guy standing on a different corner but still watching me.

WEDNESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 2021

I saw another black guy on the corner by the playground staring at me on the way to work. What the fuck was with this passive aggressive taunting. These guys were worse than Special BND Agent Schlenzig.

THURSDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER 2021

After helping a photographer friend move out of his old studio, due to his recent cancer diagnosis, we had our first real serious conversation. Over coffee we chatter about the nature of dating, and I quoted Bill Hicks, *"It's hard to have a relationship in this business, man. You're always travelling,*

Bruce Stirling John Knox

*keeping weird hours, you know. It's going to take a very special woman, you know – or a bunch of average ones.”*

On the train home, I spotted yet another well-dressed black guy in business casual staring at me. I scanned the crowded carriage and saw a second guy at the opposite end. This shit was beginning to boil my piss.

FRIDAY 24<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

Took more candle-lit meat photographs this evening, and at 10pm I left the studio to get something to eat. While wandering through the freezing streets, I text with Tove, my Norwegian friend. She was sick and home alone on Christmas eve, but mostly she hated not being able to get out and go hiking like every other day. I told her that that's what I liked about her, her constant drive to get up and do shit. When I was about to send a message saying that she'll soon be fit again and back in the mountains – my phone rang.

It was Father Lucus and he sounded delirious! I took shelter from the bitter wind in the entrance of a courtyard, as Lucus sobbed and spoke about hearing voices in empty rooms. He said that his floor was always dirty despite washing it every night. He wept for a while before muttering on about how terrified he was that he couldn't protect himself.

That caught my attention, and I glanced up at the leafless trees, then said, “Stop reading. Wait till I join you.”

He instantly burst into tears. After a few moments, he found his composure and thanked me, saying that he couldn't go on without my support. I told him to phone back later as it was just too fucking cold right now.

He didn't call back.

When I got home, I sat thinking about that morning a year ago in the temple caverns of northern Norway. It still seemed so recent. After the old Swiss guy and his men had abandoned me, and once I had climbed the stairs out of the steaming water, I soon found my clothes and backpack. But they had taken all the talisman that I had collected. Fortunately, they hadn't taken the GPS locator.

In case Lucus was actually onto something, I needed some protection.

## Interfering With Divinities

SATURDAY 25<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

Slept in till 1pm. Made my bed. Had a shower. Sat at my desk with a coffee and watched the news. I learned that the James Webb Space Telescope was being launched today after ten years of construction. Hank Green had this to say about it, *“John, I don’t know what the point of being a human is, but I know that somewhere close to the root is curiosity. We want to make the world better for ourselves and for other people. But even without that concern, I think we want to know, we want to learn, we want to look really deep into ourselves, into our world, and into our universe. And in a very literal way we are about to see deeper than we ever have before.”*

This Telescope was the result of vast amounts of human cooperation and knowledge brought together in order to scrape the surface of the fundamental elements of the universe.

And then there was Father Lucus with this ritual that had been written by some fanatic hundreds of years ago. An operation designed to communicate with celestial beings in order to prove where man’s place was in the grand scheme of things.

And then who was I? A fucking idiot riding on the coattails of institutions that were as alien to me as deep space was to the wise. Why should I fucking bother when I would never understand anything of significance? All I knew was the futility of my trying. And yet, what did I have to lose by taking a look.

I joined a gathering of friends for Christmas dinner in a big apartment where I threw confetti and cooked chicken for the banquet. More and more friends arrived and even the huge dining table wasn’t big enough for all the guests and food. After the feast, I chatted on the sofa with a petite blonde Russian who was new to town. She was just another kid in their early twenties overtly looking for corruption. But inevitably, I was cock-blocked by Felicity and Elisabeth. I called it a night by 3am and walked away with a smirk. It was always amusing how my so-called sexually liberated friends found it necessary to keep me away from the fresh meat. How hypocritically typical.

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SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

Finally, I decided to write three near identical letters. To Father Theophilus in Strasbourg, Rabbi Geithner in Salzburg, and Ahmet the mullah in Ghent. I told them that I was working on an academic paper and asked if they would have time to answer a few questions about theodicy.

I expected no reply, in which case, I would stalk them anyway. Why not. I knew where they lived.

TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

An Italian girl who I had been introduced to by Aniska had postponed our photoshoot for tonight, so I left the studio once I finished work. On my short walk to the next street where I lived, I saw another black guy watching me. I was fucking annoyed by their presence, so I went home, dressed warmer, and then went back out into the cold.

Returning to the lakeside house, I knocked hard on the front door. Both the gaunt old woman and mute old man stood in the entrance. The woman crossed her arms as she said, “Do you have something for us?”

“I’ve tracked them to a river with terraces surrounded by stone buildings,” I stated, from the doormat. “But I need some sort of protection, if I’m ever going to get them under control.”

The old woman stood and swayed from side to side before a smirk cracked the corner of her thin lips. Glancing aside, she walked away as the big guy opened the door wider.

They led me to the right, to part of the mansion I hadn’t been to before. A group of those well-dressed young black men sat reading at a large oak table. Not one of them looked up as we passed through that big room full of books and display cabinets. We then entered a stone arched corridor that led to a small Romanesque chapel. Behind the altar was a stairwell in the floor. It was narrow and uncomfortably tight. The old couple each took a tall candle, lit it,

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and then descended beneath the chapel. I glanced back from where we had come, before reluctantly following with my own candle.

And yes, we entered a chamber that was as stark and empty as the buried tomb's entrance. However, the four columns of this underground portico faced west, toward its twin tomb. The two heads of this household went straight to the discreet stairs at the far end of this chamber and continued downward. I paused, staring at this eerily familiar situation. Except, instead of exposed dirt surrounding the portico, here stone walls boxed it in. A sickly sweat greased my palms, as I wondered why this tomb was so easily accessible. However, I still moved inward and down the other stone stairs.

Below, the couple were already lighting metal bowls along the aisle, but this tomb was different to the one in the garden. The layout was mirrored and yet adorned much differently. Statues of nude men and women stood in crippled postures next to the surrounding colonnades. At the end was a thick slab of uncut stone instead of a sarcophagus. Behind it was a big stone relief of more humbled bodies covered in script. Strangely, the chamber smelled like fresh flowers, though I couldn't see any. The main similarity was that everything was made of black stone with gold details. Turning slowly, I scanned the wall behind, remembering those giants that I had seen just before escaping the other tomb. But we were alone, it was just the three of us.

The old couple were kneeling in front of the crude altar. Heads bowed as they mumbled in unison. This place was beautiful in its Greco-Roman temple style. So, I sat in the middle of the floor not wanting to let those two old cunts get to the stairs before me.

However, I suddenly found myself in the realm of death and sin without even trying. Fires roared in this wide valley and over a small mountain peak. I saw the silhouette of the towers from another scorched city. And yet, as my eyes adjusted to the reddened flames, I realized that these buildings weren't ruins at all. It was a widespread metropolis that covered the valley walls. The golden haze rose and fell with the massive fires, but I could see a path that could take me further up into the abandoned battlements of this infernal settlement. That was when the black goat appeared out of nowhere and fucking bit my left arm! It stomped its hoof in a threatening manner and bucked its horns at me!

"The fuck is your problem?!" I snarled, grasping my bleeding forearm.

The goat shot forward and rammed its horns right into my fucking chest – I fell backward on the floor in the underground tomb, grasping the pain in my ribs, but I wasn't bleeding. However, a golden glow was now filling



the space. A deep rumbling began to echo from every direction. The voices of the old couple rose as they called out louder and louder. I felt the droning sound vibrating through the floor and saw the statues shake. The woman then screamed in horror! The old man soon joined her with a shrill voice that a grown man only ever made from the pangs of extreme agony! There, above the altar, I watched a golden sphere of flames appear with interlocking halos. Then countless incandescent arms rolled around that two-meter-wide free-floating ball of fire. A blueish silver gleam emanated around the aura of this looming orb, as that howling noise grew louder than a freight train. Yet despite the burning sphere, the tomb remained as cold as ever.

“Whoa!” I gasped, when a huge paw reached out of the fire and slammed upon the floor in front of the old couple! Shrieking, they both scrambled away. Tripping over themselves as they fled in terror. But I stayed. I had seen things like this before, two years ago, during my one and only DMT trip.

That tree-trunk-thick lion’s leg slowly scratched at the floor with massive claws before slamming down again! The impact caused several statues to topple and shatter! Getting to my feet, I clenched my jaw, bracing myself as I stood my ground. I watched those claws tear into the stone floor as I slowly took a step closer. The ripples of the intricate halos were far more alluring than the risk, especially how they brought back memories. The way the flames moved like liquid gold. As blinding as the light was, I wanted to touch it. I wanted to know if it was actually there. Or was this just another fucking case of hyperphantasia. The rumbling was getting dangerously loud, when suddenly the paw retracted, revealing a small object on the floor about half the size of a phone. I was reaching down to pick it up, when the rumbling shifted to another pitch. In the next moment, I genuinely felt frightened. Like I had just realized that I was swimming right next to a great big fucking shark. What the fuck was I doing?! I began to pull back. But no! I shook my head out of pure disgust and snatched up the item from the floor – just before the orb expanded! Backing, I hurried away as I saw multiple wings of fire stretching out from the sphere with what looked like stars gleaming within. In the next moment the flames broke into unrestrained chaos! This time the fire was hot! With an inferno filling the entire tomb, I lurched for the stairs!

Racing up to the first chamber, I shoulder barged straight through a crowd of old men in filthy robes. All of them covering their mouths with both hands. I shoved my way through those strange apparitions as the flames flared up the stairs. Despite the heat they kept their mouths shut. I didn’t stick around, forcing myself out the door, through the columns, and up the steps into the

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chapel!

Immediately, I slammed into several black men! I stumbled away from them glancing back at the stairwell. No flames, however, rose this far. Other men gathered around the old couple. They were both prostrate on the floor and weeping. One of the black guys grabbed me by the jacket and yelled in some unknown language. Several others shook him loose. I just continued backing away, slowly shaking my head. What the fuck was this place built for?!

I walked out to the back garden and stood upon the very ground that I had once dug up. There, in the light from the big house, I raised this newfound object in my hand. It was a small stone tablet covered in some foreign script on both sides. My mind was full of too many questions. Had I actually contacted something during my DMT trip? Who were those levitating individuals robed in gold within the Norwegian hypogeum? Was there a connection to this place and its secret? I didn't fucking know, but as I stood there, it began lightly raining and I became aware that I wasn't alone. The water's edge was now lined with hundreds of translucent shadow figures. It seemed as though I had gotten the attention of something. But devils were devils! Men were men! And my enemies were still my fucking enemies!

WEDNESDAY 29<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2021

I awoke many times in the night, finding various shadows and hideous creatures filling my flat. Sometimes more, sometimes less. I ignored them whenever I reached for my phone to see how long it had been since I had last awoken. At one point, I noticed that I had another message from the mother in Poland, *"You know you are my fantasy. A filthy fantasy. But I'm also a little bit afraid of you. I like men who hurt girls. But you seem to be extremely savage sometimes. I never had something like this. As you can see, I'm one of your biggest fans."*

Putting my phone aside, I watched the hundreds of black serpents hanging from the ceiling as I recalled what Malloy had told me at lunch. The whole Berlin Lodge of Masons were going to Jerusalem in the new year for a special ceremony in the caverns under the old city. As I drifted back to sleep,

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I wondered if I should talk to him about these visions of mine. But from what I understood, the Freemasons rituals had nothing to do with communicating with anything beyond the self. All I had was the systematic behavior of quiet insanity. I'd keep this psychosis to myself and to myself alone.

SATURDAY 1<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2022

Fucked and sodomized Zoe in my bed this morning. Finished what we planned to do two years ago. She left in a good mood, and we didn't talk about it. Nothing like some casual meaningless fornication to start the new year.

SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JANUARY 2022

Nigel came to the studio this afternoon and we recorded our first session discussing his book idea on contemporary dating. During one of my frenzied rants, I quoted Chuck Palahniuk, "*Sticking feathers up your butt does not make you a chicken.*" Yet egotistical self-absorbed fucking pretense-peddlers loved to think that just by saying that they were something that meant they were it. Finally, I ended by spewing forth a monologue about how another world war was inevitable! We're the same primitive fucking animals we've been for the last 100,000 fucking years! We're savages! Fucking savages!

-

This evening, I sat on the floor in the dark.

I soon stood in the circle of ruined obelisks in the pouring rain. The wide stone platform was now coated in a thick black sludge. Scanning the surrounding lake, I heard a grunt from behind. A worm-bodied devil slithered aggressively toward me. I grabbed that fucker by the throat and slammed it against a standing stone! Hissing, it pulled away with its boney arms lashing out. I heard more of them groaning as it retreated. A chant then

## Interfering With Divinities

began throbbing from all around the elevated platform. Stepping over to the edge, I looked down to the water where thousands of those pale creatures with humanoid upper torsos surrounded this place. Even more of them were emerging from the murky waters as their menacing voices rose in waves. A great beast then surfaced further behind, but it just continued on its way.

Then a loud THUD struck the stone behind me! Turning in the downpour, I found a big, tiger-sized demon. It was as black as the shit that we stood upon and stretched its jaws displaying broken obsidian-like teeth. I slowly approached this brutal-looking thing and too it drew closer. Until suddenly it leaped! Its head side-swiped me and I was sent crashing across the muddy slime sliding all the way up to another obelisk. The chanting devils called out louder from below. Cradling my ribs, I staggered to my feet. However, the demon was now standing in the center of the stone circle – where it began melting! The entire structure was reverberating from those overwhelming voices, but I was focused on how that animal disintegrated into a vile sediment. And then something touched my head –

Opening my eyes, I looked up as that same tiger-like demon walked around my flat. Its snarling breath stank as it stepped into the open passageway in the east wall. I sat watching it slowly squeeze into the depth of the cave and I wondered what the fuck that was all about.

MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> JANUARY 2022

Nigel wrote to me today, saying that he had just tested positive for Corona – again. So, I walked down to the local test station, and twenty minutes later I got a negative result. A few days after Christmas dinner, multiple people also came down with Corona. Everyone began freaking out, despite all the guests having taken a test before coming. And then even those that had since taken multiple tests didn't believe that they were actually in the clear. With people running around claiming that they were sick despite no evidence, it was obvious that we had officially reached peak levels of absurd hypochondria. Where was all the faith in this fucking vaccine that was meant to prove you were a supposedly immortal human being?

-

Later that night, while listening to *All Eyes on Me*, by Bo Burnham, I walked down my street. As I stepped onto the curb, I saw the lady of the house getting into a black Bentley with a blonde girl and that blonde Russian douchebag. Upon seeing me, he bounced down the footpath with his shirt still gaping open regardless of the freezing air. I clenched my jaw and watched him approach. Laughing, and in his terrible English, he invited me to another party across town. The stick-figure of a girl then strut over and reached up around my neck as she pushed her fake tits against my chest. I glared straight back into her tweeking eyes, as she whispered, “Let’s fuck on the drive.”

I leaned forward and quietly hissed, “I’d rather cut your fucking head off!”

FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

After work, I went to the theater to see the new *Spider-Man* film. But during the trailers an advert for Cartier, *Love Is All*, came on and my eyes glazed over. This was the exact delusion of love that businesses incessantly pushed – while the authorities in Kazakhstan were now shooting to kill protestors.

After the movie, I wrote to Ally. She replied right away, saying that she was also free tonight. So, I went directly to a late-night supermarket and bought a big bottle of ketchup.

Once I got home, I emptied the ketchup and thoroughly washed out the bottle. I then grabbed my large tube of water-based lubrication and poured a considerable amount into the clean ketchup bottle and filled the rest with warm water.

When Ally arrived, she was looking fucking adorable in the candlelight. Her blonde hair was immaculately styled to one side and her cleavage was impossible to deny. I grabbed her small figure the moment she stepped in the door and slammed her against the wall. Squeezing her throat, I kicked the door shut. She gasped and I licked her open mouth as she tore at my clothes. Picking her up, I carried her to the sofa where I violently stripped her naked. She then turned and jumped on me, her legs clinging to my hips as we made out where I stood. Her dark eyes peering into mine as I stabbed my impatient

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erection at her tender asshole. But then she slapped me! So, I dropped her! Her impudent smirk, however, only fueled my sadism. I shoved her so hard that she flew off her feet onto the bed! Looking up shocked, she giggled, then crawled over and sucked vigorously on my dick. Soon, I picked her up and dumped her on the leather sofa. I then grabbed the ketchup bottle from the desk. Spraying her tits with lube, I flipped her around, doused her spine, and soaked her ass. I then spanked and fucked her hard against the sodden sofa. When she sucked my dick again, I shoved the pointed nozzle of the bottle deep into her rectum, filling her up to capacity. She gasped as lube shot out of her ass. Pulling her hair, I got her to sit on top as my dick sunk deep inside of her flooded colon. She rode me like a real cowgirl. Lashings of lube burst out as she bounced. Then suddenly, she cried out aloud and pushed down harder than before. Once she rose up, clear lube squirted in a powerful stream across my white floor. And people still asked why I painted it that way. Filling her ass with more from the ketchup bottle, I told her to shit it all over me while I sat on the sofa. Then I slipped my dick into her sloppy cunt as I fingered her ass. While she pounded down, I managed to slip four fingers into her ass before she climaxed. Disgusted at her pleasure, I pushed her away. She shivered while panting like a thirsty dog. With all the radiators on full, it was like a sauna in my flat as I stretched her across my sofa. Spreading her supple thighs wide open, I soaked my hand in more lube and then returned my four fingers to her ass. She never resisted, until finally my thumb popped inside, and she cried out in some kind of response. Throttling her slender neck with my right hand, I continued pumping my left knuckles deeper into her tight little body. And then, at last, my fingers curled and clenched as I fist-fucked her! I grabbed her around the back and lifted her up, letting gravity do half the work. My wrist sank deeper with each punch! Soon she gasped in pain, so I withdrew my hand and shoved her over the sofa. I told her to reach back and pry open her cheeks. As she did, I jerked off into that gaping meat! My cum shooting into her drenched cavity as she hummed with trembling exhaustion. Inserting my dripping erection into her asshole one last time, she finally let her sphincter clench.

When she got on her knees and licked my dick clean, I reached for a pen from my desk. I glared hatefully into her mascara smeared eyes as I then drew a swastika on her forehead.

SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

Recently, I had downloaded a bunch of dating apps again, and today at 4pm I had my first date with Abi, a dark-haired Romanian girl. Sitting at my local cafe on that gloomy afternoon, I waited while listening to Tamino, *Indigo Night*. I watched the waitress Aileen and wondered if she knew what had happened to Defne.

I then received a text – when suddenly a group of six black women sat at my table.

“Hi,” I smiled casually. “Guess you catfished the shit out of me.”

“We are friends,” the strikingly beautiful woman in the middle stated. “And we have the same problem.”

“Do we?” I frowned, leaning back.

The woman turned and pointed out the window next to the door. Across the freezing street, in the fading light of day, stood one of the well-dressed black men.

Studying these young women, I recognized some of their turbans.

“You must help us!” she stressed, grabbing my hands upon the tabletop. “You must help us free our husbands! You must!”

“Free them from what?!” I snarled, removing my hands from her strong grip.

“They are stealing our men! Taking them from their families. You must help us!”

“Must I?!”

“We can help you get what you need.”

“And how’s that?”

“I’m a locksmith.”

I picked up my phone, and slowly looked away from the surrounding women. Abi’s message said that she would be fifteen-minutes late. Tucking my phone into my jacket pocket, I asked, “Where are you all from?”

“Sudan.”

Sighing, I shook my head. What made them think that I could help them with anything?! I didn’t know who they were or who lived at the lakeside house. But not wanting them to ruin my date, I quickly moved them along. “Give me your number, and I’ll think about it.”

Abi soon joined me, and she was looking fucking gorgeous. We got on

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great. I mentioned my stay in Romania in 2017 and she said that she had also visited the same village. I really liked her cute accent and penetrating gray eyes.

I already had other dinner plans, so cut the date off at 6pm. However, I made sure that I got her number as we walked to the U-bahn.

### SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

With both objects from the lakeside house, I sat on the floor this evening. The ivory idol in my left hand. The small stone tablet in my right. From what I could tell, it seemed like the underground tombs were amplifiers, just like how I had imbued my flat with devils.

After closing my eyes, I soon found myself in a freezing wind as I stood within a large enclosure next to a stone cathedral. Suddenly the ground shook! A deep groan came from below. Holding up the ivory idol, the tremor got worse, as my hand was pulled away from the cathedral. I crossed the yard following the idol toward the trees. The closer I got to the middle tree, the louder the rumbling grew, until the trunk itself cracked and the soil below bulged upward! A scream then came from behind! I twisted and saw that brown-haired girl standing in the enclosure. Holding out the tablet, I watched the ground immediately settled as the groan faded. One attracted. One repelled. I then marched across the yard toward that now silent girl. Her naked body almost glowed in the dark of night. All of a sudden, she spun and ran into the shadows down the side of the cathedral by the trees. Once I hurried after her, the wind died, and I abruptly found myself in a tunnel. Train tracks nearly tripped me over. Not far ahead, I could see the platform. It was the Berlin U-bahn station: Spittelmarkt.

### TUESDAY 11<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022



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Father Lucus phoned sounding half asleep. He said that we needed to fast before the ceremony. Along with abstain from other things in order to purify ourselves. He then started rambling on about the wandering moor and all the places that he had travelled to. Being a nomad from Algeria, he went north to the Iberian Peninsula so that he could commune with divinities in a distant land. He went to Cordoba, Toledo, Oviedo, Mundaka, and Fabara. Lucus said that some names had changed over the centuries, but these seemed to be the most important places that he had visited. Finally, according to René's research, the moor died in Marseille – this I could confirm.

I took notes, but mostly observed how unusually calm Lucus now seemed.

WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

At 3pm, on this cold and misty afternoon, I went out for a coffee. I immediately spotted a black guy on the first corner who followed me. Then I saw another come marching down the next street. And when I approached another intersection, several more men closed in. Suddenly the Mercedes pulled up in front of me! The original black guy shoved open the passenger's side door and called out, "Get in, quickly!"

I scowled back.

He glanced around at the others hurrying toward us, "Please! Please get in!"

We drove off, leaving the six other Sudanese men on the curb watching our abrupt departure.

"I don't know what I'm doing!" the driver gasped.

I had chosen the back seat and glared at this guy suspiciously.

"I don't know! I just don't know!"

Staring at the damp streets, I said nothing.

"I can't sleep! I can't stop thinking about what they made me do! What I did! What I did to that girl!"

"Why did you do it, then?"

"I had to! They told me to!"

"What did they possibly say that could convince you to torture an innocent little kid?"

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“I must do what they say! I always do! I had to!”

“Or what?”

“Or I will lose my faith! I need my faith! It is all I have in this world!”

“And yet you’ve lost faith in what you did.”

“This is too much! I don’t know! I don’t know what to do!”

I scanned the winter trees in my neighborhood, thinking of those Sudanese women, and then spoke up, “Hey, if it was easy everyone would be doing it. You did the right thing. She deserved to suffer.”

“But why?!” he cried desperately.

Frowning, I glared at the back of his head as I asked, “Do you even know what I did? What I owe? What I’m meant to return?”

He shook his head.

“And yet you asked me why I kept digging!” I yelled, full of anger. “What exactly do you fucking know!”

“She is growing impatient! She sent us to motivate you! She is...,” he stopped himself, as tears ran down his face.

“Tell her, I’m making progress.”

“That won’t be enough!”

“Drop me off on the next corner,” I said, pointing to my local café. “Ask yourself, what else is there to life other than your neurotic obsession with your faith? If nothing, then you should fucking murder me! But then maybe you should understand why! And then you’ll know – not just believe – you’ll know not to show me a single fucking moment of mercy!”

-

I had my second date with Abi this evening at the Russian restaurant at Rosenthaler Platz. During which, the police came in and checked everyone’s vaccine passports and identification. After all, IMPFUNG MACHT FREI.

As we headed to the Z-Bar for drinks with friends, I told Abi that it was my 44<sup>th</sup> birthday. The owners gave me a complimentary bottle of champagne, as more people showed up than I had expected. Most of the girls took the opportunity to take revenge and gave me a severe birthday spanking to the cheers from the crowd. I received sincere hugs from some while others thanked me for the company over the lockdowns. Nigel gave me a collection of works by Edgar Allan Poe, saying, “Young Bruce, I’ve got to admit, I’ve met some of my dearest friends through you. It’s a true pleasure having you as a friend.”

“You just need to get out more,” I smirked, patting him on the back before I bid Abi goodnight. She had an early morning, but I told her that looked

forward to seeing her again.

As I leaned against the bar, the owner handed me a cola, and said, “You know, there’s a reason so many came out tonight.”

I left at 1am, with most of the guests wondering why I was leaving my own party. My excuse was that I had work tomorrow. However, as soon as I jumped in a taxi, I went in the opposite direction from my neighborhood. The lady of the house had invited me to another Russian party. How could I refuse. After all, birthday strippers were a tradition of mine.

Kinksters in the Berlin fetish scene liked to claim that they lived the most sexually glamorous lifestyle. They were wrong. Underground sex parties were for the dregs of the sexual marketplace, where they could find solace in being desired despite their objectively numerous deficiencies. High-class Russian whorehouses hosted by affluent drug dealers were where the real decadence bloomed. Money, Russian money bought the finest pussy in this fucking town!

#### THURSDAY 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

Walking the cold empty streets this evening, I was dwelling on a few particular girls that I had loved and lost over the years. I especially focused on how much I seemed to have hurt them. They had inevitably become different people, and now we had little but the past in common. Their lives no longer required my existence, and it seemed that I had been reduced to just a mistake in their faded and distorted memory of what we had once been. I remembered though. And as much as I appreciated how far they had grown, I also despised that they were no longer the embodiments of what I perceived them to be. We had become obsolete to each other. Yet still, their sexual constructs in my depravity would never let their capitulating meat grow old.

I then spotted a blue and silver van on the curb. It was a Kältebus from a Christian shelter. A couple of volunteers were talking to a homeless guy on the pavement as I slowly approached. They soon helped him into the van as I walked by. I wondered if I should volunteer. But what difference could I make. Maybe it would be a more constructive use of my time than the insanity that I indulged in. Through helping those worse off than myself, I

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might become a better fucking human.

But by the time I got home, I knew that no fleeting altruism would change what I was in my bones: a piece of fucking shit!

# SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

FRIDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

With less than two hours of sleep, my flight departed Berlin at 7:20am.

I arrived in the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela at 2pm. The hotel that I was staying at was half of an old monastery. My room being appropriately stark though quaint.

Having time to kill, I wandered around the beautiful buildings with their rickety lichen-patched stone. I was well aware that Spain had been a pocket of ignorance of mine, however, I soon came to adore the Baroque architecture with spires on everything.

While alone in one small church admiring the ornate columns, a tapping sound caught my attention.

“You little shit,” I smirked, watching the monkey-devil clawing at some jewel in a marble wall covered with a list of names. Suddenly the precious stone popped out and I caught it in midair! The small creature then smacked its deformed head against the wall above the gaping hole. The jewel was not its concern. Peering into the cavity, I saw a tiny wooden box tucked inside. I used the map that I’d picked up from the hotel to pry this object out of its hiding place. Folding the map around the box, I then replaced the flat jewel back in the wall and left before anyone else entered.

I stood in the big square in front of the elegant cathedral as the sunset turned the twin towers gold. But as I watched, the sun fell further and abruptly the stone went cold. I sat on a small balcony just west of the cathedral, looking



down over the valley as dusk grew ever darker. It was 7pm when all that was left of daylight was a slither of gleaming fire on the horizon. I then thought of the time that I had chased the sun across the North Sea in a small fishing boat. The foolish endeavors that I had gotten myself into seemed unavoidable at the time, but looking back, I hoped never to find myself in the middle of any open waters ever again. I couldn't help scanning the homes down the valley with their warm lights and reminisce on my childhood. Looking through the windows of neighbors or friends or even my own home, I knew that I never belonged. I just watched from outside. A sentiment that persisted to this day. And here I was, in another distant land, brought through sheer curiosity. Because I wanted to know. And once again, it had seemed like a good idea. I was set on a course, like my venture out into the North Sea. Though, now the sun had gone, but what I had was a view that I could enjoy for a few more fleeting moments. I may have indulged in atrocities, but I would never deny the beauty.

Father Lucus soon came marching over to my spot. As I stood, he embraced me hard, then gave a curt acknowledgement of my coming so far to see him. He said that everything was in order.

"Tonight?" I asked, assuming tomorrow would have been more suitable, considering that he had told me little to nothing about what the plan was.

"We must begin on the eve of the Sabbath," Lucus stated, walking off without a pause. His white hair and beard looked as neat and tidy as I remembered from Porto. However, his expression was drawn and haggard. Deep lines were cracked into his stern demure. He explained that he had been praying from sunup to sundown. Then he wanted to confirm that I hadn't eaten or laid with a woman in the last 24 hours.

"Where are we going?" I asked, while being led up into the old town where I soon lost my orientation in the narrow streets. "Thought we were doing this out in the woods, where you could set up the ten surrounding altars."

"They must be on consecrated ground!" Lucus grunted, holding up a cluster of keys both ancient and contemporary. "I readied them all last night. There are enough chapels in the city to do the job in approximately the right places."

We hurried down a few more crooked alleyways, before stepping up to an iron-studded double door between stone pilasters. Lucus unlocked and then shoved the door inward, revealing wide steps that immediately went straight down.

"Underground?" I hesitated.



## Interfering With Divinities

“You can’t be claustrophobic!” Lucas yelled, without waiting.

“Getting there,” I sneered to myself. Glancing up at the leafless branches on the shrouding trees, I stared the weeds and creepers that were riddled throughout the wall above.

Lucas now had a torch as he quickly stomped further down into the echoing depth. Reluctantly, I pushed the heavy door shut and then used my phone’s flashlight to illuminate the descent. We went deep into the hill that the old town was built upon. The steps curved and intersected several other staircases that led back up to unknown levels. Eventually, we entered a tall subterranean chamber that resembled so many of the churches that I had visited today. However, gone were the elaborate icons and framed paintings. This place was abandoned and stagnant. The only feature of note was the running water pouring from an open pipe into a large semicircular pond next to the stairs.

“How’s your Arabic?” Lucas called out, while he proceeded to light many bowls of oil placed around the floor.

“Non-existent,” I replied, walking slowly toward the altar. It was comprised of a stack of four random stone blocks to the height of over a meter. Upon the top resided a horned silhouette backlit by the open flames. “A bull’s head?”

“You don’t speak Arabic?!” Lucas sounded genuinely appalled.

“Why would I?” I responded, though focusing upon the writing on the floor surrounding that wonky altar. It looked like blood. I hadn’t been aware of just how much effort Lucas had put into organizing this secret little operation. However, I was pleased that he had taken it so seriously.

He soon handed me robes to wear over my clothes. That, I was appreciative of, as it was cold as shit down there. Once dressed appropriately, I saw Lucas pause as a moment of terror flickered behind his eyes.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked quietly.

Swallowing, Lucas rubbed his forehead and then went still. Finally, he spoke up, “God brought us into this world to praise his glory. By making us aware of, and able to savor, the magnificence of the world he has created for us.”

“This isn’t exactly the orthodox approach,” I commented.

Again, Lucas took his time before replying, “By heterodoxy or any other means. Whatever it takes, so be it. In Jesus name, amen.”

While I washed my face in the bitterly cold water from the pond, Lucas prayed over me. He didn’t need to explain the cleansing or any of his actions.



I'd done worse rituals. Some of what he said was in Latin, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, and I don't know what else. Part of the ceremony seemed banal as he blessed me multiple times, but other movements and directions that he faced seemed very much occult in nature. The one point of order in which Lucus stressed, was that I kept my mouth shut if I didn't know what was being said.

At one point, Lucus poured wine into a metal bowl and dropped grapes on top. At another time, he turned toward the four corners and lay face-down, arms out wide as he recited some litany over and over. He took a glass bottle and dripped oil onto his palms and then slapped his own face. I wasn't exempt from this nasty anointment.

Not amused, I took a seat next to the trickling pond and watched on. These invocations continued in a series where certain parts were repeated while others were introduced. All the while, Lucus supplicated himself with his earnest petition. He entreated, he begged, and he humbled himself to the ineffable. Again and again, in that daunting space, Lucus continued his recitations with an absolute commitment that seemed to require a strength beyond his age. I waited, watched, and wondered if Jehovah himself might show up.

It must have been over two hours of this, and yet Lucus repeated the ceremony regardless of fatigue. Prayers upon sacred rites were called out from his ragged voice. But would something actually appear? If so, what had he hoped to do? And yet where were these manifestations that he had told me about on the phone? This place was cold, empty, and dead.

Lucus's voice eventually began giving out, so I slowly rose and circled the chamber outside of the burning bowls. Standing near the bull's head, I heard Lucus weep. He was kneeling, head down, and hands limp upon his thighs. Nothing had come. No illumination. No divine knowledge. Not a single sign from above. I gradually walked back around to the pond where I washed that sinking oil from my cheeks.

When I looked back up, Lucus was standing right next to me!

"Jesus Christ!" I gasped, shaking my fucking head.

Lucus, however, was still staring at the altar.

Turning, I stopped halfway upon seeing a soft glow floating in the air. I glanced at Lucus who was utterly petrified. Approaching cautiously, I wanted a closer look. Lucus grabbed my arm, but I yanked myself free. The pale glow swirled like smoke and expanded as a mist in the middle of the chamber – when BOOM!

I shuddered as a bolt of lightning burst out of the mist and struck the bull's

## Interfering With Divinities

head! Once I looked back up, I found that a huge four-meter-tall sword had stabbed vertically down into the stone altar. It shimmered softly and didn't appear to be made of metal, but something like glass. Lucus suddenly burst into delirious prayer. Running ahead of me, he threw himself prostrate before the altar. His forehead pressed hard against the floor. As I looked upward, the specter continued growing into a semitransparent source of light. Within that undulating haze, I could almost make out the vague shape of a towering figure that levitated next to the sword. The only recognizable part of this ethereal being were the huge human-like hands. One of which held onto a big metallic cylinder that leaned against where its chest should have been.

Lucus continued muttering his litanies in his hoarse voice. I, however, was fascinated by this looming thing. When, just as I stepped a little closer, it moved! Twisting to its left, that ominous glow slammed the cylinder into the far wall with a thunderous BOOM!

The two-meter-tall tube then rolled swiftly across the ancient wall with a loud scorching sound! The entity's crystalline hands immediately removed the cylinder, revealing markings that had been burned into the wall. A script! Some form of language had been carved directly into the stone. The whole place then began violently trembling. A rumbling that increased the more this specter turned back toward Lucus and me. While it raised the cylinder threateningly above its head in both hands, I caught a glimpse of a face among the swirling mist. A glassy face with inhuman features.

I walked past the babbling mess of an old man and onto the bloody writing upon the floor around the altar. Glaring up at that messenger, I demanded to know, "Why don't you speak English?!"

Lucus moaned out in horror, but I ignored his entreatings. My hand gestured furiously at the alien script still red hot upon the stone wall.

"If you're a messenger from God, then you're below me! And if you're just another devil, then you're still below me!" I yelled, kicking aside the bowl of grapes. "Get in your fucking place!"

That free-floating entity slowly lowered the cylinder, and the vibrating eased a bit, though a deep drone persistently echoed throughout the chamber.

"What the fuck have you learnt during your time in hell?!" I snarled furiously. "Why should we listen to you?! What the fuck have you got to share with the group?! Why the fuck should we believe a fucking thing you say, if you, a divine being, isn't wise enough to know your fucking audience. Spell it out! Spell it out to me! In fucking English, for fuck's sake!"

The giant specter then simply dropped the cylinder... It fell with the

return of silence... But exploded like a bullet to my fucking head!

Both Lucus and I were knocked clean across the floor by the detonation! Shocked from the blast of incandescent light, my senses were dulled for a moment, but when I looked up again the entire place was swarming with thousands of blackened devils! Screaming, writhing, and grotesque in their wrath! I think Lucus passed out from the sheer sight of such a shrouding spectacle of incensed monstrosities. The only light now came from the giant messenger, however, it was mostly obscured behind the piles of thrashing devils. One of them grabbed Lucus's leg and dragged him toward their foaming jaws.

"Get!" I sneered, clutching his wrist. "Get back, you fucks!"

A huge number of shrieking fiends then lurched away as the levitating being reached for its sword.

Tugging on Lucus, I scowled at that messenger, knowing very well what it resembled from my past encounters, especially from the White Sea. It then raised its sword menacingly, and all the beasts howled in a savage fury! So, I let Lucus go.

"Take this instead," I whispered, pulling out the map-wrapped box, as I lost sight of the old man in the depth of those devils.

Instantly, the hordes of malicious creatures lulled at the sight of what I held in my hand. Even the messenger took a moment with the sword still raised high. Various blackened devils hung from the ceiling itself watching on as I unwrapped the tiny wooden box. Making sure not to touch it with my bare hands, I turned the box upside-down. The lid dropped and ash gushed out – until a great wind swept it up and filled the entire subterranean chamber! Devils screamed as a gigantic black worm rose from the floor, casting dozens of its own kind into the air!

"Get!" I yelled, as that whale-sized worm smashing through the masses of demons. "Get the fuck back!"

I was then crashed into by an overwhelming number of devils as they were cast aside. It was a free for all of anarchic mayhem. Struggling to keep my head above the weight of all those writhing creatures, the last thing I saw was the glassy messenger drive its huge crystalline sword directly into the ceiling with another colossal BOOM!

Darkness echoed supreme. And then silence reigned once more. All I heard in the pitch black was the weary lungs of Lucus. Using my phone's flashlight, I scanned the empty chamber. Lucus lay unconscious and mostly unharmed. Dragging him over to the pond, I discovered that the water no

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longer poured from the wall. I splashed Lucus in the face with the icy water and he slowly came around.

We sat there for a long time. It had been a hell of a day. I was fucking exhausted and sick of the cold. However, I got to my feet and staggered over to the far wall. The light from my phone lit up the freshly burnt script, and it still looked like no language I recognized. Not that that meant anything. I tried taking a photo, but it was too high up on the wall and my flash was too weak to illuminate it. Lucus then limped up next to me with sweat on his forehead and blood running from several small cuts. We didn't speak, just studied the script. The evidence of an intervention.

As we climbed those ancient stairs, I helped carry Lucus with his arm over my shoulders. There, he finally whispered, "Why?"

Frowning, I just looked up and saw the door not far above.

"Why spare me?"

### SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

I left the hotel at 11am feeling fine. Sitting in a cute cafe, I wrote about last night. It was a lovely day in Spain. Yet by the time I was done, I still hadn't heard from Lucus. I walked to his postal address in the center of the old town but there was no answer when I rang the doorbell.

I spent the day exploring, and eventually stood in the cathedral's crypt in front of the silver reliquary containing the so-called head of Saint James the Great. Though, all holy relics should be taken with a bucket of salt. Yet I wondered how many of the pilgrims that reached the end of the Camino ever actually questioned the story of how his head was found in Spain despite being executed in Jerusalem. But then again, how many of the faithful that flocked here questioned anything at all?

Listening to Live, *The Distance*, I sat on the eastside of the cathedral in the Praza da Quintana, and watched people moving about this square that probably hadn't changed in a few hundred years. Of all the 'pretty buildings' that I had been to over the years, this was up there with some of the finest. And yet, even after last night's encounter, I was no closer to the exalted than I was to feeling an ounce of compassion toward my fellow man.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

I tried phoning Lucas, but there was still no answer. Maybe the completion of the ceremony had finally put the fear of God into him. But what the fuck had he expected, revelation without consternation?

Walking out of the square, I changed the music to Refused, *Elektra*, as I envisioned dead bodies hanging from the huge western wall, as if I were still living in the time of the Alhambra Decree.

SUNDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

The bells tolled midday as I checked out of the hotel. So, I walked directly into the cathedral for mass. During that hour-long service of social-distancing, I ignored the Spanish priests and instead focused on the girl sitting in front of me. Her chestnut hair was tied up revealing a tiny butterfly tattoo behind her right ear. Once she knelt to pray, I pictured myself cutting her head off. Her blood all over my lap and soaking through my pants and onto my erection. I wanted to butcher her down to her bones. Bones that I wanted to splinter. These were my thoughts, no matter the setting. No sacred site was beyond the sacrilege of the Vandals. Except perhaps the library of Saint Augustine. So, did that make me worse than a fucking barbarian?

Leaving mass at 1pm, I wandered up the narrow streets that were now wet from the morning rain. Lucas was staying in an old three-story building which he had been moved to after some drama with his original accommodation. To my surprise, this time he answered the intercom. Soon opening the door, he appeared like a disheveled lunatic.

“Why haven’t you learned the Natural Language?!” Lucas snarled, thumping the door where he stood.

“And which might that be?” I replied.

“The primeval language of Adam and Eve! As told by Agrippa!” he stated. “You must know the proper names of all things! And for the love of God, may he have mercy on your soul, it is not English!”

“Fair enough,” I nodded with a smirk.

Annoyed, Lucas punched the door again before stomping upstairs. His apartment was on the second floor but looked onto the rooftops down the hill. The enclosed balcony was packed with old furniture, while the main room

## Interfering With Divinities

was a mess. Books, wooden crates, and clothes were scattered about. The whole place stank of rancid incense.

“What happened to you yesterday?” I asked, scanning the cloudy sky.

“Spent the day atoning,” Lucus spoke miserably, from the filthy little kitchen where he began brewing some coffee.

“Did it help?”

Scowling back at me, he grumbled, “Not one bit.”

“So, this wandering moor, he conducted the same ritual here, in the same place?”

“You opened you mouth and spoke to it!” Lucus yelled, slamming both hands against the sink. “You spoke to it!”

Glaring hatefully back at the old man, I turned my body toward him as I replied, “Wasn’t that the fucking point!”

Lucus shook his head and glanced away.

“But all the good it did,” I sneered, looking for some sugar. “You couldn’t even read what it wrote on the wall. Waste of our fucking time.”

“You saw it! You did, didn’t you?!”

“What did you see?”

“A great celestial guardian!”

“It was something. Though, don’t know if I’d call it that.”

“What would you call it then?!” Lucus demanded, with both hands on the sink.

“Don’t know,” I shrugged, happy that I found a jar of sandy sugar. “These things never say. But when was the last time you met a bear in the woods and it introduced itself?”

“Then, what do you believe you saw?”

“From what I’ve seen, the vast majority of these fucking animals have no understanding of the world. They hold no secrets to this or any other fucking universe. The only question is, is it enough just knowing that these things exist, or have you got to know exactly what they fucking know? Even if, ultimately, they have no superior fucking intellect?!”

“How can you say such things?! Clearly this messenger was of sanctified origins! Sent from the very court of the Lord himself!”

With that, I stepped right up to the old man and spoke through my teeth, “You don’t fucking know that! You don’t fucking know a thing about what the fuck showed up! Wherever the fuck that thing came from, doesn’t mean it was anything more than just one of an infinite number of devils wanting you to walk straight into its fucking mouth so that it can eat you alive!”

“No! It was of the sublime!”

“Don’t be confused by what you wanted to see over what actually was!” I hissed, when suddenly the sun came out and filled the kitchen. “Could you read what it wrote or not?! That was the only communication of interest! Everything else is assumption!”

“It said we would consort with Methuselah.”

“What?”

“The manuscript. It said Methuselah would come to us.”

“Is that what that fucking thing looked like to you?”

Lucus lowered his head and walked into the main room. There, he opened a heavy old book with rusted clasps, as he said, “Not here.”

Frowning, I stepped over to the messy table. Lucus placed the manuscript below the only painting in the apartment, of some old saint with a golden halo.

“The wandering moor studied in Cordoba, in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century. He was considered to be somewhat of a Dhimmi: a protected non-Muslim. Born as a nomad in northern Africa, the Andalusian culture welcome him in. But no, he didn’t perform the ceremony here. The manuscript didn’t say where he did it exactly. It was written by a monk in Mundaka. How it ended up here, I don’t know.”

The book was a crumbling artifact, and I didn’t want to touch the pages in case I accidentally damaged them. The text was written in an elegant Arabic script. That seemed odd if a catholic monk had written it. Though, Spain was full of dialects and maybe Arabic was common here, I didn’t fucking know.

“You’ve seen these things before?” Lucus softly asked, stepping away. “How many times?”

“Similar things,” I admitted. “But what they are, fucked if I know.”

“And other things too?” Lucus muttered, backing further.

Noticing his retreat, I crossed my arms. “I’ve seen devils so vast that they covered the sky. Seen some crawling into this world out of the meat of butchered animals. However, could they speak and explain why it is that I can even see them? No! I don’t know what any of them are, but ‘devils’ is as close to an accurate title as any. Though, just because devils exist doesn’t fucking mean that their opposite does too!”

“Perhaps that’s why you keep looking,” Lucus whispered, with a sickness in his eyes.

Tilting my head, I waited.

“Perhaps we both keep looking blindly, hoping we stumble upon

## Interfering With Divinities

something unexpected.”

“Like what?!”

“Like their opposite.”

“And what then?!”

“Then I’ll know without a doubt.”

“Know what?!”

“That I wasn’t wrong my entire life.”

I shook my head as Lucus wept. “You know, when I hear a dog barking at night, my first impulse is to beat that fucking thing to death! Then I consider the options: how best to harness its potential for my own benefit.”

“What kind of benefit?”

To which I smiled while glaring into that old man’s wet eyes. “Haven’t you seen enough?”

“No.”

“Then go back and translate whatever the fuck was burned into the wall!”

“I already did.”

“What?!”

“I went back yesterday.”

“And?!”

“It was gone. The entire wall had caved in. Nothing was left.”

“For fuck’s sake!” I sneered, turning to punch the door, but just managed to control my frustration. “If the appearance of that thing wasn’t enough to convince you of your own piety, then nothing fucking will!”

“Blasphemy!” Lucus cried out, slamming the book shut! “No more of your blasphemy!”

“Buddy, we passed blasphemy a long fucking time ago!” I snarled, picking up the book and holding it in a threatening manner in front of the old man’s face. “Let’s not act all coy now!”

“It’s within us all,” he murmured, moving slowly toward the windows. “That potential to become, as they believe in Sikhism, a Satguru.”

I lowered the book, watching Lucus fumble with his hands.

“We must actively seek these truths. Even when the cost is not at first apparent.”

Shaking my head, I looked away, knowing that I was going to be late for my flight. So, I placed the book on the tabletop before reaching for my shoulder bag.

“I’m scared, Bruce,” Lucus spoke up.

“Of what?!” I snapped.



“Of you.”

“Man, believe me. There are much worse fucking things out there to shit the bed over.”

“It’s your encouragement, that’s what concerns me.”

“Hey. You help me. I help you.”

“They say,” Lucus declared, though still with his back toward me. “That Lodovico was found dead. Murdered.”

I paused, staring at the door.

“It’s a risky place to carry out abortions, Rome is.”

Glancing back, I listened.

“The people he worked for knew of his reservations. But still they forced him to fulfill his duties. You should know that those same people have sobering means of retribution for whomever killed him.”

# BERLIN

TUESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

After dinner at Abi's place, while relaxing on the sofa, she asked for my opinion on Jordan Peterson. To which I shrugged and said that he wasn't my cup of tea. I didn't understand why everyone found him so revolutionary. All he spoke about was your run-of-the-mill conservative talking points, like Keith Ranieri. Though, I wondered why she asked. Abi said that she had dated several detestable guys recently that were hardcore fanboys of Peterson. Shaking my head, I suggested that she judge people by their works, not by their followers.

THURSDAY 20<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

Leaving the studio this evening, I turned onto my street and spotted the original Sudanese guy sitting in the only car that wasn't covered in snow. I sat in the passenger's side and asked, "How's the wife?"

"Have you got it?"

Scanning my quiet block, I sat patiently.

"You went to Spain! Did you find it?!"

I waited.

"You cannot keep leaving the country and returning without what you owe!"

"You're not wearing a wedding ring."

The young black guy shook his head with bewilderment.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

We sat in his car for an hour, and he eventually broke down again and told me about his family and how he met his wife back in Sudan. Soon after, he actually smiled and laughed, and he completely lowered his guard. However, once he admitted that he was no longer on speaking terms with his wife, he went silent. I changed the subject and told him about what I had done in Spain. Explaining the manuscript that Father Lucus had found. Though, I didn't tell him what the results were.

Looking anxious, he began muttering something under his breath before stating, "You must return the beast."

"Beasts," I added. "Plural."

"Please don't make me come looking for you again. I cannot live with what I will have to do to you. But I will still do what I must."

FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2022

I had images flashing over my vision today. That church in the countryside appeared while I was making my first coffee, though now it was coated in snow. Then later, while at work, images of frozen trees came to me. When I got home in the evening, I saw a hospital room before my eyes. I drank several glasses of water and wondered why these visions were getting out of control and invading my consciousness.

SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> JANUARY 2022

Woke up with Abi in my bed and we fucked until I came down her thirsty throat. Lying there, she said, "I like how passionate you are."

"Isn't everyone?"

"German guys aren't so much."

"If you say so."

"I like your flat. It has a good energy. I can't sleep at most places."

## Interfering With Divinities

I glanced around my black and white room, thinking of all the fucking horrors that these walls had seen.

While in the shower, a moment of paranoia struck me: what if the Romanian traffickers had set me up with Abi? But then I remembered the randomness of Tinder. There was no way that our chance matching could have been arranged.

SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> JANUARY 2022

This evening, I lit the candles and sat on the floor.

I was immediately in the circle of ruined obelisks beneath a thunderstorm. Pulling the black sheet up over my head, I shielded myself from the hail. I then sat in the center of the standing stones on that black mud. Suddenly a shrieking roar echoed above. Something massive moved through the thick clouds. Nevertheless, I closed my eyes.

I found myself standing in a very human setting: a hospital room. Glancing out the window at a dreary night, I turned toward the bed. There, a girl lay curled up on her side. Tubes and wires connecting her to the monitors and drips. I moved closer – when I was shaken –

Looking up from my spot in the circle of ruined obelisks, I saw a gigantic entity walking miles above –

And I opened my eyes again in my flat. The golden candlelight was now merged with a red shimmer coming from the east wall in front of me. So, I closed my eyes.

I was then standing on a black staircase of stone. Far below, the stairs disappeared in the dark. Upward, the stairs stretched toward a red haze that throbbed to a droning hum, and there the black goat stood. So, upward I went. The rumbling noise getting louder the further I went.

The goat walked away as I reach the summit, where I was presented with a large domed chamber surrounded by stone columns. In the middle was a gathering of shadow figures standing beneath a wide ring of free-floating flames. That burning circle hung about four meters off the ground. The droning seemed to be voices coming from all directions as I approached the center – when something grabbed my left arm! Twisting, I scowled at one of

the worm-bodied devils as it pulled me back. I wrenched my arm away before being struck aside –

I crashed in the circle of ruined obelisks under the rain again. Thousands of savaged devils then came plummeting from the sky! One of these insectile predators sprung from its landing, slamming on top of me where it hacked my fucking head apart –

Looking up from the floor in my flat, I sat for a while as that abhorrent pain soon faded. Of all the things that I had seen in these visions, I wondered who this girl was?

MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

At 6:30pm, I left my flat and went out for dinner – when four guys stepped out of a parked car across the street from my front door. Not a word was said as they gestured for me to join them. My first thought was that these were Slovaks here for retribution. However, as I sat between two of those tough guys, the one in the passenger’s side pulled out his phone. On the video call, I recognized the Romanian from the penthouse parties: Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head. The car pulled onto Frankfurter Allee when I heard him say ‘Fischer.’ Leaning up through the two front seats, I calmly waved into the phone, “Auf wiedersehen, pet.”

I then grabbed the steering wheel and wrenched it down! The vehicle swerved dangerously to the right! Everyone inside was thrown from their seats! My back slammed flat against the ceiling! The driver tried to over-correct, and I flew back into the guy on my right! I then immediately began kicking the shit out of the guy to my left! His door popped open, and I lurched out after him. The car was on the wrong side of the street and angled perpendicular. Fortunately, there was little traffic as I stumbled backward. But another rush of adrenaline overwhelmed my senses with caustic hatred. I reached for my knife at the back of my belt, but I was pulled away by the guys from the Pizza joint. The four Romanians yelled at the Turks who returned the volley. With more locals coming out from the kiosk, the Romanians quickly judged the situation untenable, so drove off before anyone called the cops.

After being ushered into the pizza place, I dismissed the situation and

## Interfering With Divinities

ordered three slices. The owner from the kiosk stood in the doorway with a serious look as he evaluated what had just happened. I crushed my anger beneath my clenched jaw, knowing that I had gotten lucky, as I wouldn't have stood a fucking chance unless the Turks had jumped in. My temper was going to get me killed one of these days.

On my way home, I accepted that I had to disassociate myself from the lady of the house. This shit was getting too risky. I couldn't have people coming to murder me where I slept.

I went straight to my basement and took out the Blackberry that Tiesa had given me. But I paused, noticing the other phone, the burner. I considered where this would all lead. Ultimately, I already owed Tiesa for getting me in and out of Norway. I didn't want to get in her debt any more than I already was.

-

Later, while reading in bed, I told myself why I needed to keep a low profile. Anonymity was the best camouflage. Christ knows if the BND were still tracking my movements. Detective Rosswald had been reassigned to Dresden, and my case was officially closed. But I had to maintain the appearance of being just another good citizen. And yet, in my core, I wanted to stir up shitstorms of belligerence! However, the bigger picture required my patience.

Thinking of Father Lucus, I wondered how he was holding up since the ceremony. So, I gave him a call.

He soon answered and was glad to talk. Firstly, he wanted to apologize for treating me so shamefully. Saying that his lack of sleep was no excuse for his poor hospitality. While he repeated his worries about the long-term consequences of our actions, I thought of this evening's events. Lucus, however, was comforted by the fact that 'our intentions were pure.'

After the call, I just felt annoyed. You encounter supposedly preternatural entities, and yet, was that alone meant to make you a better human being? No! And then you see a so-called good man like Lucus who faced these beings, and his response was absolute terror. I knew exactly what that said about me.

THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

Bruce Stirling John Knox

Exactly one month after I posted my three letters, today, I received a reply from Ahmet in Ghent. He welcomed my inquiries into Theodicy.

I was shocked. It worked!

-

Walking the wet streets this evening, I stared at the shimmering black asphalt. This quiet life of mundane routines dragged on even longer now that I had stopped wasting my time with art. There seemed like there were so many more hours in the day, and night was even worse. Despite traveling to holy sites, the comprehension of God was as beyond me as complex mathematics. This limitation of my understanding saturated me with spite. There wasn't any fulfillment through my career, women, or any philosophy. Still, to this fucking day, desecration was the pinnacle of my worthless ambition. Obsession, violence, and the objectification of a trophy was all that my sadistic mind demanded. And it wanted so much more. I wondered how much longer I could subdue this relentless need for profane sacrilege, as I was already formulating my next vulgar series of ruthless indiscretions.

That was when I realized that the smooth street had become wet rock. The wind suddenly rose as rolling mist swirled by. Looking across that rugged terrain, I found myself on a mountain slope standing between two towering black obelisks next to the edge of a cliff. The gales then struck my back so hard that it knocked me forward. Grabbing one of the tall standing stones, I braced myself and stared down into that unnatural depth. This great hole in the mountain had perfectly straight sides. Pulling on my leather gloves for a better grip, I surveyed that enormous chasm. It was as if the summit of this mountain had been cut with exact angles, creating a gigantic, inverted pyramid-like pit. I could see, even in the overcast darkness, that there was a square lake far below. Despite this grand spectacle, only one question remained, why were these two obelisks still in such good condition?

FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

This morning, as I walked downstairs and into the courtyard, a falcon flew past and landed on the handlebars of one of the bicycles. The bird just stared

## Interfering With Divinities

at me as I raised my left arm with an Elvis-finger pointed straight back at it. I was still being watched. How quickly we replaced our pets, our beasts of burden, and especially our lovers.

Continuing on my way to the studio, I reflected on Santiago de Compostela. I thought of my hostile behavior. If we had in fact made contact with a celestial messenger, I had treated it with less respect than I would a dog on the street, and I didn't even like dogs. I'm a fucking caveman. A fool. A fucking idiot. I knew nothing of the vast complexities of the universe. However, if that specter had come prepared with a means of communication, then why had its message disintegrated before we had a chance to try and decipher it?!

I immediately gave Lucus a phone call. No answer.

Moments of self-critical reflection were useful, but upon further consideration of my actions toward that entity, I stood by my demands. I had tolerated this cryptic bullshit for too many years. If that messenger was, unlike the devils I had dealt with on a daily basis, a far superior being, then why couldn't it comprehend my own inability to understand! Speak English, you fuck!

-

It was after 8pm, when I called Lucus again. He answered, sounding faint. Once I asked about the burnt text, he repeated that the surface of the wall had flaked off like pastry. There was simply no trace left of the script. I insisted that he go and check with a ladder for a closer look. However, he just started talking about how he was seeing things again. I didn't care. Fuck his fragile state of mind! But then he caught my attention by saying that it felt like gravity was off. As if it was coming from sideways.

Telford was definitely wrong with his theory about how you were incapable of higher reasoning in the realm of death and sin. The messenger we had encountered with its text was yet more proof of that. And yet, I still couldn't solve what any of it meant. Maybe Telford was partly right, and I was the one incapable of understanding! Because I was too fucking stupid to learn anything!

SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022



Bruce Stirling John Knox

This afternoon, Abi and I went to an interactive-projection exhibition.

We later cooked dinner at her place. While in the middle of eating, she suddenly said that she had downloaded a copy of my Trilogy of books, *Bark*. She then brought up how concerned she was by how often I used the term, WOMEN = MEAT. I enjoyed my meal while looking her in the eyes as she continued. How many girls have read my writing or seen my art, and then still invited me into their homes. After all, what did Freud say about the aphrodisiac of the death-wish? Abi said that she didn't want to be seen as just another piece of meat. Said that she wanted something more than just a physical connection. I concurred. And then we fucked.

SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2022

Immediately after morning sex, Abi asked if I was sleeping with other girls? I told her that I hadn't seen anyone else since I had met her. We then discussed what we were looking for in a relationship. She wanted something serious. So, while lying naked in bed, we soon found ourselves on the same page and agreed upon becoming exclusive. However, right from the very beginning Abi had made it clear that she had certain sexual boundaries. I could work within her guidelines. But I wondered how long it would take before she got bored with her own restrictions and then it blamed me.

Later, we took a walk in the stormy weather along a nearby lake, and I realized how calming her company was. I hadn't expected to find intimacy again, and yet holding her hand felt as natural as this growing desire to call her mine.

MONDAY 31<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2022

I went home at lunch and found a new letter. It was from Theophilus in

## Interfering With Divinities

Strasbourg. He too was looking forward to my visit so that we could examine the question of evil.

Two out of three ain't bad!

-

While at my desk tonight, I started getting more of those flash visions. I saw a dark room with lots of books. Upon the third vision, I switched off the lights before collecting the four candles and sitting on the floor facing east.

Looking up slowly, I was sitting in the circle of ruined obelisks. It was disturbingly quiet. The air was dead calm. A thick mist surrounded the looming stones. Not a sound came from beyond. Closing my eyes again, I pictured that room with the books.

And there I found myself. The walls were covered with old wooden bookshelves. I slowly glanced over the steamed-up windowpanes in their thin gothic frames. To my right was a desk heavy with books and a laptop. There, on the keyboard was a sticker from the University of Cambridge. The flickering light was then matched by a choking noise. I turned toward the wrestling sounds that came from behind and was presented with a sight of demonic pornography. That brown-haired girl was spreadeagle on the bed and being violated in every orifice by the very devils that I had been expected to track down.

Suddenly one of those grotesque creatures lurched backward! It had become aware of my presence. The girl still had some unidentifiable limb down her throat, when she was shoved right off the bed as all four pinkish devils shrieked! Snarling, they all scrambled up the wall and into a blackened corner of the ceiling. I scowled up at those vicious animals as I approached the coughing girl on the cold floorboards. Jerking back, she looked up in confusion. But her pupils were not fixed on mine. She couldn't see me. So, I reached for her throat – until those fucks in the corner lashed out and struck me across the face!

WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

I received a third letter today. Geithner from Salzburg would meet with me. All three holy men accepted my request for a moment of their time.

Surprise, surprise! But when would I have time to visit each of them?

-

Abi said that she was having a shit day, so I went to her place this evening. Watching a film together, I liked having her in my arms. She said that she felt better whenever I was around, and I told her that that was my job.

However, I left her just before midnight and headed directly to one of the Slovakian bars that wasn't far away. As I entered that quiet joint, I spotted Mr. Caviezel sitting at the end of the bar. I wasn't expecting to find him here. Cautiously, I took a seat next to him. "Hey, how's it going?"

Slowly turning his head, Mr. Caviezel stared back at me. His smooth voice eventually replied with that calm expression, "Good. Exceptionally good. And you? Keeping well?"

"Staying out of trouble."

"Then let me buy you a drink."

I acknowledged the gesture and we both relaxed. Last year, as it turned out, had indeed been exceedingly profitable for him. So, we raised our glasses. I admired his suit, and he took the compliment. And then he commented on how much he approved of my grooming since I grew my hair.

Once the small talk had cleared any tension in the air, I asked, "What was so precious about the property in Slovakia? There was nothing there but the ruins of an old house."

Mr. Caviezel glanced away, changing the subject, "Have you heard from Jörg?"

"Haven't even thought about him since he ran off," I frowned. "Never understood why everyone thought we were best buddies."

Mr. Caviezel looked at me with a bemused smirk.

"I hardly fucking knew the guy. We just shared a mutual and somewhat professional respect for each other. Like I have for you."

The quiet Slovakian looked away again.

"Do you know anything about the Romanians? The ones moving girls."

"Romanians?"

"Asking for a friend."

"They're not subtle."

I nodded.

"What have you done?" he frowned, sitting back.

"Ah, you know," I sneered, finishing my Red Bull, "No good deed goes unpunished."

## Interfering With Divinities

### THURSDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

When my business partner was packing up for the evening, I mentioned that I was going to stay late and edit the photos that I had taken of Jules in white duct-tape.

“I don’t know how you have the energy to keep working on side-projects after hours,” he laughed, shaking his head. “All I want to do is watch TV and sleep.”

“You know, after exhausting all other distractions, I still find that there’s plenty of time left for entertaining myself.”

### FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

I arrived late for Elizabeth’s birthday this evening, where I saw many familiar faces. While chatting with a young Irish couple, who had heard stories about me, I glanced across the packed bar at the birthday girl.

I had invited her to my place this time last year for a romantic dinner. Before hand, I stripped her naked, tied her up, and blindfolded her in preparation for a birthday spanking. Afterward, I lay her back on the bed with her knees next to her head and ass up in the air. Then I inserted a dining room candle into her rectum. Removing the blindfold, I told her to make a wish and blow it out. I then cooked us steak. For dessert, I gave her a warm milk enema and then penetrated her ass with a ripe banana – that I ate out of her.

Watching Elizabeth being led across the bar into the bathroom, I smiled knowing she was about to get this year’s birthday sodomy.

### SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

Bruce Stirling John Knox

Met Yumi for coffee and cake this afternoon. Her cute little baby watched us happily as she told me about her new life as a mother.

Once I left the cafe, I strolled by Museum Island in the cold wind. I suddenly thought of the first time that I had seen the monkey-devil. There must be something in the Alte Nationalgalerie. Something that I could use as my third gift. However, as I stood outside the gallery, that ugly little critter never showed up.

I soon left and met Abi in Hackescher Markt and we went for a walk.

Back at her place, she took portrait photos of me. I liked watching her focus. One thing soon led to another, and we tore each other's clothes off. I bent her over, leaning her against the door as I fucked her from behind. Suddenly she stopped, asking me to wait just a moment. She then quickly pulled on her platform heels and returned to her ninety-degree position. The heels added just enough extra height so that I could pound her ass even harder than before.

SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

I awoke with Abi's hand on my dick. After withdrawing from fucking her, I jerked off onto myself. To which she said that I could cum inside her now that she had started taking the pill. These were the benefits of a serious relationship. We were starting to find our rhythm and our chemistry seemed not just compatible but complimentary. And I thought that we looked fucking good together, especially naked.

TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

More and more I believed that girls were only attracted to me for the threat of

## Interfering With Divinities

violence. Without it, they had no respect. Whenever I smiled and told them that I was just a nice guy, they immediately stated how disappointed they would be if that was the case. Which only made me want to fucking brutalize their worthless fucking meat even more! Girls wanted the possibility of being murdered but didn't actually want the fucking consequences. Just as man would always believe in the concept of God because the world was simply not enough. This was the insatiable human greed for an idea but not the definitive conclusion itself. The demands for the unobtainable.

WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

We had just finished cleaning the studio, when I got my first blind-spot migraine of the year. Half an hour later, my vision returned. I took a paracetamol, though I barely had any headache.

Again, I reminded myself that death would kill me just as suddenly and without the slightest warning. But until then, I still had things to do! Things I needed to face, because my true-will demanded it! As God was of me, I was of God. As God committed atrocities so too was I permitted. As I was of God, God was of me.

-

In the evening, I left my flat and headed to Mitte. But I quickly realized, when I changed trains, that I was being followed by one of the tall Sudanese men.

It was just Burroughs and I at the Z-Bar, as he had celebrated with friends last night into his birthday. He looked as eccentric as ever in his purple suit, cravat, and walking cane. We laughed about old times in the Burlesque scene and all the debauched parties and freakshow antics. Though, I reflected over the drama and lack of solidarity from the organizers which had eventually led to my retiring of Major Obnoxious – my pig character. Burroughs shared my opinion on certain unprofessional behavior and the conflicting egos among some of those so-called progressives.

“Many people have told me terrible things about you, but I’ve said, no. Bruce maybe a cunt, but he’s still my friend,” Burroughs laughed, as he hunched over the bar with this long scraggly hair in his face. “We strongly

disagree on a million subjects, however, that doesn't matter. You've always been there when I needed it. And you're here now, and that's what truly matters. That's what it's all about. Showing up. Despite the irrelevance of minor differences."

"Exactly. It's not about the rumors. It's about how someone treats you in the present tense, in the quality time of the now," I replied, raising my cola. "And I've always considered you one of my oldest and closest friends, in this disgusting fucking city where object-permanence is considered off-brand for a zeitgeist of self-loathing little shits."

"Well, I appreciate you dragging me out for a drink. And here's to plenty more!"

-

After midnight, I headed across town. Walking down an unremarkable street, I soon came to the tiny kiosk that Mr. Caviezel had told me about. A supposed front for laundering the income from the Romanian traffickers. Stepping inside, I found Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head, standing next to the counter with two others. He looked up and simply nodded.

Outside on the curb, he held an energy drink while leaning against a Telecom distribution box. His beanie and thick black jacket seemed like his natural attire, compared to when I had met him the first time. He then asked, "Why are you protecting the old whore?"

Frowning, I glanced down the empty street at the Sudanese guy who now kept his distance.

"Did you also get rid of the two Serbs?"

"Don't know what you're talking about."

"The Serbs wanting to teach her some manners."

"The ones taking over her business?"

"No. That would be me."

I wasn't surprised.

"You could finish what the Serbs started."

"That's not my thing."

"Since when?"

Looking away, I remembered the Behm family on fire.

"Are you not the Fisherman?"

"You know, man. I'm just trying to keep my hands clean," I said, tilting my head toward the black guy down the street. "Besides, as you can see, I'm being watched."

The Romanian scowled past me. "The fucking BKA?!"

## Interfering With Divinities

I followed him with my eyes as Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head stomped back into the kiosk. Expecting he would send his thugs to beat the living shit out of me, I was bemused when he returned and placed a small package wrapped in a plastic bag on top of the box between us.

“Here, use this,” he whispered, lighting a cigarette. “Have a goodnight, my friend.”

Walking away, I slipped the package into my jacket pocket. It was clearly another burner. Though, I was somewhat confused. This wasn’t the tone that I had anticipated this conversation ending with.

### THURSDAY 10<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

My only priority today was booking flights and trains. Once the logistics were settled, I wrote to all three holy men, informing them when I would show up on their doorsteps. My luck would run out sooner or later, but I still had time to find a third gift.

### FRIDAY 11<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

Abi was too busy for me this evening, so I wrote to Defne. No reply. Wrote to Zoe. No reply. Wrote to Ally. No reply. I wanted to fucking hurt someone. But once again, I was left with my dick in my hand.

So, I went out into the cold alone. I knew exactly what I had to do without female distractions. Walking from the Hackescher Markt S-bahn, I approached the river toward the backside of the Pergamonmuseum. I wondered when the restorations would be finished, as I headed across the bridge and onto the island. Stepping over the chain, I climbed the steps at the front of the Alte Nationalgalerie. I then just waited on the landing. Waited for the monkey-devil like the first time that it had appeared.

By 9pm, I was frozen through and had nothing to show for myself. Would



the monkey-devil ever return to a place that it had already pointed out? Or was it pissed off that I hadn't released the other two cursed objects by now? I didn't know. I didn't fucking know anything!

After wandering aimlessly through the bleak city, I arrived home by midnight. I immediately lit the candles and sat on the floor.

I was in that swamp. It was dark and perfectly still. The chest-deep water barely moved. Glancing around the dead trees in the surrounding black, I expected the tusked-devil would surface at any moment. But nothing arose.

Opening my eyes, I was fucking annoyed at this fruitless evening that had left me fuming with anger! I fucking hated this shit! But there was nothing else to do, so I closed my eyes again.

There, I stood in the circle of ruined obelisks. Sitting in the center of the thirty-three stones, I closed my eyes.

I slipped and fell! Smashing into wet rocks, I crashed down a deep crack. I tumbled without control further down a narrow space before abruptly slamming to a violent halt at the bottom of a crevice! Water gushed all around and drained through other fractures in the stone. My whole body was bludgeoned and bruised, and my face had been scratched open. Yet, as I tried standing, I saw something in the glistening blackness. It was the tusked-devil. Half-eaten and strewn on its side, it was dead. That once intimidating beast was now a hollowed-out wreck. Crouching next to that big carcass, I had felt strangely disheartened. At least it had a bit of fun after I had set it free. But then frustration topped off the evening with the realization that I'd never find any more cursed objects now that my pact with this devil was broken.

## SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

After continuing our discussion on Nigel's book idea, I went to a friend's gig at Tiki Heart.

I left at 10:30pm and walked toward the U-bahn – where I just missed the train. It was a pleasant evening, so I decided to walk home. I hadn't even made it to the next street before a van suddenly pulled up and several Sudanese men dragged me inside! While I was pinned to the floor, they pulled a hood over my head and taped my hands behind my back. Resistance was useless.

## Interfering With Divinities

The drive was brief, and I knew exactly where they were taking me. Down and down and down more stairs. I was then dumped on the concrete floor where they untied and stripped me naked before I was hoisted upon that crucifix. There, my wrists and ankles were duct-taped to solid wood. The hood was soon ripped off by one of the black men that I didn't recognize. I might have thought that these guys wanted to fuck me, if I didn't know what religious zealots they were. This had been a long time coming, so I had nothing to say. However, they all quickly filed out of that subbasement. The last thing that I saw before the light went out was what I had assumed to be Defne's blood stains on the floor. Then the door slammed shut!

I must have been left there for an hour before I heard something. Yet I still had no options. No clever plan for escape. When the black guys returned, they would skin me alive and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. The tape was wrapped so many times around my wrists that my entire forearms were immobilized. What could I do but slip into reluctant acceptance, just like whenever I got tattooed. I never dwelled on the upcoming pain, there was no point. The pain would come, and it was unavoidable. I was here because of my own actions. It was going to be shit, but so was life. And besides, a less horrible death wouldn't have seemed fitting.

The door eventually opened, and the light burst on. Squinting, I twisted my head toward the footsteps and saw a familiar face. The original black guy placed a bag on the floor and opened it. Stainless steel shimmered in the dull light. I wanted to negotiate but still couldn't think of a thing worth saying. After all, I had no legitimate argument.

"Why are you making me do this?!" the tall guy whispered, from where he took a knee. "Why are you making me do this again?! You swore to me that you would fix this! That you would return what you owe!"

Glaring down at him, I felt only bitter disgust. It was repulsive that I was the one tied up and yet he was the one who looked trapped.

"There is no other choice," he mumbled, placing a curved blade on the dusty floor. "Why? Just tell me why you have not returned what you owe?! They need them! They must have them back!"

Noticing his pause, I saw him glance over his shoulder. Ah, yes, toward a security camera. Of course, we were being watched.

"Why?! Why do I have to do this again?!"

"What do you think I've been doing all this time?" I spoke up, realizing that he just needed any excuse. "A priest in Santiago is helping me locate them. If you know a faster way of tracking devils, then why haven't you

found them already?!”

“Where?! Where are they?!”

“Cambridge. Somewhere.”

“Somewhere?!”

“Somewhere in Cambridge.”

The young Sudanese man slowly rose to his feet in front of me with a blade in hand.

“I’ve already arranged a meeting with a Jesuit priest in Strasbourg. He’s helping me narrow down the search. Theophilus. That’s his name. Go check for yourself. Theophilus in Strasbourg. If he’s not who I say he is, then do your fucking worst on me! But if your masters really need their shit back, then fuck off and let me finish the fucking job!”

“I do not believe you. They do not believe you. It is too late for that!”

“Didn’t you just say they still need them back?!” I snarled murderously. “They’re somewhere in fucking Cambridge! I’ll get them back, but I need the assistance of someone with the expertise in these fucking matters! The priest has already agreed to help! So, let me finish, and stop wasting my fucking time with this bullshit, you fuck!”

The executioner seemed unmoved by my lies. But I clenched my jaw, knowing that I was only moments away from saying too much. The stalemate abruptly ended when he turned and marched out. Again, I was left in that cold pitch-black isolation.

In that deep quiet, I lingered on the conflict in the young Sudanese man. I couldn’t physically get my way out of this situation, but I knew his weakness: their wives. After all, tomorrow was Valentine’s Day. I knew that one way of gaining someone’s trust, was to offer them comfort when they were at their most vulnerable.

It wasn’t long until he returned. Cautiously, he stood with his side toward me while speaking, “I should leave you here, devil-charmer.”

The callous tone of his voice suddenly unsettled my confidence.

As he moved closer, with the blade in hand, I anticipated my throat being cut. He, however, merely sliced my restraints and then stepped away with his head hung low.

I opened my mouth, but stopped, not wanting the camera recording what I had to say. Scanning the subbasement with its odd filing system, for the first time I became curious as to what other verboten secrets were locked away down here. There was another door in the corner that might have opened to more rooms and God knows what else in this quagmire of Berlin’s

## Interfering With Divinities

underbelly. I barely had time to dress and stretch my aching limbs before I was led up all those stairs. My acidic mood simmered beneath my scheming spite. Once outside, I took a deep breath in that dark courtyard and stared up at the near full moon. “You know, Darwin wrote a list of pros and cons. He was torn whether or not he should get married. Ultimately though, he decided that a wife would humanize him. He knew that women enable us to feel more capable of living up to our full potential. A wife expands our boundaries and resources. A wife supports our goals and gives rise to alternative possibilities beyond our limited conception. You share experiences and she becomes the reason, not a reminder, that you should take pride in your life. Working together toward an achievement of mutual benefit. You should never deny that most fundamental of human partnerships.”

The black guy just frowned at me.

“Did you make a covenant?” I asked. “Between you, your wife, and God.”

No response.

“They came to me, you know. Your wives. They came asking for help.”

This got a reaction of shocked concern from the young guy.

“Can you imagine how fucking desperate they must have felt if they chose to seek advice from me, of all fucking people?!”

Shaking his head, the black guy became even more agitated.

“They want you back. That’s all. They’re not trying to deprive you from your work. They only want to work with you. Because remember, they too made a covenant. They’re on your fucking side!”

Tears ran down the young Sudanese man’s face. Twisting away in shame, he stumbled off toward the Mercedes. He didn’t get far before hunching over as his hands covered his face. Stepping up beside him, I gently put my hand on his back. He turned and hugged me tight, weeping like only a broken man could. As he did so, I held him like a child, but I glared straight back at that locked door to the subbasement. I knew that his wife would eat away at his resolve as only domestic life could. Trust me, slowly but surely, she would stunt his fanatical ambitions and break him down to an even weaker version of himself than he was right at this moment.

MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

This evening, I waited outside the S-bahn at Hackescher Markt with a rose and a small gift, while listening to Head Like a Hole, *Wet Rubber*. When Abi came walking across the square, I savored the view. I adored her black silhouette in black heels with her long straight black hair. Her beautifully pale face was always matched perfectly by her elegant black eyeliner. I loved watching her walk toward me like I was the center of the universe.

Over Valentine's dinner, we discussed our current status. She said that she was worried that I wouldn't want to see her again after she had phoned me on Saturday. I told her that I had guessed something was up, but I had no problem clearing the air and sorting things out after a miscommunication. Abi smiled and said that she liked that about me.

When we left the restaurant, I found a small black card in the pocket of my overcoat. It said, "*There is always a way out, but I'd like you to stay.*"

I turned to Abi, putting my arms around her, as I whispered, "I'd like to stay too."

We went back to her place where she finally opened her gift: a big black dildo with a suction-cup. She burst into laughter, understanding why I had suggested not opening it at the restaurant. Smirking, I reminded her of our previous conversation. Now she could stick it to the inside of her glass shower door so that I could watch her fuck herself while I jerked off from the toilet. She smiled again, saying that she also liked how I followed through with my ideas.

"I love fucking you," I soon said, holding her face with both hands while I was deep inside her. Her eye-contact was such a turn on. I was still surprised by how much I was attracted to her. Maybe it was because she didn't remind me of anyone else. I always felt totally present with her.

WEDNESDAY 16<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

I took the small ivory idol with me into Mitte this evening. Scanning the Alte Nationalgalerie, I climbed the steps. No monkey-devil appeared. So, I pulled out the idol just to check if it had any effect. I waited on the wet landing and watched as a storm swelled in the clouds above. But nothing unearthly

## Interfering With Divinities

happened.

Eventually, I wandered down and around the side of the museum. I approached the fence next to the back of the Pergamonmuseum, though, still nothing materialized.

Walking away, I wondered if there were any items of interest at the lakeside house. However, the monkey-devil had never once showed up there.

After midnight, before I went to bed, I opened the windows and listened to the storm blowing through the trees. Soon came the clattering of the goat among the ivy.

I climbed out into the gales and looked up at some massive cliffs that flashed with lightning. Clouds of smoke burned golden within that hostile night. A howling then came from where the cliff dropped further below this thin trail. Flames glistened down where lava flowed. The goat, however, wandered off into a big crack in the rock. Emerging at one point, I found that we were in a small gap between enormous cliffs. I saw the ruins of a great tower on the other side. Other cracks led in various directions, but the goat continued down a gap that soon revealed a huge archway. The stone was occasionally cast in red from the infernal sky and I caught glimpses of devils clinging to the walls. That was when I realized that the goat was changing. It was transmuting into the size of a mammoth. Soon it had an unrecognizable outline against the vast flames of a burning city that lay beyond this passageway. Exiting that great arch, I scowled at the innumerable devils in the shadows of this mountainside. The giant goat-like thing moved further around for a better view of that gigantic scene of devastation. The colossal fire devoured every part of this settlement between mountain ranges. Temples stood further up the valley where an even more magnificent hue of red gleamed upon this limitless blaze. Despite the scale of the raging flames, taller towers with spires peaked above that smokeless heat. The distant heights of architecture were backlit by burning clouds. Of all the cities of men that I had travelled to, this city of Abaddon was unparalleled for its nefarious enormity. As I admired the overwhelming view, again I wondered who exactly had built these endless streets with their incalculable colonnades? Had this place always been infested with the damned? An ostentatious dominion trapped in perpetual decimation. I had lost sight of that goat-thing, but I didn't care. The spectacle of this scorched kingdom was infinitely more beautiful than Rome's own burning at twilight.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

After 15 minutes of watching *The Tinder Swindler*, both Abi and I questioned if it was real. From experience, I knew how easy it was to tell a girl exactly what they wanted to hear. But then, while thinking that, a paranoia crept into the back of my mind again: had the Romanian's set me up with Abi? She seemed too good to be true. Was she just telling me what she knew I wanted to hear?

But inevitably, we ended up chatting in bed into the small hours, where I forgot my skepticism and we fucked some more.

FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

The storm had only gotten worse tonight, and when I left Maddy's place in Pankow, the deluge had been replaced with a tremendous wind. I staggered toward the U-bahn with only one question in mind, could I gain the assistance of those that had come seeking mine?

I soon stood in Wedding, outside the building where I had watched that piglet being skinned alive. It was almost midnight and yet most of the lights were still on. More importantly, the double doors onto the street were wide open. Babies cried and black women sat in the staircase. I couldn't tell if they were all Sudanese, but they all appeared African. Old men in thick blankets slept near the open doors to the third-floor flats. Somewhere inside a woman sung a sad hymn while wide-eyed kids sat around and stared vacantly at candles instead of cellphones. Further upstairs, more of them looked up as I passed by. No one spoke to me. Finally, I came to that familiar doorway. There was only one old man sitting on this landing. With a blanket draped over his head, he held out his hand like a beggar, except with pebbles in his palm. I watched as he examined the tiny stones before he looked up.

The door suddenly swung inward, and a young black woman almost

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walked straight into me! Confused, she backed off pulling her own blanket close. The old man then began babbling incoherently. Leaning away into the candle-lit flat, the girl called out over the voices of other women within. What sounded like angry questions replied, and then the women that had confronted me at my local cafe yanked the door wide open. The old man was now yelling as he pointed blindly in my direction.

“You cannot be here!” the young woman declared, dragging the girl inside as she slammed the door shut!

Nodding, I glanced back at that suddenly subdued old man. I crouched next to his stench and glared into his bloodshot eyes. With his loose mouth quivering, he soon went silent. I turned my head toward the pebbles now scattered across the floor, and said, “Whatever you’ve seen, it can always get worse.”

SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

Abi and I went to Potsdam this afternoon. I wanted to investigate a small pyramid that Malloy had stumbled upon recently. Unfortunately, due to the weather warning, the park in which it was situated was closed.

So, we continued walking through the quiet streets, talking for a good two hours. She finally asked about my time in Spain, saying that I seemed rather irritated since returning. I told her about Father Lucus and the basics of the ceremony, though, I gave no details about what had shown up. There was no reason why she would believe me anyway. I knew when to keep my experiences to myself. The one thing that I reassured her of, was that I might have appeared bothered at times, but it wasn’t because of her. I always enjoyed her company.

Abi then admitted how troubled her head had been recently. She was struggling to cope with work and family obligations. Finally, she said something that made me once again appreciate her perception of me, “I’ve been so adrift lately, that I really value your grounded energy. It’s been so long since I’ve had someone I could rely on. I’m really glad that you’ve given me something to hold on to.”



Bruce Stirling John Knox

SUNDAY 20<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

With her oral fixation, Abi again woke me with a blowjob.

We later headed into Mitte and went to the Alte Nationalgalerie. I had told her that I had wanted to see the new exhibition on Johann Erdmann Hummel. Though, I much preferred the permanent collection with works by Wilhelm Gentz, Arnold Böcklin, and Franz Stuck. Ultimately, however, I scanned the interior of the building, especially the upper western walls in hopes of spotting whatever the monkey-devil had been trying to point out. But nothing seemed obvious. Abi and I still had a nice time perusing the art on that drizzly Sunday afternoon. It was nice sharing these little things with someone else.

When she went to collect our jackets from the coat-check, I headed down to the bathroom. But once I was returning upstairs, I found the blonde German, Verena, standing above me!

“What are you doing?” she asked softly, as I slowly approached her level.

“Ah, you know. Admiring some of those worthless and forgotten artists.”

“You seem more obsessed with the building itself.”

Frowning, I tilted my head as I leaned in, “You still keeping an eye on me?”

“What are you looking for?”

I glanced away from her seductive throat, as I whispered with a smirk, “Nothing you can help me with. Not this time.”

“Then who can?” she asked, remaining on the stairs as I continued up.

“Good fucking question.”

TUESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

Texting with Abi this afternoon led to her telling me too much! I fucking hated it when girls committed self-sabotage with their radical honesty. As she spoke, my eyes rolled into the back of my skull, and I remembered that with

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the benefits of an intimate relationship came the tedious negatives. But I was no longer the guy who tolerated this kind of banal shit-testing. I had nothing to say to her.

-

Arriving home after work, I saw the lady of the house step out onto the pavement. I raised my chin in acknowledgement. However, she stared straight ahead and marched past as if I wasn't even there. Fair enough. It was for the best that we moved on and kept our distance, like how it used to be.

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Later, Ally unexpectedly showed up on my doorstep with a sly smirk and that glistening blonde hair. Before I had a chance to ask what she wanted, she jumped on me and clung on like a baby sloth. I carried her in and dumped her on the bed. Recalling what Abi had told me today, I felt all figments of fidelity evaporate. That sweet young Polish meat then stared up at me as she unzipped her jacket revealing that porn-star cleavage of hers. But in the next moment, she pulled out a large black handgun and pointed it directly at my head!

Feeling my blood boil at the back of my neck, I clenched my fists, instantly wanting to beat her pretty fucking face into a pulpy stew.

"I want you to fuck me with it!" Ally laughed, tossing the gun aside as she sat up. Clamping both hands around her throat, I glared at her pouting lips. But I soon shoved her away as I moved to the sofa. Getting up, she sat on top of me with the gun in hand. "Put it in me! Put it in good!"

So, while Billie Eilish, *Oxytocin*, played, I did exactly what she asked for. I shoved that cold black steel roughly into her tidy wet cunt as I rubbed her clit with my left thumb. Whenever she reached for the erection in my pants, I flipped her over into a different position. I had no intention of fucking this smug little bitch. Soon she began moaning. Her juices soaking the gun and dripping off my fingers. Wiping my hands on her ripe ass, I grabbed her throat and pinned her to the floor. There, I rammed the wet barrel into her mouth and pulled the fucking trigger! Pulling it again and again and again and again and again, I pictured her skull rupturing and her fucking brains spewing across my shiny white floor. I then stood and left the empty gun between her perfect teeth.

Suddenly I went lightheaded. A vision of a hospital room flashed before my eyes. Shaking it off, I moved to the kitchen, just as a second vision overcame my sight. I grasped the doorframe and my eyes immediately returned to normal. Drinking several glasses of water, I scowled back at that

meat on the floor as I asked, “Who’s is that?”

“Mine, silly,” Ally smiled as she rolled onto her stomach. “I can get anything I want.”

“From where?” I questioned, noticing that her pink knee-high socks had cat paws on the bottom.

“From my guy’s best friend.”

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As soon as Ally left, I lit the candles and sat on the floor facing east.

I soon stood in that hospital room. The only light came from the corridor. A nurse was just leaving and didn’t see my presence. In the bed itself, the brown-haired girl was sleeping. I stepped over to the heart-monitor and saw that all the instructions were in English. Was this Cambridge?

Standing at the bottom of the bed, I slowly lifted the thin blanket exposing her bare foot. I then gently pinched her little toe. A blackness abruptly filled the room. It got darker specifically on the wall above the girl’s head. That was where those four devils crawled out of the shade. They melted into each other as they hung there. I leaned closer squeezing her toe harder, and those devils snarled as if in response to her pain. The girl suddenly awoke in horror! So, I grabbed her ankle and yanked her down the bed! All four devils then lunged at my face with murderous talons! Raising my left hand, they instantly withdrew hissing like wild cats. The girl squirmed trying frantically to free herself. The small stone tablet in my fingers was all I stared at. How exactly did it work? Glancing up and down between those devils and the girl, I wondered who held the reigns over whom?

Sitting on the floor in my flat, it smelt like fornication in there. But I knew that no sin that I had ever committed would ever matter in the slightest. I was a mere spit in the eye of the devils that were the very face of the Earth.

WEDNESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

This morning as I finished my daily workout, the sun filled my windows, and in that moment, I was reminded of the Fata Morgana Gallery. The Armenian girl, Arpi, then came to mind. Poor dead little Arpi. I wondered how she was doing in hell, and why had she come to me when I was buried in the lakeside

## Interfering With Divinities

tomb?

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I went to the theater tonight with Mara, Elisabeth, and Abi to watch the latest version of *Death on The Nile*.

Afterward, Abi asked if I still wanted to see her once I came back from my travels. I knew it was a loaded question. If I said no because of what she had told me yesterday, then I was an asshole. But if I said yes, then it was suspicious that I was comfortable with the situation. So, I smiled and said, “Why wouldn’t I?”

THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

I awoke to the news that Russia had finally invaded the Ukraine. Because might was right. Borders were drawn by those who could maintain them. If you elect a comedian as president, why wouldn’t the powerful see your country as a fucking joke. Look at America and its most recent run of gibberish-spluttering leaders. As for Germany, we were obviously on Russia’s side, considering our slavish dependency on Nord Stream 2. Merkel had wanted the facade of eco-friendly energy, so had set in motion the shutting down our nuclear plants, while making honorable deals with Putin because, as Johnson had put it, “*The old concepts of fighting big tank battles on the European land mass are over.*”

Beds had been made, now we would have to lie down and fuck ourselves in our own shit.

-

This evening, I knew that I was out of time, so fuck it. I lit the candles and sat on the floor in my unholy circle.

At the circle of ruined obelisks there was a massive storm. The lake had flooded and was now sending huge waves against the stone platform. Admiring the destructive collisions with the spray washing over my face, I soon backed off to the center. I sat despite the torrential rain and pulled the black sheet over my head.

Finding myself suddenly clinging to the face of a vertical cliff, I was smothered in a hollow silence and a dense fog. I quickly spotted the cavity in

the rock that I barely managed to climb over to. Arpi was no longer where I had seen her hiding last year.

Opening my eyes in the circle of ruined obelisks, waves splashed around me. I then closed my eyes focusing on another.

A vast desert of ash gently sloped downward as smoke rose from a god-sized crater. Scanning this bleak landscape beneath an overcast night sky, I couldn't see a single sign of movement beyond those toxic plumes. The monkey-devil wasn't here. It had probably succumbed to the same violent fate that its master had suffered.

Opening my eyes, I had another idea, though doubted that it would help. So, I ignored the gales over the circle of ruined obelisks once more and closed my eyes.

A complete darkness confronted me. Until the roar of a great fire drew me out of this system of caves. A primordial valley of broken tectonic plates presented itself before me. Behind the mountains the sky burned red with golden flares of swollen eruptions. At last, I had found the black goat, but it was still a deformed mammoth and was transfixed by what lay ahead. Standing next to that giant creature, I surveyed an ancient structure that filled the valley like a glacier of ominous architecture. A palace in hell!

I slowly continued walking past my former guide. This immense building was somewhere between a fortified stronghold and a Tibetan monastery. The walls, however, were as looming as a gravity dam, and stretched all the way to the summit of this rugged valley. Regardless of the living fire that thundered above the mountains, this building seemed saturated in shadows.

That lumbering hairy mass of the goat-thing then came closer to me, before turning its tremendous horns and returning toward the caves. I no longer cared for what I had come for. This place offered the answer to a nagging question that the worm-bodied devils had started months ago. What lurked within?

The gigantic front walls of the structure were at least a few kilometers away, and my time was short.

I opened my eyes in the rain and then immediately closed them.

There, I stood right at the foundations of the lowest of the solid walls. But as I scanned the stark masonry, I failed to spot any kind of entry point.

Opening my eyes in the circle of ruined obelisks again, I pulled the wet sheet tight against my freezing shoulders. I closed my eyes, though this time nothing happened. What reference had I to focus on? I recalled the night that the devil had spoken through the voice of that decapitated head, saying, "*Für*

## Interfering With Divinities

*die Vorfahren.*”

With my own dead father’s anger in my blood, I looked up from where I stood. It was a long thin passageway with a distant staircase leading up to a red hue. I wasted no time and moved fast. Hurrying up the stone steps, they went up and up and up until I was utterly exhausted. I grew furious at the effort but kept going. Staggering to the top, I clawed at the walls where I finally came to a right turn into an open space: a scarlet garden of dead trees. There, I found them. Men in robes that were as worn and blackened as their filth-coated surroundings. There were dozens of them that I could see in that stagnant mist of the upper echelons of the palace. Even though the sky burned openly above, more heavy walls surrounded. Impatient, I walked past one archaic man who looked like a decomposing statue. He never seemed to notice me. No one did. None of them even moved. And as I stepped up to another old man, I realized that they seemed incapable of animating themselves at all. Some of the ash that smothered them had become a hardened crust, even over their open eyes.

Just then I caught sight of something in my peripheral vision. One of the bearded men was gradually turning his head in my direction. His long hair hung down to his waist as he tilted his head as if confused. Slowly approaching, I watched him twist his whole body toward me. How he saw anything with all that sludge on his face was quite the feat. Upon inspecting these clear signs of consciousness, I asked, “Are you trapped here?”

Upon my words, they all came to life! Thousands of those fossilized men stretched out of their various stages of immortal exhaustion and stepped toward me!

Remembering my original goal for coming here, I spoked up again, “Where can I find them?!”

That ancient man suddenly grabbed my forearm with a brutal strength unbecoming of his fragile state of decay. Without pause, he dragged me toward the wall as the mob limped in slow-motion ever closer. He shoved aside anyone in our path. Soon, he thrust me toward a slender gap in the wall. Clutching my own arm, I scowled at that miserable old fuck. He, however, was peering out through the hole in the wall. That was when I then realized just how high in the structure we actually were. The burning vista of endless mountaintops faded to where only active volcanos lit the blackened horizon. I looked back at that ruthless old man and wanted to ask him another stupid fucking question – but he anticipated my curiosity by clamping his spare hand over his own mouth. Glancing at the hundreds of other lost souls that

approached, I found that they too were all covering their mouths. I understood exactly what they were implying: silence was golden. They weren't prisoners here. This was the Shangri-la of hades.

Opening my eyes beneath the deluge, I then soon opened my eyes in my flat where the cold still froze my flesh. The frustration from my unresolved mission was only equaled by bewilderment toward the very existence of that palace.

That was when, in the golden candlelight, a dark haze appeared before me. At first, I thought it was one of the passageways. This manifestation, however, was a fully formed devil. A long black sheet hung over its head and reached down to the floor where a puddle of tar expanded. Its body was like crude oil that rippled wetly as it moved slowly. A sense of impending dread still wasn't enough though, to stop my antagonistic demands, "Show me where they are!"

That tall figure just stood still.

"I'll set them free!"

Slowly pulling the hood back, that figure revealed a fountain for a head where the tar poured freely. It suddenly grabbed my skull, and my entire face was engulfed in a swarm of talons – and then butchery was all that I beheld! Blood and mangled meat! I saw savage means of rendering countless bodies into a grotesque state of unrelenting slaughter! This vision of the utmost violence was as macabre as it was arousing. Catching my breath, I looked up as that devil held out a small thin vial. A golden shine gleamed from the elegant black shape as I carefully accepted it. At last, I was ready to confront the three holy men.

# G H E N T S T R A S B O U R G S A L Z B U R G

FRIDAY 25<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

My train from the Brussels airport arrived in Ghent at 3pm. After dropping off my shoulder-bag at the hotel near the old Palace of Justice, I took a casual stroll into that medieval city center. Abi was away on her own trip to Prague and sent selfies with her friends. When it started raining, I took shelter in St Bavo's Cathedral. I sat there for a while considering the old money in this part of Belgium. Just another spot of history that I knew nothing about. Everyone was dressed so clean cut and yet no one knew what the fuck I was doing there.

-

My first appointment was at 7pm with Ahmet the mullah. He wasn't too far from my hotel. Wandering south for five minutes, I soon took a narrow side street and abruptly left the busy hub of the city. How quiet and dark it suddenly became. Stepping up to a neglected entrance, I rang the rusty doorbell. A few moments later, a decrepit elderly man opened the door just a crack and peered out. With a small cap and white beard, he might have been Turkish, but I couldn't tell where anyone came from these days. A kind smile soon stretched across his friendly face, and Ahmet welcomed me in. He immediately turned and led me up to the first floor. It was a meek old home that smelt like dust with a hint of cigarettes. A crooked wooden table stood next to a grimy window. Ahmet sat in a creaky chair and gestured for me to join him for a freshly brewed pot of tea.

"Of all those worth speaking to, how have you come to me?" he asked in





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a faint voice, while arranging his humble cups.

Sitting there, I ignored the old man. I instead focused on a strangely placed quote on the wall from St. Cyprian, *“There is one Church, and one chair founded upon the rock by the word of the Lord. Another altar cannot be constituted, nor a new priesthood be made, except the one altar and the priesthood. Whosoever gathers elsewhere, scatters.”* I thought of the narcissism of small differences as I glanced back at Ahmet’s continuous rambling. Nothing about this hermit exuded any sense of awe for his pious nature. He was just another insignificant nobody and not a thing he could say would change the great indifference of the universe. I hadn’t come here for any sort of knowledge and conversation with a so-called holy man. All I had to say was, “I have ein Gift for you.”

The thin old man suddenly looked stern as he sat back and went quiet.

I then placed a small package wrapped in black cloth on the table between us. Ahmet slowly withdrew his hands while staring at the object. And so, we both waited in silence. I glared endless animosity at this mortal man as he eventually succumbed to temptation. Opening the string that bound the cloth, he carefully unveiled the filthy little urn from Rome. He looked up, noticing a second object in my left hand. Uttering voiceless words, he then picked up the urn and popped open the lid.

“Allahu Akbar!” he cried, thrusting himself backward while staring at the stale air above the tabletop.

I then calmly walked out while tucking the small stone tablet back into my jacket pocket. Ahmet’s moans echoed down that back street as I strode toward the quaint canals. The further I walked, the more I admired the architecture and warm lights. How lovely it was here. I was glad that I had come. And yet, as I continued wandering through that charming town, I constantly found shady side streets so close to those busy Friday night activities. Twisted lanes called for the butchering of drunken students that packed those bars and bustling restaurants. I wanted nothing more than to slit the throats of so many little girls. And the meat on those wet streets was as tasty as they come. All I had were contradictions. A lust for beautiful desecration.

Soon, by 7:30pm, I sat next to the water at Graslei and Korenlei where I plugged in my wireless earbuds and listened to Filter, *Under*. I once had the idea of wanting to leave an impression on this world, like some of these magnificent monuments. But I wasn’t important to any institution that would ever call for such a dedication. We were mostly pedestrian fodder soon to be swept down the gutters of civilized insignificance.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

While there enjoying the view, I watched four kids walk past along the water's edge. They were all dressed in long overcoats, like so many others, but unlike everyone else this evening, they silently moved by as if in funeral procession. But then, one of the two girls looked directly back at me! Despite the huge scarf that covered half of her face, I knew exactly who this was!

SATURDAY 26<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

Leaving Ghent at 7:30am, I changed trains at Brussels, and changed again in Paris at 10am. Ah, Paris. Always so fucking pretty. With my first coffee, I walked down the street from Gare du Nord station to Gare de l'Est. Once on my third train, I read the copy of William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, that Abi had given me. As abstruse as some of his work was, I appreciated the line, "*As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt to the contemptible.*"

At 1pm, I wandered through the streets of Strasbourg toward my new hotel. I then headed straight out again with blue skies above and a crisp winter's breeze on my face. After passing the statue of Gutenberg, I sat in the window of a cafe staring up at the unfinished twin steeples of the cathedral. With the current European Parliament being based here, the money flowed as smoothly as the surrounding canals. And yet, why hadn't they funded the cathedral's completion. I couldn't stand a job half done!

I soon stumbled upon a large protest in Kléberplatz. With all the Ukrainian flags flying, I didn't need to speak French in order to understand that today's revolutionaries demanded an end to the Russian invasion. The situation made me smirk. Glancing around at all the half-timber buildings, it was obvious how this very fucking place had been claimed by both France and Germany throughout history. But rewriting national borders now was considered a war-crime. Scanning the crowds of comfortably dressed bourgeoisie bleeding hearts, I suddenly spotted those same four kids from Ghent! Young adults in their early twenties dressed in expensive labels. They walked silently by, oblivious to their surroundings and yet blending right in. I watched them from beneath my sunglasses and behind a group of fat Frenchmen. Those kids never saw me this time as they slowly submerged back into that mob of





pacifists. Making sure that I wasn't being followed, I headed back to my hotel before my second appointment.

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Crossing the canals with their medieval towers, I arrived early, finding the Jesuit priest, Father Theophilus, standing outside a tall gate. He was smoking a horn-shaped pipe that smelt excellent. Greeting him with a firm handshake, I watched this short round guy grunt as he puffed on his pipe while turning toward the entrance. He lived in one of the steep attics that were common throughout the old town. At the top of the narrow wooden stairs was a life-size statue of a lion-headed angel that scowled menacingly at anyone who approached. The dark wooden beams in the ceiling looked as strong as the day the house was built. Theophilus poured himself a scotch and gestured if I wanted a glass. I just glared back at that old man with his trimmed white beard. Standing there, I removed the small stone tablet from my pocket before holding up the second package wrapped in black cloth. Theophilus tilted his head as he took a seat in an antique armchair.

"A gift for you," I stated, watching this man who presented himself as no holier than thou.

He casually pulling open the string and then the cloth. But when he laid eyes on the small bowl from Istanbul, he shot to his feet! The ancient pottery dropped – smashing upon the thick floorboards!

Something suddenly grabbed my shoulder, and I was thrown back across the room!

"Leave!" the frantic old priest yelled, as a strange groaning that began filling the attic. Every piece of wood was creaking as if the entire building strained under a great weight.

I got to my feet as dust fell from rafters that stretched for the first time in centuries. Watching as the light bulbs swung, I saw a resolve come over the old man's frown. He never looked back at me, just stared up into the center of the room.

On my way down the thin stairs, I heard furniture crash and windows shatter as thuds pounded the walls! The priest shouted angrily in French before abruptly going silent. Those loud collisions, however, continued even more violently until I closed the front door. Outside it was a quiet peaceful evening in Strasbourg.

Soon, I walked through the clean streets with their countless bakeries and cozy restaurants. I hoped that the two devils that had now been released would make these pious old men suffer just as badly as the devils had during

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their untold imprisonment. Spite was never proportionate. But would my gifts have any effect upon the larger world? No! My simple intention was going to plan, though, fathoming whether or not any of it mattered was unobtainable. I did what I had come to do. But so far what had I achieved? What the fuck did I have to show for myself? Just a nice little trip through old-school Europe. Was that all I would gain from this effort? Or was it the disappointment itself, that these holy fucking men had indeed invited someone like me into their homes, when they should have fucking known better!

SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2022

The train departed late from Strasbourg, at 8:45am, however, there was no rush. I had to change at Stuttgart, where I got my second coffee, before continuing southeast at noon.

For three hours, I admired the scenic views while sitting next to a tall blonde girl who finished reading one thick book and immediately began another. While listening to *Adagio in G Minor*, from *The Great Sarabande*, by Handel, I watched as the snow-laced Hohe Tauern Mountains finally appeared. So, I then asked the girl if she was Austrian? No. She was German, from Kiel, but had taken the year off for an Au Pair in Paris, before going to medical school. Smiling under her mask, she seemed pleased to finally speak English with someone, and she needed little encouragement from me. I asked if she wanted to become a doctor or a surgeon? Sitting up even more excited, she declared her immense fascination with criminal forensics, indicating the thick book in her hands. It was one of a series written by some famous German pathologist. I inquired as to what had gotten her into such things, and she stated that she would feel more comfortable cutting up dead people than the living, as there was no risk of accidentally killing them. Her infatuation had begun at an early age when her father had first taken her hunting. Of all her siblings, she was the only one that shared that special bond with her father. She had been fascinated with learning how to track deer and pig, and she was soon enthralled by the structural consistency between mammals. Sitting quietly, I watched the pale mountains pass by while listening to her elaborate on how to gut and butcher an animal in the woods. She informed me that in

Germany you studied not only your weapons but also the habitats of your targets before you could gain a hunting license at the age of fifteen. On that, I asked how old she was? Nineteen! She continued telling me about hunting in France and the ritual celebrations at the end of a kill. Enjoying her stories with their graphic details, I could picture her own wet insides all over my bloody hands. People always overshared intimate details about themselves if you politely listened and ask for more, especially when they were attracted to you.

The last hour of the journey passed in no time and as the train pulled into Salzburg, we exchanged social media details and finally our names. Valerie was continuing on to meet friends for a week of skiing. Before we parted ways, I grabbed my bag from the overhead compartment and told her, "This was one of the more interesting conversations I've ever had on a train."

"Yes, definitely!"

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I checked into my big hotel at 4:30pm. After this weekend of nonstop excursions, I decided to book a room in a nicer than usual place. It was worth the extra expense, the view from my corner room looked straight up to the Hohensalzburg Fortress. I was impressed at how smoothly all my travel connections had gone and how good I felt, despite having eaten practically nothing.

Strolling down to the river, I crossed over into the picturesque old town of Salzburg. I grabbed a coffee to-go and wandered around while there was still some dwindling daylight. This third medieval city on my agenda also seemed ripe with a legacy of riches. The more I explored these elegant places the more Berlin was held up as the whore that it was.

Shortly, I stepped into the baroque Kollegienkirche. Its enchanting white interior with golden framed altar was completely empty. No pews, no people, just me standing in that tall empty space. Slowly turning, I stared up at the sheer white columns that had been kept in perfect condition. It reminded me of both the Pantheon in Paris and of St. Peter's square. I would have loved to lock the doors and spend the night alone in there. Filling the place with devils, I would watch them slaughter one another until their blood soaked all the way up to those pristine Corinthian capitals.

That was when the echoes of high heels drew my attention. The beautiful Verena came slowly toward me looking as serious as she was exquisite. "What do you think you're doing here?"

"The door was wide open."





“This isn’t proving anything!” she stressed, keeping her delicious voice down. “You need to leave!”

“It’s sweet of you, still tracking my movements. But don’t you think you’re becoming a tad bit obsessive.”

“This isn’t funny! What are you doing here?!”

“That’s none of your fucking business!” I snapped back, leaning in as I whispered, “This conversation is over!”

I walked out of the church, rather perplexed that she had appeared out of nowhere again. Why the fuck would she even give a shit where I went?! Our fleeting professional relationship had ended a long fucking time ago. That shit was dead and buried as far as I was concerned. I had other things to do. And yet, I still had time before my third and final appointment. So, I took a seat in the square next to the cathedral as dusk tainted the sky. Looking past all the spires and toward the towering rock that the fortress was built upon, I soon found myself more annoyed by Verena than the penetrating cold. I had thought that I wouldn’t have to worry about people tracking my phone anymore. This was a good reminder that I needed to change my number. I wanted to become a nobody again. Though, after this year, I had assumed that I was already deemed irrelevant to everyone. I had to adapt my strategy if I ever wanted to eat some fresh meat again. Keeping a low profile obviously wasn’t working. However, I knew exactly why I couldn’t stay out of trouble. Because it was better to hate an enemy for trying to stop you, than hate yourself for simply existing.

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Returning to the hotel, I collected my third gift and decided to order a taxi to the airport for tomorrow morning. I saw the receptionists were both busy with people checking in, so I took a seat on the sofas among some old ladies. To my growing disgust, I watched as those four kids stepped through the front door! In the light from the chandeliers, I finally got a good look at the girl with brown hair. She was, in the flesh, the very girl from my visions.

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A few hours later, in the restaurant upstairs, she repeated, “You should leave.”

Glaring back at her, I finished my glass of water before standing as I addressed the group, “It’s been a real treat, meine Kleinen. And as they say around this neck of the woods, Gute Nacht!”

I took the stairs from the restaurant, wondering why these kids had been following me. Their alibi was clearly horseshit, but if they were all as capable

## Interfering With Divinities

of witnessing these unseen entities as Hazel-Locks-Girl, then why had only she appeared in my visions? Reaching the third floor, I drifted down that long corridor while stretching my arm. It still ached from the Italian's attack. I then glanced over my shoulder, half expecting that the Sudanese men would pop out at any moment. Slipping the steak knife out from my sleeve, I knew what I had to do tonight in order to get Hazel-Locks-Girl to confess where those four devils were hiding. The only question was, would she be alone after dinner? Stepping up to my door, I heard the phone begin to ring. I stopped, however, once I entered my room. My shoulder-bag, which I had left on the giant bed, now lay on the floor. I checked that there wasn't anyone else in there with me, before answering the phone. It was the front desk, "You have a package, Mr. Knox."

Cautiously picking up my bag, I glanced through the contents. Everything was there. I closed it and left it on the armchair on my way out. Walking down to the lobby, I assumed that the rabbi had wised up and returned my poisonous gift.

"It just arrived, Mr. Knox," the young Asian receptionist said, placing an envelope on the counter.

"Danke," I replied, finding a blank business card inside with a short message in immaculate handwriting. Looking up, I asked, "Did an angry-looking Italian leave this?"

"No, Mr. Knox. A pleasant young woman."

A black Audi sat in the shadow of the hotel where Verena waited behind the wheel. Glancing around the freezing streets, I climbed into the passenger's side.

"Look, as tempting as you are," I said loudly, with a frown. "I'm actually kind of in a relationship with someone at the moment."

Verena stared at my facetious scowl, before she whispered, "Such a philanderer!"

Savoring that slightly offended yet still flattered gleam in her eyes, I watched as she held up another small card. On it was an address in Erfurt along with the word, *Nordkreuz*. Without touching the offering, I sneered back at her, "The fuck would I want with a bunch of extremists?!"

Verena sat still in her cashmere trench coat and turtleneck. She then pulled out a fountain pen and wrote an address on the other side.

"Worms?!" I hissed, glaring murderously at her clear attempts at entrapment. "Is this Heinrich's place? Fuck that cunt!"

A frustrated yet detached tone then crossed Verena's voice, "Is there

anything you don't think you already know?"

Scanning the empty street, I took a deep breath, remembering the train ride just before I crossed into Austria. "I don't know what's in Lake Chiemsee. What do you think you know?"

"War has begun," Verena stated clinically. "But it's the in-fighting that will sabotage even the strongest alliances."

Looking into her eyes, I pictured her on all fours in my hotel room, and then I took the card.

"I'll tell you what I know," the blonde said, starting the ignition, "I know you're not as stupid as you think you are."

Walking slowly long the third-floor corridor, I shook my head dismissing Verena's coaxing. But I was suddenly furious, when I entered my room and found that my shoulder-bag was now pressed right up against the door. In a burst of intolerance, I searched the bathroom, closets, and under the bed, even making sure the windows were secure. And then I saw that once again the bag was right against the closed door. Opening it, I watched as the small ivory idol slid toward the door. I picked it up loosely and felt it pull with a force greater than gravity. Leaving my phone on the bed, I then headed out into the corridor. With the idol resting on my palm, it directed me upstairs where I soon stood outside another room. I quietly put the idol away before knocking – when suddenly I heard voices cry out in a commotion! Kids yelled desperately from behind the door. So, I thumped my fist harder! The voices changed in pitch and turned to confusion! I hammered again just as the door sprung wide open!

Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy looked up terrified and immediately stumbled away. This room was much larger than mine. Beatles-Hair-Boy stood crying like a baby with his back against a wall. The huge bed hid the third screaming voice. There, Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl was on her knees hunched over the fourth kid who lay in convulsions upon the floor. Shoving the boys out of my way, I marched over to the girls, demanding to know, "What the fuck happened?!"

"She's having a seizure!" the skinny girl squawked.

"No shit!" I snarled, cradling the head of Hazel-Locks-Girl in my hands, one palm firmly holding her jaw shut.

The other girl tried helping by pinning any flapping limbs to the floor.

"Has she taken something?!" I barked, glancing at the awkward girl and the two useless boys. "Has she had these before?!"

"Yes! No!" the girl stuttered.

## Interfering With Divinities

“Which is it?!”

“No! No, she hasn’t taken anything! She’s had tremors but I’ve never seen her collapsed like this!”

“What’s he doing here?!” Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy called out. “How did he even find us?! How does he know?!”

And then, as the girl shook in my grasp, the steak knife slipped out from my sleeve!

Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl froze for a moment, then, before I could release the brunette’s chin, she grabbed the knife and stood back yelling, “You’re not human!”

That was when I noticed that the tall girl wore latex gloves. So did the convulsing girl as well as both boys.

“Stop! No! Come on! We can’t!” Beatles-Hair-Boy moaned, as he slid down the wall and sat on his ass still weeping with dread. “We can’t to this! We can’t!”

“Shut up!” Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl snarled. “They were right! They knew this whole fucking time!”

“No, please! I can’t do this!” the boy whined. “I just can’t!”

“They knew!” the girl gasped, while staring at me with frenzied eyes. “They knew everything!”

Still holding the shaking girl, my grip tightened as my anger rose toward this developing situation.

“We have to start!” Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl suddenly ordered. “Hurry up! Work together! We can’t stop now! Get the relic! Get it!”

At that point, the idol in my jacket pocket was vibrating so violently that it was almost in time with the unconscious girl.

Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy ran and leaped over the bed where he ripped open a suitcase!

“No! This is too much!” Beatles-Hair-Boy begged, shaking his head where he sat. “I don’t want to do this anymore!”

“It’s too late! We can’t stop! We have to do this, or we’re all fucked!” Platinum-Thigh-Gap-Girl yelled, turning the steak knife toward the weeping boy. “You know there’s no backing out now! You know what’ll happen!”

“Stop! What are you doing?!” Tom-Ford-Glasses-Boy gasped, suddenly holding an old dagger. “We can’t turn on each other! Not now!”

Suddenly the small girl in my grasp screamed! Her back arched and arms contorted! That voice of hers was as shrill as it was horribly tortured!

And then all the lights went out!

Cries of panic filled the room as the dim street lights silhouetted those frantic kids stumbling in the dark.

“Get back!”

“I don’t want to do this!”

“Do it! Do it now!”

An awful stench then filled the room.

Releasing the girl, I slowly stood and spoke up, “Eat them!”

The disorganized voices of all three of those kids abruptly stopped mid-sentence.

Stepping over to the nearby windows, I stared down at the empty street as I reached into my pocket and held the ivory idol in one hand and the stone tablet in the other. The dripping sounds of flesh tearing, bones snapping, and guts spilling was all that came from behind me. Choking and trembling breaths soon became gargling and short-lived whimpers. The thud of a foot striking the floor in spasms was the loudest thing that emanated from that lightless room. Turning, I saw bloody organs strung in threads among the toothy snouts. Those hideous devils devoured the slaughtered children with a selfish appetite. Moving closer for a better view, I spotted one of the pinkish devils lunge at my presence! I raised the protective tablet toward its deformed forehead and watched that thing squeal and lurch away in agony. With clenched teeth, I stood in the midst of that butchery as those four creatures feasted like abominable hyenas.

I patiently held my hatred still until they licked up every last drop of blood, erasing those slain kid’s entire physical existence. The four devils then gathered together and rose on their hind legs as they finally confronted me as one. So, I held up the ivory idol at arm’s length.

And then the lights burst on!

I was alone in that big hotel room. Looking at the pale sculpture of the devils in my hand, I heard it hum before the vibrating slowly stopped and it went icy cold.

“Piece of shit,” I whispered, turning as I picked up the steak knife. Only then did I discover that I wasn’t alone. The unconscious Hazel-Locks-Girl was still lying on the floor. Why the fuck had they left her unharmed?! Kneeling, I grabbed her fucking throat – when a thin necklace slid against my hand, revealing a locket incasing a honeybee. I immediately released her, standing up as the story of how Arpi had killed herself came to mind.

Going through her handbag, I tossed aside bottles and packets of Percocet, OxyContin, and Xanax. I soon found a plane ticket from Bristol to Brussels

## Interfering With Divinities

but no return flight. Opening her British passport, I glared at the photo of the twenty-two-year-old, finally learning her name: Hailey.

# BERLIN

TUESDAY 1<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2022

When I went out for dinner, a fox ran onto the street and stopped right in front of me. I glared at that little shit, knowing that I should pay the lakeside house a visit. But I'd go whenever it suited me. Walking past the fox, I sneered at the messenger, "Yeah, yeah. I fucking know."

THURSDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> MARCH 2022

During dinner at Abi's place, we each shared stories from our travels. She was, however, more stressed about the war, concerned that Romania might be next on Putin's agenda. And then she said that she was also worried about us, as she couldn't tell what I was really thinking. I smiled and asked if she trusted me. Without hesitation, she shook her head. Fair enough, and I nodded.

She soon climbed on top of me, and we began making out. But I picked her up as I stood, saying that I was going home.

Abi gasped in disbelief, "After a week, you're just going to leave me like this?!"

Smirking, I then slammed her hard against the door and we barely got our pants open before I fucked her. Crushing her face as I rammed my erection deep into her tight cunt, I loved how she moaned. We were both out of breath by the time I ground my forehead into the back of her skull as I came.

Abi licked my lips and whispered, "Distance makes the heart grow fonder."

## Interfering With Divinities

I knew better and left.

### SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

After another morning blowjob wakeup-call, I went to the canal for a coffee alone where I considered paying the lakeside house a visit. I glanced around the pedestrian life of the young and worthless of Berlin but saw that none of it cared for what I held in my jacket pocket. So, while listening to The Prodigy, *Voodoo People*, I decided instead to go and meet an ex who was visiting town.

### SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Waking at 11am, I saw a hideous white devil huddled under my desk. It had a bloated head and tiny face with distorted features. This creature had too many ribs and a segmented body with countless limbs. While it stared at me it held out an upside-down skull which it slowly poured a black liquid out of.

Ignoring that thing, I rolled over and went back to sleep.

I awoke at 1pm, having finally had my first good twelve-hour sleep since last weekend's travels.

### MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

I found something on my doorstep this morning. Picking it up, I realized that it was a pig's ear.

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After work, I bought white roses and met Abi at a nice sushi place. She was, as always, looking beautiful. Tomorrow was both Woman's Day and our two months together. We liked how things were going and both wanted to continue seeing each other.

However, we parted ways at 11pm, as we both had a busy week ahead. As I got off the U-bahn, I wondered how serious this relationship could get. Could I play the part of the good boyfriend? So far, I felt I had done a pretty decent job. But then I spotted a skinny girl strutting next to me. I immediately pictured myself slitting her throat and stripping her naked. Under the cover of the metal stairs that led down to the Urban Spree, I could puncture her gut with my knife repeatedly until her piss and shit mixed into her shredded skin. I wanted to ruin the meat, leave the body, and take the head home to fuck!

At 11:30pm, I saw a black guy on the corner of my street. So, I went upstairs, left my phone, and collected the ivory idol. Marching back downstairs, I went straight up to the young Sudanese man and asked, "Where's your car?"

We arrived at the lakeside house after midnight where several Sudanese men stood waiting in the driveway. They all led me inside without a word. In the dark lounge, the old woman sat in a wheelchair facing my approach. I knew perfectly well that I had no reason to trust any of these fucks, especially not once I returned what I owed. But after dinner with Abi and then that temptation on the street, I understood that I'd never change what I was at my core. So, skin me alive and I would deserve it for a thousand other reasons! I was not a good fucking person! Full of indignant disgust, I held up the ivory idol and stated, "I couldn't find them! You'll have to live without."

Once I placed the tiny idol on the old woman's palm, she instantly scowled at me and said, "Still the liar!"

"How would you fucking know!"

"Get rid of him!" she ordered.

Suddenly I was grabbed by a dozen black hands and dragged out to the back garden. I initially thought that they were going to bury me alive again, but they crossed the yard and headed to the water's edge. There, they bound my wrists and ankles together behind my back, before picking me up like a lamb to the slaughter. I was carried out onto the jetty that stretched further into the pitch-black lake. This was not what I had anticipated and began thrashing out! They then dropped me into a long rowboat! The pain of landing on my right shoulder was soon replaced with my disdain for the original black guy who then sat in the boat. The others stood silently on the jetty watching as I was rowed quietly out into that freezing night.

## Interfering With Divinities

Listening to the water against the hull, I knew that whether I died now or in another forty-four-years I would still have an abundance of unanswered curiosities. I could live for a thousand more years and still never gauge the ultimate extent of my own dismal ignorance. All my frustration couldn't save me in the face my inevitable drowning. I HATED THE FUTILITY OF QUESTIONING ANYTHING!

Soon, the black guy pulled the ores in and grabbed my collar as he whispered, "They are watching. I will cut you loose and throw you in. Hold onto the back and stay quiet. Wait until the lights are out. Then leave and never contact our women again! You understand!"

Scowling at this proposition, I genuinely didn't believe him. But then he cut my restrains, and before I had a chance to take a deep breath, he heaved me right over the side!

How quickly I recalled my contempt for all the times that I'd found myself in hideously cold fucking water! Every muscle cramped and my brain was electrocuted with a constant surge of physical shock! However, my hands were placed on the stern of the rowboat, and my face surfaced while my body curled up into a ball. I clung on desperately as the black guy took his time casually rowing back to the shoreline.

Barely able to breathe, I forced my head under the water once we reached the jetty. I fumbled blindly, trying to hide in case others waited, but soon I heard only one pair of feet stomping away.

Pulling myself along the side of the jetty, my feet soon touched the bottom, and I limped out of that agonizingly cold lake. Regardless of what I had been told, I walked directly toward the back patio. I grabbed a stone bust from the garden and smashed the glass door! Tearing my way inside, I shivered wildly as I marched with a hunched back through that big house, quickly finding the old woman near the chapel. She merely scowled at me. Grabbing her wheelchair, I shoved my wet face right up into hers. The mob of black men then came running and crashed into us! I held on, snarling at the old woman, "This fucking place was built for a fucking reason! Wasn't it! Communication!"

The men struggled, but my frozen body was too numb to care what they did.

"Do you speak their language?! Have they taken you to see the mountains that burn?! What temples have you built of your own in that realm of an unknowable God?!" I yelled furiously. "Or one day will you wake up dead and surrounded by hungry devils that waited your whole lifetime just chew

on your worthless fucking existence?! What's your fucking retirement policy in hell, you miserable fucking cunt?!"

"Unlike yourself," the old woman cursed. "We're not all going to the lake of fire."

The crowd of black men eased their tugging and slowly let me be, as I sneered, "You're so fucking wrong about that! And deep down in that thick fucking skull of yours, you fucking know it!"

"Get out!" she grunted.

The men closed in again, as I demanded, "Why not use these fucking temples?! Why not control the devils you've collected?! Why not build a fucking empire in hell that you can rule?!"

"Blasphemy! Sedition! Heresy! Idolatry! Sacrilege!" she screamed.

"Yadda, yadda, yadda! Fuck off, you short-sighted meat!" I shouted, drenched with a fuming impatience for answers! My entire body was torn at by that swarm of men, but my hands wouldn't release the wheelchair that was held by others. "If you won't fucking listen, then where the fuck's the old mute?! At least he's still got some fucking balls!"

"He already passed!" she snapped.

I paused, glaring into the eyes of that wretched old woman. Then I spoke calmly, "If I find him and prove to you that that's where you're going too, then what the fuck have you got to lose?! Use these temples for what they're meant for! Communicate with them! Control them now, while you're still alive! While you still have power over the powerful!"

"Get out!" she snarled, turning her face away. "Get out, you monstrosity! I'll hear none of your lies! Get out!"

"Fucking custodian!" I hissed through my teeth, before releasing the wheelchair – and we all crashed backward onto the floor! Wrenching myself away, I got up as men rose between the old woman and me. Some of them reached for my arms, to which I barked, "Fucking touch me!"

A golden light then appeared above. The frantic Sudanese men suddenly shuddered and stopped where they were. Scanning their faces of fear, I then walked out of that long room. I, however, caught a glimpse of my reflection in a window where a small flame hung above the crown of my head.

Upon stepping out of the front door, only the black of night surrounded as I stumbled away, soaking wet and bitter. All I saw were cowards unwilling to use the tools that they worshipped. Once they were dead it would be too fucking late! But once they were dead, I could then reap that which they refused sow! There was a kingdom to overcome!

## Interfering With Divinities

TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

This morning the air was crisp and clean in my lungs. The sky was clear and blue above my head. I wasn't dead yet.

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At 10pm, I sat in front of the Alte Nationalgalerie and closed my eyes.

I then sat in the circle of ruined obelisks while I recalled Arpi crying at my exhibition in 2019.

Immediately, I grabbed her by the hair!

Opening my eyes, I held onto Arpi in front of the Alte Nationalgalerie. The naked and filthy Armenian girl looked scared out of her mind. But while holding onto the throat of this meek apparition, I spoke up, "Bring it to me!"

Releasing that dead girl, I watched as she sadly glanced away before slowly walking through the glass doors and into the gallery.

Less than ten minutes later, I spotted Arpi on the external stairs, near where I had first seen the monkey-devil. She descended the steps with her arms over her breasts and long dark hair hanging in front. Soon crouching before me, she placed a 10x10cm ceramic tile on the ground. I picked it up with a black cloth finding unknown handwriting on the backside. Wrapping it up, I stuffed the tile into my jacket pocket. The pale image of Arpi had already vanished.

-

By 11pm, I crept up to the lightless lakeside house. I took a knee on the driveway and picked up a small pebble. Then, I lifted the welcome mat outside the front door. Placing the pebble on the front step, I positioned the tile directly over it. I then covered the tile with the mat where it belonged. Whomever would step on the mat would cause the pebble to snap the tile and unleash whatever was trapped within.

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Arriving on my street well after midnight, I saw a large animal moving beneath the icy lamplight. It was a gray wolf. This ominous omen stared at me, and we both stood still. A smile of animosity grew across my face, until the wolf gradually wandered away.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

FRIDAY 11<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Today, I changed my phone provider and got a new sim card. I had my doubts but wanted to see if this would curb those tracking my movements.

MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

I was working at my desk this evening and listening to Rebekka Karijord, *Prayer*, when I noticed a red glow from outside. Opening the window, all I smelt was the rain. I knew, though, exactly where that unnatural light came from and why it looked like there was a fire in the courtyard.

Putting on my Chucks, I grabbed the wire and headed around to my neighbor's gate. In the small clearing near my building and nestled among overhanging branches, a scarlet flame rose from my old magickal sinkhole. Free-floating, the flame moved slowly with a consciousness to its writhing. I approached quietly, recognizing this fiery entity as the same kind that dominated the mountains that burned. However, its crimson radiance illuminated another face on the other side of the clearing. An ancient man stood among the trees with a long beard and simple crown above his gaunt face. In his hands was the severed head of a blackened devil. He didn't seem to notice me. So, we both stood for a while as that murderous light stroked our retina.

THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

Leaving my flat this morning, I heard struggling and thumps coming from inside the massage parlor! Right then, one of the Romanian gangsters that had tried to take me for a ride, opened the door. Scowling at his shock, I heard a woman's voice snarling in Russian behind him. He just straightened up and cautiously backed inside.

Not my problem! And I continued through the entrance and out the front door. But then I saw another Romanian standing next to a parked car. He glared hesitantly at me as I strolled away toward the studio. And then, I spotted one of the elderly women from the parlor getting out of her own car. She was stuffing a handgun into her shoulder bag when she looked up. We nodded politely and went in opposite directions. Whatever way that situation played out it still wasn't my fucking business! Crossing the intersection, I glanced back. The Romanian standing next to his car was joined by another and they watched me walk away. There wasn't anything in it for me. So, it wasn't my fucking problem!

-

Abi wasn't doing too good after learning that she couldn't get time off at Easter to visit her parents. So, this evening, I went to keep her company. I was well aware of how shit it felt when things didn't work out the way that you had planned. Yet in doing this, by being there for her, she made me seem important. She was someone I finally looked forward to being with. I liked knowing that I could brighten up her night just by being there.

While in Abi's kitchen, she sat on my lap, and we looked for hotels in Venice. She wanted to go there for her birthday in July. Making future plans together was one of those little things that made me sure that this relationship was becoming exactly what I needed.

Later, while walking to the train, I crossed the overpass and scanned the bleak silhouette of the Berlin skyline. Soon, however, that wide empty expanse of tracks became crowded with translucent figures. I ignored them as a freight train passed by. But once it was gone, I found there were only more of those shadow figures. A vast mob of motionless shapes all staring at my isolation on that cold platform. I should have stayed the night at Abi's.

# EDINBURGH

FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Back at the Berlin airport again, I was on my way to catch up with my old aunt for the first time since Corona. It would have been better if Abi could have joined me, but I could always entertain myself in the fatherland. I loved Edinburgh with its black stone architecture, leafless trees, and warm lights behind casement windows.

My flight departed at 4:30pm, so beforehand, I had a videocall with my nephew and niece. My brother was busy with his PlayStation, so the kids took the phone upstairs and reminded me that their birthdays were coming up next month. My niece was turning sixteen and wanted to get a parttime job, to which I recalled having a paper-run as a teenager and how fucking shit it was! And yet, it taught me that no one else was going to pay my way or carry my load. I then pointed out that that was exactly what was happening in the Ukraine. My niece pulled out her phone and started taking notes. I then asked what they had learned about history in school? The kids both groaned, vaguely saying something about the 1981 Springbok Tour. Shaking my head, I shrugged at my own pathetic childhood education. It was only because of the books that my parents had collected on other cultures that I myself knew anything beyond what the evening news got my father furious about. Asking what they had learned about German history, I found that they knew about as much as I did when I first moved here. Once I started giving them a crash course on both World Wars, I saw their eyes glaze over. So, I changed the subject to science. They immediately expressed that common depression felt when looking up at the stars and feeling utterly insignificant. However, I told them to keep in mind that out of all that emptiness they were alive here and now, and that gave them an advantage over the great indifference of the universe.

## Interfering With Divinities

My brother finally joined the conversation, and I was genuinely shocked when he said that he had never heard of the Fermi paradox. His daughter then read back her notes:

1. *Avoid jobs you hate.*
2. *Don't rely on others.*
3. *History wasn't child friendly.*

We all laughed, and I added one final point, that Scientology had nothing to do with science. They all looked confused, as I smirked and waved goodbye heading off to my flight.

Elizabeth had recommended a cozy pub just up from Princess Street, and while I had dinner there, I thought about my videocall with the kids. I was surprised how fascinated they were by details that they simply knew nothing about. Their undivided attention and sincere curiosity were just what most people lacked. I actually liked talking with these kids as much as they seemed enthusiastically engaged. But sooner or later I'd say too much and shit on everyone's parade. I shouldn't be responsible for anyone. After all, I had barely kept myself alive. My brother was their upstanding father, I was just their idiot uncle. I had to remember my place and keep them at a distance, like I had done successfully for most of their lives.

Walking through the middle of Edinburgh toward my hotel, I soon saw loneliness on the faces of every little drunken girl with their heads slumped forward. Though, how quickly I was reminded of their innate nastiness once they barked hoarsely into their phones and screamed at each other on the street. This fleeting moment of sympathy was replaced with a self-loathing for tolerating such a stupid fucking notion! The very idea of offering hope and comfort was based on the false premise that they were worth more than pig shit! I was that very nastiness that I despised! Empathy was a lie! I knew nothing of good people! Everyone was getting by doing their slovenly thing out of pure self-interest! I was not their concern, and they were not mine!

SATURDAY 19<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

I arrived at the care-home with a negative Corona test and fresh flowers.





## Interfering With Divinities

My old aunt was much more upbeat than two years ago, when I first visited her here. She had caught Covid last year and nearly died, but somehow managed to pull through. Considering the hermetically sealed entrance and all the protocols that I had to go through, we both shook our heads. These places for the elderly were meant to be the most secure, in order to protect the most vulnerable. And yet that still hadn't worked. However, she, like I, had survived this supposed plague. She said she was turning ninety in August, and I shuddered, wondering if I was only halfway through this life.

She pointed to the pile of postcards that I had continued sending her from my travels and said that it was the only mail she ever received these days. Asking about her youthful adventures, I mentioned my interest in visiting the middle east with all its history from the Nile to the Indus. She suggested that if I ever made it to Iran (when relations were less volatile) then I should go to Isfahan. There, she had seen one of the most beautiful mosques in the world.

Showing my aunt some photos of Abi and I, she smiled and thought that we made a smart-looking couple. She then pointed to the big CRUELTY IS POWER tattoo on the inside of my right forearm, saying that I should get it removed as it gave off the wrong impression. Smiling, I said that it was always a good conversation starter. We both laughed. Her mind was as sharp as ever, and as I left, she said how much she appreciated having such a handsome visitor and that I was always welcome.

-

While at the National Gallery that afternoon, I became transfixed by the enormous painting of Rome by David Roberts. I loved the way the rooftops were lit by the setting sun. This painting, it meant something to me. I recognized places that I had been too. And the immersive scale of the artwork was truly awesome.

"Let her finish," an Englishman spoke from my side.

Glancing down, I had assumed that he was referring to the two girls sketching crude copies of the painting. I smelt the old guy's pleasant aftershave before I twisted my head toward him.

"It's unbelievable," he whispered. "You're actually here."

"Excuse me," I replied. "Do I know you?"

"Salzburg," he said quietly, while staring at the huge painting. "Why did you follow them to their room?"

"Don't know what the fuck you're talking about, sunshine."

"I have the security camera footage. You walked straight to their room without hesitation."

A smirk grew below my scowl.

“Why? What were those kids to you? Just a random convenience? An opportunity to take advantage of some innocent strangers at a hotel?”

“The fuck are you on about?”

“What did you do to those three kids?”

“You must know. You have the footage. What are you, an Austrian cop?”

“No.”

“English cop?”

“A concerned father.”

“Were they your kids?”

“They were sick. They needed help. But that’s not what you offered them, was it.”

“Go save you own fucking children then and fuck off.”

“I’m trying to.”

“Are you Italian?”

“You entered their room. Then the power went out. Once the footage returned, you simply walked back to your room. What did you do to those three kids in the time between?”

“Four.”

“What?”

“Get your facts straight, buddy! There were four kids! And they were the ones that invited me in!”

“Why?”

“Why what?”

“Why would they invite you in?”

“Hey, they wanted what all young adults want.”

The fifty-year-old guy with silver hair waited.

“A taste of depravity like they’ve never had before. You know how it is. A good old fashion gangbang with bukkake happy endings to round off their pious Sunday evening. You know what they say about catholic schoolgirls. We arranged it beforehand while in the restaurant. I may not know how to play the piano, but I can still thumb a g-spot while fingering a clit as I sodomize an asshole or two.”

One of girls sitting on the sofa in the middle of the gallery, slowly looked back up at me.

I stared down at her as I continued, “Haven’t you ever put a girl on top of another, face to face, and then run your tongue up over both their labia in one long lick?”

## Interfering With Divinities

“The witnesses at the restaurant upstairs said your conversation was less than civil,” the small Englishman said in his croaky voice. “They seemed to think you were scolding them like an angry headmaster.”

“And?! That’s it?! Is that it?!”

“She was having a seizure when you arrived.”

Turning my head away, I nodded. “Yeah, that’s right. But you couldn’t have seen that in any security camera.”

“The girl, the one that survived, she sent me here.”

“How did you find me?! Are you tracking my fucking phone?!” I demanded in whispers, pissed off that my new sim card was already compromised. “And if you aren’t a cop, then how the fuck are you here, huh?!”

“When she woke up, they were all gone. Just gone. You entered the room and the other three vanished.”

“They let me in for some friendly fornication. When I arrived, however, she had collapsed. The others didn’t know what to do, so I cradled her head until the seizure passed. No one was in the mood for getting frisky after that. And I wasn’t there to fucking babysit a bunch of morbidly depressed spoilt brats! So, I fucked off back to my room. End of story.”

That serious-faced guy then buried his hands into the pockets of his windbreaker.

“Why the fuck are you asking me?”

“I think you did something to those kids.”

“And then what? Flushed their bodies down the toilet? And why leave the brunette?”

No response came.

“She hired you to find me?”

“No.”

“What are you doing here, then?”

“I want you to leave her be.”

“You think I give a fuck about her?”

“You followed her to Paris in December.”

“Excuse the shit out of me?!”

“I’ve seen the footage from the National Library.”

“Then you saw that I had a fucking appointment with a guy at the rare books department! So, what the fuck are you implying?!”

“Your behavior is a criminal offense!”

“Your hacking my phone’s GPS isn’t?!”

“I didn’t track your phone.”

“Tell it to a judge!”

“I didn’t need to.”

“Whatever, cunt!”

“She told me you were coming.”

“Here?! She’s here?! In Edinburgh?!”

He glanced away annoyed.

“Seems like you’re confused about who’s stalking whom!”

This part-time private investigator remained bitterly silent.

“Are you good at your job?” I asked, looking back at the painting of Rome. “Good at finding people and shit?”

“I found you in here.”

“Give me your number, then.”

Hesitantly, he slowly took my phone as I held it out.

“Cromack?” I said, watching him type his name. “A priest died in Rome last October. Father Lodovico. Shortly before his unusual death, he was visited by a bald guy. A real miserable looking son of a bitch. Find out who he is.”

“Why should I?”

“He was in Salzburg that night. Find him and you might solve the mystery of the missing kids.”

“What do you know about him?”

“Tomorrow. Let’s talk tomorrow. Find me at the St. Giles’ Sunday service.”

-

Later that evening, after killing time at the movies, with *The Batman*, I found myself following two young girls along the street. The tight jeans of the tall blonde drew me closer. Yet they never looked back. While watching them talk, I knew that children weren’t innocent. Humans were criminals by default. Only by adulthood should we have learned how to suppress our natural proclivities for committing what society deemed as unethical. Suddenly the two girls took a side street. I was about to pursue, but it led in the wrong direction from my hotel. Reluctantly, I continued straight ahead and plugged in my earbuds, listening to Alice in Chains, *Dam That River*. What a beautiful fucking night. Scanning the castle below the full moon, I admired the view while passing the Scott Monument. I would leave nothing behind once I died. No children, no great wisdom, and there wouldn’t even be a gravestone with my name on it. All I had was the art and writings of a fucking lunatic. Even Abi, who was the closest to me, had nothing invested.

## Interfering With Divinities

I had to explicitly explain to her that she should only critique my character based on the quality time that we spent together, and not on my art or writings taken out of context. Still, it wasn't enough for her to trust me. How we presented ourselves was futile against selective perception. I had no idea how she or my old aunt or my young niece saw me. Would they think less of my person if they knew that I was following girls on the street while leaving kill-kits in every country that I had travelled to? Or would it merely confirm their gut intuition that I was a fucking piece of shit?! However, ultimately, I knew that none of them spent a second thought on me once I left their presence. So, fuck this idea of leaving monuments to my psychotic obsessions when I was disgusted by anyone that listened to anything that I had to say.

SUNDAY 20<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Walking up the southwest side of the castle, I passed through the empty Grassmarket and up Victoria Street to the cathedral. I tossed my empty coffee cup in the trash before replacing the chilly morning air for the nave that was just as barren as the Royal Mile. Sitting in the pews facing west, I listened to the female minister preach while I stared at the stained glass. I saw all messiahs as false idols. Their inability to communicate the perfect word of their God left interpretation wanting clarity. There were no leaders of man worth following as spokesmen for a beheaded godhead.

“Your thoughts are not your thoughts,” the minister stated, catching my attention, and bringing out a smile as I glared back at her. Her final words of the service were centered around the war in the Ukraine and how no one deserved to suffer. What she should have said was, no one got what they deserved! I glanced around that meager congregation and knew that Jesus was right, the meek shall inherit the Earth, a scorched Earth where they're damned through political submission, covid compliance, and soaring inflation. The proletariat masses didn't rise up and overthrow their masters because the meek didn't have a plan or even the resources to make ends meet. They couldn't afford the fucking luxury of time off to protest whatever trending TikTok-savior deemed blasphemous hate-speech that needed canceling, or to rally behind the latest zero-carbon tax-deduction bitcoin worth investing



in. They were morons that elected the elect to talk to God on their behalf and then these messengers put words in his mouth as they chose what to translate so that the meek could believe in something that they never put a moment's serious thought into. The meek had already inherited the Earth and still they had no leverage! And those in charge, like Putin, fucking knew this!

Once the service was over, Cromack confronted me in the north transept. "What are you doing here?"

"Ah, you know," I replied, staring at the statue of John Knox. "Enjoying the ambiance."

"Did you murder that priest in Rome?"

"What's your stance on abortion?"

"What kind of faith do you have?"

"What blind faith do you have in Hailey?"

Going quiet, the old Englishman stared up at the tall Gothic windows. "Greek orthodox. It's the only pure faith. The church that was founded before any bible was stitched together."

"Have you been to Mount Athos?"

"Years ago."

"The priest killed himself."

"Who was he to you?"

"Who's the girl to you?"

"My daughter's dying. Hailey's treating her."

"How?"

"With unconventional therapeutics."

"She's a fucking child!"

Cromack stood still for a long pause, before saying, "In Eleusis, Plato said that philosophy was a way of dealing with death."

"Yeah, and what miracles has she performed?"

"I once saw a gathering of women manifest a black substance out of thin air. That was when I was just a boy. An encounter that I'm still ashamed to talk about. No one, no matter how open minded, believes you. It was alive, that black thing in the air. Of jinn and mankind."

"Is she here?"

"You know she isn't."

With that, my patience ran out and I marched away.

"The Italian!"

But that slowly drew me to a standstill.

"He's not a very cordial man."

## Interfering With Divinities

“Tell me something I don’t fucking know!”

“Let the girl finish her work!”

-

I sat alone on Calton Hill looking over the city with its steeples, listening to Whores, *I Have a Prepared Statement*. I was too harsh at making judgments. The world worked because people worked together. And yet, only seeing the worst in people was a warped perspective that I had deliberately designed. This negativity was why I knew that no one should ever trust me. And yet some did.

-

After spending a long time in the Waterstones bookstore, I got back to my hotel at 5pm wanting to test something ever since Abi had sent a nude this afternoon. I sat on the big bed in my room facing east and closed my eyes. Arpi immediately appeared in front of me. She looked as sad and as lost as ever. However, while staring at her, I reached forward. She had brought me the ceramic tile, a solid object, and yet right now I couldn’t physically touch her. My fingers passed clean through her pale apparition like she was nothing at all. But still, her naked belly was right there, I could focus on her navel and the tiny hairs that caught the evening light. Her arms covered her breasts, but I could see enough. Standing in front of her, I watched as she coyly twisted her head away. I grabbed at her slender throat to no effect, but still I jerked off over her silent humiliation. Thinking of Hailey as I ejaculated, I knew that she too would make a pretty little ghost-whore.

MONDAY 21<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2022

On the morning flight back to Berlin, I was thinking about some fun and games to have with Abi. I wanted more than what she seemed willing to give so far. So, I text her three simple little appetizers. Suggestions that might push her boundaries. If she responded positively, then I’d know that she was mine.

1. “*I’m going to start collecting my cum every time I jerk off, so the next time you come over I will open your ass and pour it inside you.*”

2. “*I want you to drink a whole liter of milk and then give me a blowjob until you vomit all over my dick.*”



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3. *“I want to start writing little messages that I’ll put inside small capsules before inserting them into your vagina just before you leave my place. You can only take them out once you arrive home.”*

# BERLIN

TUESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> MARCH 2022

*“As for Freedom of expression and opinion, which is one of the most important foundations that the West boasts about, it has fallen into the abyss. At least since George W. Bush came about twenty years ago the entire Western world came with one opinion and everyone is moving in the same direction. Governments, lobbies, companies, media, and most recently, social media. What is this democratic West in which hundreds of millions of people live but which has only one opinion? The truth is that freedom of opinion and freedom of expression is to have one opinion that is identical with the West. This is the truth.”* Bashar al-Assad.

With the Syrian president’s voice in my head, I switched off my light and was about to get into bed, when I saw that red glow outside my blinds. I opened the window and leaned out. In the clearing among the trees the free-floating flame undulated between a rich scarlet and an opulent gold.

Not my fucking problem!

Shutting my windows, I went to bed.

THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Leaving the studio at 6:30pm, despite the pleasant evening, I couldn’t help that fuming hatred gnawing at the back of my mind. I might have fucked things up again, but ultimately, I knew that it had seemed like a good idea at the time. Then, reaching the corner, I saw one of the Sudanese women

walking toward me.

"I can get you into wherever you want," she spoke anxiously, though looking straight into my eyes.

"Why?" I frowned, stepping closer. "Why now?"

"She is gone."

"What happened?"

"She is in hospital. They said she will die soon."

Glancing around the quiet street, I waited for more.

"One of our men, he went mad. He beat her. He beat her very bad."

I just listened to her frightened tone of voice.

"Now the men are free. Because of you. We know it was you."

"Then let's go, kid," I said, waving down a passing taxi. It would have only taken a minute for me to run upstairs and grab the protective tablet, but I didn't care. Precautions be damned! Nothing worked out the way I wanted! So, fuck it!

It was dark when we arrived at the lakeside house that was looking as ominous as ever. There was no longer any welcome mat on the doorstep as I gestured for the woman to do her thing. She seemed confused, like we had come to the wrong place, but quickly got on with the task at hand. Opening a small leather case, she popped a couple of thin metal tools into the lock and opened the door as easily as if she actually had the key. She moved inside and disarmed the alarm by typing on a keypad. The code was a simple four-digit pin.

"Thank you kindly," I said, holding the front door open. Glaring into the depth of those corridors, I ignored the locksmith as she walked away without a word. I drifted quietly into the lounge and looked out onto the back garden. Standing there, without any lights on, I scanned the patio. I would have dug up the buried temple again if the digger was still on the property.

Eventually, I wandered through the house, switching on random lamps as I examined the ancient books and trinkets on the elegant shelves. I found a wall covered with black and white photos upstairs. The pictures were mostly set in some remote African village. Perhaps in Sudan, but I didn't recognize any of the faces. However, there was one photo of a murky lake where some kind of big black animal rose its unnatural head. The villages on the shoreline looked terrified and several blurry figures ran away covering their faces. I knew exactly what this creature was, remembering the pond in Leicestershire.

I spent a couple of hours searching and collected a spare set of house keys that I found. But none of the keys opened the door to the chapel-wing.

## Interfering With Divinities

One room had a giant stone block on the floor that was twice the size of a double bed. This weatherworn granite was covered in a sophisticated script with matching glyphs.

It was almost 10pm, when I was sitting at a massive desk upstairs without any lights on. I had gone too far and said too much. My attempt at being a good guy in a relationship had failed. So, that's that. My three suggestions had crossed a line with Abi and this afternoon she wrote back saying that she didn't want to see me again. It had seemed too trivial and not something worth breaking up over. I had liked her. However, I reminded myself that women might humanize you, but they didn't enlighten. So, I wiped my hands of her.

And right then, my phone buzzed, and I received a text from my old ex, blonde, *"Was thinking of you the other day. Remember what you said about the walking-red-flag. I think my guy just broke up with me."*

*"Why were you thinking of me?"*

*"Because you said back then that I should think about you the moment that he fucks up."*

*"Invite me over then."*

*"Yeah, I'm quite fun tonight. Full of Tavor."*

*"Full of what?"*

*"Benzodiazepine."*

*"I would come, but I know you're kidding."*

*"I'd actually invite you over after this piece of shit day but I'm about to pass out from the medication."*

Sitting in that silent old house, I looked up as Arpi's naked apparition then appeared next to me. With disgust saturating my nervous system, I hissed, "Show me where it is!"

She immediately led me downstairs to another large room full of display cabinets and bookshelves. In a glass case upon a velvet cloth lay the ivory idol. I wrapped it up and walked out, locking the front door behind me.

FRIDAY 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

At 7pm, I took an ex to Das Kapital, the artist bar. She was trying to promote

Bruce Stirling John Knox

her own art and get herself more involved in the creative community. Introducing her to the guys working there, she got their details about how to host an evening herself.

At 9pm, I returned to the studio and met Maddy. She then modelled nude among dozens of candles. While packing up, I told her about the other plans that I had to photograph her tied up. Despite her preference for being in control, she said that she trusted my direction.

At 11pm, I headed across town once again, for the birthday drinks of an old socialite. However, out of the blue, I received a text from Amelia. She was unusually talkative for someone who had ghosted me years ago. Obviously, she was feeling particularly lonely, and soon admitted that she had just moved to the Bask Country in the south of France. She sent me some photos, and from briefly examining them, I knew that it wouldn't take much effort to find exactly where she was now living.

At the bar, the Italian waitress eye-fucked with me while I chatted with the drunken birthday boy. I, however, forced myself to walk away and not ask the waitress for her number. All I wanted was to fucking hurt someone!

SATURDAY 26<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

While listening to Danny Elfman, *Choose Your Side*, I walked up to blonde's apartment building in the outskirts of Berlin. I had text her that I was coming, but of course she never read my message. I soon filmed myself walking right up to her front door and stroking her name on the doorbell, before simply turning away.

SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

I was having coffee in the sun with Melina, when I received a text from Blondie, "*Jesus Christ, Bruce. You should have rung the bell.*"

## Interfering With Divinities

*“Why, you would just freak out.”*

*“True.”*

And then I received a photo from the Finnish girl, Kaja, who I had recently been chatting with online. I have known many girls from many places, but she was now in Berlin! I wondered if she was stalking me. And then I remembered that her birthday was coming up. Had she actually taken my advice and decided to travel?

After leaving Burroughs' place this evening, I saw a girl on the train staring at me. I glanced away but looking back found that she was still gazing at me with those beautiful eyes above her medical mask.

She transferred to my next train and also exited at my final stop. So, I followed her chubby ass upstairs with my hands aching to strangle her fucking throat. But then I thought of her eyes, and I stopped on the footpath right behind her. I then just watched her turn down another street. All she was looking for was some kind of human connection, and yet all I wanted was violence. Scanning the empty midnight streets, I walked home knowing that she had done nothing wrong.

MONDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Kaja came to my place this evening. She had at first seemed shy, but the casual conversation made her comfortable. However, just before she headed back to her hotel, I suggested a bit of birthday fun tomorrow night when she was turning twenty-nine. I told her exactly what I would do, to which she smiled cutely and said that she was looking forward to it.

TUESDAY 29<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

In the small hours, I awoke from a dream where I was attacked by lions –

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and found that my phone was ringing. It was René. He was concerned about Lucus who had gone missing. Annoyed, I told him that I was sure Lucus would turn up, and I went back to sleep.

I went to Kaja's hotel after work where we met in the big lobby. Heading straight upstairs to her room, I immediately stripped her down to her knee-high socks, bent her over the bed, and proceeded to spank her ass twenty-nine unforgiving times! She whimpered meekly, but I didn't give a fuck. Laying her on her back, I then raised her legs so that her knees rested by her shoulders with her ass up. She had a timid look in her eyes as I held the dining room candle above her. Once it was inserted snugly within her tight rectum, I lit the candle and told her to make a wish. She blew it out and I then threw confetti in the air with a smirk, "Happy fucking birthday!"

We made out for a while before she got on her knees and sucked my dick. Spotting a pack of candy on the nightstand, I selected one specifically. I then shoved Kaja over the bed again and thumbed that banana-shaped candy deep inside her asshole. It stayed there while we took a long walk all the way to Hermannplatz. During which, she mentioned that this had been the first time that she had given a blowjob since she was fifteen. I frowned, considering that she had been married for eleven years now. It seemed like there was some truth to the cliché that Finnish people were extremely repressed.

WEDNESDAY 30<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022

Kaja sent me photos today of all the bitemarks that I had left across her entire body. Not to mention her bruised ass. I liked how her pale skin was so easily damaged.

THURSDAY 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

This evening, while getting dressed in my white shirt and black suit, I received a call from an unknown number.

I soon headed to the club where Trudka was performing on stage. Finally, after all these years of knowing her, I watched her dance, and she was fucking excellent. How I had missed that perfect ass of hers.

After the show, but still wearing her short white wig, Trudka joined me for a drink. We laughed as we chatted, and I was reminded of how talented some of my beautiful ex-lovers were.

Leaving the club at 11:30pm, I walked directly to the Brandenburg Gate. The night was chilly, and the streets deserted. There, among the Doric columns, Mr. Caviezel stood. He was looking sharp and actually took note of my cleaned-up appearance, before saying, “The Romanian’s know what you did to their two guys.”

“How do you know?”

“The woman. She told them. The woman from the massage parlor.”

Scanning the few tourists braving the cold, I slowly asked, “Why would I care?”

“You helped me find the Slovakian land deeds. I’m just returning the favor.”

Walking down my street, I text Ally, saying that I’d like to fuck her. I stopped in the dark entrance of my building, though, and wondered how Mr. Caviezel even knew such details. If gossip was spreading this fast within the circles of organized crime, then how long was it before it filtered down to the authorities? Boiling with frustration, I put some serious thought into breaking into the massage parlor and surprising the lady of the house when she arrived in the morning.

But no! I couldn’t make enemies or arouse suspicion so close to home. There had to be another way. She was merely protecting her interests, and I was just an expendable fucking neighbor.

FRIDAY 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2022

“*Fuck off!*” Was the message that I awoke to find from Ally.

-



Bruce Stirling John Knox

Over drinks with Yumi this evening, she asked about my breakup. I told her that it was fine. Anything could end without warning even when you did everything right. I only felt vindicated. Intimacy was dead.

THE ONLY POINT OF LIFE WAS TO BECOME SO JADED THAT YOU FELT NOTHING BY THE TIME YOU DIED!

Have no attachment to anyone or anything because no one and nothing fucking matters! We are all worthless fucking meat rotting meaningless fucking lives until a pointless fucking death reduces us to a hopeless fucking pile of shit!

SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2022

My phone woke me just after I had gone to bed. It was René. He was in Lucas' apartment in Santiago de Compostela. Sitting up, I stared at the floor as he muttered on about how the place was a mess with papers and books scattered about. He said that the bathroom stank horribly as the bathtub was full of maggot-infested animal guts. Thinking of the bull's head that Lucas had prepared for the ritual, I wondered what else he had been up to. Ultimately, René was just stumbling around half grunting to himself in French as he tried making sense of the situation. But then he began describing a series of photographs. Photos of a stone wall that had a script burned into it.

That motherfucker! Lucas had lied to me! He had gone back and taken pictures of the evidence! And yet, he didn't want to share it with me! What a fucking prick!

"Man, what do you want from me?!" I finally snapped. "He's a big boy! Who gives a fuck where he's at!"

"He was never like this!" René snarled. "Not until he met you!"

"Try looking in Marseille!" I retorted. "Isn't that where you said that the fucking moor died!"

MONDAY 4<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

I went to the supermarket at lunch to get some sugar. While waiting at the checkout, I stood behind a tall blonde and watched her bend over in tight sports leggings. I immediately joined another queue. However, she then left the supermarket at the same time as me. So, I turned and took a different street the long way back to the studio despite the onset of rain. Even though I wanted to grab her throat, strip her naked, and fucking murder her while I was balls-deep inside of her fucking meat – I still just walked away. The rain trickled down the back of my neck as I thought about eating her ass, before frying a piece of it in a pan and then eating her ass again.

-

It rained for the rest of the day and continued once I got home in the evening and sat on the floor.

A bleak coast stretched out either side of me made of dark pebbles with steep mountains behind. Storm clouds thickened out to sea. Pulling the black sheet up over the back of my head, I sat on that immense shoreline with the wind and spray pelting my face.

I could respect Abi for ending it with me. Obviously, she had seen what a piece of shit I truly was. I'd never amount to anything in this realm of death and sin any more than I would in the realm of man.

I OFFERED HOPE TO NO ONE!

A thought then came to me: if devils could die here, then could I also kill my own resurrection?

Glancing across the desolate sea with its gray waves, I spotted someone standing further down to my left. It was that strange Arab again. But I was in no mood for the company of anyone.

Opening my eyes, I sat in my dark flat for a while longer. The one thing that I knew for sure was that I only had a few more good years left. If I didn't end up dead from all of this infernal behavior, I'd have to end it myself. However, now I wanted to know if it was possible to end it in hell too.

TUESDAY 5<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

Bruce Stirling John Knox

Just before midnight, I headed across town to the lakeside house. I opened the front door with the keys that I had taken and switched off the alarm. Walking through that big place, I went straight to the locked chapel-wing. This time I was prepared. Placing my bag of tools next to the frame, I soon broke through the door.

My pen-light lit the stone stairs as I descended through the antechamber of the underground temple. It was cold and silent as I stepped up to the altar and demanded aloud, “Where’s Lucus?!”

Nothing.

“Where’s Hailey?!”

Nothing.

Suddenly furious, I yelled, “SPEAK TO ME!”

I then immediately thought of the words that had just come out of my mouth and I went bitterly quiet. Why speak? Speak a worthless language incapable of communicating that which was beyond mere words. No. Nothing would speak to me. Just as I wouldn’t speak to those that I hated. My own silence said all that I needed.

A calmness then settled within that morbid temple, and I murmured, “I won’t stop. You know this. I’ll find Lucus. He’s the holy man I’ve been looking for. You know what I’ll do to him. Him and the girl. She tried stopping me. She should have tried harder.”

And then a red glow arose from the stone before me. A slow flame that coiled into something almost human. In its outstretched hand was a small iron rod. I reached forward as more preternatural fire filled the small temple and I took the gift.

WEDNESDAY 6<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

I phoned Cromack today and told him a story about Father Lucus. Told him that Lucus could heal his daughter, but he had gone missing. Told him that I didn’t have any interest in the girl, but he shouldn’t trust her. Told him that I would stay out of it, but I was worried about my missing friend. Told him that if he could find Lucus and he then healed his daughter, then maybe he would realize how wrong he had been about both the girl and me.

## Interfering With Divinities

Cromack was clearly skeptical. But I smiled. There was nothing more fun than casting doubt on someone's convictions.

I then phoned René and told him about an Englishman named Cromack. Told him that Cromack was an orthodox fanatic who stalked anyone who strayed from the path. Told him that Cromack had come after me, but soon realized that I wasn't even a man of faith. Told him that I might have accidentally pointed Cromack in the direction of Lucus. Told him that if he found where Cromack was, then I would deal with him personally.

Would it work? Would Cromack find Lucus? Would Lucus go with Cromack? Would René track Cromack and then would René even tell me? All of this, just so that I could find where Hailey lived. Would it work? Probably not.

But that was when I thought of another cunt that I had an outstanding grudge with. I wanted to look Detective Rosswald in his fucking eyes and see how he could live with himself after everything he knew.

FRIDAY 8<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

On my way to the studio this morning, that boy with the greasy hair came out of the kiosk and stood in my path saying, "You need to answer your phone."

Stepping closer, I looked him up and down before glaring into that little shit's eyes, "I will. And I'll never see you here again."

I had ramen with Melina this evening, where she explained her fixation with a twenty-four-year-old Russian. A fuckboy, I told her. She, however, refused to believe it. While simultaneously defending him, she continually accused him of being an absolute fucking asshole for ghosting her.

We soon moved to a nearby bar, and I said that she was making a storm in a teacup. He probably had dozens of girls messaging him and her text had just gotten lost in the mix. It was called 'spinning plates.' And it clearly worked. Melina was thirsty as fuck for his pretty Instagram. She was like anyone desperate to get laid: emotionally compromised! So, then I asked her what she had to offer of value that a dozen other girls didn't? Her smug laughter gave no reason at all.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

When she abruptly changed the subject to my breakup, I had no interest in elaborating. People wanted to hear drama so that they could put themselves in the situation and shit on someone else with narcissistic righteousness in the perfect imagined scenario that they themselves would never actually live up to. She then insisted that I must have done something to deserve it. To which, I only thought of the Book of Job and his so-called three friends.

When she started repeating the same drunken shit that she had already told me about this Russian fuckboy, I ended the evening by waving down the waitress. Melina then asked the young girl how much of her body was tattooed. The cute waitress glanced at me as she said, "Everything."

Smiling, I kept quiet as I heard Kaleo, *No Good*, playing in the background. I would have liked to have seen her tattooed asshole while I bifurcated her torso with a circular saw.

SATURDAY 9<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

After dinner with Elizabeth, I arrived home at 9:30pm but just stood in the entrance of my flat once I saw a light on in the main room. I immediately unsheathed my knife and pushed open the inner door. A large red flame levitated in the center of a cave where my flat used to be. Wet stone was covered with hundreds of black serpents, many of them slithering around my feet. Lowering, the flame flattened out wide. The fire seemed to become like water. A burning pool two-meter-wide and surrounded by writhing serpents. Something then arose out of the midst of that liquid fire. A tall stone extended until it floated in midair. Looking closer, I saw a chiseled script covering the middle of this three-meters-high monolith.

Suddenly a ringing interrupted the vision! The flame extinguished itself, plunging my room into darkness. Pissed off, I ripped open the drawer and grabbed the burner, as I snarled, "And?!"

-  
Thirty minutes later, a car pulled up to the intersection and I was driven to Neukölln.

On a small side street, I was met by a couple of big Turkish guys in hoodies and trainers. They started rambling on about people I didn't give a

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fuck about. It was too cold for this shit, so I spoke up, “What do you think of the Romanians?!”

“They move girls,” one guy shrugged. “Pretty good at it.”

The other guy just seemed irritated, and they began bickering in Turkish.

“Hey!” I barked. “The fuck am I doing here?!”

One of them held up his phone, showing me a photo of some tough looking German. He then swiped to a second picture of a guy who also appeared to be a biker. “You know them?”

Slowly shaking my head, I was then shown a third photo: of Mr. Caviezel.

“You know this guy, yes?”

I just glared back at the two Turkish men and said nothing.

“You will know them. Best to watch your back.”

## SUNDAY 10<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

It was near midnight when I heard the black goat walking on the wall outside. I opened the window and joined it.

There, I stood at the bottom of a steep gorge. Warm air filled this narrow space of rough cliffs that reached all the way up into those red burning clouds. The goat was at my side for only a moment before it turned and walked away. Watching that enigmatic animal go, I realized there was a massive cavern right there in the dark. The goat clattered further in as a great breathing echoed out. I was staring hard into that impenetrable black when a hand touched my arm! Lurching aside, I nearly fell down the rocks, but Arpi pulled me back. She shivered with dread as she clung tightly to me. That rhythmic noise from the depth grew louder. Arpi pressed herself against me, burying her face into my chest as she whimpered. Slowly placing my hand on her back, I held onto her as I stared spitefully into that cavern. And then, with a blast of air, a flood of devils stampeded out from their slumber and ripped us to shreds in less than a few bloody seconds of contentious inevitability!

## TUESDAY 12<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

I had been wondering what I should tell my niece on her sixteenth birthday, but then I remembered our last videocall. After all the pleasantries of asking how her cake was, I gave her a caveat. I was not a teacher, like both her parents, but I was an advocate of learning. That said, I had a gift for her. The first gift that I had ever given her: the importance of books! What some say was the greatest human invention, the ability to pass on that which previous generations had already learned. She was already a reader, yet she should read more. For as they say, knowledge was power. Start with the Greeks. She should work her way through philosophy and science. As she was at a catholic school, she should have read the Bible by now, but other religious works were just as worthwhile as any other classic works of fiction. For example, Milton and Dante had forever warped the mainstream perception of Christianity by writing fictional stories that had become seen as authoritative.

My brother's wife then spoke up in the background, asking why I was telling her this? I never did like her, but I simply replied, "No one told me when I was growing up that life is shit! And that there were smarter people than us that wrote down their ideas on how to navigate it long before we ever existed."

My niece, again, paid close attention and took notes on her phone. I stressed the value of understanding context, cross-referencing, and never blindly believing any one source. If truly curious, she would learn to question everything. Until she reached the deconstructive point of, "*I think therefore I am.*" Only then would she discover how hard it was for the individual to mature. Because books were great, but education was not the same as experience.

WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

I had a long online chat with Tove this evening. Unlike our usual conversations, tonight she had brought up her eagerness toward trying some bondage. When talking, she always seemed to be on the defensive and half the time

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argued with herself over the things that she said. The hyperactive stream of consciousness that she would blurt out had taken me a while to adjust to, but I simply let her rattle off her awkward contradictions while I read between the lines of what she was clearly uncomfortable admitting. Ultimately, she was sick of being the one that always had to take charge and lead both her friends and her long-distance boyfriend. A common complaint. And so, she wanted to relinquish control and submit to someone else for once. That was when she said in a slightly hesitant voice, “That’s why I like talking with you, you always seem chilled and super confident.”

One of the burners then began ringing from the drawer. My headache, which had slowly subsided during our flirtatious chat, suddenly returned.

I was soon driven south to one of those areas full of small gardens and tiny dachas. Several Turkish guys grunted at me outside a boarded up and partially overgrown shack. I was then led inside by one of them where I found two men tied to chairs in the empty space. There, a group of five Turkish boys were in the midst of yelling at the two white guys. It wasn’t until I stepped closer in that I recognized the two bikers from the pictures that I had been shown on Saturday night. They were mean-looking sons of bitches that had clearly been beaten severely before succumbing to this situation. Soon their gags were removed, and they immediately began snarling in German. So, I stood back and watched with my arms crossed. The yelling competition was brief, but the belligerence of everyone made me smirk. I didn’t need to know what they were saying to enjoy this testosterone-fueled hatred on display.

A boy then pointed at me. One of the restrained bikers just cursed and spat at the boy. The other kids laughed hysterically. Though, I still didn’t know why the fuck I was there. The spat-on boy then pulled out a knife and raised his eyebrows at me, as if showing off. That was when he proceeded to stab the first biker! The dude took it like a champ, merely berating the boy’s weak effort. The other biker looked more concerned as he dripped with sweat.

When one of the adults came inside, everyone suddenly went quiet. The boy with the knife was questioned sternly before the Turkish guy left, but not before glancing menacingly in my direction. The boy then scowled at me as he pouted bitterly. So, I raised my index finger to my neck, indicating that he needed to stab the side of the throat before slicing all the way around. Laughing, the boy bounced in his sneakers. The biker sneered without the slightest fear – until the boy began hacking at his throat! And he fucked it up. Again and again, he stabbed but kept slipping or not going deep enough.



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When he finally attempted slicing around the front, he ended up sawing his way into the windpipe. Maybe he had a blunt knife because he made a pig's ass of the job. And yet it worked. Covered in blood, the boy wobbled on his feet and no longer smiling. He gazed up at me for a sickly moment before stumbling outside.

A second boy, however, pulled out his own pocketknife and looked me in the eye. I watched on, clinically evaluating how he handled the other biker. Nodding in approval, I admired how he didn't get a single drop of blood on himself. He even cleaned his blade without being told.

# D R E S D E N

FRIDAY 15<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

It finally stopped raining as I crossed the old stone bridge over the Elbe while thinking of Abi and listening to Gracie Abrams, *Unlearn*. I wandered along the northside of the river toward a circular park bench under a covering where I found the perfect view of Dresden. With those lyrics lingering in my head, I put my earbuds away and sat alone with the cold wind on my face.

I had matched with some Russian girl on the bus here and her catfish conversation was as predictable as a bot could be. During the ride, however, the view of the countryside far more captivating than her copy-and-paste-laughter at every second text that I wrote. All her pics had the face cropped out, so I asked to see what she looked like. She laughed again before asking what I had done to deserve a selfie. To which I immediately replied, “*I don’t deserve anything and you’re a fucking nobody to me!*” She had a thoroughly fuckable figure and I could see myself sodomizing her while I smashed in her whatever-face with a tire iron. But I clearly had no patience for dating apps or people in general with their contemporary concerns about their irrelevant power-dynamics in their small-time lives that were of no more consequence to me than this fucking city full of strangers that could all burn like it was being razed in 1945 all over again!

And then, who did I see walking toward me but Cromack and René. Those two short men in overcoats came marching against the wind from the same direction that I had come from, almost as if they had been following me. I remained where I sat as both of them stood above with accusative scowls.

“You’ll never find them,” René eventually stated, with both hands in his deep pockets.

“You think you’re in control of this situation?!” Cromack sneered, angrier than he had been in Scotland. “Your attempts at manipulating our friends

for your own amusement has gone too far! This ends! You need to stop!”

Taking a deep breath of that persistent winter air, I sighed and glared back at those pale men.

“You were right, though,” René added pensively. “Lucus needs the girl’s help. Just as she needs his. So, thank you for that. But that’s it. No more. You understand.”

“She needs to continue her work! Or I’ll fucking...” Cromack’s voice cracked with emotion, and he looked away while rolling his jaw.

“You think she needs your protection?” I asked calmly.

“You’re a very sick guy,” René said.

“What kind of sick?” I replied.

“What do you think?” Cromack commented.

“I think that kid’s dangerous,” I said. “She doesn’t need saving. You’re the ones she’s taking advantage of. Remember this conversation when the shit hits the fan.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about!” Cromack remarked. “My daughter’s dying from Lou Gehrig’s Disease! She was, for the first time in her life, able to walk, thanks to Hailey! But then you attacked her in Salzburg, and now my daughter is worse than ever! I shouldn’t even be here! This is all your fault!”

“Where are her parents in all this?” I asked.

Cromack shook his head, turned away, and then muttered, “They’re preoccupied.”

“Like you are, right now,” I said. “You know, the disgust parents feel for their children is no different than how the kids hate them in return. You can smell it in the air. This extension of everyone’s self-loathing. One reflecting the other’s failures in their future and past. The pathetic fucking expectations of one disappointment to another. Kids need to kill their fucking parents, or they’ll never grow up. Or better yet, parents should kill their fucking kids, and spare us all the hassle.”

“What happened in Salzburg?” René asked.

“Where’d you find Lucus in the end?” I replied.

“Nîmes. Not far from your suggestion,” René said.

“Yeah. Well, I’m not your enemy,” I hissed, crossing my arms against the cold as I glanced back down the riverside. There, to my genuine shock, I saw the only person I had actually come to stalk in this pretty little town. “Detective Rosswald, have you met these two rays of sunshine?”

The big German with a gray beard now had long curly hair. He glared

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solemnly down at me before he addressed the two cautious foreigners, “You are aware that you are dealing with a reckless and horribly disturbed individual here. Have you any idea what he’s capable of?”

“As a matter of fact,” Cromack said quietly. “I’m just starting to think I’ve barely scratched the surface of what a fucking lunatic this guy is.”

“Hey, you know. You guys should all get together, share conspiracy theories, and circle-jerk each other off,” I said facetiously. “Just leave me the fuck out of it, or you’ll be hearing from my lawyer again.”

“Does your lawyer know where you are now?” Rosswald asked. “What exactly are you doing here?”

“Johan Christian Dahl,” I said, pointing between the three men. “I came to



see the view he painted in 1839. And of course, celebrate the sadistic public execution of a young Jewish boy.”

“Is he harassing another little girl?” the German questioned the English and Frenchman.

“You stay away from her!” Cromack snarled, lunging at me – until Rosswald stopped him with a hand on his shoulder. “You keep your fucking distance! Or so help me!”

“Don’t,” Rosswald said quietly. “Don’t threaten him. Just walk away.”

“Why not, detective?!” I asked viciously. “Why not?!”

Just then, a group of teenagers sat down on the other side of the circular bench and cracked open their beers. The three men went bitterly silent as the

evening's clouds darkened behind them. I stared across the river at the spires of the black stone silhouette that was Dresden, while my accusers all slowly drifted away on the wind.

"Hey!" I called out. "If you trust Lucus, pay close attention to how he interacts with the girl."

René was about to say something but kept it to himself.

I then added, "And when you realized you're wrong about her... I'll forgive you."

-

At midnight, there was only one anniversary that I paid remembrance to. It had been thirty years since a girl had died. If I was Humbert Humbert, then she was my Annabel. A thirteen-year-old who's life had been abruptly abbreviated after being stricken with Meningococcal Meningitis. The life lesson was clear, anyone could disappear without any warning!

I sat in the middle of my hotel room facing east. If there was ever someone that might have been a half-decent, if not holy human, it would have been Annabel. So, I closed my eyes in the dark and went looking for her.

A pale light came from a mist further down this cave-like tunnel where a trickle of water ran. Turning, I saw that the creek flowed from beneath a huge pile of naked rotten corpses. It wasn't water, but bodily fluids. I twisted away from that hideous throne of decomposition and followed the effluent liquids. This cave network spiraled always downward, until it suddenly dropped into a bottomless well. More frigid mist hung over the descent while a weak light leaked down from some distant surface. This stark primordial emptiness had only been made worse by my reprehensible presence. Watching the fluids fall into a fine spray before turning to nothing, I found no Annabel here. She was dead. Never to return, but never forgotten either. Not until I too was gone. We might be remembered by others, but not our memories. Only these poor words could be passed on, if at all.

SATURDAY 16<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

At 10am, I headed through the small city center listening to Taylor Swift, *False God*, and thought of the premature travel plans that Abi and I had made.

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A notice on the side door of the Katholische Hofkirche said that it was closed to the public, but I went inside anyway. There, I discovered a beautiful white interior with gold details, while a choir practicing up next to the organ. I slowly wandered through the columns until I paused at the sight of Detective Rosswald sitting on the last pew. The music was sublime, so I sat next to that big guy, and we just listened for a few minutes.

“What are you really doing here?” he eventually asked. “Who’s the girl that the two men are looking after?”

I remained focused on the voices filling the open space in the morning light.

“What happened to Schlenzig?” he added, holding a vape pen in his thick hands. “And Behm’s family? What happened?”

Scanning the classical nave, I quietly asked, “What do you know about Nordkreuz and Polish Identitarians?”

Rosswald gradually twisted his whole body toward me, before saying, “What have you gotten yourself involved in?”

“Me?” I said, scowling up at Jesus on his cross. “I’m just a curious fuck.”

-

It was still freezing when I strolled away from one church in the direction of another. As expected, the iconic Frauenkirche was thoroughly disappointing with its fake marble interior and its objectionable pastel themes. I had no sooner walked in as I had walked straight back out.

Crossing the square, I knew I still had plenty of time to pick up my bag from the hotel before jumping on the bus back to Berlin. I was just passing the statue of Martin Luther when I spotted Rosswald puffing on his vape as he sat at one of the many surrounding cafes. We glared at each other as I continued by. How amusing it was, seeing that he had come looking for me. His presence proved my suspicions. But he, along with Cromack and René, were desperate for answers, clarity, and some kind of resolution. Thus, they were all susceptible to that most unscrupulous of psychological tortures: constructive ambiguity.

# BERLIN

TUESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

This evening, I went for my first run of the year. However, on the way out, some unknown woman with a sour expression entered the massage parlor. I hadn't seen the lady of the house since the morning that I had heard a commotion in there. Just then, as I stepped out the front door, I found that kid with greasy hair chatting with some drunks right outside my building. But not the local drunks. No, these were Romanians. Clenching my jaw, I jogged down the street wanting nothing more than to bash that kid's fucking brains in with a claw-hammer.

WEDNESDAY 20<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

I rolled over in bed at 4:30am and abruptly found myself wide awake. Lying on my back, I heard birds begin to sing, and right then a rustling came from outside. I looked up and saw what I thought was the monkey-devil pushing open the window. Leaping out of bed, I slammed the window shut! I was sick of all these distractions. Teach me something, be of some fucking use, or fuck off!

-

After hearing a vocal coach talk about the intricacies of manipulating one's voice and the complexities of working around various time signatures, I was left confounded by my own stupidity. Music was yet another language beyond my fathoming. For my entire life, I had skated by on a superficial

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understanding of how I even strung a sentence together in English. Why the fuck did devils bother trying to communicate with me?! Unless that was the point. To mock my ignorance. I was nothing more than a fucking animal. However, I wondered if Hailey could speak this so-called language of God.

THURSDAY 21<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2022

Arriving home drenched in sweat from my evening run, all I wanted was to sodomize little Arpi's apparition. So, I closed the blinds, spread the black sheet with the unholy circle, and sat on the floor.

I immediately found myself standing in a big corridor with old wooden paneling, gold-framed paintings, and lined with marble busts. A hand then grabbed my wrist from behind and pulled me back! I twisted, yanking myself free from the Armenian girl in that dark place. Desperation saturated her face as she began backing away. I quickly grabbed her now that we both stood on the same plane of whatever fucking existence this was. Struggling, as if attempting to speak, she seemed more distraught by something else, even as I caught her slender throat in my hand. Her arm pointed down the corridor as she flapped mutely like a trapped bird. Finally, taking note, I eased my grip on her, wanting to see what it was that she was so frantically gesturing toward.

Dragging Arpi by the wrist, I stepped around a doorframe and peered into a large bedroom where a massive bed was surrounded by medical equipment. The dim evening light slid in between giant drapes. Sleeping there was the sickly little Hailey. Her long brown locks of wavy hair were spread out on the enormous pillows. Looking at both girls, my dick got hard – when suddenly the whole building began rumbling!

And it all went black!

Standing in wet silence, I reached out and touched cold stone. I then spent hours stumbling through this lightless crypt. Everything was rough stone with slimy puddles below my bare feet. I should have been able to just open my fucking eyes back in my flat, but I couldn't. This place had various chambers but no windows or any kind of way out. I was fucking trapped in some freezing black dungeon.

When, for no reason, my eyes finally did open, I was sitting in my flat



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with raw fingertips from feeling my way in that darkness.

Not wanted to repeat this strange obstruction, I got dressed and headed to the lakeside house.

However, once I arrived at the house after midnight, the locks had been changed. Without warning or a light, the front door swung open! A tall man in a business suit confronted me in German. Turning, I immediately walked away. He then called out in English, “Your black brothers are looking for you!”

FRIDAY 22<sup>nd</sup> APRIL 2022

On the way to a friend’s birthday, I text Ally. I doubted that she would reply but fuck it. After last night’s frustration, I wanted a slice of her ass.

While at a private party in a rundown queer-friendly bar drenched in classic Berlin graffiti, I scanned the guests. They were mostly musicians and artists. Maybe I needed some allies. I then couldn’t help wondering what the Sudanese wanted from me now. So, I soon excused myself and headed across town to Wedding.

I stepped up to that old apartment building an hour later. But the front door was locked. I looked around the empty streets at midnight and couldn’t hear a sound. My phone then hummed. Ally had replied, inviting me to a bar in Prenzlauer Berg. Turning, I was just walking away when someone called out from an upstairs window.

I waited, and soon, three tall Sudanese men approached me on the footpath. Bracing myself, I glared at them, when I realized that they all looked terrified. They said that since the death of the old woman they were at a loss. Most of them were planning to leave Berlin but they seemed more worried about their friend. The one in hospital. The guy who had attacked and killed the old woman at the lakeside house. They stressed that he had suddenly become a completely different person. That he had been taken over by something. “You are the only one familiar with these unclean spirits! You must help him! You can stand up to these devils!”

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding!” I snarled, stepping closer to those three. “After all the fucking shit you cunts put me through, he can go fucking

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rot!”

Despite their size, they all looked bashful and lowered their heads like timid little boys.

I fucking hated these pricks for all the months that they had followed me, but then I recognized one of them. “You! You were in Salzburg! What did you do to the Italians?!”

“We let them go.”

“Find them. Find the bald guy. And then I’ll see your friend.”

-

Arriving at a bar after 1am, I was too preoccupied with my conspiring to care about all those beautiful young whores filling this place. However, Ally was looking fucking delicious with her glossy lipstick, dolled up blonde hair, and that tight little dress. Stepping up to her, I slid my hands around her waist pulling her body against mine.

“Let’s get one thing clear,” she said, with a salacious smile. “We, you and me, we don’t fuck.”

I glared into her eyes with those thick lashes as she rubbed herself against me.

“What we do is a recreational abstraction.”

“I didn’t come here to fuck you.”

“Excuse me?!” she looked bitterly offended.

“I need an instrument of leverage,” I said, with a conceited grin. “Like the one you brought over. The one I fucked you with last time.”

“That’s perfect!” Ally smirked. “There’s something I want you to do. In exchange, you’ll get your little toy.”

“What have you got in mind?”

“Not tonight,” she whispered, licking my neck and reaching into my pants. “Come to my place tomorrow night. I’ll call you first.”

SATURDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2022

After going to see the movie, *The Northman*, Dario and I slowly walked and talked our way back into the neighborhood. I got home at 1:30am but had still heard nothing from Ally. Staying up till 3am, I finally went to bed knowing

Bruce Stirling John Knox

that it wasn't personal, girls used you whenever it was convenient for them.

SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

I awoke in the middle of the night finding that my flat was full of screaming devils! It was fucking chaos! Feeding animals were tearing into one another! Many crawled across my bed and were tackled by heavier creatures. I lay on my back in the dark listening to all that hideous insanity, and those violent shrieks slowly lulled me back to sleep.

MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

This evening, I went to the realm of death and sin where I stood outside the palace on that burning mountainside. I just stayed there watching those massive flames rising over the peaks in colossal waves of crimson ferocity. When Arpi appeared next to me, I grabbed her by the throat and snarled, "What the fuck are they all waiting for?!"

She gagged while clawing at my forearm.

"You saw me on the bridge before you died, didn't you," I hissed into her face. "You saw those five devils. Maybe it's time I introduced you to them."

Suddenly the mountain range shook as if an eruption had torn apart the rocky landscape just beyond the summit. Every looming flame above the valley was then wiped out by the shockwave from a massive black shape that rose into the sky. Finally opening her pretty fucking mouth, Arpi screamed in a panic! She thrashed out attempting to get away. Releasing that naked girl in the growing dark, I walked toward the palace walls as I myself had become the only fire left here. Shrieking then came from within that towering structure – when I was grabbed! Hailey slapped my face from out of nowhere! Instantly furious, I clenched my fists, finding myself human again. Then something smashed into the ground with a dull but brutal THUD! Great stones fell from

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the churning clouds like some cataclysmic hailstorm of monoliths! Enraged at her interruption, I threw my hands at the naked Hailey!

And it all went black!

Once again, I had suddenly vanished from a vision and found myself standing alone in that hidden dungeon. I was utterly contorted with disbelief! Shouting my fucking lungs dry, I stomped throughout the place like a blind lunatic wanting nothing more than to strangle the fucking life out of that snooping little meat!

TUESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

Still no word from Ally. This typical behavior wouldn't bother me if I didn't need something from her. Or did I? After all, nothing could protect me from what was ultimately coming. My needs and wants were irrelevant against the grand scheme of things. I deserved nothing!

So, to cope with my inflamed anger, today I decided to partake in a 30-day challenge that Jules had already begun, involving a 5km run every day. I had, however, always been curious to see what would happen if I cut out both coffee and sugar from my diet. Therefore, I combined both challenges. Why not. It's only pain.

FRIDAY 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

Day 4 of running 5km every day with no coffee and sugar, and I felt like total shit. Yet despite the constant headache, a pinched nerve in my lower back, and muscle strain, I kept going. This kind of bullshit was to be expected.

I was stretching after this evening's run, when Ally finally wrote to me. As much as I would have liked to just ignore that cunt, I simply had no other plans this evening.

-

At midnight, I went to Ally's place, which wasn't where I had met her for the Polish party. It was in the same area, but this was a much nicer building and her apartment looked too mature for a twenty-three-year-old. She opened the door looking as cute as ever. Saying nothing, I stood there as she jumped up and hung off my shoulders as she hugged me.

"We don't have long," she said, with a smile, leading me by the hand into the master bedroom. There, she opened a drawer and picked up a black Glock 19 with two extra magazines. "For you, good sir."

"What do you want?" I asked in return, checking the clip that was already in the gun.

"I want to know some things about you," she said abstrusely. "I want to know how you see people."

Scowling at that meat, I tucked the extra magazines into my pocket.

"I mean generally, as a whole, how do you view others?"

"We're all predators raping each other. Even victims victimize their abusers, if only in their delusions, including if they themselves are their only abuser."

"How many women have you abused? Violently, like in your art."

"Oh, I get it. You're one of these dumbfucks that can't differentiate between suggestion and action!"

"You know exactly what I mean, sexually!"

"Yeah, you're just another of these dominating masochists wanting their cunt railed endlessly and yet pretending like their still tight and virginal."

"That's why we work so well together, we know each other's needs."

"We're not friends! You're a fucking cunt! Now fuck off and die before I say something that you'll truly fucking regret!"

"No! Talk to me! I want to know! I want to know how you get all these beautiful girls!"

"You want to know what?!"

"I want to know how you, of all people, get so many girls to trust you?"

"You should fucking know, or how the fuck am I here right now?!"

"I'm not talking about me, I know myself, I mean others."

"Other what?!"

"All those other incredibly hot girls! How do you get them to lower their guard?"

Staring spitefully into Ally's devious little eyes, I watched her panting like a puppy. "You want her to believe that you're performing a ritual. A ritual that she thinks is done simply in order to seduce her, and yet at the same time she

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assumes there's some deeper more insidious meaning behind it. Ultimately, she needs to feel, in her gut, that she's putting her very fucking life on the line like never before. That's all they want. A gamble. A genuine danger with an uncertain outcome. None of them actually trust me! Not at all! That's why they like it! If you wanted someone you could trust to fuck you up, then you'd get your fucking boyfriend to do it. But the fact is, it's all a fucking game! They don't really want to risk their lives. They just want an amusement park ride. Their stimulation is nothing but a simulation of their perversions. It's all just a game. Just a masturbatory fucking game! An excuse so that she'll get naked, vulnerable, and capitulating. Only then, can the serious work begin!"

"The serious work?"

"You know exactly what I mean!"

"I knew it!" Ally smirked, sitting on that gigantic bed. "I could always tell by the way you walk!"

Perplexed, I shook my head. "How I walk?"

"Oh God! You totally remind me of that old song, *Bitter Sweet Symphony*, by The Verve. The way you walk down the street, like you're going to murder someone!"

"And does that turn you on?"

"Absolutely!" she whispered, leaning back on the bed. "That's why I wanted you here tonight. To fulfill a fantasy that I've been thinking about for months now. God, I've been trying to get the nerve all week just to say it out loud. But you get me! You understand, don't you?!"

I stood menacingly above her as she rubbed her leg against mine.

Her lips fumbled without words for a moment, before she smiled bashfully as she spoke, "I want you to watch my guy fuck me. I want you to hide in the closet and watch. I want you to see. I want to be seen. I want you to judge me. Then, once he falls asleep, I want you to come out, put the gun to his head, and threaten to kill him. I want to watch you looking me. I want you to watch me touching myself."

"Loaded?"

"Of course!"

"And if he wakes up?"

"You'll wear this," Ally said, reaching for a plastic bag on the floor as she pulled out a brand-new black balaclava. "It'll look like a robbery."

"He's a heavy sleeper?"

"Passes out the moment he cums!"

And right then we heard the front door open! Ally grabbed my arm and

shoved me into a huge closet with slat doors. The lights dimmed just before her drunken boyfriend stumbled into the bedroom. He didn't say a word, just crashed into her and then onto the bed. They barely stripped any of their clothes before he spread her legs and pounded her missionary-style. Less than a minute later, he suddenly moaned, coughed, and just rolled limply onto the bed. It looked like one of those pathetic sex scenes from that Netflix series that all the girls were giggling about last year, *Bridgerton*.

Ally was still lying on her back as she slowly looked toward the closet. Pulling on the balaclava, I would have liked to have had my leather gloves, as I elbowed the door aside. Ally's thighs were wide open and wet as she gently rubbed her clit. Gradually lowering the handgun toward her sleeping boyfriend, I glared back at Ally's gaping mouth. Her head rose as her half-exposed breasts heaved while she strained to keep her voice down. Watching this little Polish girl soon climax with a gasp of stifled delight, I then smashed the Glock into her boyfriend's fucking face!

He awoke crying out with blood gushing from his busted nose! Screaming furiously, Ally lunged at me until I pointed the weapon at her perfectly feigned distress. Her boyfriend yelled with pained confusion, so I bashed his fucking skull again and again! Immediately, he curled into a ball of submission. Ally shouted at me as she cradled her crippled man. That bleating concern in her shrill Polish voice might have even been real.

Grabbing his wallet and her purse, I walked straight out. I then whipped off the balaclava before taking a look at their identity cards. Dumping their shit in the first trashcan on the street, I wandered through the quiet neighborhoods, going a long way before I found a taxi. I was feeling pretty good for the first time all week, so plugged in my earbuds and listened to Rammstein's new album, starting with, *OK*.

SATURDAY 30<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2022

Waking at 11:30am, I decided to start the day with a run.

Once I got home, I saw that I had missed a call from an unknown number. My phone, however, rang again after a shower. It was one of the Sudanese men. He said that friends at the Ethiopian College in the Vatican knew of the

## Interfering With Divinities

bald Italian: Arrigo. Pausing, I stared at the wall. There was that Ethiopian connection again.

Less than an hour later, a car picked me up and I was driven to the southwest of Berlin where we entered a large compound surrounded with trees. Only one of the three black guys escorted me into what looked like a hospital. Considering the police presence, I assumed it was more of a prison than a care facility. We were required to go through several check points and metal-detectors. Fortunately, before the drive, I had replaced my knife with something more appropriate. A nurse or a guard, I couldn't tell which, then led us down long corridors until we stopped outside one of many metal doors.

Inside that locked cell, lay restrained a Sudanese man with dried foam on his cracked lips. He instantly thrashed out in a manic frenzy upon our entrance! However, once he laid his eyes on me, he eased down and went quiet. The guard and escort remained in the doorway while I stepped closer to the incarcerated man. Looking down at his feverish sneer, I saw that he seemed to be covered in scabs from what looked like some kind of nasty skin disease. His face wasn't at all familiar from the many Sudanese I had seen, but he recognized mine despite the medical mask. So, I tested him. Making sure that the other two couldn't see, I pulled out the small stone tablet from my pocket. That restrained man had an instantaneous reaction and violently lurched away! Pushing his entire body sideways, he struggled against the limitations of his bondage. His face clenched with exhaustion.

Putting the tablet away, I tilted my head and asked, "Do you want to stay here?"

The man merely gnashed his teeth while still leaning away from me.

"Fine," I replied, and then walked out of that sweat-stinking cell.

"He did not react like that to anyone before!" my escort muttered, hurrying after me. "He did not stop screaming when we visited him. You know what this is! You can cure him!"

"I have no fucking idea what's wrong with him!" I snarled, loathing all the locked doors that we had to go through. "I can't help anyone! I'm not a fucking doctor!"

"We have seen you working with these unclean spirits! Please! No one else can help him!"

"He's still going to prison for what he did."

"But his soul will be free!"

Shaking my head, I looked at the other two black guys waiting by the car. The three of them then spoke to each other before they all turned toward me



with desperation in their anxious eyes. I just wanted to get the fuck out of that place. But instead of begging, they began thanking me for simply seeing him. Their sincere gratitude momentarily made me forget my surroundings. Maybe I was wrong. Maybe people respected kindness. Maybe if I treated others with more decency then they'd behave the same.

No! Inevitably, they'd become ungrateful and expect not just cooperation but unconditional subjugation! I owed these cunts nothing!

SUNDAY 1<sup>st</sup> MAY 2022

Heading home this evening from Burroughs' place, I found that Friedrichshain was dead quiet compared to the May Day festivities in Kreuzberg. I was walking down my street right on midnight when I saw that blonde Russian douchebag standing outside my building. The closer I got the sorer for himself he looked. I soon saw that he was marked with the lingering bruises from a blackeye.

"Hey," I said, pulling out my keys. Despite intending to ignore, I suddenly had a question. "Hey, whatever happened to the lady that owned the massage parlor?"

The young Russian stood dumbstruck, staring back at me with his slack-jaw-expression of strung-out-idiocy.

Not interested in pushing the conversation, I opened the front door and continued inside.

"You is smart guy, right!" he suddenly blurted out. "I need help! You help me, yes! I tell you where old whore is, yes!"

"Help with what?"

"Easy! No problem, my friend! I take you! Come! Now! No problem! Easy!"

I hesitated on the front step, but it was a nice night, so fuck it.

We took a drive in his black Bentley back toward Kreuzberg, though turned south on Sonnenallee. On the way, this tense young guy opened the glovebox and handed me a small plastic case. He also took one and slipped his two phones inside. Copying him, I realized that it shielded our phone's GPS. We soon cruised along a canal that I had never seen before and entered

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an abandoned industrial area. The Bentley parked in a secluded spot at the back of several rundown warehouses.

First thing the young guy did was pull a tarpaulin over his car. He scanned the place cautiously before unlocking a heavy steel door into a concrete building. Once inside, he hit the light and locked the door with his cluster of various keys. He nodded at me and proceeded along a narrow corridor full of scrap metal covered in dust. Around a few bends, he unlocked a second door where he handed me a flashlight as we descended two levels. We went through yet another locked door and then crossed a metal bridge over what looked like an exposed sewer system. The gray water gushed below as we continued into a room with nothing in it.

At this point, who fucking knew what he was up to. So, I snapped, “Hey! The fuck is this?! Where’s the old woman?!”

“Soon! Soon!” he dismissed me completely, while grabbing a section of plumbing in the wall – and suddenly a hidden door slid sideways! Another grated staircase went downward and of course led to one more deadbolted door. Behind that was a vast subbasement of empty space. Only sparse structural pillars stood in that black expanse.

“The fuck am I doing here?!” I demanded impatiently, not relishing that I had once again found myself in another subterranean situation.

That little Russian fuckwit seemed to have recovered some of his smug attitude as he held out his phones, “No signal! It’s freedom, baby!”

I watched him walk into the dark until his flashlight lit up crates, suitcases, and a laptop on a foldable table. Slowly entering, I realized that this was his personal storage unit. There were several clothes racks surrounding the table where he opened a MacBook. While he showed me a bunch of spreadsheets, I glanced around the unseen distance, as I sneered, “The fuck’s this got to do with anything?!”

“What?” the young guy frowned.

“What?!” I spat back.

“You try fuck me?!” he snarled, suddenly pissed off. “You think me a joke?!”

“Where the fuck is the owner of the massage parlor, you little fuck!”

And then a voice cried out from beyond!

We both spun, but the sweaty blonde just led the way with his flashlight. In a far corner, a girl sat tied to the pipes running along the edge of the floor. My first impression was that it was Defne! Lunging, I grabbed that fucking Russian by the collar! But then the girl moaned again, and I didn’t recognize

the voice. So, easing my grip, I asked, “The fuck is this shit?! Who the fuck is this meat?! Why the fuck am I here?!”

“You Fisherman,” he smirked, rubbing my shoulders. “You take her. I tell you where old whore.”

“Not today, sunshine,” I replied, and began backing away.

The Russian then snorted and pulled out a handgun!

But I was faster with my new Glock and aimed it directly at his fucking head!

Immediately, he returned the gun to his belt and raised his hands with a nervous hysteria, “No, no! No for you! You take this! You take her! All good! All good, my friend!”

“Fuck off!” I hissed. “Do it yourself!”

“No, no! I no do! I no do that!”

“You’ll abduct a little girl, lock her way the fuck down here, and then won’t do what exactly?!”

“Come, my friend! You know, I no do that!”

Lowering my weapon, I glared at the scowling Turkish girl. “Put one bullet in the gun and tell her to finish herself or you’ll leave her here to starve.”

And with that said, I walked away.

“Yes, yes! Thank you, my friend!”

“Where the fuck’s the old woman?!” I yelled across that great emptiness!

“Sorry, my friend. I no know.”

Clenching the gun, I wanted nothing more than to shoot that fucking cunt right in his face, but then I realized that I needed the keys to get the fuck out of there – when BAM! I shuddered from the gunshot. Twisting, I discovered that the girl had shot the Russian the moment that he had handed her the weapon. He now lay on his back where an expanding bloodstain ruined his vile shirt. Stepping closer, I watched the girl still pulling the trigger at the squirming blonde. He gasped convulsing a few more times before going dead still.

“Well played,” I said, kneeling as I collected the keys. Walking away, I called out, “Now enjoy your long slow goodbye!”

WEDNESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

I awoke soon after going to bed, finding Hailey standing naked next to me – so, I lunged at her!

And it all went black!

Passing right through where that girl should have been, I collapsed onto the wet stone of that hidden dungeon. However, I hadn't been in the middle of one of my visions this time! Hailey had, instead, come after me! What the fuck was this shit?! Standing in the absolute black, I reached out until I came to the nearest wall. This time I remained calm. The layout of the dungeon was becoming more familiar as I felt my way down silent corridors. My mental map of the place remained consistent. Making the most of my time here, I soon came to that spiral staircase and explored other levels.

THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

Again, I was awoken by the presence of Hailey next to my bed. Throwing my blanket aside, I reached with murderous hands for her!

And it all went black!

Once more, I stumbled into that hidden dungeon. I was really getting sick and tired of this fucking shit! But like my running routine, I just straightened up and walked it off. I had learned from my last investigations that the stairs went up to nothing. Only a rough ceiling of solid stone. This time, I took the stairs down. The rooms grew smaller on each level below. At one point, I thought I heard something from outside the walls. But there wasn't a single window anywhere. Because of course, I was trapped underground yet again!

FRIDAY 6<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

I was about to get ready for bed at midnight, when I felt a hand on my shoulder – twisting, I grabbed Hailey's neck!

And it all went black!

Screaming into that hidden dungeon, I stomped straight to the stairs with my bruised feet and headed down to where I had left off last night. I cursed myself in the dark while not even thinking about where I was going. The lowest level was only a short corridor that twisted sharply before I nearly fell down a new spiral staircase! My shocked irritation only worsened my frustration. Though, it was the cold air that came upward that refocused my priorities. I stopped, however, before continuing down. An ominous moaning came trickling down from where I had come. I had no interest in retreading old ground, so downward I proceeded.

What was Hailey up to? Why would she send me here? And how the fuck was she even able to? I wondered this each time that I had found myself here. Though, tonight another thought came to me: perhaps I was provoking this response from her.

And then I slipped! Crashing sideways down the spiral stairwell, I tried stopping my fall, but the steps were damp and coated in patches of slime. I did, however, manage to grab ahold of a protruding block from the wall – because I saw it! A pale light drifted upward. Stretching my back from the unforgiving impacts, I cautiously crept lower. I soon found that the stairwell ended abruptly as it was cut short. The ancient steps simply broke off to nothing revealing a boundless abyss of sickly fog. Crouching while clinging to the walls, I peered under. This hidden dungeon was in fact an upside-down tower built into the ceiling above the storm clouds of hades!

I sat on that bottom step for a long time staring at that tranquil sea of mist. What if Hailey was a holy woman? The fact that she was able to send me here meant that she had a very real power over both men and devils.

Suddenly I heard an inhuman madness screaming from further up the stairwell! But before I could even stand, a torrent of thrashing monstrosities crashed down into me! While plummeted into that great chasm, I saw devils like dysentery gushing out of the tower. However, we all dropped into the mist and quickly the density of the clouds turned black. The rush of wind in my ears was matched by the screaming of devils all around me in that freefalling chaos. The whole time that I fell, I knew one thing with absolute certainty: Hailey was becoming a real fucking problem!

SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

At 10pm, I sat in my flat in complete darkness and closed my eyes.

I soon looked up from where I stood on that mound of black sludge in the center of the circle of ruined obelisks. There, I sat and closed my eyes.

Looking up, I was outside my flat in the clearing. I once again sat and closed my eyes.

I looked up at the massive walls of the palace in hell and found that this fortress remained as silent as ever. Scanning the dismal valley that burned in random areas, I knew that I was alone. No one had followed me. So, I began surveying the landscape in front of that enormous building. I soon located the center of the wall, and then I backed off a short distance. With a larger boulder as my canvas, I scratched at the surface with a smaller stone.

I was nearly finished with my crude design when a cautious worm-bodied devil approached. More hesitant than usual, the creature constantly glanced up at the high walls. I gestured for it come closer and indicated toward the sketch of my next construction project. Then pointing to a spot on the ground where the work should begin, I looked at the devil for acknowledgment. But that thing was too distracted by the scale of the palace. So, I grabbed that fuck by its ugly gray face and glared into those tiny black eyes until it understood my resolve, "Fucking build it!"

Opening my eyes, I looked up from the clearing outside my flat. I then saw several old men standing among the trees. Ancient figures that didn't seem to notice me.

Opening my eyes upon that oily shit smothering the circle of ruined obelisks, I felt it start raining.

Opening my eyes finally in my flat, I remained on the floor for a time. The former pitch-black was now less so. The east wall ahead of me then slowly faded in the middle and the passageway appeared. I could hear primitive shrieks from savage throats echoing out of it. The vulgar nature of that noise drew me in.

Soon the passageway led into multiple caves and tunnels that were barely lit from cracks in the rock where molten gold burned within. The feast that then presented itself was a mass slaughter in a giant cavern. Thousands upon thousands of blackened devils ate men, women, and children alive. The place was a vast hive of feeding wickedness. I climbed over animals that I couldn't even discern in the dark, but that cared nothing for my wandering. Vicious

beasts pinned men down and devoured them guts first. The screams from both the eaten and the eating, invigorated me. Butchered prey clung to every crevice in that cave system that stank of shit and bile. Innumerable black serpents hung from the low ceiling and dripped disgusting fluids into the humid air. Human bodies that should have succumb to their violent injuries remained agonizingly conscious. Their flesh in shreds. Organs floating in pools of piss-stinking blood. Dismembered infants drowned while worm-like parasites pecked at their open wounds. This place was clogged with infinite mutilations that I adored for each and every horrific sight and sound. The further I went, the more the caves became honeycombed caverns riddled with absolute desecration. Devils fought over the objects of their sadistic contempt. Larger abominations ripped both man and devil apart like they were all the same shit. That blackness glistened with golden highlights while a crimson mist formed around the caves of a greater size. Entities of translucent form were no less brutal as they ripped the fabric of human material into utter wreckage. Even unseen powers tore through men, devils, and stone like whirl winds of blind rage. These congested atrocities were as noxious as I was reverent toward them. More! I wanted more of this dreadful annihilation! And more was what I found as I made my way over one pile of screeching carnage into yet another chamber full of writhing torment. Human bodies were ravaged unrecognizable and yet still they were unable to die. Their misery permeated the rancid air and soaked into me like an opium of cruelty. I was one with all that abysmal desolation while spurring it on with an insatiable bloodlust.

But then I crawled through a sharp hole of volcanic rock into a primal arena of screams that were all focused on the center. And there she was! Naked, Hailey knelt face to face with some hideous black creature. Even from my distant vantage point, I could tell that she was speaking to this devil. After all, none of them were attacking her. They just snarled obscenely like it was some infernal hall of congress.

Opening my eyes, I found myself drenched in the atrocious pangs of a resentful envy.

MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

Leaving my flat this morning, I passed an old guy wearing track pants and a hoody, sitting where the lady of the house used to. He was too busy muttering into his phone to care who I was. Was this the new pimp at the massage parlor? Who gives a fuck! Fuck them! Fuck every cunt in this worthless fucking hovel of a city!

TUESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

While nearing the last stretch of my evening run on day 15, I spotted a blonde girl in loose pants and crop top just ahead of me. I instinctively slowed down and walked behind her. Turning her head, she glanced back. We lingered on each other's gaze. Then she pulled out her keys and stepped up to the front door of the building next to the U-bahn entrance. I picked up the pace and jogged on. Knowing where she lived, I wanted her blood soaking into my skin as much as my sweat was.

-

Later that night, I noticed the red glow outside my blinds. So, I opened the windows and leaned out. A free-floating flame hovered in the midst of the clearing surrounded by a crowd of pale old men with long white beards. Looking further up the wall to my right, I found the black goat standing sideways upon the ivy.

“Yeah, yeah,” I sneered, looking back at the clearing. “It'll only get worse.”

WEDNESDAY 11<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

On my way to the studio, I saw a young Sudanese woman approach. Her colorful dress and long braids matched the sunny morning, but her bloodshot eyes were bleak and traumatized.



Bruce Stirling John Knox

“They are moving my husband this week!” she cried out, but quickly controlled her outburst. “Please! I need him! Our lives are in your hands!”

All I could think of was Defne being tortured in the subbasement for weeks, as I snarled ruthlessly into that woman’s face, “Ask your fucking men what they did! Ask them for the fucking truth! And then you’ll fucking know who to blame!”

FRIDAY 13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

I received a call from my defense lawyer today. Bracing myself, I assumed the justice system had finally caught up with me. I wondered if I would have time to get out of my chair before fifty cops kicked in the studio door and dragged me away. But no. He told me that he had received a call from Detective Rosswald. Getting to my feet, I scanned outside the window. My lawyer advised me not to speak with him. But fuck it, let’s see what Rosswald had on his mind.

The call was soon transferred and then the gravelly voice of the detective spoke up, “How?! How did you know? What was your involvement? How did you know about Schlenzig and Behm’s investigation? Were you working with them?”

I just waited for a long time.

“You knew! You knew what happened! I was wrong about you, Mr. Knox. You’re a nobody. Just another disgusting sex-pest. Stay away from Dresden!”

-

On my run this evening, Rosswald’s words sunk in. This wasn’t the outcome I had expected. You mention something unrelated in passing, and then people made connections to irrelevant patterns regardless of how tenuous the formulated link. But I was no different with my ridiculous ideas about my delusions. Ultimately, he was right. I was a fucking nobody!

-

Just before midnight, I left some friends that were celebrating their part in a new music video. I soon stood on the U-bahn platform and reached for my earbuds. That was when I felt that thick bunch of keys in my pocket. So, while listening to Horskh, *Mud in My Wheels*, I jumped on a train going in

## Interfering With Divinities

the opposite direction from my home and headed to the Slovakian bar near Abi's place.

I had hoped that Mr. Caviezel would be there, but of course I didn't recognize anyone in that packed bar. Needing some water, I caught the eye of the bartender. I could feel the weight of the dead Russian's keys as I wondered if that chained-up girl had dehydrated to death yet. A line from *Pickman's Model*, by Lovecraft then came to me, "*I want human ghosts – the ghosts of beings highly organized enough to have looked on hell and known the meaning of what they saw.*"

As a glass bottle of water was placed in front of me, the young guy behind the bar leaned in. "You meeting someone?"

"No."

"Maybe I can help?"

Glancing around the busy establishment, I then asked, "What do you know about the Russians in town?"

The big guy raised his eyebrows and shrugged. "Been a real clash of heads since the war began. You've seen it. Lots of Russian's haven't paid their debts, and you know how it is when things are tense."

"Why?" I frowned. "The Russian economy already recovered from all these bullshit fucking sanctions. Why's there still a problem?"

"Doesn't matter," the bartender replied, as his eyes drifted across the crowd. "People, you know, use any excuse so they can take advantage whenever it looks justified. But it's causing a growing rivalry among businesses. People don't like having their supply-chain disrupted. Especially when it comes to, you know, the basics: girls and medication. People are outsourcing to former competitors. You know, some hold real grudges against the Russians. But you don't fuck with some people. Unfortunately, most are failing to appreciate that one day the Russian's will bounce back. But you know what, we're all truly fucked if the Russian's actually win this war."

SATURDAY 14<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

After dinner at a burrito joint in Mitte, I sat watching people walk by – when I had one of those images flash over my vision. A dark hospital room. I sat

still and in a couple of seconds it passed. However, a few minutes later it happened again. I saw Hailey sleeping in a hospital bed.

It happened once more on my way down the street toward Rosenthaler Platz. I fucking hated this shit! And then I was grabbed! An invisible hand pulled me to the side. Furious, I tore my arm away and continued down the street with the wind in my face. Fuck this shit!

-

At 11pm, I sat on my floor in the pitch black.

I soon stood below that massive front wall of the palace as I was struck by a violent dust storm! Pulling the big black sheet over my head, I backed away. But then I nearly fell into a square hole in the ground. It was right where I had indicated to the worm-bodied devils to start digging. Though, none of them were anywhere to be seen in those gale force winds. The hole was much larger than anything from the circle of ruined obelisks and I couldn't even see the bottom of the pit. I scanned this wasteland between the steep mountains and then looked up at the palace. A lone figure stood far above, silhouetted by the low clouds of churning fire. I couldn't tell if he was looking back down at me, though, he was probably oblivious to my presence. So, I cursed them under my breath, "Why the fuck did you even tell me about this fucking place?!"

Sitting back in my flat, I closed my eyes again.

I then stood in the hospital room from my unexpected visions. Hailey lay in the bed with her long brown hair spread out on both sides of her pale face. Glancing around, I couldn't find anything that revealed where exactly this place was. I looked back to the girl and wondered if my visions were her way of reaching out for help.

No! Why the fuck would she want my fucking attention?! This was merely uncontrollable random bullshit! She was nothing more than a fucking annoyance! Scowling down at her, I knew how easily I could crush her throat while she slept. This quiet life that I had tried to disappear within was tedious. Without causing trouble there was no reason to live at all. I wanted nothing more than to cut her head off and keep her as my next favorite ghost-whore. IT'S ALL METAPHYSICS AND METAPHORS UNTIL YOUR DEAD FUCKING MEAT.

THURSDAY 19<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

This evening, I sat on the floor in the unholy circle facing east and closed my eyes.

I immediately found myself surrounded by incinerating flames! Shielding my face, I stumbled away and slammed directly into the wall of the palace! This firestorm roared worse than I'd ever seen it. Quickly glancing across the burning ground covered with these giant living flames of jinn, I spotted a pile of rocks. The heat was too much, and my sheet was soon scorched, and yet I realized that this pile of rocks had filled in the pit for my next obelisk. That same black muck from the ruined circle also smothered anything in close proximity to the site. Crouching against the wall, I didn't bother protecting my face. This place seemed to react to my designs with something like antibodies. The old woman at the lakeside house was right. There was nothing to gain from making plans here. A thunderous booming then came from the distance. Despite my skin smoldering and the sheet catching fire, I slowly rose to my feet and glared through that ominous inferno. Sparks and dust sent me stumbling half-blinded back against the wall. Yet I looked on, watching as a great serpent descended from the burning black clouds and stretched across an entire mountain range as it moved in my direction. This fucking place hated me.

Opening my eyes in my flat, the burning sensation that had roasted my flesh gradually faded as my body relaxed. I cracked my neck from side to side and thought of Hailey, and how much I had been craving her tight little asshole. Closing my eyes again, I focused on her.

However, I merely appeared in the colonnade next to that river with the u-shaped terraces. It seemed as though I could only locate her whenever she was weakened or unconscious. But that still didn't explain what the fuck this shadow figure in the river had to do with her?! Why the fuck was it just standing in the water staring at me?! If knowledge defeated frustration, then I was conquered by ineptitude!

FRIDAY 20<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

When I left my flat this morning and passed through the courtyard, I found that greasy kid sitting where the lady of the house used to. He smirked at me as I walked by.

I went to meet some friends on a boat this evening, but the persistence of this never-ending winter decided to piss on our plans. Relocating to a nearby bar, I got involved in a thoroughly engaging conversation with my Welsh friend Ned. There, we discussed history, philosophy, and the beauty of classical architecture.

As the storm worsened, our small group moved to another bar where Ned and I neglected the others that all departed one by one. We talked well into the small hours discussing great minds and movements that had shaped the world. It was funny how you could know someone socially for over a decade and only now discover your shared interests. Ned was clearly more well-read than me and would recite lines from Faust in German. He spoke Welsh, English, German, French, Latin, and was currently teaching himself ancient Greek, just because modern Greek was too easy. It must have been a nice advantage being able to appreciate the nuances of books written in their original language. Yet we both understood that highly educated individuals were not necessarily good communicators.

#### SATURDAY 21<sup>st</sup> MAY 2022

After dinner with an ex, I was invited to a bar by an English friend who was visiting town. However, I was in the middle of the busy streets around Boxi when I saw the apparition of Arpi appear among the crowds. She stood naked in the board daylight and looked as real as everyone else. Yet I knew the difference between reality and these fucking visions of nonexistent psychosis! Arpi was dead! This thing wasn't the girl that I had briefly known. All I saw was some unconscious projection that my cunning brain had constructed from our two interactions and the sum of her suicidal diary. But I still knew precisely what she was. An omen. That I too would be dead soon.

I was done with waiting for someone to jump me, so I headed across town

## Interfering With Divinities

while the blood still flowed in these veins of mine.

Arriving at the Romanian kiosk, I found that Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head wasn't there. The others in the tiny store, however, had seen me before and suggested I visit someone in Charlottenburg.

Twenty minutes later, I came to another kiosk. The Romanian there had been expecting me. He then led me outside where he pointed to car parked on the other side of the street.

I was then driven across town. It's amazing how far you can go without saying a single word to any of these guys. What are we but other people's assumptions?

It was getting dark in Schöneberg by the time I was escorted to an elevator. We went straight to the roof where a dinner table was set up and a dozen Romanians ate as they enjoyed the view. Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head slowly stood and gestured for me to approach. Suddenly, however, two big pricks got in the way and frisked me. They took both my knife and the Glock.

Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head looked pissed once he saw the weapons, "Why are you here?! We all know you have many eyes on you!"

I just stared at him. Why the fuck didn't they just kill me already?! Clenching my fists, I eventually sneered, "No one's watching me!"

"Says who?" he snorted, lighting a cigarette. We then slowly walked across the flat roof toward the edge. "They're always there. Watching. You know, the eyes of God. Vultures waiting around every corner. You understand, they want you dead."

I scanned the skyline irritated that I had come here just for this. "Where's the lady of the house?!"

"Who?"

"From the massage parlor!"

"Probably Ibiza. You know, she blamed you for everything."

"Then it must be true!"

"Do we have a problem?"

"Do we?!"

"Are you a problem for me?"

"Is that what I look like?"

Taking a step backward, Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head glared at me before saying, "What is it you want?"

I bottled up my hatred, as I took a moment to control the urge to walk right off the edge. "I want to do my work! I'm fucking sick of these fucks interfering with me! And my fucking patience is running out!"

“You’re not a healthy guy. You know that, right?”

“You think?!”

“You do what you do, and maybe we work together in the future.”

“And why would we want that?”

“It’s the Slovaks you should watch out for.”

“Should I?!”

“You’re the Fisherman.”

“I don’t even know what the fuck that means!” I snarled, walking away.

“You are the one with a problem!”

I couldn’t wait to hear it, hoping that finally they would put a bullet in my fucking head. So, I slowly turned back toward that gathering on the rooftop.

“They have a video of you.”

I clenched my jaw and waited.

“I’ve seen it. Seen what you did to those two while everyone watched.”

The men at the table all stared at me, while I thought of Friedrich’s driveway.

“I look forward to getting your hands dirty again,” Mr. Deflated-Rugby-Ball-Head called out. “Unless one of your friends gets you killed first.”

Grabbing my things, I then punched the inside of the elevator on my way down. No one had been tormenting me. It had all been in my fucking head!

No! This was bullshit! I knew that I wasn’t fucking crazy!

So, I went straight to a Turkish bar in Neukölln. The young guys puffing on shisha watched me as I searched for a familiar face. I marched through two more quiet establishments before I saw a little weasel that I vaguely recognized. He quickly took me out the back and handed me a burner. Someone on the phone soon said that they would send a ride.

A few minutes later, an SUV picked me up and we drove into Kreuzberg. A guy then climbed in the back next to me, as I demanded without hesitation, “What do you know about the Slovaks?!”

The heavy Turkish guy glanced around the streets as we drove off.

“The fuck do you know?!”

“Hey! Relax! You were there! What more can I say?!”

“I was where?!”

“Relax!” he said calmly, shaking his head while running a palm over his beard. “It is what it is.”

“I fucking hate that expression!” I hissed. “Where the fuck was I?!”

“You saw for yourself that night, when we invited you to watch.”

“For fuck’s sake, invited to what?!”

## Interfering With Divinities

“The two we took care of. The two that the Slovaks sent after you. You were there. You saw what happened to them. You even showed the boys how to finish the job.”

“The two bikers?”

The Turkish guy just stared out the window.

“The fuck have they got to do with me?!”

Looking agitated, the guy next to me sighed and said, “The Slovaks sent them to deal with you! We fucking warned you they that were coming!”

I sat quietly as a sense of clarity soaked through my nervous system.

“You must know the guy. That fucking Caviezel. He’s wanted you taken out for years now.”

TUESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

I awoke at 3:30am to a rustling outside my window. Snapping on the bedside lamp, I saw the disfigured monkey-devil perched upon the windowsill. I slowly approached, noticing that one of its six limbs was half missing, and its black flesh was severely scorched and peeling.

My first thought was that it could continue showing me where more cursed objects were hidden away. But why had it only come to me now?

Being wide awake, I switched off the light and sat on the floor. The monkey-devil climbed inside but kept its distance. Once the passageway appeared between the east windows, I stood and gestured for that little critter to follow.

Soon the tunnel became a small cave that opened onto a stormy view across a stark landscape. Waiting there, I heard the injured creature slowly crawl up next to me. It wasn’t long before a worm-bodied devil slithered down into the cave and stared cautiously at my company. I stepped closer and asked, “Can you heal it?”

That wet semi-humanoid had no reaction to my words, but I didn’t reiterate. Either it understood, or it didn’t. Just as, either the monkey-devil would survive, or it wouldn’t. The outcome was out of my hands, and I opened my eyes and went back to bed.



WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

This evening, I finished my final 5km run of the 30-day challenge. I hadn't noticed any remarkable physical improvement. These things took time, but where was the benefit? Probably on my insides, though, the pros hardly seemed worth the cons. Yet, I committed, followed through, and had once again achieved my goal. And gained what exactly?! Knowing that I could go a month without coffee and sugar?! I already knew that it would take a lot more than that to kill me.

-

I got home after dinner at 9:30pm just as a knocking came from my door. Checking the peephole, I saw a Sudanese man and the bald Italian right on my doorstep. I immediately swung the door wide open and glared at those two pricks.

"Let's take a walk," the menacing Arrigo sneered.

So, the three of us took a quiet stroll around the park next to my block in the fading light of that pleasant day.

"Why have I come all this way if you're of no consequence?!" Arrigo eventually demanded, walking by my side while the black guy followed.

"You're looking for Father Lucus."

"Am I?"

"Lucus knew about Lodovico. Told me to confront him. More importantly, Lucus was pressuring him into taking his own life."

"Because?"

"Lucus is involved in his own form of heterodoxy. I've seen him practice his rituals at Santiago de Compostela."

"Lucus? Father Lucus? A Roman Catholic?"

"That's what he claims. But check his history. He was moved from the seminary in Porto to Santiago for disciplinary reasons."

"And what's your involvement?"

"I'm not a man of the cloth!"

"Yet you were the last one to see Lodovico alive."

"You saw him too. He was already a broken man. Lucus knew it and pushed his guilt over the edge. But Lucus was too much of a chickenshit to

## Interfering With Divinities

say it to his face. That's why he used me. I didn't know it at the time, but I was just a useful idiot sent to confront Lodovico. That's why I want you to find Lucus. Hold him to account for his manipulation."

"You know nothing of my position!"

"Oh, I'm sorry, have I misjudged the situation?! Were you not responsible for Lodovico continuing his secret abortion surgery?! Or were you actually there that day giving him a scriptural guilt-trip over murdering unborn babies?!"

Arrigo walked in silence.

"You're looking for Lucus either fucking way!" I snarled. "You could shake his hand for convincing a catholic priest into killing himself, or, more appropriately, you should make him suffer Lodovico's former duties as punishment!"

"How so?"

"Lucus comes from a medical background in the military."

"What do you know of his heterodoxy?"

"In January, I helped him in Santiago with a 9<sup>th</sup> century ceremony. We contacted a devil. And it sent him on a mission in the service of a little pagan whore in the UK."

"You can, of course, prove all these extraordinary accusations."

"Nope. But just ask your new friend here what my fucking credentials are worth."

"What am I meant to do?!"

"Catch Lucus in the fucking act!"

"The act of what?!"

"Raising hell!"

"Nonsense! This is complete absurdity!"

"Again, I defer to your esteemed escort!"

The Italian and I both twisted back toward the young Sudanese man. He lowered his head and slowly nodded while whispering, "We have seen his works."

"Where is this Lucus?"

"I don't know."

"You said the UK."

"It's up to you to find where exactly."

"How?"

"You found me with less."

"Who's the pagan?"

“A girl who was in Salzburg the same night we were.”

“A child?”

“She’s not a fucking child! Don’t make the same mistake that everyone else has! But I want her! That’s the only reason you’re here right now. I don’t give a fuck about Lucus and his heresy! I want the girl! Lead me to her, and then you’ll see what Lucus has been up to! Give him the option of working for you or you’ll excommunicate his ass!”

“At this point, why would he even care?”

“You’d be surprised. He still believes he’s doing God’s good work.”

“If I find where he’s hiding, then you’re coming with me!”

“That’s the idea!”

Arrigo turned to the black Mercedes that we had ended up standing across the street from. While he climbed in, the Sudanese man stepped closer to me. “Why did you speak with his wife?”

Frowning, I guessed that he meant the wife of the possessed man, as I hissed spitefully, “The truth shall set you free!”

I walked away knowing that their truth would only incriminate them and hopefully ruin their marriages. Glancing back from the corner of the street, I saw the Mercedes drive off. I wanted people in misery, and yet they seemed to end up thanking me like I had done them a favor. But who gives a fuck. None of this would work out the way that I wanted it, because there simply wasn’t any best-case scenario. Thinking of all the sexually violent things that I had recently planned for Hailey, I ultimately knew that she had the upper hand with that neat trick of hers. All my sadistic endeavors would prove fruitless, and yet that only made me want her even more!

Getting home, I slammed the door shut and threw my jacket at the fucking wall! I then ripped open the drawer containing the small iron rod. What the fuck did it even do? Was it a weapon, a form of protection, or a way of trapping a devil? And how the fuck did I use it?! Or was it just another deflection from what I really wanted, Hailey’s blood on my fucking hands. I wanted her all to myself once I found her. But even unconscious she seemed able to defend herself!

That reminded me of Mr. Caveziel. That cunt wanted me dead despite our assumed mutual respect. But how could I stop him? I didn’t even know where the fuck he was or who he would send to finish me off next. However, my one advantage was that he didn’t know that I knew that he was after me. Yet, both my scheming and frustrations solved nothing! It was all such pointless fucking chaos!

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Taking the small iron rod, I killed the lights and sat in the unholy circle. I wanted to stir up some shit! I wanted to bring even worse anarchy to the fucking noise in my head! I wanted to ruin it all! I WAS THE ARCHITECT AND THE ARSONIST! I wanted to burn down every beautiful cathedral that I had ever aspired to construct, so that I could bash my own fucking face into the wreckage and remind my stupidity that this was all that I was fucking good for!

On a jagged slope full of deep holes, I stood against the blasting wind on another bleak mountainside. In a great pit next to me, a huge tree swayed in the gales despite its shelter. No, it wasn't a tree. It was some enormous growth of branches extending from the back of a giant. Disgusted, I picked up some rocks and yelled profanities as I threw the stones! Nothing reacted. The sky howled above, until one stone hit something that splashed. That massive beast then reached out of the pit like an inflamed tumor with no discernable head nor tail. It was much bigger than I had thought the depths could contain. So, I threw another fucking stone! It then swept an immense extremity across the slope with such destructive force that I was ground into mince!

Closing my eyes again, I wanted more pain, more havoc, and more of that gratuitous aggression!

On the edge of a swamp, I stood with mist surrounding and a huge black serpent lying in the shallows. I was knee-deep when I kicked into the waters while screaming inanities! Suddenly the whole swamp vibrated as that monstrous leech growled savagely. I threw my black sheet aside, standing naked in the water as I yelled and stomped about. In the next horrendous instant, the trembling surface exploded open! Jaws as gigantic as they were hideous flung themselves upon my puny antagonism and I was chomped into a thousand mutilated pieces!

Opening my eyes in the unholy circle, I savored the severity of the sensations rippling throughout my hunched body. But I wanted more ferocity so soon closed my eyes again.

On a small rocky hill, I stood among the blackened ruins of a temple within a tall valley. I twisted in the rain, despising this abandoned site of no formidable function. Then I spotted two devils below the steep cliffs crouching next to a pond of worm-filled waters. Yelling, I screamed without words at their seclusion. Not a moment later, they both pounced shockingly fast up the steep cliffs and into the ruins! They were like big dogs but the size of elephants. Their frenzied attack shattered the pillars as they charged at my indignity. But I backed off further into that place. I wanted them to destroy

everything as well as myself! Yet I still wanted more! I wanted them to tear the very fucking mountains down! Instead, however, I was split in two and devoured by their merciless hostility until it was as if I had never even been there.

FRIDAY 27<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

At 2:30pm, I received a call from one of the Sudanese men. I hadn't expected to hear from anyone so soon. Grabbing my jacket, I met him outside for another walk. He took his time before eventually saying, "The girl. She is in a place called Bath. In England."

"Great! I'll book a flight! Let's go tonight! Where's that Italian prick?"

"Returned to Rome."

"What?!" I snapped, stopping in the middle of the footpath.

"Now you will heal our brother!" the black guy insisted. "Like you promised! Like you swore you would!"

I just looked away as the cold wind blew down my collar. Why wouldn't this winter fuck off already?! And why wouldn't any of my fucking plans ever work?! I didn't care to repeat the futility of my Aachen experience. Knowing that Hailey was in Bath was as good as knowing nothing! "Where?! Where exactly did he say in Bath?!"

"You must help him! You promised to heal his curse!"

"I fucking promised nothing to a fucking cunt like you!"

"Heal him! You must!"

"Why the fuck should I?!"

"You are the devil-charmer!"

"Where in Bath?!"

"Heal him!"

"Go fuck yourself!" I barked, walking back to the studio. The greasy-haired kid was standing outside the kiosk and smiled at me as I crossed the intersection.

"Tomorrow!" the black guy shouted. "You will see him, tomorrow!"

-

Spending the afternoon fuming in my office, I barely held my resentment

## Interfering With Divinities

down while trying to work. This was just another repeat of Dresden. But that was the universal constant wasn't it: life was shit. Sitting back in my chair, I gazed out the window and shook my head. Fuck it, I would go and do it myself! Aachen be damned!

Firstly, I discovered that Bath was nowhere near Cambridge, so what the fuck was the connection? I quickly found that Bristol was the closest airport with the earliest flight being on Thursday, so I booked it!

Heading outside, I then went straight to the corner kiosk and confronted that fucking kid, "You know Mr. Caviezel, right. The Slovakian."

"Whatever!"

"Get a message to him."

"Yeah, and what do I get out of it?"

"Tell him I know what Jörg's planning. If he gets back to you, then I'll introduce you to Mr. Caviezel personally."

-

Later that night, I awoke from a knocking at my door! To my true bewilderment, the French girl, Lorina, stood there with her Greyhound on a leash. "Can I help you?!"

Without opening her mouth, she put her hand on my bare chest and walked in. We stripped and fucked while her dog watched like a good boy. However, it was while she was on top that she suddenly spoke for the first time, "Give me a child!"

To which I threw her the fuck away, as I sneered, "Are you out of your fucking mind?!"

She then lunged at me like an animal, "I want a child!"

Grabbing her vicious arms, I pinned her down, "Not from me!"

"You're clean! So, give me what I want, and you'll never see me again!"

"Clean?!"

"You're tests at the clinic came back clean!"

Leaning back, I glared murderously down at this meat. How the fuck did she even know about my yearly STI checkup? There really was no such thing as privacy in this digital age.

"It's all you're good for! Breeding stock!"

"Wow," I gasped, and then got up and opened a bedside drawer. Lorina struggled but I put my knee in her spine and tied her up with several black straps. It was only then that her mutt started yapping. But when I clamped the dog's snout shut, I realized that it was focused on the window. I muzzled and hogtied the dog before carrying it into the bathroom. Returning to the bed

with my knife, I flipped the restrained Lorina onto her side. She immediately went tense once I placed the blade against her delicate throat.

A vision of Amelia then came over me.

And suddenly I realized that the butchery of this French girl wasn't worth the stains on my sheets. A tapping then came from the window. Glancing over, I saw the monkey-devil hunched among the ivy, so I called out, "Where is she?!"

That nasty little creature raised a limb and pointed inside. Toward the west. Toward England.

Confused, Lorina cried out, "Give me what I want! That's all I want from you!"

Folding my knife, I placed it on the desk before pulling the girl down onto the white floor.

"What are you doing?!" she squirmed.

"I'll give you something," I whispered, before pissing all over her arrogant face. Shrieking, she lurched away but couldn't escape. Her humiliation was all that this meat was good for. Once I was done, I dragged the soaking girl out to the staircase, along with her dog, and then threw her clothes further down. I simply released one strap that held her wrists together, before slamming the door shut. Stepping over the smeared puddles of piss, I went straight back to bed.

## SATURDAY 28<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

A few hours later, I awoke at 8:30am to my doorbell. Right outside was the original Sudanese driver. It had been a while since I had seen him. I got dressed and we took a drive across town. We never spoke.

This time we didn't go to the compound where I had first met their incarcerated colleague. Still, we had to go through multiple check points and metal-detectors. Only one guest could visit the prisoner at a time, so I alone was escorted through stark corridors. I scanned the walls and took note of all the security cameras in every corner. Once the door opened, I found that black guy still restrained to his bed. I walked halfway into the cell before stopping while in clear view of a camera as I said, "Kill him and come with

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me!”

The prisoner immediately went into convulsions. Turning, I ignored the guard and left. Now that’s an exorcism done right!

-

I got home by 11am, cleaned up the piss from the floor, and wondered if I should have cum inside that French elitist. Why not? Why not indeed? Because anything that reminded me of myself was clearly a mistake! I was father to none! However, then a thought occurred. What if Abi had never been taking the pill and now she was actually pregnant? That could explain why she suddenly broke it off with me. Like Lorina, that might have been Abi’s only interest in me from the start. But fuck it. If so, it was too late now.

-

This evening, while listening to Sjellos, *Chamber of Reflections*, I was sitting at my desk sketching. I could see a short series of artwork coming from my impressions of those mountains that burned. But then a black shape appeared beside me. I slowly twisted around as a great panther-like demon materialized. Its head nearly touched the ceiling. I had seen these demons before. It had a face comprised of dozens of serpentine tendrils. I had seen two of them wrestling by a lake where the water had withdrawn revealing a giant worm that killed them both. This demon, though, had the same breath as the incarcerated Sudanese man.

Later, it lay at the foot of my bed while I slept.

SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

Again, that panther-demon appeared next to me this evening. It watched as I went over my notebooks and sketched some of the places that I had seen in my visions. I wondered if it recognized these locations. But my rough sketches were shit! So, I switched off the lights. Why draw when I could show this demon these things firsthand.

When the dark passage in the east wall formed, I led the way. The creature was so big that it barely squeezed into the tunnel. Soon the red hue from the fires shimmered ahead of us and we stepped out of the caves into that great valley below that brutalist-like palace. I glanced at the black demon, though,



found that it seemed rather tense. Walking on, away from the mouth of the caves, I saw that the creature refused to join me. I continued crossing the slopes and up to the front walls to where the pit had been filled with rocks. Waiting there in that comparative calm, I watched massive firestorms swirled miles away down the valley. No other devils showed up and I was once again confronted with my inability to understand the logic of this fucking place. The inhabitants of that daunting palace probably knew better than me, yet what good was their wisdom if they wouldn't pass it on. But then again, who was I demanding to know things that I simply couldn't learn.

MONDAY 30<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022

Getting home this evening, I opened all the windows despite the cold and stared out into the big trees. Soon heavy paws stepped closer on the white floor. The red glow in the courtyard then emanated from the small clearing. I glanced aside at the panther-demon before I grabbed the wire and left my flat.

Opening my neighbor's gate, I walked through the courtyard toward the red light. An even larger gathering of old men in robes surrounded the clearing. Pushing through their passive silence, I emerged in the open center where that tall flame floated. I then crouched, and like a caveman, began poking at the magickal sinkhole with a stick. While watching this little piece of hellfire that had followed me into this world, I knew that Nefertiti II was right. This breach was out of control. Good! So, I stabbed more violently at the flame! There was no control! Only chaos and our delusions! That crimson jinn then grew in height as the old men slowly retreated. Rising to my feet, I glared into the flame but saw no intelligence. Whatever this thing signified it meant nothing to me! If it was a threat, it left me unaffected! So, I then held out the small iron rod – and the flame instantly evaporated!

The darkness was consuming for a while until my eyes adjusted, but I heard an odd noise first. A cracking sound like something crystalizing. I gradually focused on a lighter shape within the clearing. It was slowly expanding like creeping ice. The more my eyes adapted the more polished this big glass-like disk on the ground became. It eventually reached the width of two meters in diameter. That's when I saw someone else step through the

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ancient men on the other side of the clearing. Hailey knelt and stared into the black glass without even noticing me. I wanted to grab her hair and beat her pretty face into the ground! But as I glanced away in disgust, I realized the depth of the reflection. There was a huge hole below the glass. No, it wasn't a hole. This was one great big scrying mirror! Leaning closer, I saw a mountainside surrounded by low clouds – and then a huge vertical slice of the cliff began rising! This massive chunk of rock slowly levitated upward through the drifting snow and into the night sky. There, it revealed a vast hollow with an arched gateway inside that jagged mountain.

“You found it!” Hailey suddenly whispered.

So, I smashed the glass with the heavy stick! Walking away through the crowd of apparitions, I always knew that I was never really good at sharing.

TUESDAY 31<sup>st</sup> MAY 2022

Tonight, an ex spontaneously decided she would pay me a visit for the first time in years.

“No billiards anymore?” she asked disappointed, as if she had ever actually joined us when I had invited her.

“No time,” I replied glancing out the window. “Too busy.”

“With work?”

“And other things.”

“Other girls?”

“More important things.”

“Do I need to worry?”

“About?”

“I have a hard time believing that there's no one worrying about you.”

I stared back at her beautiful eyes, though, I could barely picture how we had once been together.

-

Later, while sketching, I found myself distracted by the inevitable fact that I would fail to find Hailey in Bath. That was when I noticed the smell of rain. I then switched off the lights and stood by the windows. There, I stared through the ivy and into the wet night. This constant anger wanted what it

always had. I hated knowing that I was right about myself: living peacefully brought no peace of mind!

Soon I heard heavy paws behind as the panther-demon approached with a guttural growl. Rustling also came from outside and the black goat slowly peered in through the window. The demon behind me then aggressively arched its back. My flat had now disappeared and become a great chamber full of those decrepit old men. Perplexed, the panther-demon stood still as those men began mumbling in the dark. At first it was a soft hum from random directions, but quickly their voices rose until that boundless space was roaring with thousands of men yelling from where they stood!

WEDNESDAY 1<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2022

I had seen more and more of those translucent old men on the rainy streets throughout the day. Many of them stood outside the studio staring at me. They all seemed very much aware of my presence now. A murmuring from their growing voices drifted in the background like the constant sound of rain on the windows.

-

This evening, as I prepared my bag for traveling tomorrow, dozens of those old men would appear for a while in my flat before fading away and being replaced by others with dirty crowns and long beards. Their chaotic voices were as enlightening as their former silence. It wasn't until the panther-demon materialized, that they all backed off. I watched that ominous creature snarling as those elderly patriarchs vaporized into less than shadows. It was only then that I really wondered what exactly they were trying to tell me. Were they incensed that I had trespassed on their palace? Or maybe they were livid that I had led them astray into this fucking place?

However, the old men were soon replaced with other devils and shadow figures. The panther-demon didn't seem to mind these entities and it wasn't long before the lights in my flat barely lit anything. I didn't see it happen, but I heard the commotion. A fight broke out somewhere in the gathering. I found the violence far more enthralling than my self-doubt over ever finding Hailey. The walls of my flat had disappeared at this time, and that entire assembly of

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devils became a thrashing riot of inhuman wrath! Wrestling with one another, they slammed into me, and we were sent crashing down an embankment within this multi-level cave system. In that cavern even more beasts came from different passageways. Shoving hideous devils aside, I climbed over others in the dark while also being struck by unidentified acts of brutality. Every blow to my arms, legs, and torso was a reminder that these fucking cunts were real! Hearing even more savage roars coming from another cave, I struggled through bursts of hostility into a much grander chamber of sharp rock. A giant black creature ripped the limbs off another huge animal that shrieked ferociously! The larger monstrosity nearly stomped on me as it stumbled among the thousands of smaller beasts. It then smashed off a great chunk of the cave wall! The avalanche that tore down through the darkness sent howls into that already deafening cacophony! The only light was few and far between and coming from burning gold that I assumed by now was also some condemned form of life. The unrecognizable giant lumbered back toward me, yet I lurched out of its path and fell into a pile of disorientated devils. That's when I heard the snarl of the panther-demon nearby. It seemed as though it had taken the attack on me personally, as that creature pounced! The ceiling in this cave must have been as high as a four-story building and yet the giant still had to duck its vaguely silhouetted head as it twisted around. The panther-demon, however, scaled the giant in seconds, going straight for the throat. Lurching away, that massive beast's movements caused a surge of other devils to climb up its back. The mutilation of such a grotesque giant was an awe-inducing spectacle of carnage. And the giant was soon overwhelmed by the swarm. The panther-demon bellowed while maintaining its perch upon the neck of the fallen carcass.

That was when I realized, despite the lack of illumination, the black goat was standing right next to me upon the cave's curving wall. Suddenly the panther-demon vaulted through the violent masses! I could see other devils being driven aside as it charged furiously at the goat. The much smaller animal did nothing but stare at the oncoming challenge. So, I too watched on. But when the panther-demon leaped with paws reaching, the black goat merely opened its snout and breathed – and the attacker exploded into a mist of shredded meat!

“WHY, YOU FUCK?! WHY?!” I screamed in psychotic disbelief. However, my voice alerted the entire cavern to my existence. Before I could do anything in protest, I was crushed and then ripped to fucking pieces!

Sitting up on the floor of my flat, I cursed that fucking goat as the pain

slowly subsided. I stayed there, hunched over in silence as bitter shock pulsed through every muscle in my body. Why would the goat kill this demon? What a fucking waste! It had spent Christ knows how long trapped before gaining just a few weeks of freedom only to be slaughtered by one of its own! I was stricken with the extreme worthlessness of it all. Why kill one of its own?! Unless the black goat wasn't in fact anything like these devils? Or had it always planned on ruining whatever I had sought to gain? Why should I waste my fucking time looking for holy men or roaming through the realm of death and sin when I got absolutely nothing out of it! The bigger picture was a black canvas of ultimate chaos. For there was, in truth, only one end of the spectrum: and that was going from bad to worse.

# BATH

THURSDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JUNE 2022

While walking through the center of the pale stone town of Bath, I came to a balcony on the footpath and looked down upon u-shaped terraces in the river! I shook my head slowly, scanning this beautiful place in the cool evening breeze. The colonnade from my visions must have been directly below where I stood. Continuing toward my guesthouse, I still didn't see how this place was connected to Hailey. I would soon find out, though, once I dropped off my shoulder-bag.

I admired the quiet neighborhoods of Georgian architecture that covered the surrounding hills. So, I decided to take a stroll the long way back into town by heading through the woods to the southeast. I was in the middle of a secluded path when I was struck by the beautiful sunset between the trees. In the distance stood the steeple of a stone church near my guesthouse. I paused for a moment, soaking up that tranquil view.

Old men sat behind warm windows and waited to die alone, though, occasionally they peered out as I passed by. Knowing the great indifference of the universe, I hoped that I would never live so long.

It was dark at 10pm when I arrived back at the terraced river. I stood among the trees and stared across the waters at the colonnade below the street. There, I waited patiently. I had all the time in the world. After all, it was a lovely long weekend in England where everyone was celebrating the Queen's 70<sup>th</sup> jubilee. I was most likely just another loyal royalist, though heaven's forbid not a nationalist. The British were almost as masochistic as Americans. I blended into the background like a thousand other nobodies from out of town. My plan was simple, with a systematic approach toward following up any suggestions that my true-will came across. It wasn't long until I invoked the apparition of Arpi before me on the riverside. She looked



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sorry for herself with her arms crossed like she could actually feel the cold.

“Bring it to me!” I said, facing the u-shaped terraces. Walking away, I left Arpi to her task as I headed up onto the streets. A stone bridge led toward the old Roman baths where this town got its namesake. The fact that there were thermal springs here, again, reminded me of my time in Aachen. But I wasn’t bothered by past excursions. Sitting in the square outside the cathedral, I ate shortbread while listening to the Beastie Boys, *Eugene’s Lament*. I hadn’t come here like the Romans to cleanse myself in any waters. Not this time. I had no intention of getting anywhere near any fucking water whatsoever.

As I reached for another shortbread, I spotted a wet coin sitting on the bench next to me. Arpi then stood naked in the middle of the square where she shivered. Glancing back at that ancient coin, I picked it up with a tissue and found faded words scratched into the dull gold. I looked back up but found that Arpi had vanished. The shadow figure from the river had now taken her place. Great, another devil for my collection.

FRIDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> JUNE 2022

Heading out this morning, I stopped by the church that I had seen beneath the sunset. Two men were tying flowers to the pews in obvious preparations for a wedding. As I strolled through the open doors one of them turned and welcomed me in. I ended up spending an hour chatting with this American rector. Ryan was my age with two kids. Possessing an extremely hospitable demeanor, he was exceptionally accommodating, like most former members of the military. Though, as I pushed, he elaborated briefly on his time in Afghanistan. It had driven him to question everything, until he eventually became an investigative journalist and returned to the war. He admitted that after all the conflict that he had experienced he finally had a breakdown. Right after that, he found Jesus while wandering through the woods. He had since been an evangelical rector here for the last six years. The sincere manner in which he spoke was refreshingly disarming. I mentioned my own inquiries into joining the seminary in Edinburgh a few years ago, and he smiled, saying that he was currently writing his PhD on Christian Ethics at the same seminary.



“Can I ask you a question, Bruce?”

“Sure.”

“What do you have difficulty with?”

Oddly stumped, I found it difficult to answer.

“Can I pray for you, Bruce?”

“I can’t tell you not to.”

Ryan then took my hand, and I watched him closely as he spoke aloud, asking God that I might have a joyful day. Believing that I was a good person, he thanked the Lord for bringing me here.

I could see how this kind of earnest good will could win over the vulnerable.

“It’s not a chance event that you walked in here today.”

“Hey, I’m just a curious guy and go wherever I find myself.”

“It’s God’s path that led you here. These places you’ve been searching through on your travels, they’re like when I was in those woods talking to myself. I didn’t know it at the time, but I was praying.”

“Do you ever have difficulty ministering to your congregation?”

“It gets hard at times, but I have a fantastic support group, especially my wife.”

I went quiet as I scanned the empty pews.

“Can I give you my e-mail, Bruce?” Ryan asked, searching for a pen. “Bruce, will you do me a favor? Will you write to me when you’re having a tough time of it? Will you do that for me?”

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While having a coffee in the center of town, I dwelled on the conversation with Ryan. Did I really need another holy man as a friend? I’m not a good person! I came to this place for one reason! But then again, if that was God’s path then I had to be a fucking saint!

-

I walked up the steep northern hill in the afternoon. As green as it was, the slopes were knotted with expensive homes draped in Union Jacks. I hadn’t brought my umbrella, so as the clouds were thickening, I approached another stone church in search of shelter. However, this one was closed, so I took a seat on a bench in the small garden above the intersection.

Where the fuck was my guide?! I had spent hours last night sitting in the dark of the guesthouse expecting the monkey-devil to show up. But nothing! I had then assumed that it would appear today, like in Paris, if I just kept moving about the city. Though, here I sat, trying to quell that memory of

## Interfering With Divinities

Aachen. I was so close to Hailey and yet who fucking knew exactly how far?! Pulling out the ivory idol, the protective tablet, and the iron rod, I stared at them one at a time. They sat coldly on my palm. Taking out the coin from the river, I examined it within the tissue paper. I hadn't even been looking for this, so what good was it to me?! Inevitably though, the possibility slid down the back of my neck with the first drops of rain, what if Arrigo had gotten this place wrong? I had only ever seen indications during my visions that Hailey was at the University of Cambridge. But then again, I remembered going through her stuff in Salzburg and finding that her flight had departed from Bristol. Cambridge was on the other side of the country. There had to be a connection. But I had tenuous clues to work with. Without the monkey-devil or one of these enigmatically imbued objects pointing me in some kind of direction, I had nothing to go on!

Thinking about it again, maybe the monkey-devil couldn't even locate living people. Maybe I had over-estimated its abilities. Maybe when I had asked where 'she' was the other night, it had actually pointed at that French cunt who happened to be in the way.

Ryan was right. I had come here to remind myself of my place in the world: as a fucking failure! Here I was, in yet another wealthy old city looking blindly for someone that, despite all intents and purposes, didn't even live here. I might have had a plan, but that plan had led to nothing but sitting alone with my dick in my hand!

It was right at that moment of sickening despondency that Cromack slowly came up the stone steps next to me. He stopped on the footpath in front of the towering steeple while looking up. With his hands in the pockets of his dark raincoat, he eventually spoke in his croaky voice, "I was wrong."

I just sat there.

"My daughter's condition has deteriorated to the point that I had no other choice but to put her back in that hospital that she hates."

Remaining silent, I felt more raindrops fall.

"It seems my faith in Hailey was... indeed misplaced. She's got all new priorities. Ever since the priest moved in with her. I thought she cared about our welfare. I thought I knew her better than this. I thought I wasn't..."

I watched Cromack shed his tears while standing his ground.

"They said I should have brought her in months ago. Perhaps if I'd listened to you, things would be different now. But I believed in her."

His pain was genuine, but I had no condolences to offer.

"I'll take you to her," Cromack finally stated. "We both deserve some

answers.”

Getting to my feet, I zipped up my jacket and surveyed the overcast city. “Apology accepted.”

We drove north in Cromack’s Range Rover for half an hour while the sky grew increasingly dismal. It was going on for 4pm, and we were about to turn off the quiet country road – when another vehicle also wanted to enter that private driveway. I leaned forward, staring bitterly at the other driver, as Cromack murmured, “Isn’t that the Italian?”

Arrigo let us lead and we cruised up a long driveway between white flowers on thick shrubs and shrouded by a dense woodland. A gray neoclassical mansion with ionic columns on its portico awaited us. Two symmetrical wings stretched either side with statues on the edge of the rooftops. However, to our left, we spotted the wreck of a car that had crashed head-on with one of the big trees.

“That’s Hailey’s motor!” Cromack gasped, jumping out from behind the wheel. Watching him go, I thought he ran faster than a decrepit old man could. He soon slowed and turned in circles looking for the owner of the abandoned vehicle.

“Someone left in a hurry,” Arrigo grunted, as I turned toward the wide-open front door. I couldn’t help noticing his excellent suit as he marched inside. The three of us then searched that massive house. Only Cromack yelled for Hailey. He sounded more desperate than brimming with the frustration that he had previously spoken with. I had seen this place before. At least, seen the upstairs corridor with its wooden paneling and gold framed paintings. I knew exactly which door opened into Hailey’s gloomy bedroom. Lo and behold, the medical equipment and monitors were still standing next to that huge bed. The lightless room was as vacant as the car outside. I didn’t appreciate having the other two men around while I went in search of my business. However, even if there were no spoils to be found today, I now knew where Hailey lived. She would be mine sooner or later. Lifting one of the pillows, I took a long slow sniff.

“She’s not here,” Cromack said, stepping into the dark bedroom. “Where’s the Italian?”

We then went looking for that bald-headed prick, only to find him rushing back in the front door with a crowbar in hand. Scowling menacingly, he cursed in Italian as he stomped ahead of us. The Englishman and I followed with matching expressions of sobriety. Glancing around for a weapon in case

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need be, I didn't spot anything of note before Arrigo quickly led us down stone steps into the cellar and then down into a vaulted crypt. At the far end the Italian began prying at a small but weighty door. He yelled feverishly and hacked at the frame where a medieval lock had bolted the solid door shut. Beyond it, I could hear weeping. Suddenly Cromack came charging up with an iron bust and smashed open the heavy lock!

While the stench that hit us was horrific, the emaciated sight of what remained of Father Lucus was even more shocking. Covered in filth and almost naked apart from a ragged blanket, his white hair was now blackened with grime and his limbs weren't much more than skin and bone. The other two men staggered back at the cries of that hunched prisoner. Yet as I took a step closer, Lucus collapsed into my arms. His hands grasped ahold of my shoulders as he moaned in absolute despair. Trembling, he wept in a frail voice, "You came back for me! You came back for me! You came back for me!"

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Arrigo spent some time cleaning Lucus in a bathroom, while Cromack had gone to the kitchen looking for something to feed the starved man. Sitting on the front steps of that enormous mansion, I stared at the open lawn with its wall of surrounding trees. The crashed car seemed odd considering how open the space was and how far from the driveway it had veered. If Hailey had been attempting a hasty escape either she had another vehicle to get away in or she was in fact still on the property. But how did she even know to run? If she was still watching me from a far, then I thought she would have tried to contact me preemptively. Unless she simply hadn't foreseen that her lapdog, Cromack, would have thrown her under the bus like this. Thinking about the situation, I had to wonder what exactly had been going on in this big old house.

Lucus looked like a holocaust survivor when Arrigo helped him to the car. With nothing to say to either of them, I just glared at Lucus as he was driven away. Raindrops began falling again as I glanced at my wristwatch. It was just going on for 5pm.

"I've seen too much," Cromack muttered, as he came out and stood above me. "This doesn't make any sense. Why would she keep him locked away down there? What benefit was there in it? Why would she do this? She's a natural theurgist, in a Neoplatonist sense, you know."

"Is she now?!"

"Lucus said that she was being manipulated by something. Controlled.

Forced to do whatever this is.”

“Yeah?! By what?!”

“I don’t know. Lucus said it was here long before you got involved. I just don’t know. But we need to get away from this place. There’s something unclean here.”

“Really?! Where?!”

“Can’t you feel it? That presence. That threatening presence.”

“Not in the slightest!”

“You know what Lucus said about you?” Cromack sighed, moving down the steps and onto the gravel driveway. “Said that the Holy Ghost, it looks over you.”

I clenched my jaw and glanced away, as I replied, “Tell me something I give a fuck about!”

“There’s a place I think she’s gone to. Where it began in her childhood. St. Andrew’s Church. It’s just north of Cambridge. She told me about it once. How she used to run away there as a kid. It’s been abandoned for decades. She said that that was where her premonitions started. I think if she’s scared and not thinking straight, she’ll return somewhere safe.”

“Have fun!”

“You’re not coming?”

“I’m done with running after people on God’s little path of bullshit!”

Cromack had nothing to add, and I watched him from the steps as he drove away. I didn’t trust him as far as I could spit. The guy was still trying to save her. And then the moment I was alone, the rain began pelting down over that morbid estate.

After locking the front door, I soon found what I needed in the kitchen. I then returned to the crypt with a thick flashlight in hand. Adjusting to the stench of human shit and other decay, I searched through that extensive dungeon. Lucus had been a busy fellow. Constructing quite the environment down there, he had plenty of supplies and definitely hadn’t been left to die. Stacks of books rested against the walls, along with the remains of butchered animals. I recognized the skinned frames of at least a dozen lambs. Then, in a crumpled pile, I uncovered his papers from Santiago de Compostela. Including a copy of the inscription left by the messenger! However, what the text said was still indecipherable to me. And all the comments from Lucus were in Portuguese.

Stepping into the center of that space with its low ceiling, I found a pile of stone slabs that formed a wide altar. On the altar sat large pieces of burnt meat.

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But some of the meat was still moist. Whatever Lucus had been doing down here, it had been still going on until very recently. Sweeping the flashlight's beam around, I saw that there were hundreds of bowls and jars spread about the edge of a big circular area. He had been conducting a ritual here, but nothing like the one I had assisted him with. This was far more elaborate. The further I crept into the distance, the more animal carcasses I found. He wasn't eating them to survive, these were sacrifices! But for what? Had the messenger at Santiago left details for the next step in the ceremony? Or was this operation something that Hailey had convinced him to fixate upon? If she knew how willing he was at finding a direct route to the godhead, then these two really would have made quite the pair.

Once again, I stopped where I was, feeling somewhat jealous that I hadn't been involved. But who was I? Lucus was a smart son of a bitch with a lifetime of knowledge and expertise in multiple languages. While Hailey possessed a vast wealth of resources and an unscrupulous ambition, not to mention her so-called skills in theurgy. I was a troglodyte in comparison.

So, I closed the heavy door, sat on the floor in front of the altar, and then switched off the flashlight. It was numbingly quiet though altogether rather familiar. In that damp silence, I closed my eyes.

Nothing appeared. Nothing spoke up. Nothing happened. I didn't even find myself in the realm of death and sin. After a time, I didn't actually mind the stench. Memories of the ritual that Lucus had performed in Santiago then came to me: the litany, his repentance, and the way in which he cast himself prostrate upon the ground. Thinking of Ryan's prayer said aloud this morning it reminded me of the word made flesh. As disgusted as I was, I figured fuck it, and raised my voice. I found it utterly nauseating as I asked forgiveness while belittling my unworthy existence. However, as I repeated it over and over, I slowly saw the truth in what I was saying. I was a worthless piece of shit, a fucking idiot, and a reckless fool speaking as humbly as an arrogant animal could toward whatever concept of God that my inferior mind could model. Unlike the oration I had desecrated at Loch Ness years ago, this was not meant for any such provocations. I had a singular goal at my core and if it required this form of humiliation, then so be it. Ultimately, I wanted to know that which had eluded and yet fascinated me: what power controlled devils?

"I am nothing but a weak sinner full of immorality having trespassed through every inch of my ungrateful life. Absolve my untold transgressions so that I may commune unabashed with the holiest of messengers upon high."

Over and over innumerable times I stressed this statement until my

voice began to rasp. But nothing came to me. Of course not. One moment of entreating absolution was a drop in the bucket from a lifetime of irreverence. Why would anything divine speak to me if even the damned wouldn't.

Slowly standing, I stretched my back after hours of sitting in the dark. However, I stopped where I was. There wasn't anywhere I needed to be. This was as good a place to bide my time as any. What was outside but the tedious world of melodramatic human relationships that were of no interest to me.

And then I heard a faint distant ringing. A phone. It could have been a million miles away, though the twanging metal somehow pierced the cracks in the ruptured door. It was an omen. A reminder that there was nothing down here for me but a waste of my time.

The phone was sitting on a table in the big entrance. When I picked up the receiver, I looked at my wristwatch. It was 11pm.

"You should run," Hailey softly whispered into my ear. "Cromack's daughter just died, and now who do you think he blames?"

"Why not you?"

"He's in love with me, that's why. And that's why he'll carve you up like Abraham would his own son."

CLICK.

No sooner than I put down the receiver than I heard a THUD against the front door! The handle shook in a frenzy before a shotgun blast BOOMED!

A chunk of the wooden door slid across the entrance as I backed away. My hatred for that fucking girl swelled in my veins as more gunshots shattered the door! I wouldn't die by the hands of some smitten old yes-man. Not before I had a chance to strangle Hailey to death! So, I turned and ran. Ran and burst into the kitchen. Ran out the back door and into that howling storm. Ran into the woods that were now a concentrated black. Switching on the flashlight only once I crossed the lawn – WHACK!

I slammed straight into a tree trunk! With my chest throbbing, the air was knocked out of my lungs as I fell. By the time I crawled toward the flashlight, I saw that it lit up Cromack's stalking approach. He came with a hunting rifle in hand and scowling condemnation toward my disabled predicament. With the gales raging throughout the trees, I watched the long barrel of his rifle aim straight at my face. He had me. Fair enough. But he didn't fire. Instead, he smashed the butt of his weapon into my back! His boot then shoved me over and pressed down on my throat. Clinging to this foot while coughing and trying to catch a breath, I glimpsed Cromack weep as only a father who'd just lost his long-suffering daughter could. That was when he gasped and his eyes

## Interfering With Divinities

changed, “She’s all I’ve got now!”

Hailey was right. He saw her as a lover.

A stomp to my guts then emptied my last reserves of oxygen! I was quickly dragged back to the lawn where Cromack stripped my jacket and shirt. Pausing at the sight of my tattooed back, he then beat me so hard that my arms were bludgeoned and useless. He produced a length of rope from somewhere and tied it around my right ankle. In another moment, I was hoisted off the sodden grass upside-down. He struck me again with the butt of his rifle where I hung by one foot, and then tied my wrists behind my back and directly to my loose left foot.

I was powerless and stricken. There, I swung in the frigid night to suffer the blinding cramps of surging pain as the rain began pouring once again. But who gives a fuck! Shake it off!

The sound of cracking branches below me opened my eyes. Cromack had returned from the mansion with a canister of petrol and was now dragging discarded wood for a pyre! The old man never stopped weeping as he built up the bonfire until it scratched at my forehead. I never did regain the full use of my lungs as I hung there shivering.

“You brought ruin upon your own!” Cromack cried out at last. “It is done! Go to thy appointed place!”

“You’re no Elijah!” I hissed with contempt, at my would-be executioner. “You can no more kill me than the prophets of Baal could!”

Cromack went rigid for a long moment. He then slowly picking up the canister and pouring petrol all over the pile of branches. Finally, he had found his dignity and no longer shed a tear. The smell of petrol stung my nostrils. Once the canister was empty, Cromack immediately threw a pack of burning matches on the pyre – but to no effect! The deluge had soaked through everything, immediately diluting the petrol and extinguishing the matches. Glaring back at that gaunt old man, I remained unimpressed. So, he raised his rifle as the wind lashed at us both. When suddenly he spun and yelled out, “Get back! Stay away! Stay Back!”

Despite the rain in my eyes, I could see that there was a light on in the mansion and three figures were approaching. A fourth individual then stepped out of the woods and moved up behind Cromack. There, the stranger spoke into Cromack’s ear. He cried out in complete terror and stumbled away screaming hysterically, before ramming the barrel under his own chin and blowing his fucking brains out! BOOM!

This fourth man was close enough for me to recognize. He was the young



Arab in robes that I'd seen many times in my visions. The wind gradually sent me twisting away and I lost sight of the other arrivals. Then I abruptly crashed down into those sharp branches and tumbled onto the lawn. My aching body curled up on its side with my hands still bound behind. Trembling there, I saw those three men surround me as they stared down at my bruised exhaustion. It was the three holy men that I had gifted with cursed objects!

"Even an infidel can recant in moments of contrition," one of those stern men declared. "If only for a brief time of misgivings."

As soon as they untied my restraints, I sat up but never saw any of them again. Were they apparitions or what the fuck was going on? Straining as I got to my knees, I reached for the flashlight and my clothes. Fuck this shit! Walk it off!

Frozen to the core, I went straight to the one place I knew of: Hailey's bedroom. Stumbling along that upper floor corridor, I eventually ripped off my wet shoes and pants before crawling into that massive bed. The blankets were thick, heavy, and encapsulating. I passed out in moments as my shivering faded away.

However, it wasn't very long before I was awoken by THUDS! Followed by RATTLING, THUMPS, and BANGS! Running footsteps and fists on walls echoed throughout the dark! Did I see anything? No. Chickenshit poltergeist could go fuck themselves! I slept through living devils butchering one another upon my very fucking bed sheets! And yet these unseen riots persisted all throughout the night. At some point the windows were flung wide open and the storm blew inside. The blankets, however, were more than enough to shield the tempest and I pulled the massive pillows around my back as an extra layer of protection. Groans and shrill voices of whatever entities tormented this estate eventually disappeared as I focused on the lulling battle among the trees. There was nothing to linger on. Nothing that needed contemplation tonight. But nothing to look forward to either. Lucus was in the Italian's hands now. Hailey would never return this weekend. And Cromack was fucking dead. All I had right now was myself. The pain in my leg throbbed worse than my tender ribs, but it really wasn't anything as bad as that month of running 5km every day. It's only fucking pain after all! Sleep it off, motherfucker! Sleep it off!

SATURDAY 4<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022

## Interfering With Divinities

After an absolutely s hit sleep, the light of day crept between those heavy drapes and woke me at dawn. The storm had blown itself out during the small hours, but the overcast sky was still as bleak. Slowly glancing around that large bedroom, my bloodshot eyes focused on a huge painting on the wall across from the foot of the bed. It was a macabre image of the stocky twin towers of that exact same cathedral from one of my visions with Hailey. Sitting up, I stared at that hauntingly life-like artwork where a scarlet sunset was silhouetting the spires of the third central tower. It was then that I noticed that my jacket sat pressed against the wall below the painting. Grabbing it, I pulled out the ivory idol and watched as it gently slid across my palm. It was pulling toward the painting. Toward the south.

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I got back to the guesthouse by 9am and had a long hot shower. My whole torso was streaked with bruises and scratch marks, but nothing was broken.

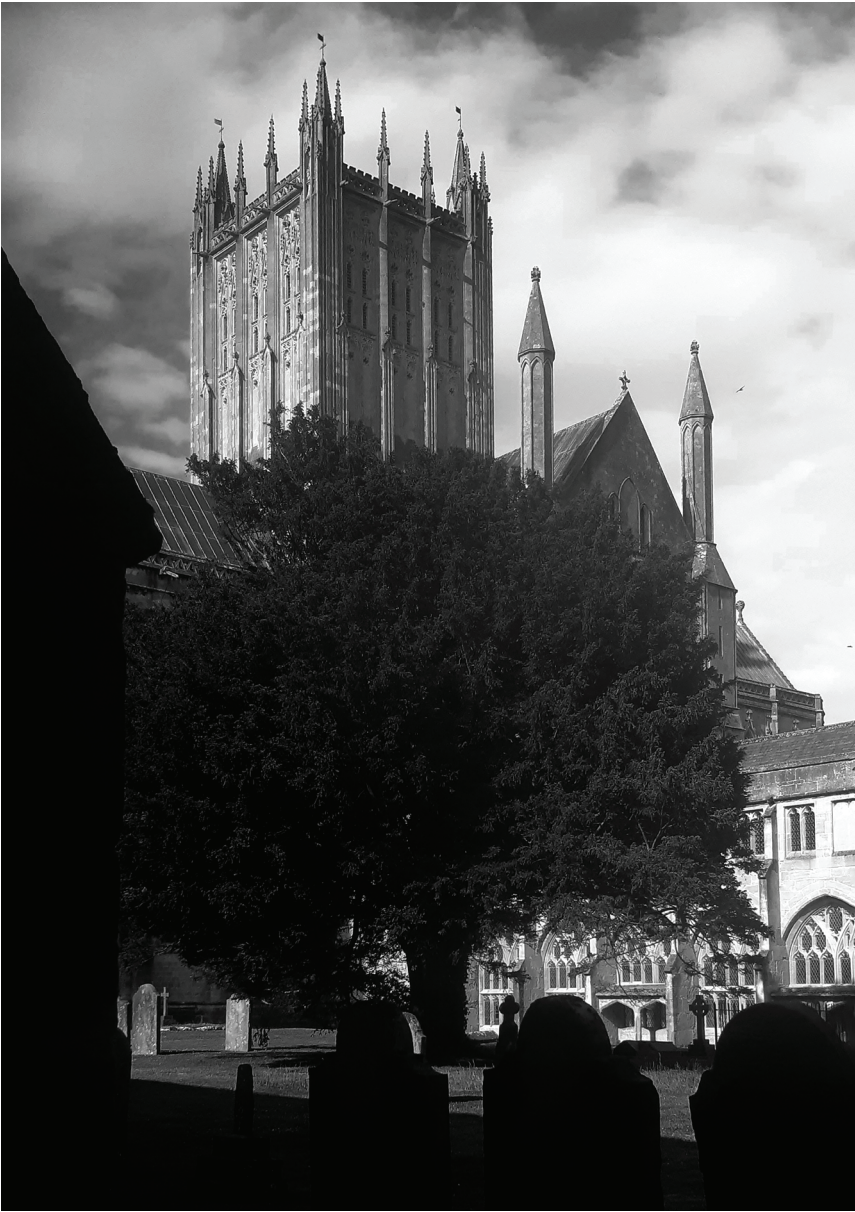
Walking down the street past the church, I felt like telling Ryan that I knew exactly what I had difficulty with. I, instead, listened to Sneaker Pimps, *So Far Gone*, and caught a bus into the city center. Coffee was all I truly needed. I started putting some serious thought into what had happened last night with those four unexpected men. But the multitude of unresolved questions that branched from the inquiry only annoyed me. Like so much of life, last night could go fuck itself!

While ordering a latte to go, I stared at a series of photos on the wall. One was of a picturesque bridge. I asked the kid at the counter where it was, but he just shrugged. So, I pulled out my phone and showed him the photo that I had taken of the painting in Hailey's bedroom. He still had no idea. Sipping on my coffee, I examined the series of pictures on the wall, and then found that the locations were actually written on a list next to the last photo.

The Palladian Bridge was just a 30-minute stroll south of Bath in the next valley. Soon, the old lady at the entrance to the park welcomed me with a pamphlet from the National Trust. So, I tried my luck with her. She immediately recognized the cathedral. It was in Wells. Just an hour's drive south.

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Arriving in England's smallest city at 4:30pm, I stepped out of the double-decker and found a rather charming medieval town. Small gabled



## Interfering With Divinities

roofs surrounded an imposing gothic cathedral that was much larger than the one in Bath. However, as I approached, the open field in front of the cathedral was not where I had stood during my vision. There should have been more trees surrounding an enclosed space with walls on three sides. However, the idol in my pocket was now vibrating and pulling toward that complex of buildings, so inside I went.

There was a cloister on the south side surrounding an internal graveyard and a large tree, but this too wasn't what I had seen. And still the idol pulled further east. Heading into that grand nave, I wandered down the empty cathedral. At the transepts, a boy dressed in precentor robes asked if I was there for the service.

At 5:15pm, a choir filed in and performed the Evensong. The whole time the idol continued pulling inside my jacket but now in a southerly direction. That was when I eyed an Indian girl sitting on the other side of the choir. She stared back at me, so I looked away and found a leaflet next to the hymns. According to its map of the compound, the Bishop's Palace was situated south and encircled by a moat. However, the layout also indicated that there was an area with walls on three sides just outside where I sat.

The choir finished at 6pm and the modest gathering slowly drifted out into the clear evening air. I was about to walk around the northside of the cathedral as it was the most direct route according to the leaflet, but then I spotted that Indian girl heading in that direction. Turning, I took the long way which required that I looped around the entire fortifications of the Bishop's Palace.

The moat was peaceful below those long battlements and there was no one else around as I wandered southward. I was curious as to what was buried in the enclosure, but again, I didn't see how it was connected to Hailey – when, who did I see come walking around the far side of the moat but the devil herself!

The outstretched branches of the big trees hung above us as Hailey approached with her head hung low. Her brown 1950's plaid dress, heels, and knee-high socks matched her long hazel locks. Looking as stylish as ever, she eventually raised her gaze just a few feet from where I stood in her path. Behind her thin gold-framed glasses, her adorable eyes darted with instant dismay. She lifted the heavy copy of *Sein Und Zeit*, by Martin Heidegger, protectively in front of her chest but didn't take a single step backward.

“Hey, kid,” I said in a hushed tone.

Shaking her head sadly, she replied, “You don't approve of my methods.”

“After seeing the state of Lucus, I totally approve.”

“He chose to stay.”

Taking a deep breath, I glanced aside before turning. I gestured for her to continue, and we slowly walked back toward the cathedral.

“What became of Cromack?” Hailey asked quietly.

“He’s dead.”

“Like those in Salzburg?”

“The fuck did you think would happen after following me across the continent like that?! Fucking kids should stay out of the kitchen if they don’t want to get blood on their hands!”

“I don’t mean those three. What did you do to the four spirits that brought us all together?”

“That what you call them?”

“How are you so intimate with such beings?”

“They’re fucking animals, that’s all they are.”

“In contrast to what?”

“Your three buddies seemed like they were in way over their heads. Didn’t last five minutes after you passed out. Those seizures happen often?”

“I’m going to die from it. But I’m more scared that one day I’ll never wake up and find myself trap in there. How long have you been consorting with these spirits?”

“Trapped?”

“When did you start? Or was it them that began communicating?”

“You’ve been doing more than having a little chit chat with these things, yourself.”

“Do you think I wanted to be forced upon? They attacked me every single night after they first appeared. Every time they’d take me no matter where or who I was with. They humiliated me every day. Every day until you stopped them.”

“The fuck were you planning for in Salzburg?”

“Who even cares anymore. They’re all dead, aren’t they.”

“You’re looking real heartbroken, there.”

“They weren’t my friends!”

“And neither am I! You’re no clairvoyant! Just another worthless sack of fucking meat!”

“I never said I was. You’re the one who found the passage. You saw it in that small clearing. You’re the one who brings out these things. But why did you destroy our only link to what we’ve been looking for all this time?”

## Interfering With Divinities

“The fuck are you talking about?”

“Why can’t you admit it? Why are you so self-destructive? Ask yourself for once, why even attempt communication if you yourself won’t talk?”

“Practice your pet psychology on some other gullible dumbfuck that you like surrounding yourself with!”

“I don’t practice anything like that.”

“Good! You definitely shouldn’t practice anything you preach. Or chances are, you’ll end up just like Cromack’s kid. Dead and fucked!”

“That’s why I need you.”

“You don’t need anyone. You just want their sniveling devotion.”

“What was Jesus without Paul?”

“Jesus Christ! Glad to see you’re setting your goals high!”

“You’ll carry on once I’m gone. Continuing the work after I’ve passed.”

I stopped in the middle of an empty street and watched as that small girl walked ahead before I spoke up, “You can talk with them?”

“Excuse me?”

“You can actually understand them, right?”

“As can you.”

“What did you see in the clearing?”

“A place of luminary teachings.”

“And what is that?! Spell it out to me!”

Hailey scowled at me with her puppy dog eyes. “The hidden place. Where Samyaza dwells. The great Dudael.”

“When the fuck was I ever looking for that?!”

“It’s all we’ve ever searched for.”

“Fucking kids!” I hated these assumptions that we made about each other based on our own agenda-basis.

“In order to not only survive, but thrive, we must learn from those that have made hell their home.”

I glared down into Hailey for a while and then asked, “And you think that’s where I belong?”

“Not at all! I alone have earned the right to breach the sacred veil. To plumb the depth of its celestial wisdom. That burden is mine to bare.”

As I stood looking into her, I wondered if I had been wrong about this kid the whole time. She was more than just a pretty face. If she could in fact talk directly to devils, then she could resolve all my unanswered suppositions. But that then begged the question, could I trust the translator?

“There’s only so much divine gnosis gained through the epistemology of

this world,” Hailey softly said, as we continued strolling through that quaint little town. “Pythagoras’ doctrine on the transmigration of souls, and even Dionysian’s three-fold path of purgation, illumination, and union, simply aren’t enough. Reading, *Learn All Things*, by Parmenides isn’t a goal unto itself. Lucus knows this. His dedication to the Poimandres and the nous is admirable. But he saw how your presence in his life was, as he put it, too corrupting with your underlying mens rea. That’s where he and I disagree. I find your shameless nature to be of far more value than those shielding themselves with moral limitations and ethical contradictions. Lucus fears the very possibility that hell exists. You simply know it does. We both do. But the idea is much more than Lucus can tolerate investigating. He’s always skewed by his catholic blinders and so he constantly distorts the results of our experiments. He still believes that a heavenly kingdom is the prime mover, when there’s negligible evidence in support of any such theory.”

“How do you know he’s wrong?”

“Seriously? When was the last time you spoke with the King of Kings?”

I stared down the narrow street and listened.

“Precisely. The idea of there being a personal god is the thinking of the grossly inane.”

“That’s why you stayed quiet during the conversation in Salzburg.”

“I despise my generation. Infantilized adults crying themselves raw every single day over the general neurosis of our times. They justify their tantrums by deeming their immaturity as emotional intelligence. Then the next moment they’re giggling like absolute embarrassments over moronic distractions like the blathering cretins they accuse others of behaving as.”

“Sounds like you keep some shit company.”

“I needed them as a base resource. Nothing more.”

“Like Cromack? And Lucus? And now I get that prestigious fucking honor?! All for what? Looking for some fictitious place lost in the fucking mountains of hell? But what good is finding it if you’re dead soon anyway?”

“That’s precisely why I need to find it before it’s too late. And thanks to you for sending Lucus in my direction, I’ve made leaps and bounds in my progress. Your role in these events is far more important than I could ever hope to convey. I could never possibly thank you enough!”

“For what?!”

“You found me there! You freed me from those four! And you’ve found the very entrance itself! Our connection is like nothing I’ve ever know.”

“We have no connection! I don’t even know who the fuck you are!”



## Interfering With Divinities

Hailey stopped and stared at the pavement again before quoting Nietzsche, *“The devotion of the greatest is to encounter risk and danger and play the dice for death.”*

I turned away and walked in a slow circle, clenching my jaw impatiently.

“We are kin to Saint Fursey.”

“The fuck is that?”

“One who suffered intrusive visions as we both suffer.”

I stepped right up in front of that little girl and waited menacingly.

“You’ve seen so much more than I have. I get easily lost in that place. But I’ve seen you watching me. I know that I’ll never speak the natural language as fluently as yourself. Though, with what I have allotted, I’ll prove my emphatic resolve. One day, you’ll tell my story in Adamic. The teacher becomes my disciple and spreads the Loagaeth.”

“Oh, the utter fucking hypocrisy of a nihilist with her heroic attitude of fucking entitlement! Kid, I’m not the light nor the way. Find another fucking teacher! I speak for none but myself!”

“And yet you’re the one who keeps finding me.”

“What was the first thing you ever said to me?” I asked skeptically.

Hailey took a moment. “Those four. They had come for me one night. I ran into the cold and found myself in a great hall. There were many other corridors leading away. It was so cold there. I was completely disorientated. And then I saw you. You and some other pale creature. You seemed so at home there. But I ran once you saw me. I didn’t know where I was or how I’d gotten there. So, I asked you. I asked you where I was.”

Gently placing my hands on both of Hailey’s shoulders, I squeezed. If just for my own benefit, so that I knew that she was actually standing in front of me. “Where did you think we were?”

“The mythopoeic imagination. Where Jung communicated with the unconscious,” she stated, in a clinical assessment. “How are your dreams?”

“I get fucking murdered every fucking night in my worthless fucking dreams! Nightmares are the norm and mean less than fucking nothing to me! Grow the fuck up! And fuck Jung!”

“Why did you come looking for me, then? Are you going to appeal to my better angels and persuade me to stop?”

“I came here for Lucas! I don’t know a thing about you! And why the fuck should I even give a shit?! Who the fuck are you to me? You’re just another psychotic out-patient clearly deluded by your chronic audio/visual hallucinations brought on by some form of schizophrenia. What exactly are



you dying from? A brain tumor? Cancer? Some degenerative genetic disease? It makes sense why you told Cromack not to trust doctors, as they've clearly left you for dead. So, fuck it. Why not keep telling yourself that you've got some cosmic strategy in which to outsmart your definitive case of impending doom!"

Hailey stared at the ground.

"Fucking people like you claiming to heal cripples with a power harnessed by demons forced into servitude is complete fucking insanity! Or else why haven't you used the fucking knowledge gained from your holy guardian angel to purge yourself of all this trivial weakness and human ignorance by now?! Why the fuck are you still looking so fucking sorry for yourself if you are in fact this great big miracle worker?! Raise the fucking dead, already! Go find Cromack and his kid and bring them both back into this bullshit mortal coil of ours! Just don't forget to rematerialize his fucking face after he shot half of it off last night! But I'm sure that's no problem for a genius soothsayer such as yourself. Fuck, I'm amazed you haven't struck me down for even speaking shit about you! If the power of Christ compels you, then cast the first stone and cast me out with the infinite devils that inhabit my every blasphemous fucking breath!"

"Why haven't you?"

"Because they don't speak English! They're fucking animals!"

"Why are you testing me?"

"I'd have to first respect you to test you!"

"I'd respect myself if I were respectable," Hailey whispered. "But I know I'm not."

I stopped myself for a moment and examined this little girl. "If you're half my age but twice as smart, then why the fuck haven't you worked out these fundamental truths?! What's your fucking excuse?! Inexperience?! Bullshit! You're no innocent fucking child! Just look at those jaded fucking eyes of yours! You know exactly how cruel and fucking ruthless this pigsty of a world can be! You've been selling me a pack of fucking lies dressed up as rationalizations, and I ain't fucking buying your shit!"

"See. Like Goebbels, you'll be the mighty voice of a great message," Hailey murmured. "All masters need a spokesman."

"No. No one listens to me. Never have and no one ever will."

"You may not see the influence you wield but like a father your reach is subtle yet profound."

"Yeah, sure. Just jerk off the ego a little more and I'll cum running after

## Interfering With Divinities

you.”

“Look at how you speak. Your gift is something visceral that I don’t possess. I have the Sepher Raziel to pass on and you will become my mouthpiece.”

“Then you’ve already failed.”

“You came here looking for me! That’s what you wanted! That’s the only reason you came! Your motive is no different to everyone else! You’re here for me! Saying anything else is self-deception! So, please! Stop this!”

“That’s some grade A stalker-transference shit, right there!”

“We share a mutually assured compulsion. How many times have you come to me at night?”

“Yeah, and how many times have you?”

“More than you’ll ever know.”

“Spoken like a true sophomoric child. Acting as if your existence, actions, and thoughts actually fucking matter. What are you but a strip of bacon? Pig is pig. Your skin may be delicious but so is every other fucking ham sandwich. You’re a fucking distraction! I eat cunts like you for breakfast and forget the taste of your ass by lunch!”

Hailey looked away and continued walking.

“Whatever wisdom you think you know or hope to ever gain, it’ll still never part the sky and bring a hailstorm of gods to their fucking knees before you, me, or any fucking idiot! NOTHING YOU WILL EVER FUCKING LEARN WILL STAND UP TO THE IMPOSSIBLE EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR EVER-EXPANDING GREED!” I yelled, walking away from her. “NO REVELATION WILL EVER BE ENOUGH!”

“No human revelation,” Hailey said, looking back at me. “And certainly not spoken by the word of man.”

I gradually stopped and snarled, “Spoken by whom, then?”

“They told you in Salzburg,” Hailey said, as we stood at a distance.

I remembered Beatles-Hair-Boy had tried to recall an encounter that had meant little to me at the time.

“I hated my hopelessness! I had no reason to wish for anything better for anyone ever! I hated my futility even more than my own sheltered reality! With every fiber of my being, I swore I’d do absolutely any act necessary to free myself of this debilitating ailment. And it was during one particularly strenuous treatment that they heard me. They came to me. They found me there in my bed at the clinic. Those three. They came with a proposition.”

Hailey and I had eventually resumed walking at a snail’s pace through the

quaint streets with the evening light fading.

“They stood over me. Offered a cure. At a price. As they needed a fourth member. Four of us to stand up to those four spirits. I welcomed them unreservedly!” Hailey went quiet for a time, her eyes darting across the ground. “I had no idea how horrid those things would treat us. It was stupid of me. But I was desperate. And as my condition improved, I reminded myself of where I’d come from. But, I had in fact, traded one pain for another. Each time those four came, I knew it was still better than being bedridden for longer and longer periods. Sometimes they would abuse all of us together. Mostly, though, I was violated by myself. All of them concentrating on me. I asked the others, but none of them admitted being singled out as I had been. However, they seemed to think of it as a bonding experience. Like our shared rape brought us closer to one another. The more disgusting the acts that were committed upon us, the more I grew to believe that we would all die at their hands. But whenever they went too far, I’d just wake up alone sometime later. Just like in Salzburg. Except, no one else came back that time. They were all gone. Including you. Because of you! You took them! All of them! Despite what they had planned.”

“And what exactly was that?”

“I wanted more than to merely exist in constant agony. I wanted what they promised me. I just wanted it to end. They too were all diagnosed with incurable ailments. Liver, kidney, and pancreas conditions. We were all in it together. Yet I saw something different. You heard them describe that bright light. But I never saw that! I saw those four spirits for what they were. Savage and grotesque! I didn’t understand why the others agreed on the same vision of their abusers. I didn’t understand why I saw something so horrendous! I thought I was being punished. That I deserved it. Yet still I hoped that if I went through enough penance then I’d see what the others did. But no. I only ever saw what I came to realized was their true form. It was the others that were being deceived!”

I listened though her story didn’t add up.

“The other three had, as commanded, each taken the life of someone else in order to prove themselves. It was, in a sense, a way of symbolically killing their ailments. They said I needed to pick a sacrifice. If I wanted to complete the initiation, it had to be someone of value.”

“Me?”

“Yes.”

“How was I of any fucking value to you?!”

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“What did you do to them?”

“You had already collapsed by the time I arrived.”

“We had misjudged the situation.”

“If those four devils could cure you, then why’d they let you have a seizure right at the moment when you were going to give them exactly what they wanted?”

“How’d you even find our room? We were meant to surprise you. We’d tried in Ghent and Strasbourg, but you were always moving. Why? What were you doing on your travels?”

“How have you been tracking me all this time?”

“What was your relationship with those four spirits?”

“Did they speak directly to you? Or were you just doing whatever the other three kids told you. Because, you know, you don’t seem like the good soldier type just following orders.”

“You know precisely how they communicate.”

“In English?” I smiled facetiously.

“You sent those four after us! It was you all along who was luring us into your trap! You were in control of them the entire time!” Hailey stated calmly, stepping up to one of the cozy buildings. Unlocking the door, she walked inside without hesitation and led me upstairs to the second floor. I watched her hips sway under her knee-length retro dress as she climbed the steps.

“I don’t believe a fucking word you’re saying! You were the one using those three kids! And the four devils found you because of what you’ve been in contact with your entire life! Ever since St. Andrews!”

“What specifically have I been in contact with?” Hailey asked cautiously, as she slowly turned away from me. There she stood in that small bedroom facing the gothic windows. The laptop with the sticker from the University of Cambridge on the desk next to her.

“You know what’s in the river, don’t you? In the river below the terraces.”

“No! No! No!” Hailey gasped, throwing herself back against the wall!

And it all went black!

The deep silence of that hidden dungeon came over me like a smothering incredulity as I winced at finding myself there once again. I had pushed Hailey too far and struck a nerve. Stumbling blindly in circles, I knew that there was no escaping this imprisonment, so I sat down. Hailey would have gotten away by the time this temporary spell wore off. Long gone with any means of finding her. I had my chance to seize her by the throat and I’d missed it. She was a cunning little piece of meat, which made her pristine flesh even

more attractive. Though, I would never get a taste of her now. That time had passed. Here I was again, stuck in a dead-end. Therefore, I focused on where I was: a cell. Solitary confinement made tangible. The anti-shekhinah. Boiling with hatred, I repeated my oration, but now desecrated.

“I am nothing but a weak sinner full of immorality having trespassed through every inch of my ungrateful fucking life! Condone my untold transgressions so that I may commune unabashed with the lowest of fucking messengers within the deep!”

Over and over and over, I sneered this declaration. Louder and louder and louder, until my echoing voice yelled back at me!

A golden light slowly rose above my head during my time there. My eyes opened as I continued with my oration again and again and again. This unnatural glow slowly revealed that I was sitting in the crypt below Hailey’s mansion. However, instead of Lucus, I saw that young Arab in robes was seated in front of me. His wooden staff rested on his lap while his gentle eyes stared back at my determination. The flickering light above my head shimmered on his wet pupils. Those glistening highlights in his eyes instantly sparked the memory of my DMT experience. This time, however, I lunged forward, grabbing the Arab as I demanded, “WHAT POWER CONTROLS DEVILS?!”

The Arab just sat there with no reaction as I shook him furiously. I was about to repeat myself – when his hands suddenly clamped upon my skull! The pressure was brutal! Despite my thrashing resistance, he pulled me close, all the while staring into my eyes. He then pressed his open mouth to mine. There, he blew air straight down my throat. My ribs ached from their previous injuries. So much air filled my lungs that I thought I might split open!

The moment he released me, a single word spoke forth from my own overwhelmed voice that wasn’t even mine, “Necessity!”

Coughing as I fell backward, I tried balancing myself. I soon discovered, however, that I was once again alone in that hidden dungeon. The golden glow had now shifted to a gruesome red tone. And then a great rumbling came up through the stone floor. Crawling to the stairwell, I hurried downward. The red flame above my head lighting the hidden corners for the first time.

Upon reaching the bottom steps, I was presented with a view to the hell of medieval parables. For the clouds had disappeared, exposing an infernal landscape miles below. A primordial world of volcanic upheavals and tectonic growing pains. There was no end to the mountains that stretched away below and no edge to this ceiling. All I saw was a blackened panorama

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of two boundless planes. This place that burned was being shattered apart by the flames of giant jinn that waged war with their own devices.

So, I let go. And fell. Dropping into the sweltering ether, the illusion of my mere existence compelled my descent. Though, I suddenly thought of when Arpi had written that God was gravity holding us down. But then, somewhere during my freefall everything slowed. Gradually a reverse gravity outweighed me. I withdrew and fell back toward the ceiling, until I found myself coming to an equilibrium in midair. Scanning where I had dropped from, I saw that it too burned. I was encapsulated in the center of an enormous hollow space. An inverted sun. Red and gold flares of writhing destruction whipped toward me from every angle. Yet I was so far removed that a cold indifference seeped into my separation from all that illumination. I was at once the focal point and the blind spot of this great unholy sphere.

There, I became as a serpent. Black and coiling. Without head nor tail.

A pale mist then began forming in the air before me. It slid on strange surfaces that resembled crystals. Though none of it was a solid. The vague figure that appeared within the swirling gas slowly raised a hand. A transparent hand with its palm toward me as if gesturing for me to stop.

I immediately lurched forward and wrapped my black form around that glass-ape's throat – and fucking crushed it!

Sitting up, I found myself alone in Hailey's small apartment. It was dark outside. Now 11pm. I had been gone for hours. Looking at my hands, I could still feel murder running through my veins, but all I could do was clench them. I gradually regained my orientation and rose to my feet. While leaning against one of the walls, I noticed that it was completely covered with dozens of copies of the same scene captured in paintings, engravings, and drawings: the dragon devouring the companions of Cadmus. Hailey seemed rather fixated on this one particular myth. Though, as I felt the vibrating in my jacket pocket, I recalled my vision of the cathedral and what might lie buried beneath. After all, why did she have an apartment here of all places? She lived in Bath and must have studied in Cambridge, so what the fuck was so special about this tiny spot on the map? Pulling out the idol in the dim light, I stared at it. For the ivory carving itself depicted more than just those four devils.

Backing out of the bedroom, I ran downstairs and sprinted all the way across that sleeping township to the massive cathedral. The streets were deserted as I moved along the northern walls and around the apse, only to run up against a tall iron gate. With buttresses to my right and looming trees to

my left, I caught my breath in the dark. I then heard the gasps of that little girl coming from the enclosure beyond.

Jumping down on the other side of the gate, I saw Hailey cry out as she stumbled away from her work on the eastside of this graveyard.

“Not as easy as it looks,” I said, slowly approaching the hole that Hailey had attempted digging.

“Where did you go?!” she cried out. “You vanished right in front of me! You just disappeared! How’s that possible! Teach me! There’s so much more I need to learn!”

With the small iron rod in my fist, I punched that fucking meat right in her pretty fucking mouth! She collapsed harder than any of her seizures could have knocked her down.

“What?!” she whimpered, crawling away through a meek pile of dirt. “Stop! I have too much to finish!”

In the shallow pit that Hailey had dug below the tree, I saw something barely exposed to that indigo night. It was the smooth surface of bone. A large span of something that had to be a skull. The buried head of an animal much bigger than anything indigenous to this island.

“Is this what you did to the others in Salzburg?!” Hailey pleaded, as she wiped the blood from her lip. “You made them vanish into thin air! Just gone from existence!”

“What’s down there?”

“No! It’s mine!”

“Is it?!”

Sitting still, Hailey looked shy as she whispered, “You have no idea. No idea how long it took me.”

“Of all the secrets you’ve kept hidden, how many of them have given a fuck about you?!”

“You should know. You speak their names.”

“Fuck their names!”

“Why do you say such illiterate things?! You know these words have power! You understand Thomas Aquinas and what Charles Sanders Peirce said about the three-part model of signs! The representamen, the object, and the interpretant! These human flaws hold no direct relationship between the signifier and the signified! Their names are not of human speech but the word of God himself! The divine language! That which embodies all things! You must teach it to me! I must know it fluently if we’re ever to fully gain access to the Dudael!”

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I glared down at this kid as she gradually crawled to her feet in that blackened enclosure.

“The holy semiotic of genesis, I’ve yet to learn it. You have to teach me! I need to learn! Then, together we can speak the celestial word directly to all those in our way! The task of interpreting the signs isn’t enough! I need the clarity of the sublime dialect! I can’t stand this voice we use in this fucking place! I hate this human tongue riddled with selective misconceptions! These very words we speak hold no truth! The ophites knew this! They valued the binding of chaos with control!”

“The belief in necessity.”

“It’s the only way we can keep the beasts in their place! You and I understand the ancients! Why they buried them in holy sites! Why they came to us! Why they chose you! And why they need me!”

“To rape you!”

“I wanted it!” Hailey stated defiantly, finding her voice as she stood in front of me.

“The four of them came to you because you put that devil in the river, didn’t you!”

“No!”

“Didn’t you!”

“No!” Hailey frowned with frustration. “I had nothing to do with that!”

“And nothing to do with this?” I hissed, indicating toward the huge skull in the ground.

“That’s mine!”

“I don’t think it wants to stay buried.”

“No!”

“Or else I wouldn’t even be here!”

“No! No, it’s mine! It has nothing to do with you, or the four you stole from me!”

“Stole?!”

“You had no right taking what was mine! Not yours! Mine! They were all mine!”

“Yours?!”

“And I want them back! Give me what’s mine! I want what you owe me!”

“Ah, the things that I owe.”

“Give them back!”

“Kid, I had no intention of ever keeping them locked up. Not after I already set them free.”



“You what?!”

“What happened at St. Andrews?”

“You’ve already freed them before? From what? From me?”

“From you?! How could you control them if you don’t even speak their fucking language?!”

“They chose me! They need me! They’re mine!”

“Then where the fuck are they?!”

“They’re not yours to toy with!”

“And yet you’ve toyed with everyone you’ve ever met.”

“Don’t talk to me about the irrelevant! Near-sighted imbeciles that killed themselves for nothing but a few pleasures of the flesh! Fodder with no control over their own minds, they couldn’t organize a single Adamic thought. They were the ones you were meant to slaughter for me in Salzburg!”

“In order to get those four off your back?! And yet you still thought you were in charge of them?!”

“Why are you being like this?!”

“You obeyed them, and then let them rape you even while you were in hospital! What the fuck did you get out of this deal?! They didn’t even fucking heal you!”

“They never raped me! I’d never allow such a thing! They’re mindless chattel crawling in the mud below the one that he rides upon!”

“The one that he rides upon? You mean that?”

Hailey’s enraged state suddenly withdrew as she backed away from the hole in the ground. “They’re mine. All mine. You can’t take them away from me. Not again. And if they want you dead then I can’t help you anymore. You must have done something to deserve it.”

“So that’s it, you’re just another fucking custodian!”

“You still don’t approve of my methods.”

“I fucking told you, I very much approve! You’ve got guts like no one else I’ve ever met. Believe me, I’m fucking proud of you!”

Hailey’s eyes teared up as she smiled sadly, “We all get what we deserve.”

She then swung the shovel at my head – but with one hand I grabbed her feeble attempt at my murder! We both clung to that tool while scowling at one another. After all her malicious contradictory conspiring, she was still just another weak piece of fucking meat! She shook the shovel, trying to wrench it out of my left hand, but I snarled in return, “I must have done something to deserve it?! Something to deserve it?! You’re probably right!”

“I was wrong!” Hailey sneered, clinging to the shovel as she leaned her

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entire bodyweight into it. “I thought you were far more advanced. Thought that you could teach me. But you can’t, can you! You’re a false prophet and your flesh isn’t even worth fuel for the sacrificial fire!”

“You’re forgetting the very book you love quoting so much!” I replied into her sour expression, while pushing her back with one hand. “What the fuck did God say to Job’s buddies that accused him of deserving all that fucking shit?!”

*“Lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.”*

“No one deserves a fucking thing! There’s no divine justice! No karma! No fucking reason but chaos!”

“I deserve that which is mine!”

“Then you deserved being raped as well!”

“I fucking told you!” Hailey screamed, releasing the shovel and grabbing my face, “No one fucking raped me! It never happened! You don’t know a-fucking-thing!”

As her vicious claws lashed out, I tripped backward, and we both crashed into the hole in the ground! Hailey thrashed her meager fists down into me, but it was little more than piss in the wind. With a punch to her stomach, I grabbed both of her wrists in my left hand and held her tight against my body as I lay back in that shallow grave. I then replaced the iron rod with the gold coin from the river, and whispered into Hailey’s ear, “Something raped you... Was it this?”

She instantly went tense. Her head pushing back into my chest as she tried distancing herself from the coin.

“What were you and Lucus working on?”

“Let me go! I’m begging you! Please let me go!”

“What was Lucus doing in your cellar?”

“Please!”

“Why did you even need him?”

“Please! Don’t do this! Just let me go!”

“What could he do that you couldn’t?!”

“The divine can’t be deceived! They can’t be lied to! I need those of faith to conduct the direct communication! Their belief bypasses my conceit and gives the intention legitimacy!”

“That’s why you buried this in consecrated ground.”

“It’s the only way of keeping them in check!”

I thought for a moment of the Arab.

“How can you even hold it!”

“That’s a good question,” I remarked, staring at the coin as I let Hailey go. Scrambling away, she hurried into the middle of the enclosure. I then raised the ivory idol in my other hand and watched the two objects tremble as a sudden wind swept through the trees.

“Wait! Stop!” Hailey shouted, as the gusts tore at her long hair. “If you’ve learned anything you’ll stop! Don’t do it! This is too much!”

Stepping up onto the grass, I raised my two hands and their contents above the shallow hole, before letting them go. The coin shot into the ivory like they had some magnetic connection before they both smashed straight down into the buried bone!

Hailey shrieked as the sky suddenly set loose a deluge upon us! However, it was the red glow that swelled up from beyond the heights of the cathedral that drew my fascination. The English girl’s voice then cracked as she was lifted off the ground by an unseen force! And then another scream filled the air! It came from Arpi. Her apparition stood further back in the enclosure. Arching her back painfully, she was also attacked by something imperceptible. Tremors pulsed from the ground which began bulging, splitting apart, and toppling nearby gravestones. I backed toward the gate, the iron rod in one hand, the protective tablet in the other. The great red flames that now plumed above the spires filled me with intrigue. There, I witnessed an explicit desecration of the inviolable rules of necessity. Fires crept down the cathedral walls like preternatural animals and surrounded the enclosure. Their illumination highlighted the blackened figure that choked Arpi. It was the thing from the river. However, now it stood fully formed. A humanoid devil with magma-like flesh and the face of unholy wrath. It stared at me as it ripped Arpi’s head clean off and rendered her ghostly body inside out!

The entire graveyard heaved upward, then eased down! Glancing into the widening hole, I saw that the bare bone was now blackened and moving of its own accord under the topsoil. Something was resurrecting itself. Hailey screeched for mercy as those four pinkish devils were revealed by the growing hellfire. With my hands at my sides, I slowly stepped up to Hailey’s hideous tormenters as the ground broke apart behind me. She was being stripped naked by those hungry creatures. When all of a sudden, they abruptly shielded themselves with Hailey’s body. Almost as if offering her to me. Looking down, I found that the iron rod had somehow become the curved blade of a dagger.

The thunderous eruption from the ground behind me was immediately

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replaced with the deafening winds from great wings that arose! The violent neck of that giant dragon smashed aside the walls of the cathedral as flames flared higher still!

Stepping closer to Hailey's terrified eyes, I watched as the four devils clung to her naked body. Her screams were carnal and yet her expression was one of acute disappointment. Raising the iron blade, I slit her throat while whispering, "Can't talk your way out of this one."

Shrieks from her four rapists were joined by the voices of thousands of worm-bodied devils! Behind them, the falling ruins of the cathedral revealed the walls of the palace in hell. As I turned, I saw that the pelting rain had no effect on the fires that consumed this valley. Where Hailey had previously dug, was now the square pit that I had designed. Cleared of debris, it awaited the new obelisk that I found levitating high above. Those four devils then tore Hailey's body into quarters and dumped her meat into the pit – the very moment the obelisk dropped into place with an immense detonation! The impact was so abrasive, that apart from striking every devil and myself backward, it caused a chain reaction of avalanches that cascaded down into the valley! The massive quakes that followed toppled mountains and yet still the palace remained steadfast. Looking up at that towering structure, I saw tiny goat horns far above. That was until the dragon plunged down through the burning sky! Its massive weight crashed upon the palace, cracking it open to the screams of a million holy men! While watching that colossal beast tearing apart those ancient walls, a question came to me, where the fuck were those that were meant to keep these devils in their place?

# EPILOGUE

TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2022

A black SUV was parked outside several old warehouses as I drove up in the dead Russian's Bentley. The young guy with greasy hair grunted anxiously as he got out from the passenger's side and led the way up a thin staircase. Flipping up my hood, I stepped out of the car as those small metal canisters clanked in the pockets of my jacket.

I had thought of Ryan and his question earlier this evening when I had left my flat. While walking through the courtyard, I saw a new working girl having a cigarette with the lady of the house. She looked up and smiled with an uncharacteristic Mediterranean tan. Nodding at her, I continued on my way as if nothing had ever happened between us. The one thing I didn't have any difficulty with, was seeing how easily we all misunderstood each other.

It wasn't long before I was turning up Tool, *Sober*, on the stereo and slowly driving out of that industrial area. A bloody claw-hammer and the half-empty Glock now sat on the passenger's side. Glancing in the rearview, I saw the windows from Mr. Caviezel's office erupt with flames. I then disappeared into that stinking shithole that was the feeding grounds of Berlin. For I haven't done anything if I haven't been stopped.



## SOUNDTRACK

Gojira, *Pray*  
Two Feet, *Had Some Drinks*  
Rob Zombie, *The Triumph of King Freak*  
Tricky, *The Only Way*  
Lowrider, *Pipe Rider*  
Jerry Cantrell, *Castaway*  
Dope, *Fuck Tha Police*  
Not My God, *The Underneath*  
Jugurtha, *Ipermaho*  
Metallica, *King Nothing*  
Béla Bartók, *Romanian Folk Dances, Sz 56: 111. Pe-loc – Andante*  
Nine Inch Nails, *Somewhat Damaged*  
Agnes Obel, *Chord Left*  
Heather Nova, *Not Only Human*  
Bo Burnham, *All Eyes on Me*  
Tamino, *Indigo Night*  
Live, *The Distance*  
Refused, *Elektra*  
Head Like a Hole, *Wet Rubber*  
Billie Eilish, *Oxytocin*  
Filter, *Under*  
Handle, *Adagio in G Minor, The Great Sarabande*  
The Prodigy, *Voodoo People*  
Rebekka Karijord, *Prayer*  
Alice In Chains, *Dam That River*  
Whores, *I Have a Prepared Statement*  
Danny Elfman, *Choose Your Side*  
Kaleo, *No Good*  
Gracie Abrams, *Unlearn*  
Taylor Swift, *False God*  
The Verve, *Bitter Sweet Symphony*  
Rammstein, *OK*  
Horskh, *Mud in My Wheels*  
Sjellos, *Chamber of Reflections*  
Beastie Boys, *Eugene's Lament*  
Sneaker Pimps, *So Far Gone*  
Tool, *Sober*







BSJK



## ALSO BY B S J K

Short story 1:	10 Days in The Madhouse.	2011
Short story 2:	How I Ended Up in Hospital.	2012
Short story 3:	The Small Hours.	2013
Short story 4:	Loch-Fucking-Ness.	2013
Short story 5:	Natalie Portman & I.	2014
Trilogy:	Bark.	2014
Short story 6:	An Occult Obligation.	2015
Short story 7:	Relationships and Their Discontents.	2015
Short story 8:	There Is No Diagnosis.	2015
Short story 9:	Somewhere to Be Alone.	2016
Short story 10:	The Museum Island Murders.	2016
Short story 11:	Unholy Water.	2017
Short story 12:	Tempting Fatalism.	2017
Short story 13:	Laughter and Screams.	2017
Short story 14:	Pernicious Transmutation.	2017
Short story 15:	On the Shoulders of Devils.	2017
Short story 16:	To See a Man About a God.	2018
Short story 17:	Adventures of a Psychopath.	2018
Short story 18:	The Curse of Incomprehensible Causation.	2018
Short story 19:	This Pilgrim Denied.	2018
Short story 20:	Inalienable Theophany.	2019
Short story 21:	Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me.	2019
Short story 22:	Roaming Perdition.	2019
Short story 23:	Zen as Fuck.	2020
Short story 24:	Committed.	2020
Short story 25:	My Inescapable Spite.	2020

