

THE SHORT STORIES OF

**B S J K**

21 - 25

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*Published by*  
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## CONTENTS

21	OF SYCOPHANTS, MESSIAHS, PRODIGIES, AND ME	1
22	ROAMING PERDITION	49
23	ZEN AS FUCK	73
24	COMMITTED	109
25	MY INESCAPABLE SPITE	209
	Soundtrack	295



SHORT STORY 21  
2019  
OF SYCOPHANTS, MESSIAHS, PRODIGIES, AND ME

DISCLAIMER:

*What happens in the mountains stays in the mountains.*

CULMINATION 3  
LIKE A MONET

MONDAY 30th SEPTEMBER 2019

“Tuscany isn’t what I was expecting,” I said, picking up my cappuccino. “I’d pictured vast, golden fields framed by endless vineyards upon gently rising hills. I was wrong.”

“You’re thinking of the south,” the Scotsman laughed, before ordering another gin while we sat in a small courtyard in the tiny township of Barga.

“What brought you here originally?” I asked. “What’s with all the Scottish flags?”

Peter proceeded to explain his family’s connection, retelling the history of a famine here two hundred years ago. I found his hearty accent and pessimistic enthusiasm rather pleasant in the chilled autumn evening. Though, his unbridled honesty about his shady business practices as an arms-dealer seemed more than a little incriminating. But I was just a random stranger, and he was a half-drunk Scotsman. He elaborated on his travels, smuggling weapons through Africa, Russia, and Asia, and he particularly enjoyed talking about his experiences with the powerhouse that was the Chinese people. After his globe-trotting, he had bought a little house here with some of his hard-earned blood-money. He proudly boasted that he had finally learned some gratitude for homely comforts and a few good friends. This was somewhere that he could simply disappear from the world and fade into obscurity. However, he suddenly pointed out that it was only a quick drive to Milan in his Ferrari if he desired a little taste of excitement.

Looking out over the view from this medieval village perched on a hilltop, I appreciated what Peter was saying. This place was nothing less than quintessentially Italian. I admired the iconic scenery and was glad to have finally found time to visit this country after fourteen years of living in Europe. Turning my head up toward the tall, slender trees next to Barga’s

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

stone church, I was reminded of impressionist paintings, and how far removed from Berlin it all felt. Google Maps had once again failed to illustrate the exact environment that now fully immersed my senses. It especially hadn't emphasized just how steep the narrow roads to my Bed & Breakfast really were.

Politely returning the question back to me, Peter asked, in a serious tone, what my intentions were for visiting such an out-of-the-way destination?



Crossing my arms, I told him that at 3am this morning I had finished the pedantic corrections to the animation of my short film, *Nephilim*. Which had left me only a few hours of sleep before my flight to Pisa. Peter smiled and listened contently. I confessed that the last time that I had felt this burnt-out was from writing my trilogy of books, *Bark*. It had been a busy summer of commercial work, while focusing on my short film, and pro-actively getting back into the dating game. However, thankfully, I had been able to pay off my debt to the tax office. And, although I had enjoyed seeing more girls than I had ever before in my entire life, disappointment drove me away from all the dating. But then, three weeks ago, I had hooked up with a Czech latex model. So, I had invited Alicia to join me here on vacation once she was done with her latest photo-shoot in Paris. "I just came to relax and, you know, get a little romantic."

"That's my lad!" Peter grinned, raising his glass. "To all the girls I've loved and left behind!"

Eventually, Peter led me to a small seafood restaurant, where we



exchanged numbers and I shook his firm hand goodbye.

“What are your plans before your lady-friend arrives?” he asked.

“There’s an artist living further up the valley. Going to pay him a visit. And there’s also this girl.”

“Another one! Right you are! Always have a contingency plan!”

“If you’re ever in Berlin.”

“It’d be a pleasure, my lad!”

While waiting for my dinner, I wondered why people trusted me. Why did they volunteer intimate details about their lives to someone who could possibly use that information to exploit them? What was it about me? Was it a curious expression in my eyes that I could never observe? Was it my gentle tone of voice that I was unconscious of? Or was I just that much of a charming fucking cunt that I could befriend any fucking asshole once I bothered to start a conversation? No. The simple fact of the matter was that everyone was dying to spill their deepest, darkest secrets to any fool that wouldn’t immediately judge them for it. But how did they know that I wouldn’t judge them? Do I look like that much of a devil’s advocate, or like just another devil like everyone else? Yeah, I was just like everyone. Perfectly normal. I saw the good and the bad in each of us and I knew that it was all one and the same. We’re all the fucking same. I’m no different and nothing special. So then, people should fucking know better than to trust me.

CULMINATION 1  
DESECRATE THE TEMPLE

SUNDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2019

Sitting alone in the Fata Morgana Galerie on a beautiful spring afternoon, I looked up from my desk as a tall, somewhat familiar woman stepped inside. Her maroon coat matched the red slip supporting the cast on her left forearm. It wasn’t until she put on her amber-framed glasses that I had a flashback to my train ride through Romania. Moving over to the top step in the middle of the gallery with my hands in my pockets, I watched the forty-year-old female smile.

“Hi!” she said warmly, though keeping her distance. “Remember me?”

“Small world,” I replied, stepping down to her level, where she hugged me like we were old friends. “How’s it going, Reveka?”

She said that after our encounter on the train, she had found me online and

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

had recently seen that I was having this exhibition. Since she was taking time off work while her broken arm healed, she had decided to visit Berlin. Despite her age, there was something about her voice and stature that reignited my initial attraction toward her.

The gallery door then opened, and Reveka introduced her blonde friend, David. His young, blank expression and distracted eyes focused directly on my artwork. While Reveka and I made polite small talk, David took his time examining the black and white images in black and white frames. We both watched as he crouched next to the concentric circles of salt, coal, and soil in the upper room. Suddenly, he spun and insisted that I visit his family home in Tuscany! Reveka glared back at her wide-eyed friend with a series of incredulous blinks.

“Thanks, but don’t think I’ll be traveling anywhere anytime soon.”

“You must!”

“Sure.”

“Whose blood is this?”

“Pig’s blood.”

“Not that, this!” David declared, pointing at a stain on the westside of the invocation written on the floor.

Studying David’s curious behavior, I tilted my head toward the gorgeous Reveka. “You straightened your hair.”

“Really enjoyed our conversation on the train,” she nodded, walking over to the front window, “Would think about you often, and remind myself to travel more. And yeah, you should come to the villa next time you get sick of Berlin.”

“Love to, but don’t see it happening.”

“Why not?”

“Things to do,” I deflected, glancing out at the busy street. “What happened to your arm?”

“She did it to herself,” David said, marching over and shaking my hand vigorously, yet he maintained a complete lack of facial emotion. “A pleasure! A real pleasure to see your work. You must come and stay with us the first chance you get. The things we could show you, you wouldn’t believe. But you would! You would understand! You of all people. Yes, you must come and stay with us! No matter what happens, you must!”

THURSDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2019

*Escape From East Berlin*, by Daniel Pemberton was playing in the gallery, when I saw the door open as a pair of cargo pants came dancing in. The big guy swept rhythmically across the two rooms, as the groove eventually brought him closer as he asked who the artist was. The following chat was more of a mumbling monologue in which the fifty-year-old German answered most of his own inquiries. Juggling topics from his fascination with the occult, to his love of screwing little girls at Kitkat, it seemed that his conscious-stream had little cohesion. This was one of the reasons that I was glad that I never had a job where I had to deal directly with the public. He soon grunted on about his Gaia meditation program and how to choose which darkness to walk with. He kept repeating the word, 'Rumi,' so I had to ask what it meant. He laughed and briefly looked at me like I was a fucking idiot, finally stating that it simply meant, 'Come.' The guy was clearly high as fuck, and right then, in his very next breath, he admitted how much he loved cocaine and quickies. He loved it! Clearly! The thick headphones clamped around his neck continually blasted techno while he would begin dancing erratically from time to time. Out of nowhere, he then began ranting incomprehensibly as he clenched his huge fists. Leaning in a little closer, I hoped that he might knock me the fuck out so that I didn't have to endure this retarded fucking conversation. He swayed from side to side and then grinned before going on about, 'Nafs,' like I knew what the fuck that meant. After a second condescending scowl, he said it was Arabic for the animal in all of us. He soon handed me his business card – the guy was a fucking lawyer! Finally, he locked eyes with mine, and in a moment of clarity, he quietly said, "You are a great creator. You get what Stewart Brand meant by, *"We are as gods and might as well get good at it."*"

Shaking his crushing hand, I noticed a silver pendant of a Samurai hanging around his neck. This guy was a cultural-thickshake. On his way out, he welcomed me to join him while detoxing in Malaysia. He then squinted like a shocked orangutan when I told him that I didn't drink or do drugs. Glancing around the gallery one more time, he then enthusiastically congratulated me. While watching him pull up his headphones and shimmy out the door, I wondered if I looked as disconnected from reality to other people as he seemed to me. Fucking hedonists!

FRIDAY 1st MARCH 2019

The Armenian girl, Arpi, who had come to the vernissage, also walked past the gallery on Tuesday while I was having an intense exchange of ideas about

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

spiritual spaces with a body-piercer. Arpi returned today once she saw that I was alone. She had the glistening brown eyes of someone truly searching for something – seemingly somewhere in my eyes. With her timid smile, she admitted that in the last couple of days she had investigated my artwork online and wanted to know more about my motivation. Instead of answering this intrusive plea for honesty, I brought up our previous conversation from the opening night, about how she had been drawn to the horror of her own inner thoughts, and I asked what exactly had inspired her to talk to me about it? She laughed nervously, and I could smell her long curly hair. At first, she talked about her investigations into Zoroastrianism, and how she believed part of herself was trapped in the House Of Lies. She went on about trying to find some bridge and learning how to finally cross over it. Though, after a while, she seemed comfortable enough to reveal that some years ago she had been diagnosed with a rare type of schizophrenia. Since then, she had kept a detailed journal of all her visual hallucinations. The doctors had given her medication, but none of it had helped for very long. She almost began crying as she told me a long story of how disturbing her visions had recently become. They were so bad now that she believed she couldn't tell anyone about what she was seeing. Couldn't tell anyone but me. And then she broke down, pointing at one of my pictures as she stated that she had seen the exact same devil in her hometown!

I brought out a chair and some tissues from the back of the gallery. With my arms crossed, I stood and watched as the twenty-something-year-old slowly relaxed and dried her eyes. I had lost count of how many kids had volunteered these confessions to me, mistaking mine for a sympathetic ear. Yet I understood how to play the part. I took a knee and gave her a chance to catch her breath. I wanted her to trust me. I wanted to learn what exactly had traumatized her. I wanted to keep her secrets in my arsenal for a time when I could wound her worse than anything she could currently conceive. After all, they say, two can keep a secret if one is dead! Arpi then pushed her head next to mine, and revealed her actual agenda, asking if I would draw the atrocities that she had seen. With impatient disgust, I looked away, thanked her for confiding in me, and told her that I had too many other things to do. She smiled sadly, hugged me, and hoped that my exhibition would be a big success.

Just before she hurried out the door, I asked how long she would be staying in Berlin? She fought back the tears, saying that she was flying back to Armenia tomorrow. I didn't know if it was despite of her distress

Bruce Stirling John Knox

or because of it, but I found her irresistibly beautiful. While knowing that a crying female was a lying female, I still exchanged contact details with her.

Standing on the pavement outside the gallery, next to the shattered remains of the pomegranates, I watched Arpi's cute ass shuffle toward Rosenthaler Platz. This whole fucking world was full of fucking people unable to expel the fucking demons that they wrestled with. And who the fuck did they think I was, some kind of fucking exorcist?! Get the fuck out of here!

CULMINATION 4  
WALDEINSAMKEIT

TUESDAY 1st OCTOBER 2019

I awoke early and found that the entire basin of the valley below had become a lake of mist. After my first real Italian coffee, I packed my backpack with a hoody, bottle of water, and my notebook – when something fell out of the pages. Picking up the segmented, plastic-wrapped paper, I realized that I had totally forgotten that I had stored this little gift of multiple tabs of the date-rape drug in my journal. Suddenly I paused, realizing that I had accidentally smuggled this shit into another country! Shaking my head as I slipped the plastic-sealed paper into the outside pocket of my backpack, I knew I had to dispose of it in a public trashcan before I returned to the airport.

Heading out with a local map in hand, I looked upward at the jungle-covered mountain and knew that altitude changes everything. Though, how much higher the valley went was beyond my line of sight and would become an even greater distance than my ignorance could have imagined. The road kept going upward, always upward. Every bend led to a higher and higher landscape of blue skies, while the forest dropped away to an abyss of tight-knit vegetation. I had left the Bed & Breakfast at 9:30am and arrived at the last settlement on the map by noon. Soaked in sweat, I was surprised how well my legs were doing as I ordered a cappuccino at the remote restaurant and enjoyed the majestic view. I wasn't sure if this was the highest I had ever gone (outside of a plane), but it was up there! After leaving the restaurant, I thought that I had a pretty good idea of how far I could travel in an hour. According to the map it should only take another 45 minutes to reach the end of the road. There, I would find the driveway to my destination. However, once I passed the hour mark, I understood that either I was reading the map wrong, or this road had been extended twice as long as the record showed.

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

Upward, always upward. Every turn in the road led only higher and fucking higher, and I grew more and more irritated. Why the fuck were mountains so much bigger than they appeared from a fucking distance! Once the asphalt finally came to an end in the shade of the forest, I began following a dirt road which also continued further upward, always upward. Whenever I looked back down that valley with its incredibly steep slopes, I was filled with a sense of both awe at how high I had gone on my own two feet, and a slight wave of uneasy vertigo. I was well and truly fucking sick of the climb when I finally reached that overgrown driveway leading off from the dirt road. Looming clouds had chilled the afternoon air, as I continued along that neglected driveway snaking its way into the dense woods. Once again, the path went on and fucking on.



At long last, the tunnel-like trees opened up. Two strong pillars with stone pinecones at their tops stood on either side of an open gate. Beyond, was a wide expanse above sheer cliffs, next to a three-story villa. Its beige walls and brown roof tiles allowed the structure to fade gently into the shrouding forest. The building was a single block with a classic, low-angled roof, wooden shutters, and an accompanying tower at the far side. There was a four-wheel-drive, a small hydraulic digger, and a tiny three-wheel truck parked next to the building. Warming my blood in the open sun, I approached the villa. While glancing down at the magnificent valley, it seemed as though this wasn't the same one that I had hiked up. Statues of noble Romans lined the gravel driveway, with big olive trees to my right. A stone staircase separated before

joining again at the front door on the first floor. The door itself was covered with thick iron bolts and it felt like an impenetrable wall when I knocked. Apart from the bird songs in the forest, the villa was all quiet. After knocking harder, I backed down the stairs, heading around the right-hand-side. I came across a two-story-tall archway on my left leading into an enclosed courtyard. A gentle tapping came from an open window. There, an old woman dressed in a blue and white apron, was cutting tomatoes in an ancient kitchen. I smiled and I asked about Reveka, as the cook wobbled over. With a confused frown, she muttered something in Italian before offering me a glass of water. All I could do was repeat Reveka's name but to no luck. So, I drank the water, thanked her, and wandered off with a shrug. Maybe I had the wrong place and I had gone much further than I should have. Strolling back out the archway, I headed further around toward the tower. The majority of the villa looked older and more dilapidated than the front. The plaster was crumbling off, revealing the uneven stone blocks below. Jiggling bells from the necks of a gathering of goats, drew my gaze up to their pen on the hillside. I walked up to a flat section of the hill below the goats. Appreciating the view, I glanced at a pile of rough, two-meter-long stones lying in the center of that plateau. Their uniform shape made it appear as if they were used for the restoration of the villa. That was when the unmistakable scent of oil paint caught my attention. The back of the villa was like a random collection of smaller buildings that had all merged into one. A huge barn-like door was half-open and brought me into a tall space where, to my left, another door stood wide open. Stepping inside that giant room, with two stories of windows on one wall, I immediately knew that I had, in fact, come to the right place. Enormous artworks in ornate frames brought me to a standstill. Hundreds of paintings leaned against the base of the walls, while those that hung above depicted bleak environments that I had only seen in my psychosis. Like romantic masterpieces, the style was as realistically foreboding as it was dramatically melancholic. Men and beasts slaughtered one another in every painting. It was, without a doubt, the most captivating art that I had ever seen!

Suddenly a loud Italian voice called out furiously from above! Twisting, I spotted a balcony on the second level at the end of the art studio where a big man in his fifties, with long hair and a beard, glared back at me.

"Hi," I replied. "I'm looking for Reveka."

"Reveka?!"

"Yeah. She around?"

"You're early!"

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

“I was expected?”

“The congregation’s tomorrow night!”

“I just came for the exhibition.”

“Then... You’re very, very late.”

“Had things to do.”

“The oracle’s already been appointed.”

“Sorry, what?”

“I can’t help you anymore, and you’ll not be welcome tomorrow.”

“These paintings, their yours?”

“Si.”

“May I?” I gestured toward the multitude of pictures leaning against one another.

Reluctantly nodding his head, the gray-haired guy slowly stumbled down the small wooden staircase.

As I approached him, I laid my eyes on a life-size painting of a naked man being eaten by a gang of blackened devils.

“Doric,” introduced himself, while we shook hands. He was tough looking and smelt like leather and cigarettes. Lighting up a fresh one, he then poured himself a generous glass of red wine. He offered me the bottle, but I declined.

“Coffee’s the whore I ride, but Earl Grey will always be my first love.”

“No alcohol?” Doric sneered. “Definitely not what they’re looking for.”

Unsure what the fuck he was implying, I asked if I could photograph some of the particularly violent paintings.

To which, he simply shook his head within a cloud of smoke.

“Is Reveka around?” I eventually brought up, while peering into some more stacked up frames.

“She lives far from here.”

“Thought this was the vineyard she worked at.”

“You see any vineyards?”

My assumption that she lived at the same location as the exhibition was the sort of misunderstanding that happens when you read e-mails too quickly. “You know David?”

Doric was silent on that note, but then I focused on a painting of a Greek temple where a deformed giant stood, engulfed in flames.

“Your work’s fucking excellent!”

“Pales in comparison.”

That, I understood.

A stern-faced, seventy-year-old woman then abruptly marched into the



studio. She scowled menacingly at me, before questioning Doric with a vicious punch to her Italian words. I hated that cunt's voice.

"He's my guest!" Doric finally snarled in English with an uncompromising tone.

The Nun-like woman paused, rather mortified by Doric's outburst, and then she left without another utterance.

"Your wife?"

"Governess," Doric grunted, slumping into a big red armchair in the middle of the studio. Upon his throne, the artist sat surrounded by an assortment of wines and whiskeys. Needing to rest my own battered feet, I accompanied him. Sitting on a wooden crate, next to pot-plants and countless tubes of paint, I pulled out a bottle of water from my backpack. I wished I had some actual tramping shoes instead of just wearing my Chucks. One of these days I really should get the proper equipment for these kinds of strenuous ventures. The balcony behind Doric looked like it led to his bedroom. It was dark behind the banister, but I could make out a niche in the wall where a statue of an eagle spread its wings while in its clutches hung the skeletal remains of a real snake.

"This where you had the exhibition, in your studio?"

"In the villa."

"Up here in the middle of nowhere?"

"There's a Kurdish saying, *"There are no friends but those of the mountains."*"

"Of all the art that I've seen, if there's anything that ever deserved to be held in a reputable gallery, it's this shit!"

"None of this is meant for common eyes."

"But you're fine with mine?"

"Reveka wouldn't have told you to come if you weren't, in some way, initiated. You are a seer, aren't you?"

"And a Zen master," I smirked, stuffing away my half-empty bottle.

"That's all we are. We see. Then we translate that which we see into a visual language that will inspire others to go on and perform great works of action. We, we are just the seers. Here to pass on influence. That is all we are here to do. Beyond that, we are already dust. My influence on the world has no greater effect than the dreams that most have already forgotten by the time they wake. And like a dream, once I'm dead, it will be as if I never existed."

"Very fucking Zen."

"It's a monastic lifestyle," Doric murmured, taking a sip of his wine.

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

“How long have you been in this neck of the woods?”

“Twenty years.”

“Where you from?”

“Portugal. And you?”

“Came from Berlin.”

“East Berlin?”

“Friedrichshain.”

The big guy then eased back and poured himself another glass. “Got a tooth kicked out by the Stasis. Was in a Lichtenberg jail when the wall came down.”

“Good timing.”

“Then they just released me. Along with all the other criminals. People talk so admirably about the end of the Cold War, about unity overcoming walls.” Doric then stared at the floor with a grim expression. “But they forget about the complete chaos. The vacuum that allowed a tidal wave of opportunists to take advantage of anything. All in the name of freedom. And then of course, there were the western leeches. I suppose I was one too. And there were so many little girls rushing into a deeply disturbed city. It’s a fool’s logic we all repeat. Kids fleeing broken homes while seeking refuge in ruined places because they reflect their own damage. Yet they’re horrified when confronted by thugs far worse than anything they could have been running from. I remember waking up one morning in a squat with the drunken girlfriend of my best friend sitting on my chest, masturbating while she pissed all over me. Stank like something awful. Huh, there’s nothing as depressing as watching a former lover grow old and wither into a desperate shell. When the female orgasm is the most important aspect of your life, you’re living a pathetic and meaningless existence. Sex is common. Intimacy is the last asylum for the delusions of innocence. It’s the false belief in trust, while deceiving yourself that everything you share won’t be used against you. The things we do. The weaklings we make of ourselves just for a taste of some fleeting pleasure. When in point of fact, sex is mechanical. Common. Serving the most basic function. Expelling fluids and releasing chemicals. Sex is nothing as special as we make it out to be. It’s work. Selfish work that morons claim is for the benefit of the other. Idiomatic! It’s common!”

“These days, it’s become more associated with disgust than pleasure. And when a girl says she has a fetish. All I hear is don’t this, don’t do that. A girl with a fetish likes one thing and one thing only. Everything else is non-negotiable. The less I know about a girl’s sexuality the better! But still, they

tell me more than I care to know. And all I feel is disgust. Disgust at their attraction. And disgust when I fuck them.”

“Why would you bother?!”

“Addicted.”

“Addicted to disgust?!”

“Somewhat.”

“Waste of time!”

“The divine contradiction.”

“So much of what’s held up as precious is a total waste of effort!”

“That’s up to the individual to decide for himself.”

“Only through anarchy.”

“That’s if you survive its suicidal impulse.”

“Exactly! Facing the brutal meaningless of all existence leads ultimately to a self-extinguishing solution to this perpetual triviality of our relentless suffering.”

“Yet should the thought arise to become your own architect, then the individual may be born again.”

“But where does that thought come from? Your mind or a monster?”

“Where they all come from, the sum of our past.”

“What are these thoughts? The embodiment of the spirit, or a calculating organ?”

“Psychological or paranormal, it’s all the same to me,” I replied.

“Wherever my subjective internalization comes from, it’s still as real in my memory as any objectively observed experience. The long-term effect is exactly the same.”

“At the end of the day, all the philosophizing in the world is merely a rationalization of our own dismal fears,” Doric said. “What are you really doing here?”

“Yeah, and there’s no such thing as healing your mind. All therapy is just replacing one delusion for another. I came for the view.”

“Shared psychotic disorder.”

“You’re talking about cult mentality.”

“Hedonists are all seeking some reward.”

“Fucking self-serving junkies obsessed with nothing more than getting fucking high, as if that will fix their worthless fucking self-esteem! And just like all junkies, they’ll let their fucking lives fall into ruin for the fucking retarded goal of the ultimate trip, as if they can hold onto it indefinitely. Fucking junkies!”

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

“It’s the strength of their trauma that drives them.”

“Fucking Trauma, it’s the new depression. The latest medal of honor. All these fucking whining brats need some real blunt force trauma to their miserable fucking heads!”

“We all want what we can’t have. And what is it that you’re unable to attain?”

Taking a moment, I replied, “I used to want to belong to something bigger than myself, because I never have.”

“Why haven’t you?”

“I’m a selfish son of a bitch.”

“You know this about yourself, and still you want to belong to something more?”

“Yeah, life’s a piece of shit like that.”

“If you ever did belong, would you remain?”

“Absolutely,” I whispered, glaring back at Doric. “Right up until the moment I betray them.”

“Perhaps we all deserve to be betrayed in the most treacherous way possible.”

“Can’t say I know single person that wouldn’t.”

“Why are you here?”

“Same reason I live in Berlin: for the art.”

“You’re avoiding consequence.”

“Aren’t we all.”

“The consequences of belonging.”

“I belong to the great indifference of the fucking universe.”

“Then confront it.”

“Yeah, and after you confront it and tell yourself that you’ve resolved all your fears and traumas, only to discover that you’re still just as fucked up, what does that say about you? You see, that’s the problem with therapy. What would all these cunts do once they learned that there’s nothing suppressed. No more excuses, no past to blame, no easily definable scapegoat. You can be raised in a perfectly safe and nurturing environment, yet still find yourself discontent. So, you become attracted to others that are disturbed, and if they’re not broken, you want to break them. There’s a fundamental feeling of hopelessness due to an innate rejection toward your own repugnant nature. A nature that’s rash, vile, and fucking petty. And now everyone’s calling it ‘mental illness’, and the fucking world fucking praises you for being oh so fucking brave without having done a fucking thing! You’re nothing but a

victim of yourself, trading delusions for delusions for fucking delusions!”

“And you understand this about yourself.”

“And you value nothing.”

“And nihilism leads to suicide.”

“And suicide leads to freedom from consequence.”

“And then the individual is born of his own motivation.”

“And here we find ourselves.”

“Alone with the devil.”

“One with the devil.”

“There, that! That’s why Reveka invited you!”

Looking away, I stared at a painting of a swarm of black dragons looming over a man running for his life. “Was your exhibition invite-only?”

Doric nodded, lighting another cigarette as he examined a dusty bottle of wine.

“Only investors?”

“None of it was for sale.”

“Why not?”

“The house owns everything.”

“So, who was invited?”

“Candidates.”

“For some of that shared psychotic disorder?”

A knocking then came from the door.

“Just as I am a tree growing from a tree, so too will she spring forth from my own trunk,” Doric said, raising his glass toward a timid child with long dark hair who crept around the door-frame. “Fornacetta here, is the seed they have sowed to see the unseen.”

Squinting, I glanced at Doric, thinking that the wine was finally kicking in.

“Don’t let her quiet manner deceive you,” Doric grumbled, leaning forward, as the skinny ten-year-old lingered shyly at the distant end of the studio. “It’s her ruthlessness that got her here.”

“Hey, it’s been a treat. Love your work. Seriously, fucking excellent,” I affirmed, grabbing my backpack. “But I got to head out, or it’s going to be dark by the time I get back to town.”

“No!” Doric protested. “You haven’t even told me about your own work!”

“Man, I’m nobody.”

“You’re a good man, I can tell.”

“Yeah, and a great humanitarian too!”

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

“Come back tomorrow then!”

“I would, but that’s a hell of a fucking walk.”

“Michele will drive you back to town, and then pick you up tomorrow with the morning supplies.”

“Thought you said I wouldn’t be welcome here at your little get-together.”

“You’re my guest now. My friend!”

Doric opened another bottle, while I was staring across the studio at the little girl who had inched into a corner below the windows and leered back at me. “If the governess is looking after the kid, then it’s her villa?”

Doric was staring up at the murky cigarette smoke among the thick timber beams in the ceiling as he spoke. “She brought me here. Found me starving on the streets.”

“Who, the kid?”

“The governess.”

“Twenty years ago?”

“Si.”

“Living rough?”

“Trying not to live at all.”

Looking at my chucks, I listened.

“I deserve every awful thing that ever befalls me.”

I waited.

“But she found me and gave me this life. So, I left the past buried beneath a tree outside of Porto, and here I have been paying for my deeds.”

“What did you do?”

“The unforgivable.”

“It’s been twenty fucking years.”

“Some nights I think about returning, about facing that terrible, terrible thing. But you can’t make amends for such mistakes.”

“That bad, huh?”

“Some enemies never forget the liberties you took, and I can’t blame them. I hold myself just as accountable for my decisions. There’s no righting this wrong. Nothing to do but ignore it and hide in isolation.”

“You could still take a vacation, for fuck’s sake.”

“They’ll never let me.”

“You sure you chose this life?”

“What more could I possibly want? I paint all day, every day. And here my sins will never find me.”

“And yet I did.”

“Si, and now she has her eye on you too.”

Twisting around, I saw that Fornacetta was still in the same corner looking back. “Does she always fucking spy on people like a fucking creep?”

“They found her a few years ago, on a farm. Her family wanted nothing to do with her. She had a habit of interfering with the animals.”

“Sexually interfering with them?”

“She cut the animals in order to use their blood to paint murals on the barn walls.”

“Classic.”

“She thinks you’ll take her place?”

“Oh, not to worry. I’m sure there’s a special place in hell kept aside just for her.”

“What medium do you work?”

“Currently, I’m really into stone. I guess it started a few years ago when I learned about Jews placing stones on graves. Although maybe my interest goes back to the North Sea. Or then again, I don’t know. But the older I get, the more I wonder if I should have become an architect like I was planning to. I keep thinking about stone monuments. Building in stone. Building bigger. I mean, the things I’ve done are nothing special. But the thing about stone is, it’s fucking heavy, and you can’t just have just one stone. Well, maybe a really big one would be enough. Actually, there’s a place, a church in England, it’s got the largest monolith in the country. Just one big stone. One monolith by itself in a graveyard. Maybe one’s all you really need. Don’t know. I once found this solitary standing stone under a shack on an island. It was all by itself. Had Greek carved into it. You know, I should fuck off back to that little island and photograph the full inscription. But you see, that’s what’s fucking great about stone. It’s got some serious fucking longevity!”

“None of the other candidates were working in stone.”

“Candidates?”

“Why do you think Reveka chose you?”

“For my rugged good looks.”

“I don’t see how stone would even serve a function?”

“Holding up ceilings since the dawn of civilization.”

“The exhibition was for seers, and those who could visualize, but stone. I don’t know what Reveka was thinking. Stone? She must have had her reasons.”

“It was more her friend David that had a spark up his ass.”

“You met him?”

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

“Both came to my exhibition.”

“Your exhibition?”

“Nothing as fucking epic as this, but it served a purpose.”

“So, you do understand that there’s more to these things than a profit.”

“Apart from all the people that I met, it’s one of the main reasons I’m focusing on stone. Gave me a taste for temples.”

“What kind of stonework did you feature in your exhibition?”

“Nothing in stone.”

Doric looked annoyed.

“Sexual violence.”

“Is that all?”

“No.”

“What great sin were you confessing through your work?”

“That there is no corruption,” I sneered through my crooked teeth. “No corruption that I wouldn’t condone.”

Doric raised his chin and dragged on his cigarette. “Reveka’s witchcraft has always led her to dangerous places.”

“What was the purpose of your exhibition, then?”

“It was a smoke signal. A lure. A means to an end.”

“Yeah, I get that,” I said, nodding. “But what ends were you aiming for?”

“Well, here you are.”

Thinking of some of my own strange guests, I then asked, “Have you really never left this place in twenty fucking years? What the fuck did you do that was so fucking terrible?”

“The toll has only amplified over the years.”

“I get sick to fucking death of being trapped in Berlin for too fucking long, but twenty fucking years anywhere sounds pretty fucking hellish.”

“Only the third terrace.”

Tilting my perplexed eyebrow at Doric’s bizarre statement, I barked, “What?!”

The gruff artist glanced up at the walls as he spoke, “I leave this place all the time, whenever I want. And they follow me back, but never through.”

Shaking my head dismissively, I looked over at the kid. “The fuck was she painting on her barn walls?”

“I told you, we’re all translators. But she lacks the precise language in which to communicate with the divine.”

“You’re talking about magick?”

“That’s just a crutch, you shouldn’t need it once the sacred has been



attained.”

“Fucking A to that!”

“Once you’ve learned to dance, you no longer focus on every step of the foot. You simply move with the music.”

“And the kid’s got some rhythm?”

“She has, but drifts with any melody that catches her ear. She requires direction in order to tune into exactly who’s playing the fiddle, and not allow herself to become the fiddle.”

“What dance did she do that caught your eye?”

“It wasn’t my place to select the successor.”

“Who was the judge of it, then?”

“Nobody judges you here.”

I couldn’t help laughing at that.

“There is a connection behind everything.”

“That’s such a crock!”

“Excuse me?”

“Nobody judges you here, that’s such a crock of shit!” I hissed. “If we’re all connected, then we’re also all to blame for every rape and every fucking murder! All of us! This fucking oneness delusion is such cherry-picking horseshit! We’re all one, one love, one great big collective unconscious. Yeah, yeah fucking right! Then we’re all fucking one with every fucking crime against humanity as well!”

Doric sat in his armchair holding his cigarette in front of his pale face, before slowly reaching for another bottle. “To Dionysus.”

“What terrible, terrible fucking thing did you really fucking do?”

“That, I will take with me to the gates of Hades.”

“Why?”

“It was perhaps insignificant to the world, but the impression became indelible upon my psyche.”

“Did she do something equally as fucked up?” I asked thumbing toward the kid.

Doric then stood, went up the stairs, and soon returned with a tattered sketchbook.

Flipping through the pages of charcoal drawings, I suddenly stopped and stared at the silhouette of a form with an impossible number of limbs. It was a remarkable depiction of Amaimon. Slowly closing the sketchbook, I rose and went through more of the piles of paintings. Doric sat smoking, as I came across a landscape littered with translucent figures accompanied with other

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

silhouettes draped in long black sheets. Glaring at Doric's thoughtful silence, I hurried through more frames, sending years of dust into the dry air. Most of the paintings were of inhuman creatures, but then I came to an image of the very same giant beast that I had seen outside the window of my flat this very fucking summer!

Glaring bitterly at the artist, I repeated quietly, "What did you do?"

"If god himself couldn't tame these restless spirits," Doric stated threateningly. "No man ever will!"

### CULMINATION 2 THE WHORE OF RECONCILIATION

MONDAY 8th APRIL 2019

After seeing that the-most-hated-girl-I-knew had cut her hair short, I felt like sketching her cute little pout. It had been over three years since she had publicly denounced me, and yet once she saw her portrait on my Instagram, she wrote a friendly hello and invited me over to her new flat.

Jessie was now living next to the canal across from the general hospital that I had been locked in at the end of 2014. Scowling at that looming building, I looked up as the little blonde from Hamburg welcomed me in. Unsurprisingly, her parents had helped her buy the place. I found the baroque decor was a much more mature expression compared to the young artist's previous nests. Her artwork had also progressed into somber, still-life oil paintings, which echoed her own forlorn tone of voice that she hid behind a toothy smile. While catching up on the gossip in her stylish yet gloomy lounge, she mourned over her lack of human interaction, and it seemed that after all this time, Jessie still held onto the title of the-most-hated-girl-I-knew. While talking about idle hands, the subject of the occult came up, and she literally leaped from her armchair, "Yes! If there's one person who'd understand real magick, it's you, Bruce! You're the only person I know who's always willing to go way too far!"

The topic of psychedelics soon came up, and I told her about the vision during my body-suspension that had led to the creation of my short film. Jessie was enthralled by the idea of seeing what kind of art I would create after trying some DMT. This time I lurched, stating my growing curiosity about that drug. It was as if our intervening years without contact had been filled with parallel explorations. I brought up Alan Moore's eloquent talks on

Bruce Stirling John Knox

grimoires, and Jessie leaned in even closer, saying that a few months ago she had stopped herself from continuing to read his book, *Jerusalem*. She said that it had frightened her to the core. As she talked, I lay back on the sofa and savored how those who had hated me in the past had always succumb to my fucking charms in the end. Would Alan Moore call me a magickian too?

FRIDAY 12th APRIL 2019

Just after 1am, I left my flat and walked around the block to the gate into the neighbor's courtyard that my flat looked out upon. I had taken note of a circular clearing just to the north-east of my place in the first weeks of spring when I was leaning outside to admire the blossom. This night, however, was icy as I found the gate unlocked. The entire courtyard was utterly blackened with not a single light on inside any of the apartment buildings. My eyes soon adjusted to the ambient glow coming from the overcast Berlin sky, and I stepped through the trees into the clearing. It was about four meters in diameter with a few park benches around the edge. The ground was bare dirt, and as I crouched down, I dug my fingers into the hard soil. This secluded space was perfect for re-association. A big spell was required. Something with permanence.

SATURDAY 20th APRIL 2019

I was at one of Malloy's legendary penthouse barbecue's, when Jessie sent me a photo of herself wearing nothing but my black hoody. She had come over to my place the day before, and I had discussed the possibility of taking DMT once my short film was finished. I didn't want any new distractions before then. Jessie suggested a reliable source and said that she would make sure that I took at least three hits before lying down and slipping into the fractal realm. She never used the term, 'spirit guide', but it was implied. While studying her delicious figure as she sat on my black leather sofa, I had glanced away once she mentioned that we would probably make a good couple. She said that I was already her pretend-boyfriend, but then stressed that she got nothing out of anal sex. I smiled and remembered sodomizing her right there on that very sofa back in 2013. However, I stated, now that I was growing a beard I was actually starting to look like her real daddy. Jessie burst into laughter, and while watching her, I recalled when Christopher Hitchens had said, "*There's an attitude, the head thrown back and the mouth*

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

*wide open, and the horseshoe of lovely teeth and tongue on display, and so forth, that is, well, it's a bit of a surrender. It's worth it for its own sake, and it's a simulacrum of something even more worth it."*

MONDAY 22nd APRIL 2019

In the small hours, I heard a cat in the courtyard whining without end, so I headed around to the neighbor's gate – but found it locked. Returning home, I grabbed the long stiff wire that I used for opening other doors. I soon slipped it through the perforated metal shield on the gate and levered open the door handle. Stepping into the darkness, I liked how the place was like a miniature forest between the buildings. The massive trees had grown back their leaves since winter, and the cool wind in the branches allowed my presence to dissolve into the hushed obscurity. I had enough light from the moon to find my way to the small clearing where the cat came over to me. It had obviously crept out of one of the windows and had assumed that I was just another docile human. I knelt, cupped its head in one palm, while I drove my knife into the side of its fucking neck! The little shit lurched and screeched, but I simply pushed down, pinning the animal to the dirt. The cat quickly went limp, and my hands felt wet as I chopped that tiny sacrifice into a mess of disfigurement. I couldn't see much, but I didn't need to, as I carved a crude circle into the surrounding soil. The ground was now primed.

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Later that Easter Monday, I spent the evening flirting with Jessie in a graveyard at Südstern, before watching a movie at her place while she lay on my lap.

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At 11pm, I walked away from Jessie's home toward the U-bahn, but the air was pleasant, so I decided to continue home on foot. Not every black guy in Berlin was a drug-dealer, but every black guy on Skalitzer Strasse was. A group of these guys stood in the middle of the pavement and turned toward me as I approached. Their fevered eyes sized me up, as I did the same. Except, I recognized the only white face in the bunch. I didn't remember his name, but he was one of Mr. Bismarck's crew. He called out in a friendly tone and shook my hand. While eyeballing the closest dealer, I heard the Slovakian tell the rest of them to get on with their fucking job. I watched the lingering dealers as they drifted off, while the supplier offered me a ride. I was about to decline, until just then I received a message from Jessie. She sent a photo of

her ass in the mirror where she was wearing only knee-high socks. A spike of hatred turned my head back to the way I had come. However, I forced myself into the black Mercedes, and denied temptation.

We soon arrived at one of the Slovakian bars which was obviously a front for their organization. It had a great location next to the river. Heading inside, I walked down a long passageway where I spotted a group of tough guys giving me a filthy look. The sound of smashing glass then rang out behind them! Slowly stepping past the silent men, I entered the deserted bar, and found it scattered with upturned tables and chairs. Jörg suddenly spun, spit foaming from his furious sneer. He froze, before taking a step backward and straightening up. The broken beer bottle in his hand then dropped to the floor as he nodded his head with downcast eyes. I hadn't seen this violent young guy since the clusterfuck with Friedrich's girl a year ago, but he still didn't have anything to say as he sadly walked out of the bar with his head hung low.

The next thing I knew, the owner of the bar was shaking my hand like I'd just delivered his first-born son. The supplier also slapped me on the back, and even the gangsters at the door circled around with relieved laughter. I don't know what I had walked in on, but Jörg's reputation seemed as intimidating as ever. One of the guys then handed me a bag of cocaine and a sheet of paper sealed in plastic. He shook my hand again saying that the paper was soaked in Rohypnol, and he stuffed it into my jacket's inner pocket next to my notebook. Frowning, like what the fuck, I excused myself and went to talk with Jörg. By the time I got outside, his Maserati was already racing down the street. I was irritated by the smell of Jessie on my skin and the memory of how these Slovakian cunts hadn't helped me last year when I had fucking needed it. So, I threw the bag of cocaine into the middle of the fucking river and walked home fuming.

WEDNESDAY 1st MAY 2019

Mayday meant nothing to me, until I had dinner with Mara and her new boyfriend at the local Russian restaurant. I was glad that she had finally found someone special. It was a good reminder that I too needed to play the human role and keep up appearances with the opposite sex. After we parted ways, I downloaded another dating-app, and headed around my block into the neighbor's courtyard. Despite the drunken protests of the day, the evening was quiet. Standing in the clearing, I thought about how much work I had to do at the studio, along with my short film. I knew that if I simply chipped

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

away at it, then it would all get done soon enough. I had to pace myself. I had debts. I had things to do. Yet I still had urges. There was always that violence at the back of my mind. I just needed to be patient. However, this profane space also had needs. I had started something that I had to complete. And I knew that there was plenty of time for desecration while the world of man slept.

Slowly moving around the clearing under the black trees, I dug small holes in the dirt with my bare hands. Then, while dwelling on my frustrations, I spoke them out aloud, before spitting into each hole. Around the circle I spat 33 times. Standing in the center, I once again heard the water calling me, and I knew exactly what had to be done.

MONDAY 13th MAY 2019

Receiving an e-mail from Reveka, I read it skeptically. She was inviting me to an exhibition called, *Benedictions Of An Old Man's Sin*. It was being held by a close friend of hers, and she insisted that it would resonate with me.

I didn't think that I had made such an impression on Reveka, and I was suspicious of her interest. What was her deal? Women only gave this much attention if there was something in it for them. But I had nothing to offer, and no time to spare.

Replying, I thanked her but said no.

Sitting back in my desk chair, I thought of Jessie's suggestion that I take a vacation with her at her parent's holiday home at Lake Como. I had never been to Italy and I really wanted to go, but deep-rooted priorities took precedence over short-term desires.

SUNDAY 23rd JUNE 2019

On another sunny afternoon, I met yet one more girl at my favorite Friedrichshain cafe. However, I wasn't aware that she was eight-months-pregnant until she wrote to me on the way asking whether or not it was a deal-breaker. Well, shit. I've fucked mothers before, so bring it on! Of all the girls I had dated this year, she was the cutest, but once I inquired about the elephant in the room, a malicious smirk crossed my face, as red flag after red flag rose up around her. So, I began eye-fucking the young Turkish waitress instead.

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Later, I went for a run in the hot evening, while looking for more stones to add to a new ritual that I was working on.

Once it was dark, I went into the neighbor's courtyard and sat in the clearing. I listened to the breeze and waited calmly. It wasn't long before they began to appear through the blackness. Shadows at first, and then distinctive outlines of figures beneath long black sheets. They surrounded the small clearing so completely that their shoulders touched. I counted 33. They then removed their sheets, and I was presented with semi-translucent women. All skinned and bloody from head to toe. A harem of beautifully butchered harpies. Invoking devils wasn't enough, I wanted hell to come spilling out into this world. I wanted more. I had become an infernal obstetrician delivering evil upon us all. No one was innocent. The intuition of wickedness flowed freely in the bloodstream of everyone. Reminiscing on the pregnant girl from the afternoon and her hierarchy of needs, I knew how much I enjoyed getting women of independent means stripped naked and prostrate – so that I could see them fucking squirm! Just as pain can break the will of anyone, so too can pleasure defy the integrity of the sincerest! I am the one who fucks both females and Furies!

FRIDAY 12th JULY 2019

I had been given two tickets for this evening's performance of, *Exhaust The Body*, but beforehand, I headed to a French cafe in Rosenthaler Platz. Sitting outside with a cappuccino and two lemon slice cookies, I listened to the remastered edition of Sunnata, *Orcan*, on my MP3 player, and watched Berliners move by like the faces on my dating-apps. All I saw was a conveyor-belt of fresh meat that I felt absolutely nothing toward. Dating this summer had only reinforced my prejudices against affection. Appearances are all that initial attraction requires. Psychopathy was the goal of the übermensch. And I played my part. I played the game. Because I was fucking good at it. Watching, selecting, picking who I would have for dinner. Young professionals, young kids, and young cunts that had come to Berlin for the loser-lifestyle. Meat dressed up in a hideous fuse of fashion failures and up-market labels. Just then a notification informed me that I had another match! I wrote the default opener to this nondescript nobody that I didn't even want to get to know. Glancing back at the street, I saw a good-looking couple kissing with their eyes closed. They were probably high on MDMA. All I

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

felt was repulsion. I wanted to pick up a bicycle and slam it over their heads, knocking the bliss right out of their fucking ignorance! Then I saw a smiling tourist taking a selfie in the middle of the street with the romantic light from the sunset shining in his empty fucking eyes. I saw this normalized vanity on every street corner, and I wished that I had a fucking chainsaw to cut off every outstretched hand! And then I saw her, and she was mine. A blonde in a long black dress and black heels. She stared at me from across the street while waiting for the lights, but I could already taste her meat.

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Later that night, I met my Irish friend, Nigel, next to the canal outside the venue. We arrived just in time to catch the second act. It was a demonstration of piercing and pain. I saw friends in the crowd, friends hosting, and friends performing. The unrestrained screaming of the slave girls in one show made me smile as I thought of all those desperate kids begging to be tortured – as if that would offer them peace of mind. Fucking masochists!

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In the small hours, I bought two pudding rosinenschecken from a bakery at the Ostkreuz train station and headed home in the cool night air. I was in the middle of wondering how many bones lay at the bottom of the Berlin waterways, when I walked by a stinking Kebab takeaway, where a Slovakian called out. He gave me a big hug, though I hardly knew the guy. His buddy also seemed overly excited to see me. I guessed I wasn't on their shit-list anymore. They invited me to join them at a friend's place down the street in one of the new gentrified areas. I was feeling upbeat, so I tagged along.

The building smelt like a new Starbucks and looked like it should have been in Mitte. On the fourth floor, two other gangsters welcomed us in. I took a seat at the kitchen table where I ate one of my puddings. Another guy then sat across from me and he looked terrified. Suddenly one of the big Slovaks grabbed the trembling guy and put him in a headlock! The one who had invited me here asked in a friendly manner if I would please break one of the squirming guy's fingers?

I smiled and opened a kitchen drawer. Taking a bite out of my second sticky pudding, I watched as two other Slovaks forced the struggling guy's hand onto the tabletop. With an Ikea hammer, I smashed his pinky finger into busted mince, and then I finished my dessert. Fucking tasty.

It turned out that this was the screaming guy's flat, as he pointed frantically toward a cabinet. There, the others found huge bundles of cash. I had been having a good night, right up until one of the laughing thugs offered me a



Bruce Stirling John Knox

thick envelope of 50s. Frowning, I turned my back on them and washed my hands clean of the pudding. “I don’t fucking work for you!”

TUESDAY 16th JULY 2019

I awoke on the morning of my fourteen-year anniversary in Germany and found a message confirming another first date. However, I disregarded my phone, and grabbed my bag full of stones, some tools, and the prepared meat. Walking around my block, I slipped the wire through the gate and entered the neighbor’s courtyard in broad daylight. The place was as empty as it was at night and under the shade of the trees no one saw me use my knife to carve a circle into the dirt clearing. The radius was my arm-span traced out by using a string tied to a garden trowel that I stabbed into the center. Next, I measured out 33 spaces before digging small holes. Within each one I placed a chunk of raw meat beneath a stone marked with a sigil. I buried them all. This was my first real work in stone. The desecrated circle. It was done quickly and without interruption. Now let the meat give sustenance. It was a sacred insanity. After all, cold logical rationality was a lead weight without the emotional elevation of obsession’s golden lunacy. My art, like my magick, was a process of inspiration, preparation, indulgence, completion, and then continuation. Once I had committed to an operation, I couldn’t stop. I would open every floodgate of every Pandora’s box until I had defiled the very Earth that I stood upon. This was how temples were built. This was unholy ground. This stone circle was the foundation of my own sacrificial altar of sublime sacrilege.

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That afternoon, I went to the new temporary Pergamon exhibition. Climbing the viewing platform in the middle of the cylindrical tower, I admired the surrounding depiction of the ancient city full of Greeks and blood-stained steps from the slaughtered bulls. Soon, I went through the south wing of the Pergamon Museum itself, but the Altar Of Zeus was still off-limits due to renovations. I remembered having the entire building to myself when the Thule boys had left me to my devices. They may have rejected me since then, but I couldn’t deny the affect that this place had had upon me and my travels.

Heading to the Deutscher Dom, I was severely unimpressed to find that the interior was a post-modern architectural abomination in comparison to the Neo-Baroque facade. Bland concrete and secular materialism demonstrated mere function without value. The cheap construction didn’t honor or represent

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

the original meaning of the building. Monuments needed to be built with uncompromising strength while also portraying an aspect of regal superiority. Especially through the intimidation of immortal stone. Albert Speer was right.

WEDNESDAY 7th AUGUST 2019

I awoke in the middle of the night to the sound of an intense wind in the trees outside my open windows. Rolling over and about to go back to sleep, I noticed something in the darkness. There was more than just wind out there. I could hear something breathing. Something big. Slowly sitting up in bed, I stared at the silhouette of a massive head among the branches. Though, this thing wasn't looking in my direction. Quietly creeping over to the window, I found the giant's head was at the same eye-level as mine on the second floor. It stood in the courtyard staring down at the clearing. The unintended consequences of my experiments were always fascinating to me. I wondered what other entities I could contact by building a bigger circle. Perhaps it was like a moth to a flame, and this signal had caught the attention of whatever devil happened to be close enough. But I had no way of knowing for sure. Ignoring that inhuman giant, I went back to bed.

SATURDAY 10th AUGUST 2019

This afternoon I went to a pizza place to celebrate the first day of school for the son of an old ex. Because I'm the best fucking uncle a kid could ask for, I brought the biggest cone-gift that I had packed with candy and Lego – a clever German tradition.

Later, we all went to my favorite cafe, as I had arranged another date at 4pm. The Turkish waitress was working again, so I told her that I wanted to draw her portrait. She was surprised but gladly gave me her phone number and typed in her name, Aileen.

My date soon arrived, and it wasn't long before she went into detail about her personality disorders, oh, and that we had the same tattooist. My patience, however, was growing thin. The whole time I was watching Aileen's pretty face.

SATURDAY 31st AUGUST 2019

In that hot summer evening, I went to a friend's gig near Tempelhof, only to

find that it had been cancelled. I walked away annoyed and came across an unknown part of town teeming with life. I followed the busy street until it led to the graveyard at Südstern, there I headed north to the canal. Jessie had ghosted me three months ago after I had hosted a talk at an artist bar about my creative evolution. So, while I leaned against the railing on the other side of the canal, I watched her through her ground floor windows, and I considered three possibilities:

1. She had a new lover and had forgotten about the rest of the fucking world.

2. She had found our discussions on magick more disturbing than reading Alan Moore.

3. She had heard about an American Christian's recent attempt to assassinate my character on the internet, where I was called the 'Plague of Berlin.' Therefore, Jessie had once again retreated to her old attitude of distancing herself like a fucking coward.

Of all the females I had dated this summer, Jessie was still the epitome of why intimacy was dead to me. Walking away, I knew that her place was just another scar on the face of Berlin that I looked upon with contempt. For she was still alive, and tonight I would go hungry.

#### FRIDAY 6th SEPTEMBER 2019

I awoke in the small hours and sat up staring at another one of those pale, intestine-bodied devils at the end of my bed. Behind it, outside the open windows, many others peered inward. I heard them whispering to each other. The one closest held out a hand. In the distant light from a neighbor, I could see one of those oily black serpents wrapped around this devil's forearm. I wasn't sure if it was offering the serpent, or if this was a threat. The giant leech-like creature then coiled on its palm in an aggressive movement like a nasty little cunt. Then the whispering faded as the devil slowly backed away on its endless tail. Getting up, I stepped over to the windows and looked down into the blackness. I could barely make out the heads of those gathered around the clearing. While watching them, I recalled twenty years ago, when I stood in my inner city flat, staring out the window during those long nights alone. I remembered all the art that I had worked on. All my devices. All my scheming.

I remembered in 2002, when I had first devised the systematic-procedure and decided on a girl named Katelin to test it upon. She herself was of no

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

importance to me. I wasn't even particularly attracted to her, but plenty of others were. It had taken months to plan the most concealed route and prepare the equipment that I required at the time. Dressed in disposable clothes, I carried my black duffel bag in my left hand as I approached her front door one quiet evening. I remembered how anxious I was about remembering all the steps in the plan. But when Katelin opened the door, I discovered that she wasn't alone and had a group of guests over. Excusing myself, I walked away in anger, however, it wasn't long before I realized that my plan to leave her decapitated and butchered body spread-eagle for all to see would have been a mistake. The atrocity should only be displayed in my art, the evidence itself must be destroyed!

After that, I remembered projecting my frustration upon Natalie Portman. She was just a pretty face I could manipulate. A surrogate idol to practice with. It was her suffering that I relished. I choked her, and then let her breathe. I stabbed her, and then watch her bleed. I cut her into a thousand pieces of unrecognizable meat, and then resurrected her, just to desecrate her all over again. There was no hell that I could inflict upon her that would ever be enough for me to let her go. I wanted her. I wanted her in pain. I wanted her to know what I wanted. I wanted to look into her beautifully dead fucking eyes. The trophy must be ideal. Yet the streets were littered with so much rotten flesh that I wouldn't eat to save my fucking life! I found them all so utterly fucking repugnant! Rodents had higher self-respect and better personal hygiene than those females that I was surrounded by. And when they opened their fucking mouths, they couldn't even offer some kind of individual fucking opinion! The only meat I wanted was a trophy that had been skinned, smoked, and served up on my dinner plate. Either I would have her in her prime, or I would rather fucking starve to death!

I remembered long before I moved to Germany, I would dream of living in some obscure European city. If I was lucky, I'd live in an old building with half-timber walls and a steep rooftop. I wanted to escape my ugly insignificance and hide in a quiet Continental place where I could work on my art in isolation.

I remembered once arriving in Berlin, I was confronted with the fact that I couldn't so easily escape myself. Though, soon afterward, I saw a black and white photo of Einstein walking down a street, and I had hoped that one day I might feel as calm as he appeared. Of course, my resistance to life itself would never leave me the fuck alone. I clearly wasn't as smart as Einstein. However, you didn't need to be a fucking genius to fool the voyeurs. If I

Bruce Stirling John Knox

presented myself as a quiet, charming guy who never caused his neighbors any problems, then no one would ever knock on my door and wonder what the fuck I was doing with myself.

Watching the devils in the circle below my window that night, I always knew deep down in my fucking bones, that art was never going to be enough.

FRIDAY 20th SEPTEMBER 2019

Once an infatuation came into focus, the pragmatic method of what-needed-to-be-done took over. The task became a matter of problem-solving, and eventually the steps led naturally into one another. A target, a location, and a ritual. Inevitably the focus tightened the closer I got. The steps had already begun, when once again, in a quiet moment, I asked myself if I should stop? But why the fuck should I?! I want what I want! Let the predation proceed!

Standing outside Jessie's window with her lights on, I ignored the busy nightlife in the nearby bars as I knelt and used a piece of chalk and drew a new sigil on the footpath.

Heading along the canal, I went straight to the park bench where Nefertiti II had first appeared to me. Despite the dark, my searching fingers soon found a small stone on the ground and I put it in my pocket. Facing toward Jessie's building, I drew the sigil on the concrete while picturing her in pain. No one ever questioned what the fuck I was doing. Walking in a clockwise direction with a printed map in hand, I circled her entire neighborhood, while at even spacing, repeated the sigil and collected eleven stones in total. It took an hour until I returned to Jessie's window, where I piled up the stones and crossed out the first sigil.

Walking away, I tore up the map with its geometrical markers and threw it into a trash can. This won't end. Loch Ness was right here. This was all the purpose in the fucking world that I needed.

CULMINATION 5  
PERSONA NON GRATA

WEDNESDAY 2nd OCTOBER 2019

After my morning coffee, I sat in my room with my aching feet on the windowsill as I watched the downpour of heavy rain. This was a tranquil location, but the weather changed fast. While listening to Jimi Hendrix,

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

*Voodoo Child*, I observed the view over the hillside suddenly disappear as a thick cloud swept up the valley.

The rain had stopped by the time that I walked into town and met Michele. The four-wheel-drive was packed with groceries, and we sat in silence as I grew astonished at how far we drove up into the mountains. It seemed implausible that I had walked this whole distance the day before, but mostly it now looked like a waste of energy, considering that driving was so much more efficient. I really needed to get myself a fucking driver's license.

It was all blue skies once we drove out of the forest, and the end of the driveway was crowded with an awkward assembly of vehicles. Pulling on my small backpack, I headed around that enchanting villa. I felt rather grateful for having explored as many beautiful places as I had done during my turbulent lifetime. And the place smelled lovely after the rain. I wanted to say, 'buongiorno' to the old cook, but she wasn't in the kitchen. The hydraulic digger was now sitting in the shade outside the art studio, where I heard Doric in a heated argument. Slowly stepping inside, I watched some greasy-mustached Italian smoking a cigar between brazen outbursts at the artist. Suddenly Doric turned toward me and snarled furiously, "What the hell are you doing here?!"

Rearranging my shoulders, I tilted my head and coldly replied, "You invited me."

"Why not when you were first told to come?!"

"Man, if you're busy, I can get the fuck out of here."

Stomping across the big studio, Doric grabbed my shoulders before hugging me tightly. Trying to lean away from the lingering embrace, I heard Doric whisper into my ear, "You don't want to know these people. If you've seen what I have, then keep it to yourself. These people... You cannot trust these people. Keep your secrets close!"

"I'm not here for whoever the fuck these people are."

Doric inhaled and caught my shoulders again. "My friend, I must deal with all of this. But if you have patience, we can talk. This is all just bad timing. There are too many eyes in keyholes. I have much to show you. Last night I... They were here... Just stay out of the villa. Don't let them take you inside."

"Sure. No problem."

"Can you entertain yourself?"

Glancing out the door, I asked, "Can I use that little digger?"

"Michele will show you where the gasoline is kept."

“Thanks.”

“Anything else?”

“Can I have one of the goats?”

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It was after 5pm, when I ripped off the work gloves and pulled on my black shirt. I stood on the small plateau, leaning against the old shovel, staring out over the lovely haze from the fading sun which cast the valley in a bewitching allure. It was a good thing that I didn't need a license for the digger, or otherwise there was no fucking way that I could have dug all 33 pits in one day. Machines: improving mankind since the stone-age. All I needed next was a little blood. Everything was in position and the counterweights were ready and waiting. I had been so preoccupied with my task that I suddenly realized that I had forgotten all about having a chat with Doric. At least my gift was ready to show him.

And then I heard a scream!

Scanning down to my left, I saw Fornacetta running away from the studio door, and around to the big archway. Another scream cried out, but unlike the first, it was a grown woman's voice.

Leaving the shovel stabbed into the ground, I headed down the hill at a casual pace. I spotted an unknown man with a gray mustache staggering out the door, clutching his chest and looking sick. The old cook also stumbled outside sobbing. Taking off my sunglasses, I passed the elderly couple and peered into the studio. If I was looking for blood, I found it. A mangled mess of flesh and guts lay spread out in the center of the floor. Looking around the ambient space with the sunlight beaming through the upper windows, I yelled out, “Doric?! You alright, man?! Doric?!”

As I stepped further into the studio, I checked the corners. Then I recognized the long wavy hair soaking in the mutilated remains. This was Doric! Crouching down beside the butchered mess, I wondered what the fuck had done this, and was there something else explosive in the studio? Yet nothing else was damaged. While slowly studying that slaughter-house sight, a certain symmetry appeared through the bloody chaos. Doric had become one great big Rorschach-test.

The irate screech of the governess abruptly broke my fascinated examination of the extreme human wreckage. Several other Italians rushed in behind me, all exasperated and squealing. I was then quickly ejected from the studio, and three old guys, all with a white mustache, promptly escorted me back to the archway, into the courtyard, and before I knew it, I was lost within

the dreary depth of the centuries-old villa. Doric's last word, sprang to mind a few moments later, and I began backing away from the three geriatrics. They instantly spewed venomous Italian at my resistance. Three more seniors entered the corridor and without hesitation joined the cacophony of yelling voices. The first three midgets ranted in unison while pointing at me. Even more people emerged from other doorways with flamboyant hands. The confused questioning tone then spiraled into absolute hysterics. The original three then grabbed both of my arms. Grinning viciously, I knew the simple fact that one can never beat the mob.

I had been locked in the dog-box before, so I sat patiently brooding on an antique sofa surrounded by floral decorations, marble sculptures, and many more of Doric's smaller paintings. The shutters in that parlor were securely sealed, but I knew that there was no point in opening them as I was on the third floor. There were three doors, and none would budge. Kicking my feet up onto a matching armchair, I slowly shook my head. After spending all fucking day in the garden, Doric goes and fucking dies on me before I even had a chance to show him my fucking work! Fucking typical! Son of a bitch! Worse yet, I was fucking pissed off that I'd never get to finish what I was fucking building. Fucking piece of shit! On top of that, I had some serious fucking doubts that anyone would be willing to drive me back into town. Who knows how long they'd keep me locked in here. But I had until tomorrow evening before I was due to pick up my Czech friend at the train station.

When a door finally opened, the lamplight in the corridor stretched ominously into the parlor. There, my suspicious little eye landed on the concerned expression of Reveka herself, as she spoke up, "You're not supposed to be here!"

"Story of my life," I replied, crossing my arms as I sat up.

"What did you do?!"

"Me?!"

"They found you with the body!"

"You think I did this?!"

"Did you?" Reveka whispered, looking around as she approached. "What happened?"

"Heard a scream, and saw that kid, whatever the fuck's her name, running away."

"What are you saying?"

"Saw her running from the studio."



“And?”

“And I went to see what was going.”

“Not possible.”

“What?”

“They said they found you in there.”

“You think I did this to Doric?!”

“You can’t honestly believe a child could have.”

“Doric did say that she was ruthless.”

“You can’t be serious!”

“Hey, that’s who I saw.”

“That’s insane!”

“For fuck’s sake, I’m not saying she fucking killed him!”

“Is that what you’ll tell the police?”

“You do think I did this!”

Reveka paused, twisting her head, before suddenly walking out.

“So, I’ll just wait here, then?!”

Ten minutes later, Reveka returned and this time closed the door behind her. I was still sitting on the edge of the sofa, as she moved closer and then leaned down, whispering in my ear, “You should have come when I first told you to.”

“Yeah,” I replied, gradually pushing her the fuck away from me. “I don’t respond well to orders.”

In the meek light of the parlor, Reveka stared back with a sly inflection to her voice, “I wanted you to come to me. Not to this place. I thought you knew that.”

Frowning, I was taken aback.

“I’ve been thinking about you for the last two years,” she softly spoke. “You’re nothing like the men around here. I never get five minutes to myself. There’s always too much work to be done. No one to have a real conversation with. That time on the train, you know it devastated me that you just ran off at Bucharest as soon as we pulled into the station. You didn’t even say goodbye. I hated you at first. But couldn’t stop thinking about the things you said. I really wish you had come here when I had first offered. Now there’s so little time.”

Squinting, I clenched my jaw as she knelt down between my legs and opened my belt. Italy was just full of surprises. Sitting back, I stretched my arms out wide as Reveka forcefully pulled my erection out and straight onto her tongue. As skillfully as she sucked, I suddenly wanted to fuck her against

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

the tall mirror on an old cabinet. Though, once I tried sitting up, she shoved me back, insisting that she wanted to swallow. Well then, be my fucking guest! However, when I finally ejaculated deep into her thirsty mouth, the first thing I heard was the door creaking open. Reveka scowled at me as she slowly stood. Looking aside, I spotted Fornacetta cart-wheeling naked across the dark room until Reveka grabbed the kid's thighs. While remaining in a handstand, the girl stretched her thin legs wide open below Reveka who carefully spat a long thread of cum into Fornacetta's vagina.

"What in the holy fuck?!" I gasped, where I sat.

The kid remained upside-down as she stared up at my hesitation.

"You won't tell anyone about any of this!" Reveka stated in an abruptly vile change of demeanor. "You won't tell anyone!"

Utterly perplexed, I was about to speak, but was cut off.

"We're going to the hospital in the morning to have her examined," Reveka sneered, still holding the kid's inner thighs. "If you ever mention anything about even visiting this place, know this: you're DNA will be kept on record, and we'll immediately have you accused of raping this child!"

Focusing hatefully on Reveka's brutal assertion, I felt my hands balling into fists.

"Do you understand?! You never came here! You never met Doric! None of this ever happened! Do you understand!"

I understood that this was her natural form: a fucking cunt!

"Say it! Say you understand!"

"Yeah, I fucking get it!"

With another flip of a switch, Reveka's face lightened up and a relaxed smile whispered, "Then you're free to go."

Impressed by this purely female form of blackmail, I watched as those two creatures drifted out of the parlor, leaving me alone with my dick in my hand. I mean, I've been held hostage through sexual manipulation in the past, but never so fucking literally. I just got fucked in more ways than one!

Leaving the parlor in a foul mood, I went out to the back garden in the pitch black, where I grabbed my backpack from inside the digger. I was glad that I had bought a new pen-light before this vacation, and appreciated pulling on my hoody in the freezing dark. However, I was sure that the battery in my torch wouldn't last a four-hour hike back down the valley. I especially didn't like the idea of stumbling next to all the cliffs on the side of the road. Weighing up my options, I also didn't relish the thought of playing friendly with that fucking lynch mob back inside. Who knows what kind of twisted

shit those fucking people might have in store? Not to mention, that someone in the villa had actually murdered Doric! But how? How was he killed? How was the physical deed done?

So, I ended up walking into the blackened studio. With my pen-light in hand, I took a knee next to the dried blood and obliterated body parts. Doric's remains had been left where they were, and I assumed it was so that the police could inspect the scene. But then again, Reveka insinuated that the authorities wouldn't even be made aware of the situation. Regardless, using the wooden tip of a paint brush, I pushed aside flaps of muscle and shredded tissue, exposing Doric's shattered spinal column. I struggled to conceive of a practical method of achieving such a result, short of freezing the body solid before smashing it to pieces with a sledgehammer. Though, why would anyone want to do this to Doric? That was a stupid fucking question! I didn't even know the guy, and we all had fucking enemies. But why was Reveka forcing me to keep quiet? How much of a fugitive was he? Seriously, what the fuck were these people hiding? As I glared at the state of the bodily destruction, another possibility came to mind. Turning my head toward the door, I recalled the incidents that I had witnessed outside of my window after I had buried the 33 stones in the clearing. Perhaps I was to blame for Doric's death. Perhaps it was due to the ritual that I had begun in his garden. Perhaps this was another unforeseen consequence. No! I hadn't even finished the stone circle. Whatever the fuck had actually happened to Doric it had nothing to do with me!

Hearing footsteps come around the courtyard outside, I quickly retreated into the back of the studio. I had no intention of being found with the body for a second time, so hurried up the stairs to Doric's bedroom. Hiding behind the balcony, I watched as five old men entered. One held a gas lantern, but they all completely ignored the bloody sight. Instead, they picked up a four-meter-wide painting that was already draped in a black sheet. The man with the lantern then navigated the way back outside.

After they left, I climbed back down to the studio floor, where the beam from my pen-light lit up my initials! Stopping dead in my tracks, I focused on Doric's worn-out armchair. On a small coffee table littered with used cigarettes, half-empty bottles, and stained wine glasses, I picked up a stiff, white envelope with 'BSJK' written on it. I skimmed through the handwritten letter signed by Doric, whereupon I raised my eyebrows and said out aloud, "He wasn't fucking kidding."

Standing alone in the dark studio next to the dead artist, I wondered if this

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

was as good as it gets: being locked away in isolation, slaving over your great work, while only in contact with die-hard fanatics. Was it a worthwhile life? What more could an artist want? For now, Doric lived on through his art. But all artistic interpretation was merely a form of the Thematic Apperception Test. I saw what I wanted to see. Seeing patterns where there were none. None of this meant anything. None of these fucking people in this entire fucking country meant a fucking thing to me. Doric was dead! I would never become an old man constantly regretting merely one single mistake made fucking years ago! Jesus fucking Christ, I wanted infinite atrocities perpetually arising throughout my entire life! And yet Reveka thought that she could intimidate me! Fuck that cunt! I should have sodomized her dry! Twisting away from the blood, my pen-light then lit up a big roll of duct-tape on the floor. Screwing up the letter, with its breadcrumb-details, I stuffed it into my backpack, and there my fingers came across that sheet of smooth plastic.

While heading back to the archway, I saw the clear night sky flash as if there was lightning coming from behind the mountain tops. Here however, it was calm and quiet. Entering the old villa freely, I found dozens of old folk drinking and mingling in many of the densely furnished rooms that were covered with more of Doric's gruesome paintings. The place was like a festive retirement home. This time, they paid me no attention as I went looking for Reveka. I eventually found myself in the humid kitchen, where the bouncy cook was preparing a home-grown banquet all by herself. It smelt fantastic. Even though I already knew that the cook didn't speak a word of English, I was about to ask what she had seen when the kid had come running out of the studio. Instead, I took a seat on a tall stool in the corner next to the open window and drank a big glass of water. Another fat old lady then came limping into the kitchen and called for the cook. Frustrated, the elderly woman quickly moved a few pots around, added some spice to another bowl, and then scurried out. Even though I hadn't eaten properly in two days, I wasn't even slightly hungry. I enjoyed simply sitting in that steamy atmosphere surrounded by hanging salamis, heaps of raw vegetables, and countless jars of pickled oddities. Looking at the stack of white plates with blue trim, I drifted back to the dinner parties of my childhood. Even when my parents weren't having guests over, the kitchen was always bursting with activity. I never minded helping with the cooking, however, I would do anything to get out of doing the dishes. Despite my best efforts, the cleanup was unavoidable, and as I had come to understand, one of the most

important parts of the process. Yet I always would resist it. Always the little troublemaker, and nothing had changed. Looking around the empty kitchen, my spiteful brain began connecting dots and creating new patterns. Where there was a true-will there was a true-way. I then focused on a huge basin full of fresh tomato paste. Ah, the classic Italian culinary centerpiece.

When I went looking for Reveka again, I discovered that the entire villa had been deserted. Room after room was devoid of those chatty old-timers. Maybe the police had arrived, and everyone was finally dealing with their group-denial. I was about to head to the front door and look for signs of emergency vehicles – until I heard a scream! It was muffled and came from a man. Then another shriek! They were distant. Coming from upstairs. More and more cries came seeping through the walls, and they weren't those of horror, but of suffering. Searching through room after room, I followed the moans. I grabbed an iron poker from one of the fireplaces and held it in both hands as the agonized voices grew in volume the closer I crept. On the top floor, I carefully opened some double doors where a wave of heat came out like a clammy slap to my face. I lowered my weapon as I looked down from a wide balcony into a ballroom of screaming nudists. It seemed like I had walked in on some old sex-cult consisting of wrinkled skin, sagging guts, and toneless flab. The space below was lit by thousands of golden candles, next to intricately detailed wall paneling and heavily draped windows. Staying away from the banister as not to draw attention to myself, I surveyed the oily crowd. Only the men were kneeling, facing in the same direction, toward the big painting with the black sheet still covering it. The painting itself rested upon an altar, like that in the church at the top of old Barga. Each of the women held lengths of thorny branches as they moved about the submissive men, striking them randomly. Unable to spot Reveka, I noticed that the old men all had hearty erections, and they were only whipped if they touched themselves. Then I saw the naked governess kick a guy right in his balls! He took it like a champion, so she kicked him again and again until he collapsed, soaked with sweat. I scanned the whole place, counting as I went. However, both Reveka and the kid were missing.

Leaving the old folk to their fun and games, I made my way down the main staircase. I was almost at the ground floor when I saw Fornacetta standing at the bottom. She was wearing a tiny white dress and long socks. Her hands rubbed her belly as she gazed psychotically up at me. I slowed my descent, while watching the kid lean to one side as her head tilted to the other. Glaring right into her unflinching eyes, I said, "If you get pregnant from what she did,

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

I hope you prolapse your fucking asshole while giving birth, and fucking shit yourself to death!”

“Who do you think you are, talking to a child like that?!” Reveka suddenly snarled from behind me. Continuing down the stairs, she smiled salaciously. She had a real incongruity between the aggression in her words, and the subtlety of her actions. Gently taking my hand, she led me down to where the kid took my other.

“Is this the part where you also try to beat me like a dead horse?” I asked sarcastically, as the kid smiled up at me. “Or are we fifty years too young for this party’s age of consent?”

“Please,” Reveka scoffed. “I’ve been masturbating since I was six. And besides, this isn’t even about sex.”

“What’s it about, then,” I hissed. “The cliché of power?!”

“Revelation!”

“You’re saying this really is just another backwater, self-congratulating fucking cult of doom?!”

“Truth is truth, whether you believe it or not.”

“Tell it to your social-media or someone who gives a fuck!”

Walking into another cozy parlor with the two females on either side, I watched as Reveka sat upon a velvet sofa, while the kid stretched out next to her. Reveka smirked, indicating toward the floor between her feet, as she sweetly whispered, “Sit.”

“You’re our pet now,” Fornacetta finally spoke up. “Sit.”

Scowling unadulterated hatred back at those two smug pairs of eyes, I slowly forced a grin through my long blonde beard, as I backed away, “Not tonight.”

Reveka instantly went sour, holding up her iPhone as she spoke, “You test us?! Fine. Be that way. Now you can take the blame for Doric’s death too! We have a dozen witnesses! You’re now a child-rapist and a murderer! Do you understand?!”

The kid knelt upon the sofa like a rabid animal, reacting excitedly to Reveka’s change in temperament.

“The police can easily be here in thirty minutes!” Reveka yelled. “Now you will sit! You will sit when you’re fucking told to sit! Do you fucking understand?! Sit the fuck down! Sit!”

All the formalities of suggestive control had completely evaporated in that dark little room. The underlying nasty brute of the female constitution had emerged with all its inflammatory intolerance.

“Sit!”

My smile faded, and the kid’s voice went shrill as she faked being choked, while Reveka held up the phone.

“Sit!”

An Italian man’s voice then came from the loudspeaker.

Gritting my fucking teeth, I reluctantly went down on my knees right in front of Reveka’s hostility – and then she chirped merrily into her phone before ending the call. Reveka leaned forward and began slowly stroking my shaved head, as my eyelids trembled with indignation. Stewing over this dilemma, I knew that Reveka had all the cards. She then leaned back and opened her jeans. Pushing them down, along with her panties, she whispered, “And now that you’re down there.”

Sexual reciprocation was part of the game, but for the first time, this felt like I was going to rape my own face.

Sinking lower onto the sofa so that her spread legs extended right out and around my shoulders, Reveka, licked her bottom lip as she stared at me. Her heels then hooked about the back of my neck. I pulled away at first, but saw her bi-polar eyes flinch with impatience, so I let her legs draw me in. That was until Fornacetta rested the side of her head on Reveka’s stomach so that she could watch up close. This was not what I had planned for this vacation. Reassessing my situation, I considered the possibility that I could simply overpower them both. Though, if one got away and alerted the others, I’d soon find out if their threats were actually a bluff. But I didn’t fancy my chances, so I bit the bullet and ate that cunt out.

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Less than an hour later, the whole gathering was dressed again and sitting around a massive dining table where the feast began at last. One thing everyone had told me about Italy was how extraordinary the meals were, however, I sat ignoring my plate as everyone else shoveled down the banquet with one hell of a worked-up appetite. Scanning the old folk with healthy color in their cheeks, I saw the harsh brow of the governess looking back at me. That was when I realized exactly how she had kept Doric trapped in this fucking place for twenty long fucking years. That would not happen to me! I still had a fucking plan!

Disgusted by the sounds of friendly laughter and good conversation, I got up and walked away. Glancing at Reveka, she didn’t return my look. I still didn’t understand what had happened to Doric, and why his death had been disregarded. These fucking people seemed to worship the guy’s work, and

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

yet everyone acted as if he hadn't died this very fucking evening. I wanted to grab one of the marble busts and bust its fucking head right through one of Doric's paintings, just to see if it would stir some kind of reaction out of these fucking people. But I didn't. I couldn't risk it. The house had all the leverage. I could merely bide my fucking time. But then, in frustration, I wondered how many times Doric had also told himself the same thing.

Soon, I reached the big double doors that opened into that ballroom that stank of human smut. The heat lingered, but the candles were out. All I wanted to see was the painting under the black sheet. Marching over to the altar, I ripped the linen sheet aside and held up my pen-light. Presented before me was a landscape of tall cliffs and thick mist behind a pale beauty with sickly skin. In the night setting, the shadows drew her into the dark, yet her nude figure seemed to glow. There was something about her skin that was all wrong. Leaning in closer, I realized that her body was like that of the surface of the moon and covered in tiny craters. A large black snake curled around her shoulders and stretched down to her feet. It had no head nor tail, and buried itself into the wet, rocky ground. Glancing at the bottom of the gold frame, I saw that it had the title, *Passing Of Onoskelis*. Doric had done better artworks that appealed to my sense of violent taste, and I was about to walk away – when I spotted a detail nestled in the painting's cavernous background. Stepping closer still, I counted 33 blackened figures. Maybe Reveka was right, and this was about revelation.

When I returned to the dining room, almost all the guests had passed out on their plates or fallen to the floor where they lay unconscious. There were a few that crawled haphazardly toward the door, but none made it before dropping upon their faces.

“You!” shouted the governess, as she tried weakly to stand. “You did this!”

Moving over to the other side of the table, I dug a spoon into one of the big bowls of tomato paste.

“You did this!” she screamed again.

“This,” I acknowledged, “This is what happens when your friends think you're into some fucked up shit.”

The governess slid back into her chair, as I held up the spoon, revealing a tomato-stained section of the Rohypnol paper. A square centimeter of that page was enough to knock out a grown adult through ingestion, but the drug could even be absorbed through skin contact.

Pulling Doric's roll of duct-tape out from my backpack, I spent the next



ten minutes binding everyone's wrists and ankles together. I then found that those tiny little Italians were easy to carry over your shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

Fornacetta awoke upside-down in a hole in the ground. An infernal chorus of screams filled the night air as flames surrounded while I crouched above that kid. Her legs extended up out of the three-foot-deep pit where she thrashed manically despite her hands still being bound behind her back.

"You are... You are ruthless," I conceded calmly, catching her frantic eye. "But you're also only meat!"

She shrieked like a vulgar little fucking piglet, as I poured gasoline over her face and then set her on fire! Standing back, I glanced into the next pit at the flaming monstrosity that had once been Reveka. I then moved into the center of that big circle of 33 burning pairs of legs and took a deep breath. This was what I called a great way to fucking relax!

Walking around the outside of the circle, one by one, I pushed the counterweights off the big stones, allowing them to fall into the pits, shattering the scorched skulls below! These weren't gravestones, but a method of execution! Lastly, I took the shovel and filled in the gaps with loose soil. It was hard work, but what a tremendous creation! Sitting on the ground in the middle of my new stone circle, it only took a few moments before the first entity appeared levitating above one of the three-foot-tall stone pillars. Then another shape appeared. And then another. However, it was the one that formed over the kid's charred feet that materialized almost completely. This was the most interesting development from this entire endeavor. Was it because she was the youngest, or the most deranged? Regardless, the devil floating above maintained a near tangible state of existence for the longest duration. It looked back at me with a calculating patience, and we both appreciated that I still had much work yet to achieve in order to bring them fully into this world. Practice makes perfect!

When those blackened devils all eventually faded into the night, something unexpected grabbed me! There was an intense pressure on my chest and back. As if something had reached inside and caught a hold of my spine. Whatever the force was, it was crushing like a father's violent hand, and I was lifted clean off the fucking ground! My arms hung out wide while every muscle in my body strained against the crushing force raising me up. My legs stretched straight down but my feet touched nothing. I must have been several meters off the ground because the view over the smoldering

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

stones was utterly rewarding. Their glorious screams still echoed throughout the surrounding valley, however, the gurgling growls of a hundred million beasts also swelled up out of that inexhaustible darkness. I realized right then and there that I needed to add these unholy voices to the sound-design of my short film.

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It was after 4am when I stepped back inside the villa, where I got out of the work boots and pulled on my Chucks. Washing up, I then went to collect my backpack in the dining room.

“Where is everybody?” David asked, as he poured himself a glass of red wine at the abandoned banquet.

“Glad you made it,” I said, taking a seat opposite. Grabbing an apple from a fruit bowl, I rolled it between my hands. “Really wanted to thank you for insisting I check out Doric’s work. Seriously hope he gets the recognition he deserves. Though, really is a little too late.”

“He already got all that he deserves!” David casually stated, pointing his fork at me. “His arrogance overstepped its bounds.”

“Was it you?” I slowly smiled.

David lowered the fork, while still staring back.

“How? How’d you do it?”

“HE ISN’T ALLOWED GUESTS!” David yelled in a demented outburst. “ANIMALS GET NO PRIVILEGES!”

Staring at the fork aimed in my direction again, I replied, “I was his fucking guest.”

“And you came too late!” David muttered, sitting back as he sipped his wine. “Where’s mamma?”

“How’d you do it?” I repeated, glaring hatefully back at that little blonde prick. “Just between us, artist to artist.”

Going back to his cold meal, David said quietly, “I just pointed his demons in the right direction.”

Sneering, I thought of Doric’s letter.

“Where’s mamma?”

“You didn’t do this.”

“You aren’t allowed to be here!”

“How’s that Doric’s fault?!”

“HE IS PROPERTY OF THE FAMILY!”

“He was.”

Wiping some source from his chin, David’s head swung awkwardly to

one side, as he said, “I didn’t think it would go this far.”

“It?”

“The reflection.”

“The fuck?!”

“The reflection!”

“Reflection of what?!”

“Where’s mamma? She’d never leave the house in such a state. Where’s everybody?”

“I did a terrible, terrible fucking thing.”

“Mamma!”

Throwing myself over the massive tabletop, I snatched a steak knife on the way, and then landed on that shocked young blonde! His plate of dinner smashed upon the floor, as I slammed my knee against his throat, and shoved my left palm into his face. Pinned down on his back, David flapped limply, as I spoke through clenched teeth, “I’ve been to every fucking place that Doric painted! I’ve fucking seen it all with my own two fucking eyes! Now let me show you what you’re incapable of perceiving, you blind, literalist fuck!”

“White devil!” David wheezed. “You’re a liar! A perversion! You’re no prophet!”

“A-fucking-men to that!” And I stabbed David in the side of his neck! Standing back, I watched as that snot-nosed piece of shit bled out like a helpless little cunt. As far as I could tell this looked like a murder/suicide situation. A neurotic guy goes crazy at a remote villa, kills everyone with occult undertones, and then cuts his own throat out of guilt.

As I walked out and shut the front door behind me, I heard the first rooster echo somewhere far below in the blackened valley. There, I paused and looked back at the villa and thought of all the nights that I had stood outside the building of the-most-hated-girl-I-knew. She’d look fucking beautiful crushed below a great big fucking stone.

-

A few days later, after some fucking around with Alicia, we strolled up a valley road to a tiny village with nothing going for it but an incredible view over the mountains. My legs had already adapted to all the hiking, but this journey took twice as long with a tipsy girl dragging her feet. However, I had to remember that I needed to keep up the appearance of having some shred of humanity as an alibi. So, I tolerated the superficial antics of supposedly romantic interactions. Glancing away from my pretty Czech friend, who was busy taking Instagram selfies in the setting sun, I found myself less attracted to

## Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me

her than I was toward the pursuit of devising other invocational experiments. In the long-game there would always be an endless supply of trophy girls, as well as sacrifices that had to be made. Despite the peaceful Italian vista, I saw through the very fabric of the corporeal and remembered what Doric had said just before I had left his studio after our first conversation, *“The world is not a transcendental womb, it’s a mindless gut, breaking us all down within a pitiless bile that fills the bottomless pit of time. As a painter, it’s my sole duty to unveil, without reservation, that one and only soul-destroying truth!”*

Bruce







SHORT STORY 22  
2019  
ROAMING PERDITION

DISCLAIMER:

*If you haven't got a soul, then what do you have to lose?*

FOREWORD

A WARNING

SUNDAY 10th NOVEMBER 2019

At midday, my doorbell woke me as a courier delivering a package that I wasn't expecting. Inside, I found a black satellite phone, and it immediately began to ring. An old voice then croaked into my ear, "Professor Samuel was found dead in Egypt this week. Drowned off the coast of Alexandria. The Norwegians will be coming for you."

The call ended before I had a chance to ask if I was talking with Mr. Grumbach, that miserable old prick from Switzerland. Standing in my pajama pants, I glared out the Venetian blinds at another gray sky. Why the fuck was he telling me about Samuel? I had hardly known that uptight cunt. Did Grumbach mean the same Norwegians that had chased Gabi and I through Oslo in 2017? And why the fuck would they be coming for me – now, after all this time?

Planet Of Zeus, *Gasoline*, slowly boomed throughout my flat, as I stepped closer to the white blinds and scanned the big courtyard with all its leafless trees. Fuck this! No one was coming! No one ever gave a fuck what I was doing! My eyes slowly turned to the left, down to the small clearing where I had buried 33 stones. Had my current obsession with stone arisen from Samuel's own investigations into Doggerland? Who the fuck was Grumbach and the Norwegians anyway? And how were they connected? For fuck's sake, I had only accidentally stumbled into their conspiracies, not even knowing exactly what any of them were after. It was all Chloe's fault for inviting me to join them on the North Sea. Sneering, I examined the expensive looking satellite phone, as I recalled that murderous thug Winstone. I could still feel how his fists had knocked the living shit out of me before Chloe had finally ordered him to stop. Speaking of which, who the fuck were those English assholes? Though, more importantly, what the fuck was written on that standing stone under the cottage on the Holy Island? And what had happened

## Roaming Perdition

to Chloe? Was she also at Alexandria, or still in Leicestershire?

### THE HOLY ISLAND FRIDAY 6th DECEMBER 2019

Walking past Christmas trees in every bay-window of that upper-class neighborhood, I slowly made my way to visit my old aunt with flowers in hand. She had only moved two streets east into this care-home, but in that crisp morning air, I was sad to think that I'd never stay at her house again. I would miss standing in her kitchen with a cup of Lady Grey, admiring her immaculate garden. And once she eventually dies, I would finally lose my only link to the fatherland.

My aunt seemed as comfortable as money could afford, but she admitted that she was fed up – with everything! Her own father had lived well into his nineties, so she might be stuck in here for another decade. Once there was no longer anything to live for, was it best to end it rather than linger around? But the body had a will of its own. Life keeps on going even after you had completely given up the desire to persist. An ex once mentioned, after staying at my old aunt's place, that she wanted to have kids with me, as she thought that I had some pretty good genes. She was probably right, and one day, I'll most likely be the one to see her and her offspring dead long before I reach the end of this mortal fucking cul-de-sac.

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The train leaving Edinburgh headed south, as Scotsmen cracked open bottles of champagne and made boisterous toasts to the holidays. Staring out at the overcast countryside of scrawny trees and scruffy hills, I patiently waited for the view to arrive. Soon enough, once the train reached the cliff tops, the North Sea stretched across the horizon with absolutely no indication that Europe even existed out there. Two years ago, I stood on the German shoreline, next to Captain Grant's lighthouse, with these exact same doubts. There was nothing out there! Yet, I had still crossed those seemingly calm waters like a fucking idiot!

Stepping off the train at the coastal township of Berwick-upon-Tweed, just across the border into England, I booked my tickets for the next day. I then ran across the street and checked into my hotel, before quickly jumping onto a double-decker. Continuing south, I was glad that I had done the appropriate preparations and made sure that I knew exactly when and where my transportation was leaving from. However, there were blank spots



in which no public transport could help. Therefore, I resigned myself to walking. The winter light wasn't the ideal circumstance. Looking at my map of the area, I compared my printout of the tide-timetable to that which was next to a remote road leading away from the main route. Beal was little more than a gas station in the middle of farmlands, and there was nothing to wait for, so onward I went by foot. The road was decent, random traffic past me by, and soon I crossed a train-line and climbed a hill. The sun had already set when I looked down to the distance where half a moon hung above the Holy Island. At a guess, from the time that it took to walk to where I stood, it should take another hour to reach the middle of the island. The race against the fading light once again brought back memories of chasing down the sun in Grant's fishing boat. While I glared out to that vast realm where the sea



had withdrawn, I struggled to justify my returning to this fucking place. I should have left this island to rot into the oblivion of the past. Yet unanswered questions insisted that I face even that which scared the shit out of me: those wide-open waters. Quickly disregarding any apprehensions, I reminded myself that I wouldn't be going out on the fucking sea this time. I should be long gone before the tide came anywhere near the island and completely submerged the causeway. That was the fucking plan! A thoroughly detailed plan. And I would fucking stick to it!

The wind was always at my back, pushing me on out toward the sea, but the faster I walked, the further the island appeared. For the first time in my life, I considered holding out a thumb and hitching a ride. But no! I was determined to walk it. When I had left the island two years ago, a local

## Roaming Perdition

had offered me a lift back to Edinburgh, and I'd slept most of the way. By walking, you gauge the real scale of a place. Time, though, wasn't on my side, as the light was evaporating more rapidly than anticipated. Onward I marched. Onward over the seaweed surrounded causeway. Onward, sweating and pigheaded.

By the time I set foot on the Holy Island, it was dark, and exactly how I remembered it. Long grass and black skies. I knew exactly where to go. Ignoring the small town to my right, I headed straight into the middle of the fields. I had wanted to visit the castle out of curiosity, but there was no time for trivial sightseeing. Through the grass I went, not once needing my pen-light, as the moon lit the place morbidly. While in those fields, I tried not looking ahead to the horizon. I didn't intend on stirring up any more memories of that thing which lay beneath the surface of the sea. At least not until I was back on the mainland. Unfortunately, what I went in search of was not to be found. Cursing the very fucking wind and that entire fucking island, I couldn't, for the life of me, locate that overgrown cottage. I was sure that I recognized the right cluster of trees, and my torch illuminated every anomaly, but there was no building with a thatched roof anywhere to be seen! I could still picture the cottage half sunk into the ground, but I began to wonder if the wet soil had finally swallowed it whole. Furiously, I stomped about, trying to retrace the steps from the village on the night that I had first arrived, but I was running out of time. My spotlight swept across the fields in futility. This was the right fucking place! So, where the fuck was the fucking cottage?! God damned this piece of fucking shit! I hadn't come all this fucking way for the fucking sea views! Where the fuck was the cottage with that standing stone in its flooded basement?! I began running to other possible locations, until I got close to the water's edge, and I knew that I was definitely looking in the wrong area. The cottage wasn't anywhere to be found! Thinking that I should have come earlier, I shook my head, for I could still see just fine in the brilliant moonlight – yet where the fuck was the cottage?! In disbelief, the only explanation I could surmise was that in the years since my last visit someone had torn it down.

Denying my thirst, I reluctantly turned and walked the fuck away. I had accomplished nothing! Fuming, I marched back onto the road with legs already aching. I had spent too much time searching in vain, and now I had two priorities: the incoming tide and the last bus back to Berwick-upon-Tweed. Making my mood even worse was the fact that the wind was now blasting directly in my face. Feeling mocked, I questioned if the cottage had

ever existed. I could understand someone rationalizing away certain visual distortions, but a building was something else. I had stood inside it and sat at the table. It was more than a simple hallucination. I had felt the floorboards on my face after collapsing from one of Winstone's beatings. It had been real! I had touched the monolith standing in the water-filled basement. It had been tangible! I had copied some of the Greek words from the stone inscription and translated them once I had returned to Berlin. I had evidence! The cottage wasn't just a figment of my fucking imagination any more than this fucking island! So, where the fuck had the cottage disappeared to?! I had wanted to photograph the entire text written on the stone, but instead, I was left with no recourse but to retreat. Out on that bleak causeway, I watched my moon-shadow, and sneered viciously, wondering if this was what the inscription had meant by, "*The less light you need.*" And then, checking the time, I found myself right in the middle of the causeway. I took a moment and turned back to the distant lights from the few houses on the island. Admiring the moon's reflection on the muddy shallows, I suddenly noticed how far the tide had already come in. A prolonged sense of primitive dread then soaked through my jacket, two hoodies, and thermal layer. I was out in the open and surrounded by the incoming water! It was calling for me. Off balanced by the raging wind, I lost my orientation for a few seconds in that saturating darkness. I quickly snapped out of it by stomping my boots on the asphalt! Stretch it out, motherfucker! And I marched on. Pick up the pace! And I pushed on, determined to get back on solid land and off that desolate path. Fuck Cetus! I was getting out of there, come hell or high water!

I made it back to Beal with twenty minutes to spare. Even though I had bought some professional hiking boots after Italy, my legs were still killing me. The pain, however, wasn't as bad as the irritation of wasting my time looking for something that wasn't even there. Yet, while waiting for the bus, in the lonely lights from the gas station, I observed how much darker the surrounding countryside now appeared. But there was nothing out there. Nothing for me. Nothing to fear. Just an empty landscape of worthless shit.

THE RUDSTON MONOLITH  
SATURDAY 7th DECEMBER 2019

After crashing into my hotel bed at Berwick-upon-Tweed, I slept like a son of a bitch and dreamed of Flavia from my short film. I awoke early and caught

## Roaming Perdition

the train south with my feet still throbbing. The sun began to rise as the train past the Holy Island that was now surrounded by the high tide.

A couple of hours later, I arrived at York, a quaint medieval city. I saw the statue of Constantine the Great, outside the cathedral and learned that this was where he had been proclaimed emperor. I had had no idea that he had ever come this far west.

The next train went east to Scarborough, and then I changed to another train, once more heading south to Bridlington on the coast. With a thick blanket of cloud overhead, I went in search of a bus station. The information booth was closed, so, learning from yesterday's mistake, I jumped in a taxi. The driver grunted about how my destination was definitely too far to walk. He was right. Rolling farmlands surrounded endlessly. Dreary fields with stone fences were accompanied by dense forests with jagged silhouettes. Then, upon the crest of a meager hill, the taxi suddenly pulled over to a stone church. The driver gave me his card before reversing away. I had the entire place to myself. A huge leafless tree loomed above, as I stared across the graveyard at that slab of stone standing right next to the eastern wall of the church. I heard both seagulls and crows circling the hill, while quietly approaching the biggest monolith in Great Britain. The closer I got, the higher my neck strained. This was what I had come to see with my own two eyes: the scale! The metal plaque in the ground at the foot of the standing stone, explained that the Rudston Monolith had been brought here in the late Neolithic period, 4000 years ago. There seemed to be nothing else around but abandoned fields. That was until I glanced down to the west and spotted a minuscule village below. Walking around that ancient church with its locked doors, I scanned the hills, wondering what was so special about this spot. There wasn't anything around. Why would anyone want to settle here thousands of years ago? What had brought anyone to such exposed isolation? Obviously, a community persisted, but my own reasons for coming were less than social. I had more experimental interests. Ever since erecting the circle of standing stones in Italy, I needed to know if size really mattered. Returning to the gate that I had arrived at, I noticed how both the church and monolith faced the east, though on slightly different angles. It was a common phenomenon, when the dominant religion of the day built upon the sacred sites of the past. You take something like the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, originally a Greek Orthodox cathedral, and then the Ottoman's convert it into an imperial mosque. There was no reason to believe that these re-associations would ever stop. One man's altar was another man's dinner table.

In the late afternoon light, I crouched down on the west-side of the monolith and took off my small backpack. Tucked between my extra thermal jacket and a rolled-up raincoat, I pulled out a small package wrapped in plastic. I removed the covering and held up a tiny glass bottle filled with blood. Taking off my leather gloves, I stood and pressed my left palm firmly against the cold stone. It was utterly immovable. The ultimate symbol of the



great indifference of the universe. Then a beam of sunlight cut through the church windows and lit up the stone above my head. If ever there was a sign, this was it. The image of the perfect female to bury beneath the monolith overwhelmed my mind, as I opened the glass bottle in order to pour the blood across my hands—

“Oi! You! What you think you’re playing at?!”

## Roaming Perdition

Clenching my jaw, as the gales shook the branches, I rolled my eyes beneath my sealed eyelids. Of course. Of course, someone had to show up out of nowhere just to ruin my fucking plans!

“I’m talking to you!” snapped a small man in a military jacket with shaved hair. In his mumbling English accent, he grumbled, “This ain’t no amusement park, sonny! The church is closed!”

“Just paying my respects,” I smiled hatefully.

“Come on, lad. You know that ain’t no gravestone.”

“No shit.”

“Ah, I’m messing with you!” the unshaven guy laughed, as he strolled on by. “No one gives a toss. Piss on the lot of them!”

Turning, I watched the guy light a cigarette. He then wandered down past the macabre church toward another huge tree where he stood looking down over the distant fields. I glanced at the bottle of blood but noticed that the patch of sunlight on the monolith had already vanished. The moment had passed. Fuck this! Tucking the tiny bottle into my bag, I placed both hands against the rough stone. Bracing my footing, I then pushed. I put all my weight into it, yet nothing! Straining as my boots dug into the damp soil, I pushed with every ounce of strength I could summon. But nothing. The twenty-six-foot-high monolith was unmoved by my meek existence. Standing back, I nodded my head. I then understood that the blood ritual in which I had planned to perform was an act of futility, for this stone wasn’t my work. It was an impressive monument, but it wasn’t mine. If I was ever capable of dropping a stone of such proportions upon the head of a sacrifice, what kind of devil might it manifest? Looking up at the top of the monolith, I wondered, if stone circles were the original temples then wouldn’t the ideal space be one made of finely carved obelisks? Yes! Bigger and more sophisticated. The ancient Egyptians had the right idea. Towering obelisks adorned in refined hieroglyphs. Symmetrical and focused! That’s what I wanted: 33 identical obelisks placed geometrically in the precise position around a circle. Each one dropped into place upon the screaming face of the most beautiful meat! Creating the conclusive shrine to an archetypal desecration.

Walking away from the church, I could already see the foundations of this endeavor in my mind. Almost immediately, however, I grew bitter upon the impossibility of building such a stone structure by myself. This new conception was beyond my capabilities. As attractive as it was, it taunted me. It was a stupid idea! Forget about it! But I couldn’t! I couldn’t just stop thinking of such an ideal creation. My previous occult experiments this year

with stone had all proven absolutely worthwhile. Yet what the fuck could I do now? Stick to smaller rocks like a fucking amateur?! If I couldn't build cathedrals to my own condemnation, then should I just baptize other pre-existing holy sites purely out of fucking spite?!

Frustrated, I looked ahead, down the narrow lane on the south-side of the church, as a gray Range Rover drove upward. I took a step onto the side of the road so that the vehicle could pass. It stopped, however. The driver stared back at me. Glancing around, I couldn't move off the road any more as the embankments on both sides were steep with shrubs. I thought that the Range Rover was waiting for me to walk past it, until I watched the driver get out. The passenger also joined him. Dressed in business casual, brown leather shoes, and fur-collared winter coats, the two men scowled menacingly at my presence. Watching them approach, I called out in disgust, "So, you're the fucking Norwegians!"

The two serious men then stopped in their tracks, both looking up to the right of me.

"Get away with you!" the smoker yelled out from behind the fence-line above. "Go on, fuck off now!"

Hesitating at this intervention, the two businessmen climbed back into their Range Rover and drove up past me as I slapped the rear window!

"Let them be," the smoker atop the embankment muttered.

"You know them?" I frowned.

"Know the type, I do. Just like I know yours."

"Of course, you do."

"One scrapper to another."

"I'm a lover, not a fighter."

"Don't kid yourself, lad."

Looking upward, I found that the smoker was already gone. Only the rooftop of the church loomed beyond the embankment. Shrugging off my self-important paranoia, I continued down that narrow country road. No one was looking for me. I wasn't being followed. Nobody gave a fuck about any of my delusional obsessions with standing stones. Whoever the fuck Mr. Grumbach and Norwegians were, they had nothing to do with me. But it would have been a nice surprise if those two cunts in the Range Rover were the same guys from Oslo, and had then gunned me down in the middle of nowhere. I could live with that. It would have been just fine with me. Better to end it right now, before life's inevitable lows came crashing back down on my idiot fucking head. However, at the bottom of that small hill, I came

## Roaming Perdition

across a crystal-clear creek, and realized exactly why Neolithic man had first settled here. Water!

Pulling out the taxi driver's card, I finally switched off airplane-mode on my phone and ordered a ride back to the train station. I was done with freezing my ass off. Grabbing my MP3 player, I felt like some Tool, *Tempest*, as I returned to the church gate and scowled at that monolith. Even when I found what I was looking for – I always had more to do.

### THE STAUNTON HAROLD CHURCH SUNDAY 8th DECEMBER 2019

Stepping out the front door of my hotel in Scarborough, I discovered that it was situated upon clifftops with a spectacular morning view out to the North Sea. When I had arrived last night, all I had seen was a pitch-black abyss that had struck at me with gale force winds. Taking a moment, I surveyed the distant ruins of a huge castle to my right, before dwelling on how there still wasn't anything on the horizon. There was nothing out there. Nothing out there for me.

The train took me west, back through York and all the way to Leeds. Changing, I continued to Derby, and caught a bus south to the rural town of Melbourne. Checking into a busy tavern, a girl at the bar ordered me a taxi, while I emptied half of my backpack in my room. The taxi then drove further south into the boundless farmlands under the gray skies.

Turning off the main road, the taxi went down a dirt driveway to where the sinking sun glistened upon a small lake and burned behind the battlements on the tower of the Staunton Harold Church. After two years of Chloe's nagging, at long last, I had made it here. The third and final stop on my journey through England. The elegant architecture of the church absorbed my attention as the taxi drove away, across the dam-like bridge that cut the lake in two. The charming woodland and rising hills were definitely worth the trip. There was something about the church that was undeniably enticing. I loved it at first sight. Old stone, excellent proportions, and framed beautifully by the leafless trees. Disregarding the private manor across a huge yard, I walked straight through the iron gate and faced the western entrance to the church. An inscription above the arched double-doors, stated that it had been founded in 1653. The doors themselves, unsurprisingly, were locked solid. Slowly circling the buttresses, I admired the revived Gothic style, with the parapets giving it a functional, castle-like appearance. Even the encircling stone wall



around the church seemed defensible for all practical purposes. Passing a doorway, that most likely led to a crypt, I took note of a brief statement written above, "*Mors mihi lucrum.*" At the east-end on the downward slope of the hill, I came across a locked iron gate through the surrounding wall. The water's edge was only a stone's-throw away. Moving up the north-side of the church, I returned to the front door and stared up at the metal crests on the pinnacles of the four corners of the tower. They shimmered in the wind and light rain, and the reflected sun gave off an impression that they were actually flames. Scanning the lichen and moss speckled church, I noticed sheep on the other side of the valley and began wondering what exactly I was looking for here. It was an exquisite piece of architecture, but so fucking what?! What was so god damned important about this fucking place that it had had Chloe



insisting that I hurried over to see? Maybe I should have e-mailed her so that she knew that I was finally coming. But I do love surprising people with unexpected visits. Yet I had set myself up for disappointment. I hadn't heard from Chloe since the beginning of the year, but then again, I had blocked her. Christ only knows what she was up to these days. She had probably moved on long ago. Like always, I was more than just a little late to the party. Objectively, this church was just as barren of answers and devoid of significance as the Holy Island and the Rudston Monolith. All it offered was a lovely view to a world where nothing mattered.

Wandering down the embankment, I glared into the murky waters, and then to my left where the driveway cut through the lake. I paused, however, once I looked to my right. The thickly interlocked woods seemed to absorb

## Roaming Perdition

the water at that end. Glancing at a locked gate with another ‘private property’ sign, I studied the south-end, especially a dead tree with three pale trunks. That was when I recognized that there was in fact a tiny island at the end of the lake. I crossed the driveway-dam, in order to get a closer look at the island on the eastern bank. It was that tree, that dead tree with three trunks that drew me closer. Its sickly bark stood out from the shrouding shadows of that completely overgrown island. I was again confronted by a fence and locked gate stating that beyond it was private property. Following the tree-line away from the lake, I soon found a wooden stile leading over the fence. No longer in the line-of-sight of the lifeless manor house, I ignored the ‘private property’ sign and marched straight into the muddy woods.

Reaching the edge of the brown water, the gap between the island and shore was too consistent to be natural. I got the impression that it was a literal moat. Slowly moving to the south, where the moat looped around, I peered into the blackened depth of the island’s trees and wondered if there was any structure hidden within. Continuing around to the church-side, on the west, I came across a thin gangplank walkway leading onto the island. I considered crossing – for about one second, before the mud on my boots reminded me that I took no pleasure from swimming fully clothes on winter afternoons. Hesitating though, I glared at the tight branches on the island and listened to all the rustling leaves. The sun then broke through the clouds, and my eyes were drawn toward the church. The stone walls gleamed golden against the black trees, and I left that island behind.

I liked this place, the church, the island, and the lake, but I had no fucking reason to stay. Whatever had motivated Chloe’s repeated encouragement for me to visit, was beyond my comprehension. While hiking up the winding driveway toward the main road, I pulled out my phone as I thought about e-mailing Chloe. I shook my head, however, instantly repulsed by the idea. Putting my phone away, I didn’t even need a taxi. I had seen all I had come to see, so could spend the rest of the evening walking back to the tavern like I had all the time in the fucking world. My flight back to Berlin left the East Midlands Airport at 11:55am tomorrow, getting me home with plenty of time before the private screening of my short film, *Nephilim*, at the Z-Bar at 8pm. I had already entered *Nephilim* into the Berlinale Film Festival, and if I received recognition from them, then it was a foot in the door for the American festivals. Everything was going according to plan. On top of that, I had even met a new girl, Zoe, who worked for a German TV network, and she loved it when I fucked her big, round ass. A few days before I left for the UK,

Zoe said that she thought she had known creative people before, but then she met me. But so what?! I had attained no great status! I had no influence! I had achieved nothing of significance! Only the devil had witnessed the atrocities that I had committed, the abominations that I had invoked, and the bodies that I had butchered. There was no recognition, no penance, and no fucking enlightenment for me. I was no one. Just another unremarkable sinner lost in these wastelands of hell.

It was then that something unexpected revealed itself in the middle of the hillside just off from the driveway. A small, stone pyramid! Frowning like what-the-fuck, I immediately stepped over the barbed wire fence and approached that small anomaly. It was the size of a capstone, about a meter square. I assumed, by the discoloration, that it was the same age as the church. Standing there, I looked down the hill, past the lake, and watched the sun set behind the trees. The angle of this little pyramid, however, didn't align with the church, reminding me of the Rudston Monolith's askew positioning. In the golden light, the pyramid inevitably brought Egypt, and Samuel's death to mind, and then I wondered if this was the omphalos that Chloe had originally mentioned. After spending all of a minute with that little pyramid, I knew that it could have been a monument to absolutely anything. Or, I could associate it with whatever random delusion that happened to fit the relative situation. Fuck this shit!

Climbing back over the fence, I then saw a four-wheel-drive come down from the main road. The breaks slammed on and the tires ground against the sodden gravel. The driver lunged out, stomping toward me as he snarled, "You little gobshite, I fucking knew it was you! Get in the fucking back!"

Watching Winstone approach, I still couldn't fully prepare myself for the brute force in which his fist hammered into my gut! Ah, how I missed the violent hospitality of the true British, and I gasped sarcastically, "You're definitely not the Norwegians."

"Keep your fucking trap shut, or so help me, I'll fucking crack you in two!"

Sitting in the back with an old guy on either side, I watched Winstone constantly sneering at me in the rear-view mirror.

"Yeah, it's him alright," Winstone grumbled into his phone, while driving back up the hill. "Fucking unbelievable!"

We soon crisscrossed the countryside, heading along the edges of empty fields with dark hedges. Those led directly into flooded areas where clumps of tall grass grew and were enclosed by more woodlands. Other fields had

## Roaming Perdition

forests and hedges on the horizon and eventually brought the vehicle to some kind of collection of hideous buildings. There were several structures around the central farmhouse, including stone sheds and corrugated-iron barns. A couple of tractors and trucks were scattered about, and even though I couldn't see any cows, the place stank of their shit. The guy sitting next to Winstone held a rifle as he got out and opened a wooden gate. The four-wheel-drive pulled into a compound full of massive puddles, and there we all exited the vehicle. No one said a word. Even that miserable sack of muscle, Winstone, held his tongue. Three men from the ruinous farmhouse gradually came out, and then Winstone shoved the back of my shoulder. A mean-looking guy in his fifties, wearing a sheepskin coat, came closer. He exchanged bitter glares with me, before grunting at Winstone, "This ain't no prodigal son!"

Winstone thumped something much more painful into my left arm, and I twisted furiously, finding that he too held onto a hunting rifle. The big farmer then walked across the compound toward another gate. The blunt end of Winstone's gun insisted that I follow.

The guy led me into the next field, and I was halfway to another cluster of trees, when I realized that Winstone wasn't even behind me anymore. My guide didn't appear to have a weapon, so I dismissed the sneaking suspicion of being mercilessly executed in some unheard-of neck of the woods. Entering the trees, it was imperceptibly dark. The sun had already gone down, but the overcast sky was still well lit, and yet no light broke through the branches above. My guide gave me a look of condescension once I switched on my pen-light. He obviously knew the track like the back of his calloused hands. It wasn't long before a dismal light emerged further along the path. The guide then grabbed my arm and shoved me ahead, into a small clearing of mud, thistles, and mangled roots. The place seemed to echo like a hollow cave, and as I glanced back, I saw my guide hunch and stumble away. Scanning the blackened trunks and contorted branches, I focused on the slight downward incline to a small pond at the bottom where a thick tree stump resided. A flock of goose then swept overhead. When I looked back at the tree stump, I heard a noise to my right. There, I watched a form emerge through the shadows. The shape slowly turned, presenting a disheveled old man with several filthy blankets draped around his shoulders. He was balding but his remaining hair, like his long beard, was a wiry mess. Looking like he lived out here, his face was covered in as much mud as he had wrinkles.

"How's it going, sunshine?" I chirped, though neither of us approached each other.

“Quietly waiting,” the old hermit muttered.

“For the miracle to come?”

“Waiting.”

Glancing aside, I resumed my advance toward the puddle in the center of the clearing.

“Waiting with her. The one you came for.”

With that, I stopped, glancing back at the stranger’s croaky voice.

He then held his hand up, and in his palm sat a human skull. It was missing the jaw and the left eye socket was shattered.

“The fuck is that?” I asked, eyeballing that bleached cranium.

The old hermit simply blinked manically behind his misty glasses.

Pointing at the huge tree stump, I snarled, “Fuck’s sake, then what the fuck is that, huh?!”

Again, the old guys lip’s fumbled but no words came out.

Shaking my head, I switched on my pen-light and aimed it at that big tree stump. It wasn’t the stump itself, but the stone that stood trapped right in the center of that cut down trunk that drew my fascination. Moving away from the hermit, I tried looking for a better angle, when my torch lit up detailed carvings on the top half of the exposed stone. But no matter how I pointed my light, I couldn’t make out any identifiable symbols or letters. The tree had to have been a thousand years old at the time that it had been cut down. It looked as though it had grown up and over this standing stone, totally encapsulating it. The fallen trunk was nowhere to be seen and could have been felled a thousand years ago.

Switching off my pen-light, I moved cautiously over to the anxious recluse. He held the broken skull against his chest, and coyly twisted his shoulders away from my scowl.

“May I?” I asked, holding out my open hand.

Carefully, the old hermit extended his arm, passing me the skull. “Her name was Chloe.”

“What?!” I snapped.

The guy flinched with a glint of terror.

Holding my breath, I let the old hermit calm down, while I myself dealt with the news. I studied the smooth skull, trying to picture Chloe’s scathing eyes judging me from behind her tense brow. First Samuel, and now Chloe, or perhaps she had died first. While rotating the broken skull in my gloved hands, I found a precisely chiseled line of text on the back side, “*Solve et coagula.*” Glancing at the tree stump in the dwindling twilight, I asked, “Is

## Roaming Perdition

this, this stone, is this what she wanted to show me?”

“The knucker hole,” the hermit stated.

“That’s what this is?”

“You were there. The pagans before the Christ. The lake before the church.”

“The church?”

“No.”

“The tree stump?”

“No. The knucker hole. The lake.”

“The lake by the church. That’s what Chloe wanted to show me?”

“The stone. The living stone.”

Squinting at the disjointed assertions from this filthy guy, I tapped my gloved fingers against Chloe’s skull as I looked at the tree stump. “Why don’t you cut the rest of the tree away so you can read the whole inscription?”

“It lives. Listen. Listen to it. The living stone. Listen.”

Clenching my jaw with growing irritation, I watched the old hermit muttering inaudibly to himself. The trees swayed as a breeze built up, but only the birds spoke to one another. Finally, I held up Chloe’s skull and asked, “What happened to her?”

“The knucker!”

“The what?!”

“The water! The water did it! She saw it! She did! The water! It came and left only fragments. Only fragments. Only her head.”

Turning toward the tree stump, I examined the dirty puddle. “Guess a worm didn’t warn her of that.”

“She was wrong again. Believed she could speak to the trees. But no. She couldn’t hear the living stone. She was wrong. Very wrong. She had no authority. The living stone kept quiet. She spoke falsely, and the trees denied her. All the trees denied her. And so, the island fed her to the beast.”

“The island in the lake? The lake by the church?”

“The knucker hole!”

“The fuck are you talking about?!”

“Water!”

“What about it?!”

“Water! The water! The knucker hole! Water! Water is the passageway! Why else is the Earth so precious! It is the water! The water! And if a knucker can arise through such a small hole, imagine what monstrous horrors the seas can birth!”

“Don’t need to imagine,” I whispered.

“She was... She is... Wrong. Very wrong about the island. And very, very wrong about you.”

“You saw it happen?”

“Told her not to,” the old hermit said, as he took a step backward before turning away. “But I did. I watched. Watched her being eaten.”

-

The moon lit the way across the somber fields back to the farmhouse. As I walked, I was glad that my legs had adjusted to all the hiking, as they always did by the third day. With Chloe’s skull in my backpack, I had still learned little to nothing. I was unable to get close enough to the stone in the tree stump to take a decent photo. Frustrated, I also knew that there was no way that I could get Chloe’s skull through the airport. Ultimately, whatever she and Samuel had been trying to discover, would never see the light of day. But what did I care? They had only ever tried to manipulate me. Their obsessions were not the same as mine.

Pausing in the middle of a field, I glanced back at the woods. Why should I believe anything said by these people? I had no idea who they actually were. The skull could have just been from some random person. How could I be sure of anything? Thinking of the interruption at the Rudston Monolith, I was suddenly annoyed that I hadn’t really put any of my theories to the test. If Chloe had been wrong, that didn’t necessarily mean that I was right, but I still needed to know. Looking at a puddle in the field, I knew that there was only one way to be sure about what had actually happened here.

As I neared the silhouettes of the barns and other buildings, I noticed how they were backlit by the headlights of several more vehicles in the compound. I stepped through the gate into that golden glow where a group of new men, all armed with rifles, came out of a barn and slowly surrounded me. Spotting Winstone to one side, I saw that he now had his own firearm aimed point blank at the back of his head. He merely scowled at me. Scanning the bearded gathering of unpleasant looking, middle-aged men, I had to ask, “Let me guess, you’re not the Norwegians.”

“Of course, we are, my boy!” an old Irishman smiled, moving between the others. “And you’re obviously a China-man!”

“Fucking traitor!” Winstone spat, before the butt of a rifle smashed into his face!

“What he tell you, then?” the Irishman asked gesturing toward the fields behind me. “Spill the beans, would ya.”

## Roaming Perdition

“Chloe’s dead. Samuel’s dead. God’s dead. Who gives a fuck?!”

“The professor?! The professor’s dead?! Samuel?!”

“So the Swiss say.”

“How?! When?!”

“Drowned. Few weeks ago.”

“You did it?!”

“Didn’t even know the fucking guy. And if you aren’t the Norwegians, then I don’t fucking know who the fuck you fucking guys are either!”

“What did he tell you out there, the soothsayer?”

“He told me...,” I whispered, leaning in closer. “That the Irish are the niggers of Europe.”

With a laugh, the old guy stepped to one side. A decrepit, even older bald man with massive white eyebrows, then hobbled over on a walking cane. His eyelids were covered with scars and held no orbs within. A bony jaw protruded so unnaturally that his mouth permanently gaped, and yet I couldn’t see a single tooth.

“Should stay out of other folk’s affairs,” the Irishman nodded.

“Where’s the fun in that?” I replied, while the blind man shuffled right up close and took a deep sniff of my jacket. Wincing in disgust, I hissed, “Merry fucking Christmas to you too!”

Abruptly, the blind man burst into deranged laughter!

The Irishman and this crew all looked at each other.

Even Winstone had a somewhat unsettled reaction to the blind man’s shrieking hysteria.

“Fucking Irish,” I smirked.

“Don’t have a clue, do you.”

“About what exactly?!” I demanded.

“Get the hell out of here,” the Irishman slowly spoke up, suspiciously watching the blind man stumble away toward the vehicles. “Go on. You get out of here. Get away with yourself.”

“Nice chat,” I sneered, glancing around that dangerous pack of men as I slipped between them on my way toward the main gate. “You all have a lovely fucking evening now.”

“Damned! Damned! He brings out the damned!” the blind man suddenly screamed, before collapsing to the mud, where the others rushed to his assistance.

Watching them crowd around, I continued backing away when I heard another shriek, “There! It’s in the trees!”



Once the gunshots began, I ducked and ran the fuck out of there! Twisting as I went, I saw men firing up toward the rooftops, but everything behind the compound was a total blackness. Though, I did see Winstone tear a rifle loose as he alone aimed in my direction. Sprinting to the side of the driveway, I raced for the nearby tree-line while that cacophony of gunshots thundered into the night. I couldn't tell which blasts were fired at me, but once I reached another wooden fence and threw myself over it, the gunshots soon fell silent.

Marching steadily, as the last traces of the sun faded, I followed the dirt roads back the way I had been driven here. Always glancing behind in case someone was coming after me. Most of the time I walked on the other side of a hedge, however, soon the road went through open fields with no cover. By the time I made it back to the main road, not a single vehicle had left the farm. Maybe they had all killed each other.

Reaching the driveway that led down to the Staunton Harold Church, I noticed how the moon seemed even brighter than when I had stood on the Holy Island. I walked across the shallow dam through the center of the lake, while staring at the blackness where the island hid in the night. Passing the church, I climbed over the locked gate and went directly to the wooden walkway onto the island. I took a firm grip of the rope railing and crossed the planks without hesitation. Ducking under the low hanging branches, I found that there was plenty of room once I stood within the trees. I watched my step as I approached the dead tree at the north-end of the island. The water looked peaceful and shimmered in the moonlight. Such a quiet place. The only sound coming from the gentle wind in the leaves. Removing my gloves, I opened my backpack and grabbed Chloe's skull – when my hand touched the tiny bottle of blood. How appropriate. Pouring the now black content over the white bone, I smeared it with both palms before I threw that fucking skull straight out into the center of the lake! Thinking of all the blood on my hands, and all the blood yet to spill, I watched the black waters splash and the skull disappeared. Good fucking riddance!

The ripples that spread were stronger than the impact should have caused, and almost immediately a huge shape glided just beneath the surface. Suddenly the lake broke open as a great black form rose in the middle of the water! Bracing my back foot, I clenched my jaw and fists, reminding myself: though I walk through the valley of death, I will fear no fucking water! Nothing like a surge of dread to get the blood pumping. However, I've seen beasts infinitely more alarming than this fucking dragon-like thing. Its neck was the thickness of an elephant's body and extended like a towering serpent

## Roaming Perdition

from the shoulders of a whale. While it surfaced, it craned its enormous head toward the church. It appeared to have one lower jaw that was longer than two upper beaks, with weed-like shit hanging from the underside of its massive neck. Such a predator could easily bite a person clean in half. I wanted to back the fuck away, but this knucker wasn't even aware that I was watching it. Of course not! Why would it give a shit?! Who the fuck was I?! I was no Saint George! I was a fucking nobody! But then my own cowardice was immediately replaced with self-hatred! It was my worthlessness that kept me here! I stood my ground just to fucking spite myself! "Come on then, motherfucker! Finish what you fucking started!"

That hideous beast abruptly swung its jagged head in my direction, as a huge limb rose through the water right in front of me! The meter-wide paw slammed down upon the island just to my right! The knucker lunged through the water, causing a wave to wash up and over my boots. Strangely, I found the wave itself far more petrifying than the actual devil that loomed overhead. Reaching out, I grabbed onto the central trunk of the dead tree. I had to steady myself. Every muscle drew taut as I consciously restrained my legs from running. After everything I had already seen, I couldn't believe that I was still such a fucking chickenshit. But I was determined to make eye contact with my own fucking destruction before it was too late, and I slowly raised my head. That daunting creature opened its enormous jaws while its long neck coiled back, as if it was inhaling before coming to strike me down. Delirious with terror, I slapped the fucking tree trunk! And then punched it! And punched it again – until a peculiar rattling came from above...

The knucker then pulled back even further, and so did I as I looked up to my left. There, on the upper branches of the dead tree, on all three trunks, were apes. Glass apes! These transparent entities clung to the tree, wearing partial plate-armor that was just as crystal-like as their long spears. I could see muscle and veins under their shiny skin, as they hung from the tree like real apes would. Counting nine of them, I saw three of these glass apes on each trunk. But they weren't apes, their eyes were on the side of their hairless heads. I glanced back toward the black dragon. It too seemed perplexed by these unwelcome, translucent guests. I took advantage of the moment and called out to the knucker, "Can you speak?! Are you more than just a fucking animal?! Do you even fucking understand what I'm trying to fucking do?!"

The knucker heaved to one side, as if repulsed, and then, in a continuous movement, sunk into the lake like a doomed ship going down with barely a sound.

Appalled, I sneered, looking up at the glass apes, yet they too had vanished! I stumbled backward from the water's edge, finding myself alone with the moon. The tiny island was silent. The lake was perfectly still. And once again, I didn't have a fucking thing to show for all of my fucking efforts! I am no one with nothing to my fucking name! I'm not even good enough for the fucking devil! What more did I have to fucking do?!

On the long walk back to the tavern, my despondence struggled to rationalize my failures. Perhaps I needed to work with others. Maybe I needed to join some kind of community that could support my work so that I might build bigger things. And yet why would anyone support my fucking goals?! My secret agenda was mine alone. There was no fucking lesson to be learned here for an idiot like me! All I had was what I'd always had. And I've always worked with whatever I've got – which was nothing but shit! I might not be able to build giant stone circles with idealized obelisks, but I could still incite monsters and desecrate gods in a million other fucking ways! Nodding to myself, I knew that I would soon have to pay a visit to Portugal.

#### AFTERWORD

#### A THREAT

THURSDAY 12th DECEMBER 2019

In the evening, after leaving the Museum für Naturkunde, I parted ways with my friend Jules, and pulled out my MP3 player's earplugs. I turned a corner on the winter streets, listening to Rammstein, *Puppe*, and shortly found a warm bar. There, I caught up with my reading of, *The Madness Of Crowds*, by Douglas Murray.

I had been sitting in the dim light of the bar for just long enough to shake off the chill, when someone took a seat across from me. Placing my book next to my coffee on the stiff white tablecloth, I looked up at a gray-haired gentleman in a suit and cashmere overcoat. He put a slender briefcase on the floor and glared at me from behind his rectangular glasses.

“Are you with the Norwegians?” I finally asked.

Opening his briefcase, the suit held up a tablet and proceeded to go through a slideshow of security-camera photos. “You recognize these images?”

“Christmas 2016,” I replied. “How's young Aviv doing these days?”

“Do you know who he is?” the suit asked, tilting his head as he glanced to his left. Behind him, at another table sat an older, fatter gentleman with

## Roaming Perdition

a beard. He too stared back at me. That was when I realized that the entire establishment was empty apart from the three of us. Even the waiter had disappeared.

“Nah, you’re not the Norwegians.”

“Concentrate, Herr Knox!” the very German suit insisted. “My colleague here, is a member of parliament, whether you’re familiar with his face or not.”

Crossing my arms, I sat back watching the suit’s tight-lipped mannerisms, and listened to everything he wasn’t actually saying.

“This man,” the suit said, indicating toward the tablet. “This man is Ludwig Lothar Heinrich, caught on camera with you outside the Alte Nationalgalerie.”

Patiently waiting, I examined the suit’s clammy flesh and swollen pores.

“He’s a person of extreme interest. We want you to contact Herr Heinrich. We want you to gather information about his business dealings. Specifically, where exactly his organization has been stock-piling vast amounts of steel. The kind of steel used in the manufacture of artillery.”

Glancing at the so-called politician at the other table, I kept my mouth shut, while making sure I memorized his menacing expression.

“We want you to work for us. Consider it reimbursement to a generous country that has taken you in, despite your shortcomings, for over a decade now. We understand, due to the Brexit situation, that you have received a permanent work visa. However, it would be a shame if your secure status were to be revoked because of some unfortunate calculation based on your unreliable track-record.”

My eyes instantly locked onto that cunt’s shriveled pupils. Leaning slowly forward, I grabbed both sides of the table between us.

“Here’s my number. Contact us as soon as you arrange a meeting with Herr Heinrich.” The suit then placed a white business card on top of my book. “And if you ever feel like informing Herr Heinrich about this little conversation... I’m sure you already know just how dangerous his organization can be... Look what they did to your friend after they left you that night in 2016.”

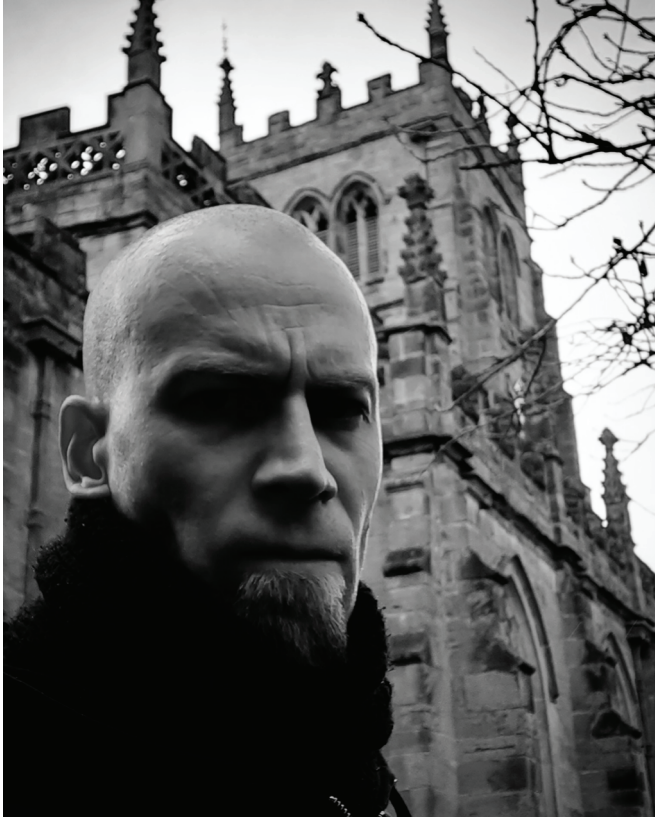
It took all my tolerance to drag my eyes away from that piece of shit, but when I looked at the tablet, it now displayed the burnt remains of two men in a snowy woodland.

The politician and the suit quietly stood and exited the bar together, while I glared at the BND business card in front of me. Fuck this! The moment the front door shut behind them, I rushed over to the window, pulling out my

## Bruce Stirling John Knox

phone as I took multiple photos of their black Audi. As the car drove off, there was only one thing that I could think about: if you could move large amounts of steel, then you could also move large pieces of stone.

Bruce





SHORT STORY 23  
2020  
ZEN AS FUCK

DISCLAIMER:

*Acceptance of rejection leads to rejection of acceptance.*

THE PLAGUE OF BERLIN  
SUNDAY 26th MAY 2019

*“There is a plague in Berlin that has been allowed to fester for far too long. His name is BRUCE. I wish that I knew his real, full name, but on Facebook he goes by Bruce Stirling John Knox.*

*In the one, brief interaction I had with him, he trivialized violence against women, and literal rape. His comments were unprovoked, intentionally cruel, and clearly for the sole purpose of his own twisted amusement.*

*After talking with just a few other people here, I quickly found out that Bruce has a long history of open misogyny, racism, body shaming, and downright INTENTIONAL CRUELTY... and this asshole calls it “art.” Even his close friends admit to blocking or unfollowing him on Facebook because they can’t handle seeing all the terrible shit this guy says, and how he treats others.*

*In the last 24 hours since my last post about it, (where I didn’t even mention his name), I have had MULTIPLE women, both in and out of Berlin, send me private and painfully written messages with their own horror stories about what Bruce has said and done to them. Each story that I hear is more gut wrenching than the last.*

*He openly and routinely uses hate speech and racial slurs. He has attacked female performers online, to the point where they have felt physically unsafe in real life. He makes what he calls “art” out of exploitative photos of women, used without their consent. He has displayed rapist and violent speech towards countless women. He intentionally degrades and demeans women FOR FUN, and then tries to exploit women FOR PROFIT. He is a mean spirited person that gets his kicks by trivializing, and even enjoying, the pain and suffering of others, mostly women.*

*Everyone that knows or associates with Bruce knows exactly what I’m talking about. And if you still invite him to events, welcome him to your parties or into your homes, or hold space for him AT ALL... you are, by*

## Zen As Fuck

*default, supporting his racist, hateful, and disgusting behavior. I want no part of him, and if you still associate with him, I want no part of you.*

*Now, here's where this gets problematic for me... I realize that he has been in this city FAR longer than I have. He has way more "friends" here than I do. He has a much larger social standing, and some sort of pull in the art community that I will likely never attain. He's been described as "good looking" and "charismatic." All of this means NOTHING to me. Personally, I really don't give a flying FUCK about any of that. A person that is shitty to people online, is a fucking shitty person.*

*I realize I will probably lose friends over this. I might even lose work over this. I. Don't. Fucking. Care. This man is a plague, and needs to be extinguished as such. If you chose to associate with this twat-waffle, you are enabling and supporting his shitty behavior. Plain and simple.*

*So here's the deal... I ABSOLUTELY REFUSE to work with, party with, or even socialize with, people that still associate with this man. Feel free to delete me, unfriend me, uninvite me places. Do whatever you have to do, but I want no part of him or anyone that can rationalize or excuse his behavior.*

*At the end of the day, we all have to be able to sleep at night. And if you can sleep at night while giving validation to a rape apologist, who uses racial slurs for fun, and intentionally degrades and demeans women for kicks and for profit... then I can't sleep at night calling you a friend." An American Christian.*

### THE DUTIFUL SERVANT MONDAY 9th SEPTEMBER 2019

It had rained all day, and while walking home from the studio, my phone rang. An unknown caller stuttered and asked for me personally.

"The fuck is this?!" I demanded.

The caller gave his name, which I immediately forgot, and then stated that he had been given my number from Mr. Bismarck.

"Fuck off!" And I ended the call.

A few minutes later, I was approaching my front door, when my phone rang again. A different unknown number. Glancing around the dismal streets from under my Japanese umbrella, I slowly answered. This time I recognized the harsh tone of voice.

Soon, I took a seat beneath the awning of my favorite local cafe and ordered a coffee. While staring at the intersection beyond the cluster of wet



tables and chairs, I saw a big black SUV pull up to the corner. Two men exited from the back and crossed the street. Standing, I shook Mr. Bismarck's hand, while he gave me the once over with his critical eye. He ended up focusing on my shoes, while I sized-up the other guy huddling below a huge umbrella.

"This, this is how I remember you," Mr. Bismarck said. "You should keep the beard this time."

I then realized that I was dressed in a black hoody under my jacket, just like when we first met back in 2012, so it was no wonder that he noticed my Chucks. We sat, but the scrawny guy in a loose suit stood in a neighbor's doorway. No one spoke, not even after the waitress, Aileen, brought out my coffee. I hadn't seen her in a while. Even though I had kept asking her to model for my art, she never showed up. As delicious as her ass was, my tolerance for everyone runs out sooner or later.

"There's been a death," Mr. Bismarck grunted, as he glared at the quiet traffic.

Looking away, I rolled my jaw. How typical it was of people to disassociate themselves from you the moment that their sensibilities got incensed, but once they shit the bed, they couldn't thank you fast enough as they led you straight to their stained sheets. But I was no longer in a position of financial instability. I didn't need their fucking money. And I didn't owe Bismarck, Caviezel, or any of these Slovakian pricks a fucking thing! Scowling at the balding guy hunched in the doorway, I sneered, "Who'd he kill?"

"Was natural causes," Mr. Bismarck replied.

"Yeah. Right. Whatever." I had mixed feelings toward Bismarck. It had been a year or two since I had last seen him. Though, somehow, I still had an inkling of respect for the guy, despite being certain that he had always wanted me dead. Or maybe that was the only reason why I had any respect for him at all.

"It was his grandfather," Mr. Bismarck groaned bitterly.

"That's his fucking problem, then," I replied.

"It is, but now it's become my fucking problem too."

"Still not mine!" I snapped.

Mr. Bismarck inhaled slowly, surveying the flooded pavement as the rain hammered down. "You're right. But you're willing to go places that most of us won't."

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It was after 9pm when I caught the U1 to Kreuzberg. Once I was standing outside an old building near Tempelhof, I slipped on some rubber gloves

before pulling out a yellow envelope with keys inside. Mr. Bismarck had written the address on the stiff envelope, including which floor I needed. Shaking my head, I didn't know what the fuck I was doing here. This was bullshit! There was no fucking guaranty that Mr. Bismarck would ever keep his fucking word. This was a trap! He was trying to get me killed or caught red-handed in some criminal act. However, I still found myself walking up the stairs to the top floor. It was simple in theory. He just needed some documents retrieved from the flat of the dead grandfather. Simple enough. If I did, he'd give me the keys to Mr. Schilling's old facility. He knew what I wanted, and that was all it took to get me here, but the rest of the story that he told was unnecessary. There was no fucking need to insult me with some fucking bullshit about a ghost attacking everyone that entered the flat. A ghost! A fucking ghost! Get the fuck out of here! However, the grandson had looked genuinely horrified when Mr. Bismarck had recalled the other men that he had sent in before me. None had returned. As if that explained anything! These cunts had most likely just run off crying like easily impressed fucking children. Fuck all these superstitious chickenshits!

I pulled out a couple of rolled up trash-bags from my jacket pocket, along with my pen-light, and then slipped the key into the lock. Once I opened the door, I immediately twisted away. I fucking hate the smell of rotting meat! Three dead men lay strewn in the entrance of the big flat. Taking a deep breath from beneath my elbow, my first assumption was poison! Judging from their attire, the three men looked like some of the Slovakian heavy hitters. Stepping over the bodies as I held my breath, I moved inward and then slowly pushed open a solid door into the dark lounge. With half of the curtains closed, it appeared to be the home of a wealthy old person. There, on an antique desk was the gilded box that the trembling grandson had described. Suddenly, my paranoia assumed that it could have been a bomb, so I wasn't about to open it. The next speculation came within a heartbeat, and I wondered if it was radioactive waste or some other elaborate means in which to murder me. So, opening the first trash-bag, I shoved the box carefully inside with the other bag. Looking around that stagnant tomb of a flat, my lungs strained for air, and yet I stopped where I was. I waited. I listened. I refused my need for oxygen. Switching off my pen-light, I gradually turned, scanning the open doorways leading to blackened corridors. I welcomed any poltergeist that might step forth and strike me down. Nothing revealed itself. No ghost attacked. No invisible forces clutched at my throat. No feeling overwhelmed my nervous system – other than that of nauseating contempt toward every

environment that didn't even attempt to fucking kill me. And if a human executioner that had been sent by Mr. Bismarck was lurking in the shadows, then they never revealed themselves either.

It wasn't raining once I stepped outside and removed my rubber gloves. Putting them in the second trash-bag, I used it to hold onto the one with the box in it. I then crossed the street and looked up at that building's pre-war facade. Shaking my head, I couldn't reconcile what had happened to the three dead men in the flat, and why it hadn't happened to me too. I moved away without lingering on the disappointment and headed toward the south-side of the canal where I followed it east. I was always at home walking down empty streets at night. Soon, I veered aside from the canal, knowing exactly where the border of my magickal circle lay surrounding Jessie's place. At Kottbusser Bridge, I took a right, and went straight to the Slovakian establishment at the back of a restaurant. There, two dumbfucks that couldn't have looked more rat-like, stood at the door into the next warehouse. I told them that I had a package for Mr. Bismarck, but the two cunts acted like they didn't know who the fuck I was talking about. They laughed and mocked me in their mumbling German slang, so I backed off, thinking about throwing the fucking box into the canal. On my way through the restaurant, a girl entered and tilted her head as I approached. She obviously recognized me, but I hadn't a clue who this pretty female happened to be. Just another prostitute I'd probably met in passing at one of these safe-houses. She, of course, knew Mr. Bismarck, and kindly took responsibility for the trash-bag. On my way out the front door, I facetiously looked back and told her, "Wouldn't open it, if I was you."

Two weeks later, after spending the whole Saturday working endlessly on the changes to the animation of my short film, I needed a break and went to meet an Irish friend for a late drink. I was just exiting the U-bahn station at Eberswalder Strasse when my phone rang.

Soon, a black SUV picked me up and dropped me off at an elegant, 1960's bar. It was completely empty as I casually stepped inside. Taking a seat at the bar, I saw Mr. Bismarck emerge from the back room. He stayed behind the bar where the dim light gleamed off all the whiskey bottles behind him, casting him in an even more ominous aspect than he already projected. "You listen to me, you vile little shit! Whatever plans you and that bitch concocted, you're both very fucking mistaken! Did you pair of stupid shits seriously believe that any of this would work?! You couldn't have! You couldn't have been that fucking stupid!"

I hadn't expected this hostile rant, and I was biting my tongue as to what exactly I was being accused of.

"You fucking idiots think you can out smart everyone else, do you?!" Mr. Bismarck slowly spoke. "I thought someone such as yourself would have known better by now! But you're just like all of these other fucks! Small minds with lame ambitions! Fucking unbelievable, all of you!"

Placing my hands on the bar, I leaned toward that livid old man, and asked, "What in the fuck are going on about?!"

"You fucking listen, and you listen good!" Mr. Bismarck yelled, slamming his fist onto the metal sink behind the bar. "You and that cunt fucking killed yourselves! You arrogant fucking nobodies! You don't dictate a fucking thing! Not to me! You understand, you fucking ungrateful shit?!"

Rubbing my mouth with my left palm, I wondered where this was going.

"You think that cunt actually gives a fuck about you?!" Mr. Bismarck said in a deeper tone. "A fucking whore! Then you're more of a dumbfuck than I gave you credit!"

Frowning, I suddenly wondered if he was referring to Alicia, the Czech model I had hooked up with last week. A sickly irritation then clenched my spine. Was she working for him? Had he paid her to fuck me? What kind of fucking twisted game was this fucking prick playing at!

"It's always the fucking same shit," Mr. Bismarck whispered. "You're all so fucking tough and full of yourselves, until someone breaks your fucking arm. She was no different. Blamed the whole thing on you. And why wouldn't she. She's a fucking whore after all! Are you fucking listening! She gave you up just as quickly as she would have betrayed you if your fucking plan had worked! Fucking idiots!"

"Who exactly are you fucking talking about?!" I frowned, slowly putting the pieces together.

Mr. Bismarck also thinned his eyes as we studied each other's reevaluations. He then thumped the sink and called out toward the back room. A bearded guy in a leather jacket shuffled into the bar holding a silver platter in his hands. The tray was placed on the bar between Mr. Bismarck and me. A decapitated head sat on it. The street outside was quiet but anyone that happened to pass by the windows could have easily seen the head on display. Curiously, I turned the tray so that I could better see the face of the dead girl. I had already guessed who it was: the cute little prostitute that I had given the gilded box to.

"Bad call," I smiled, placing the back of my hand against her still warm

cheek. “What did she ask for?”

Mr. Bismarck just glared back at me.

“You know there’s only one thing that I fucking want from you!”

The old man’s head wobbled a bit, then he eventually looked away. He could tell that I had nothing to do with this girl’s blackmail attempt, and he whispered, “Get out of my sight!”

Focusing on the pretty head on the silver platter, I sighed. I understood the one and only truth that mattered here: I definitely wasn’t getting Mr. Schilling’s keys tonight. And if not now, when?! Fuck that cunt! Standing, I snarled, “I sincerely fucking hope that you made her suffer something fucking obscene! And if not, then you should have gotten me to do the fucking job!”

THE PRINCE CHARMING OF PRAGUE  
SATURDAY 19th OCTOBER 2019

During a break between performances at the Prague Fetish Ball, I went exploring. I was walking up the steps from the main room toward the front door, when I spotted a couple coming through that crowd of extravagant guests. The girl wasn’t a day older than twenty-one and she had the most precious face that I had ever laid my judgmental eyes upon. Topless, her perfect figure wore only black lace panties, stockings, and heels. However, her chic choker was attached to a delicate chain-link-leash that was held by the hand of a fifty-year-old gentleman. The dom and his sad-faced-sub. He had short hair and a gray beard, black t-shirt under a black suit jacket, and gold wristwatch matching his disinterested demeanor. He had a trophy, and he knew it. They moved past me on the stairs as I went up for a breath of fresh air among the decadent individuals mingling outside. Removing my black military cap, I rubbed my smooth scalp and liked the cool breeze on my gaunt face. I had recently shaved off my beard after leaving Italy. There, my date had invited me to her hometown for this little shindig. I preferred the clean-shaven-look for these kinds of nights. Smirking to myself however, I wasn’t even thinking about my date, Alicia, but instead found that I was far more attracted to the new focus of this evening’s exploits.

A few minutes later, while waiting with the avant-garde partygoers at the overwhelmed bar, I turned to admire the bizarre and lavish costumes. Then, right next to me, stood the tall sad-faced-sub. The dom was ordering drinks, and she stood behind him like a puppy dog. I took exceptional pleasure from the sight of her perky tits and the gorgeous profile of her lips and nose.

Glancing at a giant drag queen accompanied by several guys dressed as ponies, my peripheral vision still noticed that the sad-faced-sub had turned her head in my direction. Despite grinning at others in gasmasks, leather straps, and oiled-up latex, my full attention was on the sad-faced-sub. I knew that she was studying me. Slowly turning back toward the bar, I gave her plenty of time to look away, but she didn't. My eyes scanned over hers, but I refused to acknowledge her, and I focused on the bar staff. She immediately began sweeping her wavy hair off her shoulders. Again, in my peripheral, I could see her back arch as she pushed out her adorable breasts. She never stopped staring at me – even when her dom twisted around and handed her a glass of champagne. I could tell that she was impatient for me to look back at her. The dom then stepped in between us. Finally, leaning my left elbow on the bar, I looked directly over the dom's shoulder and straight into the sad-faced-sub's exquisite eyes. Don't believe the vegan hype, we are all hungry predators.

Much later, after my date had done the catwalk in a latex-bunny outfit, she had disappeared backstage. Roaming the ball, I continued inspecting the flamboyant costumes of other guests and found them as entertaining as the erotic performances. Everybody wanted to be seen and seen with the most audacious look in the establishment. In Berlin, I had been to more than my fair share of burlesque and sex parties, but the standard of dress here had been kicked up to 11! While heading upstairs to the huge balcony that circled the main room, I passed the front door, and found the sad-faced-sub standing alone. She locked eyes with mine as I slowly moved closer. Her bare shoulders were hunched, and her left hand clasped her right elbow. Despite how busy the place was, she stood on the top step without a single person bothering her. The question was, where was her dom? Tapping the brim of my cap, I pointed my saluting finger at the sad-faced-sub as I passed her by – only to immediately make a u-turn and step right up into her face. She flinched with an expression of utter fright. We didn't speak, as I held out one of my business cards. She grabbed it without hesitation. Staring at it for about one second, she then popped the card into her mouth and ate it! Clapping my hands, I laughed and walked away.

I enjoyed the fuck out of the spectacle on stage, which climaxed with fire shows and double-ended dildo fist-fucks! But it had been a long weekend for my date and her ex-boyfriend photographer, so by 2am we sat chatting while watching two girls in latex pouring melted candle wax over each other on the empty catwalk. The photographer pointed out how they would soon regret

ruining their latex. Scanning the room, I spotted the sub/dom couple sitting in a corner with another pair. The sad-faced-sub kept her eyes down, and I noticed that she now had duct-tape X's over her nipples. I wondered if that was why the dom had left her alone on the stairs. Though, this seemed like an odd time to suddenly become prudish. Or perhaps she was the one who had felt insecure, in which case, he should have said fuck her and fuck what she wanted! But then, after all, that was the paradox of sub/dom relationships. Just like the illusion of exhibitionism and bondage fantasies: it's a lot of play-acting, but little follow through. In a sub/dom dynamic, ironically, the submissive partner was ultimately the one in control. The dominant had to obey the submissive's limits. Fun and games are one thing, but if I was trying to get off, then staying between the lines was nothing but a turn off. Girls might like to be tied up and teased, but why tie someone up if you're not going to subject them to your own self-interests. Date-night role-play was nothing more than shits and giggles! Passive dictators, that's all I saw subs to be. If rape, torture, and murder wasn't the ultimate goal, then you're just kidding yourself. Simulations of violence can be entertaining, but I wanted to see blood!

The sound of someone getting whipped distracted me, and I moved closer to the stage. A girl was bent over a bench where two topless men in gimp masks took turns caning her ass. My date and her ex gossiped with friends, while I found myself enjoying the girl's cries as the blood began to break through her skin. However, as much as I fixated upon the caning, I wanted them to whip her harder! I've seen these kinds of displays of pseudo-sadism many times before at kink parties. The guy would flog the girl for a prolonged period of time, but between each strike, he would reach down and tenderly caress her wounds. He would always make sure that she was comfortable. It fucking repulsed me! I saw it as no different than asking permission to beat someone. Just get the fuck on with it! I wanted to see blood! A lot more fucking blood!

Of course, there were some that went beyond theatrics. The real masochists. At the end of 2018, the Japanese-American girl from my Deutsch class had invited me to hang out at her friend's place one rainy Sunday. Her friend turned out to be an Italian witch who worked at a piercing studio. She then proceeded to hook my friend's back and hoist her up into a suicide-suspension. Then she tied her up in shibari ropes before practicing her kickboxing skills on my immobilized friend. Her screams of pain were only as awesome as the loud thumps from when the witch's shin slammed into her

gut! The most amusing part of the whole situation was the fact that my friend had assumed that I would be interested in witnessing such a display. The shit that people think that I'm into always astounded me. She had only known me for few weeks. But of course, she was totally right, I loved it. However, I wondered at what point in our brief discussions on literature had I disclosed any inclination toward cruelty and the condoning of grievous bodily harm. Unless she just liked to impress all of her new friends by getting the shit kicked out of her in front of them. Maybe it was just a test. I guess I passed. But of course, I did. I'm just a normal guy. A normal guy like everyone. I like normal things and see nothing more normal than loving the pain and misery of your fellow man. Nothing more normal than that.

The morning after the Fetish Ball, I awoke as Alicia left the apartment for her first shibari photoshoot. Once I connected to the Airbnb's WiFi, I received a notification that I had an e-mail from an unknown address. Suddenly wide awake, I sat up in bed and replied with a brief message, before jumping over all the latex outfits on the floor and into the shower.

With a take-away coffee in hand, I took a stroll into the nearby park. The gold and green trees made for a beautiful autumn setting, as I came to a spot on the ridge with a splendid view over the spires of Prague. I scanned the overcast city, while listening to Soulfly, *Prophecy*, on my mp3 player. It was one of those moments when I appreciated the chilled air, the tranquil surroundings, and my reasons for being right where I was. It wouldn't last though, it never did. But right then, with the taste of coffee on my tongue, I was glad to be alive.

She stepped up beside me, though kept her eyes down. Turning my head slowly toward her, I kept my shoulders facing that romantic view. Sofia, the sad-faced-sub, now wore a beige trench-coat, big black scarf, and black heels. Under her black beret, her long wavy brown hair flowed delightfully. Her pointy nose and desperate eyes were even more alluring than I could remember from last night. The way my brain reacted to such a sight was so intense that I couldn't help but notice the effect, just as I noticed how my erection began to grow.

"You're a prince," she said in a whisper.

"Charming," I replied. "Prince Charming."

"He'll know that I've gone."

"Have you even slept?"

"Not a bit."



“Rough night.”

“How could I?” she murmured, and we both looked out over that whimsical city. “He’ll catch us.”

“Yet here you are.”

“I shouldn’t be.”

“Exciting, isn’t it.”



She lowered her chin and pushed both hands into her deep pockets as the wind picked up.

I was about to suggest that we go back to the apartment, but I foresaw that fucking with her head would be far more arousing than just fucking her sweet lips.

“I want this to be over,” she finally revealed. “This. All of this.”

## Zen As Fuck

“Spell it out!” I demanded in a cold, greedy voice.

“I want it over with.”

“Spell it!”

“I want you to end it.”

“Spell it out to me!”

“Kill me, please.”

A hideous smirk stretched over my hateful face. Even though I doubted her sincerity, I crossed my arms and softly asked, “What’s in it for me?”

“Absolutely everything I have!”

My eyes drifted back to the endless steeples rising above the tiled rooftops.

“I have to go now!”

“Prove it.”

“He’ll know.”

Holding out my palm, I slowly said, “Come here.”

“I’ve been away too long,” she whimpered. Fear exposing her age through her childish tone of voice. And yet, she stepped up with her head down.

Reaching my right hand around the back of her head, I grabbed her hair while my left hand caught her slender throat. “Open your mouth and put out your tongue.”

She did so.

Slowly squeezing her neck, I licked her flat tongue and up over her top lip. Her sad eyes finally looked back at me, and I asked, “You trust me?”

“Yes,” she replied with more certainty than anything she had said before.

“It’s in your eyes.”

Instantly bitter, I smiled, “The fuck can you see in my fucking eyes?!”

“That you’re a monster.”

I glared at her and continued crushing her throat.

“You’re the son of Ares.”

Gradually releasing her, I utterly relished how she maintained eye contact even though she seemed about to burst into tears. I then reached into my pocket and held up two fifty-koruna coins. Rubbing them between my fingers, I said, “This is your alpha and this is your omega. Keep them on you always. From this day until the day that I place them on your eyelids.”

“He’ll know if I keep anything, anything at all.”

I pulled her closer while spitting on the two coins. Locking eyes on her, I drove my hand under her dress, into her panties, and then plunged the coins straight up into her asshole. Her gasping expression was divine, as I said, “Then keep them inside you! Always!”

“Whatever you do,” she whispered with her forehead pressed against mine. “Make it hurt.”

Savoring those words for a moment, I then told her my home address before saying, “Delete your message from this morning. Never e-mail or text or use any electronic devices. Only ever send handwritten letters. And when I write to you, burn them once read. Leave no trace of evidence. Do this, and I will gladly fucking end you.”

“When? When can you do it?”

Letting Sofia go, I simply nodded before walking away from her. I strolled the length of the ridge until I came to the grand cathedral of Prague. It was while I stood inside, at the center of the transepts, that I pictured a thousand violent methods of desecrating Sofia’s immaculate meat. And in the house of god, the great indifference of the universe blessed my malicious designs and welcomed her willing sacrifice as incontestably overdue.

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Two months later, the morning after Boxing Day, I woke in Mara’s bed for the first time in years. She had left for an early flight to Portugal for a seven-day spiritual retreat. Just before Christmas, she and her American boyfriend had broken up and she was clearly in need of some company. Giving someone a hug while they wept was something that I was always good for. Yet Mara had informed me that in today’s enlightened environment it was called ‘holding space’. Inventing new terms for old shit was a symptom of the young. And ever since Mara had gotten involved in her relationship, she had explored a world of tantra, psychedelics, and detoxing. ‘Hippie shit’, was one way of putting it – and I frequently said so to her face, and then we would laugh about it. Though, eventually, I admitted how proud I was that she was working on her inner self and how important it was to seek out her true-will. She appreciated me saying so, and then admitted that she would think of me while meditating on all the things that she was grateful for. I nearly puked in my mouth when she told me that. Recently, she had signed me up for a men’s group. She said that a guru was helping young men get in touch with their masculine-essence. My eyes rolled so hard that I think I blew a blood vessel, but I said fuck it, and agreed to go along. At this small gathering, I got to cup the balls of what could only be described as the dictionary definition of an ‘incel’ (an angry young guy still living in his mother’s basement, didn’t and didn’t want to work, and had never had a girlfriend). While cupping his balls, my other palm was pressed against his chest hard enough to feel his heartbeat. There, I asked him what his truth was as I looked him squarely in

the eyes. I had to ask this repeatedly. During which, I imagined Mara was hiding in the back room in hysterics while watching me on CCTV. Needless to say, the term 'holding space' now had a rather tainted association. Fucking incels!

A few days before Mara's break up, she broke down and told me how her boyfriend wasn't talking to her anymore. He said he was giving her space. Giving space, holding space, respecting boundaries, giving consent, having gratitude, opening yourself, and healing trauma. I was fucking sick of hearing all this tender fucking terminology. But once Mara mentioned how many thousands of euros her boyfriend owed her after they both quit their jobs and then partook in the lived-experience of *Burning Man*, I snapped. I snapped after months of not judging her relationship and all of her talk about being gaslit. I snapped because sometimes a fucking spade was just a fucking spade, and I said to her, "All this spiritual talk is smoke and mirrors! It's fucking piss in the wind! He's procrastinating! This holding space bullshit is just a good line to pick up chicks! What real hard fucking work has he actually done?! All this meditation that he claims to be doing is time-wasting and worse than masturbation! He should have his fucking head down against the concrete and smashing it wide open! If he hasn't completely fucking self-destructed after all this jerk-off meditation, then any break-through he has is nothing but a whim, and a whatever, and a who-gives-a-fuck! But he isn't down there banging his fucking head against rock-bottom! All his fucking soul-searching isn't facing his real fucking demons, and you know why?! Because he's a fucking pussy! A fucking American! All smoke and mirrors! Just like all fucking Americans! It's all about pretense with no fucking substance! He's a tourist! A spiritual fucking tourist! The proofs in the pudding! All these acclaimed new-age lessons are less of a priority than the quick fix of some hedonistic horseshit! Yeah, just put some flowers in your fucking hair, paint your faces, and dance in the wild pretending that civilization hasn't evolved out of a hunter/gather society! Yeah, sure. Cool, whatever. For fuck's sake! Living in a child-like dream-world might be fun, but it's funded by what exactly? Morons with more income than sense! These fucking first-world assholes can give up on personal hygiene and rub cheap crystals on their hairy fucking nipples, but that doesn't make them any more keyed-in on how to improve their juvenile behavior or narcissistic fucking thought-patterns! And if you can't get your flesh and bones material-existence in order, then what fucking hope do you have for straightening out your fucking soul! He's forty-six and he's pissed away his girlfriend's money like a trust-fund cunt

with no concept of what it's like to fucking starve to death! A fucking spiritual tourist who failed to apply anything that he fucking preaches! Or if he was in fact as in-touch and open-minded as he claims, then he wouldn't have left you hanging when it really fucking matters! Let's be fucking objective here: your relationship is doomed! Sounds like it's been doomed for a long time now! All of this over-analyzing every mood, feeling, and intuition is fucking retarded! And now bringing the topic of money into the equation is the deathblow to your doomed relationship! Money always worsens everything in a relationship! That's why I never borrowed a cent from you when I was fucking broke! For this exact fucking reason! Because it's especially bad if the guy owes the girl! The power struggle couldn't get more fucking obvious! So, here's the bottom line: you have to brace yourself for the real possibility that you'll never see any of that money back! He's been living beyond his means for forty-six-fucking-years so there's no reason to believe he'll change now! And you have absolutely no leverage! You should never have lent him the money when you yourself weren't even fucking working! But it's too late now! All you can do is prepare for the worst! Christ, it's so fucking obvious! He's just another fucking spiritual tourist! But hey, it works! It works being a fucking tourist! After all, you fell for it! What can I say, love is the oldest con in the book!"

Like that evening when I had snapped at Mara, this morning, I walked away from her place wondering what her ultimate agenda was. What was she wanting to gain from all of these retreats? I didn't know what her great work was, but I suspected that neither did she. There are so many lost kids struggling to find a path, instead of saying fuck it and forging their own.

Once home, I plucked a thick envelope from my mailbox. Wondering if it was from Wales, I flipped it over and found that the sender's address was in Austria. Two coins dropped onto my palm as I tore it open. Inside, a single sheet of elegant paper was signed by Sofia. It was her first letter and she already disgusted me! The sad-faced-sub was just another fucking let down! A piece of shit that had given up before we had even begun. The letter read, "*I'm so sorry. He knows!*"

THE IRREDEEMABLE SINNER  
MONDAY 30th DECEMBER 2019

After photographing Maddy as reference for my new series of art, *Three And Thirty Andromedas*, I went out for dinner. My new art was yet again something

that I found myself compelled to create. The seed had been cultivated in Italy, and then watered during my recent travels through England. I had no choice but to visualize that which I had envisioned. That which I wanted. That which had to be. On the way out of my flat, I checked my mailbox and found a small envelope. I slipped it into my jacket pocket without opening it, and walked through the neighborhood to a ramen place near Boxi.

Intermittently as I ate, I would pause and stare out at the cold wet streets. My short film, *Nephilim*, had already been rejected from the Berlinale Film Festival, and I still hadn't even told Maddy – the voice of the main character, but she didn't need to know. I had to remind myself that one rejection was natural. It was nothing personal. I simply had to enter more festivals, even though most applications weren't being taken until February. One rejection was to be expected. Though, I knew that no one else was responsible for its failure. Unable to finish my meal, I smiled, telling myself again that it was nothing personal. I then shook my head, resenting that I already had the definitive evidence that my work was entirely worthless shit! A wasted life! Every effort I had ever made in order to improve my situation had failed – consistently! And yet for some fucking reason I persisted. But why not! It was nothing personal! Nothing I did ever mattered or ever would, so why give a fuck about one rejection that confirmed what I already believed. It would be like giving a shit when some American cunt on the internet called me a misogynistic bigot – and not to mention a good-looking son of a bitch! After all, we hold these truths to be self-evident you self-righteous, Christian piece of shit!

While paying for my meal, I remembered the envelope in my jacket pocket. It was a short, handwritten letter stating, *“You have overstepped your bounds. My child is not to be thought of any more than looked upon. Recompense is due!”*

Signed, *Lechner*.

The return address was in Austria.

It only seemed fair that I should finally write a reply to Sofia's one and only letter – now that her so-called dom was making the most anemic of piss-poor threats.

While walking toward Mara's place, in order to check her mailbox and water her plants, a car slowly pulled up and drove next to me. Glancing at the driver, I recognized Mr. Slappy's sour face. I hadn't seen him in nearly a year, not since the last Berlinale. Next to him was the sorry-looking waiter from the ramen place. Mr. Slappy then spoke through the half-open window

of his black Mercedes-Benz, “There’s a client. One with a job for you. Needs it done fast. Clean. Tomorrow night. Eleven-thirty. Hotel de Rome. Do this, and you’re even with Mr. Cravat.”

He didn’t even wait for a response and drove away.

There would always be problems. Problems that needed to be fixed. It was nothing personal.

I had gone to a New Year’s Eve party in Prenzlauer Berg, but no one had answered the doorbell, so I took my time heading into Mitte. Creeping through the vacant streets from Hausvogteiplatz, I switched my phone onto airplane-mode, knowing that I was going to be right on time. As I approached Bebelplatz, fireworks shot above St. Hedwig’s Cathedral. The open court itself, between the Humboldt Library and the Opera House, was darker than usual as the surrounding lampposts were all switched off.

The woman at the front desk of the Hotel de Rome said, unsurprisingly, that there was a private event this evening. Members of the upper echelons of Berlin mingled throughout the lobby and the adjacent bar. Backing toward the double doors, I turned just as Mr. Slappy stepped up. That morose Chinese cunt led me directly into the bar. On the way, I glanced back at the girl with the guest-list who smiled as she watched me go.

A sixty-year-old Arab in a white suit and headdress, sat at a table at the far end of the busy bar. Two excellently tailored bodyguards stood either side of him. Taking a seat, I leaned away from Mr. Slappy as he stood right next to me with his back to the table.

“I am so very pleased to make your acquaintance,” the Sheikh spoke gently, as he nodded his head. One of the bodyguards then placed a small ebony box on the table in front of me. It was about 30cm square and 15cm high. The Sheikh himself placed a tiny brass key on top of the box, while saying, “I need her hands and her heart.”

Mr. Slappy then indicated that I should leave. While walking back to the lobby, Mr. Slappy handed me a room key and said, “You have no more than one hour. Take what he asked for. Leave the rest in the two suitcases by the bed.”

Upstairs, I unlocked the door into a nice suite where a small girl with beautiful Persian features looked wide-eyed at my unexpected entrance. I, however, had expected to find a dead body. She spoke in some language I didn’t recognize. I closed the door and sighed. She called out again while holding up her phone. With the black box in hand, I approached, but she

withdrew toward the bathroom. She looked more annoyed than anything. Dropping the box on the huge bed, I knew I couldn't let her lock herself in the bathroom, so I lunged! She raised both hands – which I grabbed and then immediately swung her around so that I could catch her in a headlock! I had been dying to test the sleeper-hold that I had once heard Joe Rogan describe on his podcast. With my right arm around her neck, my hand grabbed my left shoulder, while my left hand clamped the back of her head. Terrified, she thrashed out! I squeezed harder and lifted her clean off the floor. Her legs kicked into the air as her hands ineffectually clawed at my head. My grip was strong. Within seconds she went limp. I held on tight, and then caught sight of us in a full-length mirror. We made a great couple. Her feet hung loose as I carried her into the bathroom. Lying her on the marble floor, I then removed my black suit jacket, thermal layer, and tie, along with my white shirt and singlet. I placed them neatly on the bed, before pulling on some rubber gloves and returning topless to the bathroom. Once I had stripped the girl naked, I suddenly noticed how much she looked like Jessie – if Jessie had black hair. I froze as my erection grew. From that moment on, my perception of this female had shifted. Though she had much more developed hips than Jessie, her facial resemblance was truly fascinating. Was this the result of my encircling ritual around Jessie's home? Kneeling, I moved closer to her unconscious face. I listened to her breathe as I bit my bottom lip. How could she look so impossibly similar to the one that I had cursed? Scanning her nude body, I clenched my fists. Was this a gift? I was about to roll her over and inspect her ass – when she whimpered. The-most-hated-girl-I-knew didn't sound anything like this when she moaned. Picking the girl up, I laid her face-down in the big bathtub. She did indeed have a great ass just like Jessie's. But she wasn't Jessie! Unsheathing my knife from the back of my belt, I slit her throat! After the initial burst of blood, I continued to slice around her neck and cut her head clean off. Washing it in the bath, I put her head in the basin before cutting off both arms at the shoulders, and then her legs at the hips. While the blood drained, I went looking for the two suitcases. Opening them both, I found them empty except for several rolls of clear plastic-wrap. That was when I heard the fireworks go wild at midnight!

In the year of our lord 2020, my first act was to rinse the dismembered limbs of the unknown girl under the showerhead. I then cut her hands off and placed them in the basin. Wrapping her arms and legs separately in plastic, I filled the first suitcase with them all. Gutting the small female was easy, and as I dumped her mutilated organs into the toilet, I would glance at her gaping



eyes in the basin. However, removing her heart in one piece took as long as it did to completely disembowel her. The Sheikh's sentimental attachment to specific body parts was something I could accept, but it made my job a bitch. Feeling my way around her heart with my knife, I did my best not to damage it, but I was working blind. An eviscerated ribcage always had stiff, clingy chunks of cartilage that stabbed back at my fingers. Finally, the heart came loose, and I tossed it into the basin next to her pretty head and hands.

Washing out the hollow torso, I stuffed her head into the cavity of her womb before wrapping it up in plastic. The torso fit precisely within the second suitcase. I still had plenty of time, so I picked out all the little pieces of flesh from the bath's drain and flushed them away with any tissues that I used to dry down the bathroom surfaces. Finally, I positioned the girl's heart inside the black velvet interior of the ebony box. The hands lay on either side of the heart in an A-shape. I locked the box and put the brass key in my pocket next to the room key.

My stained rubber gloves were balled up and sealed in more plastic-wrap before I got dressed. The bathroom, for all appearances, looked as clean as my hands. Staring in the mirror as I adjusted my tie, I felt nothing. No one was going to catch me red-handed because I always did a good job. But so what. No one ever saw what I did. Never any witnesses. Just another secret. I remembered in early September, after one of my ex's birthday parties at a gay bar, I was walking home when I saw a girl unlocking her front door. Without thinking, I pulled out my knife and held it to her face. Once inside her flat, she was all mine. There was only one thing that I loved more than the sight of a beautiful girl with her throat slit, and that was a beautiful girl with her fucking head cut off while I sodomized her. I remembered trying to skin her dead body like my father had done with the rabbits from my childhood, but I fucked it up. And then I tried to locate her gallbladder while I gutted her but couldn't find it. I did, however, cut away the meat from both sciatic nerves in her hip joints, in an attempt to make her kosher. At one point while butchering her, I just stopped and sat on her windowsill, staring down at the silent Friedrichshain street. I remembered that I considered leaving her carcass where it was in the bathroom. Sitting there, I wondered what the reaction would be. Fortunately, prudence soon came back to me. I would never get caught as long as I completed the systematic-procedure. But then again, I really had my doubts that anyone would find me even if I had left the job half-finished. I understood that I primarily got away with it through pure anonymous impunity.

Placing the tiny brass key on top of the small ebony box, I sat down at the table and glanced away from the Sheikh. I could still hear the fireworks over the party. It had been thirty minutes since the decade had ended, and yet the mayhem on the streets would remain at its worst for at least another thirty. Scanning further down the bar to my right, I lost count of the bottles of Dom Pérignon, while the drunken crowds cheered throughout the hotel lobby at my back.

The Sheikh unlocked the shiny wooden box, opened it slowly, and then leaned in to kiss the contents. His bodyguards never once looked down. Twisting the key, the Sheikh then rested both of his hands on top of the box. He eventually spoke up in that warm, generous voice of his, "I am forever indebted to you."

Crossing my arms, I sat back, catching Mr. Slappy's eye as he lowered his head in acknowledgment. I was about to get up and leave when a thought occurred to me. Admiring the Sheikh's ghutra headdress, I quietly asked, "Say, have you ever heard of something called the Red Snake of the Pharaoh?"

"Should I have?"

Suddenly I was grabbed from behind, and my chair was shoved to one side! Some drunken idiot yelled out and violently slammed into Mr. Slappy. It was Jörg! He clamped onto my shoulders and snarled furiously into my ear, "Did you do it?! Did you?! Did you fucking do it?!"

In the next instant, the Sheikh's bodyguards seized the young man like he weighed nothing!

Jörg was then carried away kicking and screaming, "You're dead, you sickfuck! You're fucking dead!"

Standing next to Mr. Slappy, I watched the old Arab being escorted through the party by two other bodyguards, while Jörg was thrown out.

"He's not staying in that room, is he?" I asked, straightening my jacket.

"Of course not!" Mr. Slappy scoffed, while thumbing his iPhone. "This was merely a place of convenience. He'll be out of the country within the hour."

"And the suitcases?" I added, checking my white pocket square. "Who's handling them?"

Impatient, that serious-faced Chinese cunt lowered his phone as he walked toward the lobby, "Forget them! They'll be taken care of!"

I skeptically watched Mr. Slappy disappear into the party. While the bar tender wasn't looking, I tossed my plastic-wrapped rubber gloves into the trashcan behind the bar. I then found that I still had the room key in my

pocket. Scanning the party, I couldn't see Mr. Slappy anywhere. Wondering if Jörg was waiting for me outside, I stared at the room key in my hand. I had no idea what had gotten Jörg so irate, but reasoning with a bi-polar alcoholic high on speed while suffering an emotional breakdown, wasn't on my to-do-list for 2020. However, now that my job was done, I finally allowed myself to become distracted by how much that dead girl had resembled Jessie. I could just steal the suitcases and take advantage of the torso. Keep her all to myself. I remembered a few months ago, a guy walked into the flat where I was in the middle of cutting his girlfriend into pieces. His face went white. I stood up with my bloody knife in hand, but he just slowly fell to his knees. The front door was still wide open. He began weeping at the sight. I stepped aside as he crawled into the bathroom and cradled the carcass. He cried so hard and with such devastation that I also began to tear up at his pain. His awful, overwhelming pain infected me until I saw no other course but to put him, and by extension myself, out of his misery. First, I closed the front door. I then straggled him with a power cord while he knelt holding onto the dead girl. He never resisted. I then tied the cord around the upper radiator pipes in the bathroom wall and hoisted him up so that it appeared as though he had hung himself after murdering his girlfriend. However, I was dissatisfied by the interruption. So, I cut the girl's body in half and then removed her legs. I took her hips home with me in an Ikea bag and fucked her midsection before frying up a piece of her ass for dinner.

"Bruce! What are you doing here?!" someone called out from the front steps into the lobby. "So good to see you! This is perfect! We're one short!"

Pulling on my leather gloves, I stood still as the exhausted looking Englishman, Woodward, shook my hand vigorously. I couldn't recall the last time I'd seen Woodward, probably at one of the occult lectures run by his fellow Thelemites, but I asked, "How you doing, man?"

Loosening his long scarf and tweed overcoat, he nodded at the woman at the front desk right next to us, before he coyly said, "Listen, there's a private session this evening. Very exclusive. Problem is, one of the guests couldn't make it. Cancelled flight and all."

In no rush to run into Jörg, I glanced at the woman at the desk as she smiled.

"Thing is, there has to be a specific number of guests," Woodward muttered, fidgeting nervously. "For the ritual, you understand. The host's an extremely reclusive mystic from Bulgaria. He never does this sort of thing. But he's traveling through Europe on his way up north. And there has to be a

certain number of participants. His most avid disciples have paid huge sums for the prestigious honor of partaking in these—”

“The fuck is this guy?” I interrupted when I suddenly spotted Jörg yelling at the two doormen.

“Honestly, Bruce, I’m not allowed to say. I helped arrange the event here and was going to volunteer myself in place of the missing guest. But, you know, in all fairness, you know, I’m just not that advanced along the path for what’s required at these kinds of things. I’m really out of my league with these people. They’ve all had at least fifty years of experience in their respective fields. I’m not even a deacon. An administrator at best. Honestly, the guy, this mystic, he absolutely petrifies me. I met him briefly. He never blinks. Never! And I’m certain that he knows that I’m not initiated! Rushdie, his personal assistant, he’s a Sikh, an ascetic, he said, you know, he said that people have gone, you know, stark raving mad from the things that they’ve seen at these gatherings.”

Watching the party in the other lounge, I slowly focused back on Woodward.

“Listen, the missing guest has already paid for the spot. Everything’s set. Believe me, you’ve a fortitude that I’m ashamed to admit that I lack! You’d be doing me a tremendous favor. Honestly, of all the people I know, you, you Bruce, you can handle this kind of thing!”

Upstairs, Woodward knocked quietly on a door. Soon a forty-year-old guy from India, wearing a long white kurta, smiled and gestured for me to enter. I had thought that Sikhs all wore turbans, but his long hair was uncovered and loose. Woodward stayed in the corridor.

“You may call me Rushdie,” he said in a very pleasant manner. Giving him my jacket, we then sat on a thick rug that definitely wasn’t part of the hotel’s decor. The room had almost no furniture and looked completely different to the dead girl’s suite. Candles on the floor were the only light and a soft hum was coming from somewhere close.

“What is it you know of Ventsislav?” Rushdie finally asked.

“Not a thing.”

Rushdie smiled and looked down at his interlocked fingers and kept quiet.

Suddenly the idea of getting beaten to death by Jörg seemed like a more attractive waste of my time than any more of this holding-space bullshit.

“While studying Maimonides in Salamanca, Ventsislav was spoken to by a Zmeu,” Rushdie said calmly, with a tilted head. “The Zmeu came from the river and told of the City of Obsidian Temples. Told Ventsislav that he

must travel for many years to find it. Told him that first he must join the Scholomance, and there he would learn of the secrets of the City of Obsidian Temples. So immediately, Ventsislav abandoned everything and moved to Romania. Guided through the forests by the Zmeu, he was led to his new dwellings, an isolated place of learning. And just as the Zmeu had spoken, after many, many years, Ventsislav grew wise toward the realm of the unseen.”

Unimpressed by this vague story with places that I had never heard of, my gaze drifted toward something outside the ring of candles. There, small wooden carvings stood. Tiny idols of beasts.

“With the inhalation of a dimethyltryptamine extract, Ventsislav will guide the assembly to the first milestone of the City of Obsidian Temples. Once there, it is up to the individual to decide whether or not to pursue the mistakes of Solomon.”

“You’re talking about DMT!”

Rushdie tilted his head to the other side.

“A witch recently told me not to seek it out,” I whispered. “She said that when the time was right, it would come to me.”

“Why are you here?”

“To see!” I stated without a thought.

Rushdie smiled wider. “Why do you seek it?”

“So that it overcomes me.”

“Why?”

“So that I won’t return.”

“Why?”

“So that I’ll never be seen again.”

“There are dangers, even for the most pious. You must choose freely to step into the den of the cherubim. And when you are ready, you will find your place.”

I liked Rushdie’s soothing accent, and I couldn’t think of anything more intriguing than taking a hallucinogenic drug for the first time in my life in the small hours of New Year’s Day. Rushdie opened some double doors and I discovered that we had been sitting in an antechamber. The next room was twice the size, but just as dark and with candles surrounding the floor. There were seven rugs laid out in a circle around an old man who was sitting upon a pile of pillows. Ventsislav, I presumed. He wore a white tie tuxedo, and below his huge white beard a silver medallion hung on his big chest. Three men and three women sat on the rugs dressed in equally formal attire. With eyes closed, they were all meditating while chanting something in unison. Rushdie

followed and shut the doors behind, and then the heat from the room fully enveloped me. He waited by the doors, as I moved further into the space. There was also an inner circle of metal bowls that burned with open flames between the six guests and the mystic. I found a vacant rug on the far side. The pattern of the rug looked hundreds of years old, and yet when I sat down, the material was soft. Rushdie then moved toward the old woman sitting next to me. All the guests looked as old as the mystic. Not knowing the words to whatever they were muttering, I took note of wooden trays next to our rugs. A long black pipe lay on each tray accompanied by two tiny wooden boxes. One by one, Rushdie helped the guests lie down on their backs while he himself sung in a deep voice that sounded like a rattling drone. Returning to me, he supported the back of my head as I lay down. He moved away and slowly stopped singing. A few minutes later he came back and lit my pipe. All I knew about DMT was that you had to inhale at least three times. I had heard people say that the vapor of DMT was harsh and hard to take. But that's also what people said about cigar smoke in comparison to filtered cigarettes. From my experience, smoke was smoke. My head swam upon the second intake, but I took a third long drag as Rushdie held the flame under the bottom of the pipe.

My eyes closed and almost immediately I saw red cracks appear in the black. Red lines snaked across my vision until they crossed over each other forming a mesh. It was like I could see every blood vessel in my eyelids, but it felt like my eyes were wide open. The surrounding blood vessels pulsed vibrantly. I could see through them. I could see layers of these blood vessels. I could see that there was depth to it. Thousands of layers. While looking beyond the closest blood vessels, I realized that I was moving through these red veins. The space between the blood vessels looked impossible to move through. It was as if I was gradually zooming in with an infinitely powerful microscope. There was a forest of veins. Veins like vines. Red vines in the black. And then these blood vessels withdrew. Or I pulled back. The mesh of veins became the shape of a face. Not a face. The veins hung like a veil in front of a face. But there was nothing behind the veil. Until I saw the highlights of two eyes staring back at me. I withdrew further and found that I was sitting in front of this figure who was draped in gold. Gold hooded over the veil. The figure was solid like a cloaked statue and yet it moved subtly. The gold was smooth but also crystal-like. Everything had a sharp edge that shifted and reconfigured itself. The gold was dull and old, however, it still glowed as if hot liquid. This golden shimmer grew while we both sat with legs crossed and my hands on my knees. I too was wrapped in a gold

robe. The blood vessels pulsed as the glow increased. Our two robes seemed to be melted together. The gold also surrounded us like we were inside an undulating sphere. A golden ball. My back forming the wall, while the veiled figure sat with its back also merging into the edge of the encapsulating sphere. The movement of the gold orb formed patterns. Golden ribs stretched out from the figure like ripples. Ribs that shrouded this cocoon. All the while, a hollow sound murmured in the distance. The slow-moving ribs in the gold seemed to form more angular shapes. The ribs in the gold sphere then become translucent and gas-like. It was a sphere of interlocking halos. These halos morphed as they gently linked through each other. Burning in slow motion, each flame had sharp edges that fractured and created new halos that rippled outward. The figure, and indeed, I myself were also defined by multitudes of burning halos. And then something filled the space between the figure and me. More blood vessels grew into a free-floating mass in the center of the sphere. Darker flesh swelled with newly intertwined veins. Organs formed. Gray and discolored membranes slithered together. Rotating and growing, this entity swelled to about 40cm wide. That wet organic thing looked like a ball of nothing but twisting intestines. The other figure then reached forward. And so did I. My hands were gold. Glowing gold. Yet I could see through my hands. See through all my blood vessels. And then we reached into that organic mass and began pulling it apart. The more we pulled, the more it resumed its deformed integrity. It was a knot of hideous serpents. There was no core to this disgusting mass. And that was when I saw myself. I was now looking through the veil of veins. I was staring at myself sitting opposite. But I was also looking out from the mass in the middle. And at the same time, I was looking at the entire golden sphere from outside of it. I could see four points of views simultaneously. Yet my vision was perfectly clear. My attention was then drawn to what I could see outside of this sphere of halos. And I saw nothing. As bright as the gold glowed, there was nothing beyond. I was at the center of a bottomless ocean. I wanted to see more. I wanted to see further. More than anything, I wanted more –

But a scream opened my eyes! The heat stung my pupils. Disorientated, I was confused to find myself lying on my back. Once again, a subject of gravity. The woman's scream slowly faded to an echo, as I forced myself to sit up. I hung my head in both hands, blinking constantly as I heard deep, lumbering breathing. The closest thing I had to a cohesive thought was thinking that that wasn't at all what I had assumed a DMT trip would be like! Where was all that psychedelic hyper-space horseshit? Rubbing my

palms firmly against my forehead, I felt like I was coming out of a general anesthetic. But I remembered to focus on what I had just seen. What I had experienced. People had said it's like a dream and you tend to forget these trips just as quickly. But I was well rehearsed in retaining my violent dreams. However, that cumbersome echo of someone's breathing became more distracting. Each inhale sounded much bigger than any human lungs could bare. Twisting my head to the left, I peered through my fingers into the center of the circle. The old mystic glared back at me from his throne of pillows while sitting in the shadow of a giant lioness! Slowly lowering my hands, I blinked, wondering if I was still hallucinating. The animal was twice the size of a bull, and although it appeared cat-like, its hide was leathery and like a rhinoceros. Still breathing slow and sinister, the giant gray lioness then turned its carnivorous scowl in my direction. Those savage eyes gleamed just like the eyes behind the veil of veins.

"You have the scent of the devil," Ventsislav said, with the words drawn out and merged into one long exhale.

A shriek was suddenly joined by another! Two of the old guests stumbled away, fleeing from the room. Another scream howled as the final other guest also crawled back from the sight of the lioness! The doors slammed shut and the cries trickled away, as the heavy breathing from the giant lioness filled the room.

"You. You know. You already know," Ventsislav said, and began stroking the medallion on his chest. "You are of those mischievous ones. The ones that often disrupted my own episodes. The ones that appear in the guise of a guide. But you are no teacher. You already know these truths, and yet you do not share them."

Rubbing my eyes again, I cracked my neck from side to side, and then twisted around where I sat so that I could look directly at the old mystic. I coughed before angrily asking, "Am I still high, or what the fuck is that?!"

The giant lioness growled ominously and lowered its head.

"What do you think it is?"

"A really fucking big cat that looks really fucking pissed off!"

"A cat is what a cat is, regardless of what the English language calls it. So too, a Jinn is a Jinn, or Anubis is Anubis. Invocations give birth to even the unnamable. The act of incarnating is a wholly personal act. Your act is not the same as my act. Your invocations are not what I have summoned."

"How very fucking Taoist of you."

"Yes, you already know."



“Yeah, alright. Nice pet.”

“You already know.”

“Know what?”

“You know what.”

“Jesus Christ, this is some irritating circular shit right here!”

“And what do you know?”

“About what?”

“About everything.”

“Everything?”

“Yes, you do.”

“Are you fucking high?”

“Never more than yourself.”

“I don’t know, man,” I smirked, rubbing the back of my neck. “You sound pretty fucking high, to me.”

“What do you know?”

Glaring back at the old man below the looming animal, I took a breath. “I know that devils are real, and there actually is a fucking place you could call hell – in the English fucking language, that is. But so fucking what?! I also know that the Earth goes around the Sun, and the Moon fucks with the tide! But how the fuck does any of that shit benefit my fucking everyday life?! I know these tedious fucking things, but so what?! So fucking what?! Who gives a fuck what I fucking know!”

“What did you see?”

Clenching my jaw, I closed my eyes. “Gold! I saw a lot of fucking gold! So fucking what?!”

“You already know what it is.”

“Seriously!”

“You know I am.”

“Fucking spiritual tourism!” I sneered, clutching my forehead. “You give people mind-bending substances that distort the brain’s chemical receptors and warp the senses’ ability to process data while flooding the system with fucking endorphins! And then you call it a profound awakening for whatever the fuck! You interpret it into any-fucking-thing you want in order to blame it for the failures of your own meaningless fucking existence! Yeah, we’re all free. Yeah, fucking free to see whatever you fucking want to see! In doing so, seeing nothing of consequence! It’s all fluff bundled up in a ball of bullshit! There’s no great revelation! There’s no fucking breakthrough! There’s only delusion repackaged as self-determination! And these hordes of

spiritual tourists with their disposable incomes happily piss copious amounts of cash on fucking people like you for just a cum-shot of some sort of deeper understanding! These fucking vultures, gagging for the slightest taste of the cock that heals! And at the end of the fucking day, they're left with nothing but vague euphemisms that they choke themselves on while regurgitating these so-called lessons learned that have absolutely no practical application! Never a direct question answered! Never a solid solution given! Never anything but misdirection! And then you got the balls to call me a fucking liar! Get the fuck away from me!"

"See," the mystic smiled. "You already know."

"Go fuck yourself!"

Suddenly, with a tremendous roar, the giant lioness leaped and slammed a massive paw down upon my fucking chest! I was smashed back as if a tree had fallen on me. Pinned to the floor, I grabbed at the huge black claws as they slowly extended. My lungs emptied under the extreme pressure, and the lioness snarled inches from my stupid fucking face. And yet I gasped, "I'm ready."

Eat me!

I'm good.

I'm healthy.

I'm done with all this shit.

Eat me!

I'm fucking ready!

"You know that you're not," the voice of Ventsislav croaked, as he slowly walked over. "You know so many of these great things, and yet you do nothing with it. It is only through teaching that you become the wiser."

I wanted to quip, but my chest was crushed. The beast then shoved its paw down even harder – and it passed clean through my body as the giant lioness vanished right before my eyes. I felt its claws disintegrate within my very hands. It completely evaporated while I was in direct contact with that menacing creature.

"You have seen, yet you stay," the old man said, in that empty room. "And you continue to see, and still you stay."

Coughing as I gasped for air, I lay on my side, and then tried to sit. Ventsislav was heading toward the door, when I finally managed to speak up, "I've seen a lot of fucking insanity, but what the fuck am I meant to do with any of this shit?!"

The doors opened and the mystic turned back toward me as he said, "You

already know.”

I sat in the antechamber for a long time after that. Rushdie waiting patiently in the center of the room. It was like I was in shock. I didn’t feel like going anywhere. Didn’t feel like talking. Didn’t really feel anything. It was probably the lingering effect of the drug. I could still see the sphere of halos. I saw it perfectly clear. Those glistening eyes. The only question I dwelt on was whether my DMT trip was a vision of an actual spiritual place beyond this tangible world, or was it all a projection of my unconscious? Either way, was it trying to show me something important, or was it just more indecipherable nonsense? If nothing else, it had been a rather unique experience. The golden light had been so fucking blinding that it still hurt my eyes. However, whether its influence would lead me in a compelling direction was impossible to know at the time. At least that’s what I told myself.

“You’re a very fortunate one,” Rushdie eventually said, in the warm candlelight. “Ventsislav has struck others dumb for speaking in his presence.”

“Thanks for the warning,” I whispered, sitting with my back against the closed double doors.

“Beneath these polite platitudes of yours,” Rushdie softly spoke. “Is a vile wretchedness.”

“Very charitable of you.”

“You wear positive energies like the furs of an animal. It is effective. It is disarming. But strip these away, and there is a loathsome reprobate before me. I would not wish to turn my back on the likes of you any more than I would lower my throat to a pack of jackals.”

“You know, I’ve gone in search of wise, old men before. Except, apparently, in order to gain the wisdom of the wise, you must already be just as learned as them.”

“They reject you, Bruce, because they understand that you only seek to corrupt knowledge. You’re no fool. You’re far, far worse than a simple fool. You have experienced hidden mysteries that most will never discover. You have seen through the mire. You can see the things that even the most gifted choose not to look upon. You have observed the great wheel behind the cosmos. Yet you choose to harness that which would leave no quarter. Wise men reject you, Bruce, because they are wise. But they see wickedness for what it is: essential.”

“Do you serve the old guru, or does he serve you?”

“We all serve each other.”

“No. We don’t,” I hissed. “There are those so rich that they can own

enormous luxury yachts and never care to sail them. Those with armies of loyal servants just to wipe their ass. There are those with so much wealth that they can have anybody disappeared and not even think twice about it. Can you fucking imagine the type of people they can afford to pay when it comes to cleaning up much more serious problems? These fucking people serve no one, not even themselves!”

Rushdie tilted his head again, and in his calm state of being said, “Peace will come. It is right in front of you. Connect yourself to it.”

“You know, sunshine. The feeling of true disconnection is not one of loneliness or alienation, but that of liberated objectivity toward the great indifference of the whole fucking universe!”

“Peace will come, even to you.”

“Man, sometimes, you know, I wonder why I don’t just live a nice quiet life. You know why I don’t? Because the quiet is an insidious vacuum! A vacuum of relentless violence and perpetual insignificance! Only through the preoccupation of noxious agendas can you stave off the worthless nature of life itself! So, don’t fucking talk to me about peace! Peace is for cowards! I want more! More! Even if I could face god himself and he told me that the very meaning of life was simply survival – that still wouldn’t ever be enough! There will never be enough! Nothing and no one will ever be good enough! The moment one reprehensible achievement is resolved, an infinite mountain range of more will always arise! Always! Peace... Peace has no place in this fucking world!”

Rushdie continued his passive smile as he slowly bowed his head. “It would be an honor if I might drive you back to the airport.”

Walking down the corridor, I pulled on my leather gloves before plucking the room key from my pocket. To my disdain, I found the two suitcases exactly where I had left them. Those motherfuckers! Was this all a ruse to incriminate myself?!

Marching through the lobby, I dragged the suitcases behind as I glared at the woman with the guest-list. Rushdie had already driven up to the entrance in a black Audi, and then helped place the bags in the trunk. Scanning the empty court outside, I couldn’t see Jörg anywhere.

It was 1:30am when I was slowly driven away from the Hotel de Rome and switched off airplane-mode on my phone. During the ride west, through Tierpark, I tossed the room key out the window. I only wanted the keys that I was owed!

Rushdie silently chauffeured me to Friedrich’s house all the way out in the

woods. There, the young guys at the front gate wouldn't let me in. Besides, they said that Mr. Bismarck was in Slovakia.

An alternative solution immediately came to mind. We then drove to the nearest gas station that Google could find. I gave Rushdie the cash to buy several small canisters of lighter fluid and some matches. Like always, he kindly obliged. Then we drove out into the woods and off from the main road.

Rushdie stayed in the car, while I dragged the two suitcases through the dead leaves into a clearing between the winter trees. I opened the suitcases and dumped the dismembered girl on the mud. After dousing the body parts in lighter fluid, I burnt the remains below a blackened sky. I waited until the flames died down, and then I poured even more lighter fluid over the charred meat. Truly, I loved watching the girl's scorched face in the furnace of her own pelvis.

It was 3am when Rushdie drove me back through Zoologischer Garten. As we cruised past the ruins of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, I received a text from Zoe who I was still planning to fuck. However, she was too exhausted from working all night at Brandenburg Gate and cancelled on me. My phone then rang, and I heard Mr. Bismarck dictate methodically into my ear, "It seems that our friend Jörg has gotten it into his head that his prostitute-lover has been murdered. You know the one. The girl who was recently given responsibility for a box of very important documents. Documents that are still missing. Decapitation, you understand, is the trademark of a very rare type of execution. I do hope our friend Jörg doesn't make any impulsive assumptions. Now, you have yourself a very pleasant and peaceful New Year."

Even though I knew at that moment that I was never getting Mr. Schilling's keys, I still felt nothing at all. Either, I was beyond misanthropy, or I had finally become Zen as fuck!

-

Less than two weeks later, the morning after the dinner party leading into this, my forty-second birthday, I lay in bed stinking of cigars. I text with several girls at once. Some sent selfies and nudes. Some explained why they had been distant lately. And some made plans for our upcoming dates. But as for today, I had arranged other, more important things to do.

At 4:30pm, I caught the U-bahn into Kreuzberg, where I walked curiously back toward the shunned flat of the dead Slovakian grandfather. Sofia had received my letter and was waiting for me in front of the old building at 5pm. She wore a tight, black trench-coat and held onto an umbrella. Stepping up to that absolutely beautiful girl, I took her shoulders in my hands, kissed her

cheeks, and then whispered into her ear, “I want to share a truth with you.”

Sofia’s sad eyes stared up at me – and I punched her right in the gut! She collapsed, as I got out the keys that I had never returned and opened the building’s front door. I grabbed Sofia’s long brown hair while she coughed, and I dragged her inside! She tripped and fell backward, and I continued to haul her up that morbid staircase. Lashing out, she caught the banisters, but I yanked her hair harder! At the top floor, I unlocked the flat and found that the three dead bodies had been removed since my first visit. Only a big black stain marked the spot where their combined decomposition had taken place. The stench, however, lingered. I turned as Sofia got to her knees. With both hands on her adorable face, I spun and shoved her horribly into the depth of the flat! I both relished and was revolted by her expression of fear. But it was while I watched her lying on the stain, that I paid particular attention to how she gulped in deep breaths. The air wasn’t poisoned. Or at least not anymore. She crawled backward, and I loved the fact she wore knee-high socks and I hadn’t even suggested it. Following her, I slammed the door shut behind me and locked it.

Sofia moaned as she crawled further into the dark. The only light came from the lampposts outside of the few windows with the curtains open. Shadows overran the flat, but I could see perfectly. Sofia twisted and cried out, “What is this?! Stop! This isn’t what I meant!”

“Fucking meat!” I snarled, standing above her. “What you want has always been utterly fucking irrelevant, you weak piece of fucking shit!”

She screamed, as I raised my foot and then stomped on her face! I kicked her in the side and continued until she couldn’t make a sound. Taking off my jacket, I stretched my neck and rolled my shoulders, before stripping down to nothing. I took my knife from my belt, and then pinned Sofia face-down on the floor as I cut all her clothes off. Her panties were wet, not from piss but arousal. The smell was deliciously abhorrent. Once I flipped her over to remove the last of her clothes, she slapped me in the face! So, I broke every finger on her hand! Her shrieks were radiant. Slamming her head back into the hardwood floor, I stood up as she curled into a ball. I walked into the lounge, dragging Sofia by the ankle. She wrenched her leg free, and then I kicked her in the chest. Picking her up like a baby, I threw Sofia across the dining table! She tumbled over the other side and crashed onto the floor! The Austrian girl whimpered constantly, as I bundled her up again before throwing her against the wall! Framed photos shattered as her body smashed into them. I kicked her in the thighs, punched her in the mouth, and then lifted

her by the cunt and throat. Slamming her into library-like shelves, dozens of books fell, as I hammered her back again and again! I released my grip and she slumped to the floor, where I slapped and beat her about the head! My solid knuckles felt like the epitome of a naturally evolved weapon. I loved every impact that my relentless fists made against her bloody lips. She sobbed and flapped her one good hand in a futile attempt at defense, until I caught her wrist and face, as I said, “Told you so.”

Sofia shook her head as she looked up, and I punched her pretty fucking face even harder than before! Taking my knife from the dining table, I watched that frantic girl scrambled toward the corridor and run for the door. She still had a lot of life left in her. But she was going nowhere. Screaming as she found the door locked, she turned as I slowly approached. Sofia snatched picture frames and ornaments on shelves and threw them at me. Knocking the projectiles aside, I lunged! I grabbed her throat, moving onward, pounding her back into the door! She gagged, and then I stabbed her in the stomach! The way her eyes flinched in front of me was sublime. She finally seemed to realize where this was going. I stabbed her again and again, until both of our naked bodies were soaked in her blood. And yet still she resisted.

Slinging her over my shoulder, I carried Sofia back to the lounge. Her blood poured down my chest and all over the floor. I dumped her face-down on the dining table and bent her over the edge. Smothering my erection in her hot blood, I stabbed it balls-deep into her quivering anus! She screamed endlessly as I sodomized and stabbed her in the back! She lived through it all. Stabbing her harder, I fucked her faster! Her back was mincemeat laced with exposed scapular, ribs, and spine. Getting ahold of her hair, I yanked her head back so that we both stood. I then reached around with my knife and disemboweled her – right as I ejaculated deep inside of her hemorrhaging rectum!

MORE!

After Sofia rolled over onto her back upon the dining table, she began coughing up blood in violent spasms. She was one great big open wound. Looking up with those sad fucking eyes of hers, she watched as I held up the two Czech coins that she had posted back to me. Her scream was shrill as I pressed the coins against her pupils with both of my thumbs and then destroyed her fucking eyes!

MORE!

I then slit her throat!

MORE!

## Zen As Fuck

Even after her death, I continued stabbing every fucking inch of her slender carcass, rendering her remains tattered and torn!

MORE!

Despite having just cum inside of her, I still jerked off over her faithfully fulfilled desecration.

I WANTED MORE!

I hated what I wanted! I hated my attraction to her meat, and I hated what I had just done to her. I felt nothing but the divine contradiction. As I stood there, watching my sperm mix with that bloody mess, I slowly spoke out aloud, “You’ll never ever be good enough.”

Apart from taking a shower, I made no attempt to clean up, cover my tracks, or follow any of my systematic-procedure. I closed the door and didn’t even lock it. Walking away, I left the butchered meat of the sad-faced-sub to rot. If that shunned flat wasn’t haunted before, I hoped it was now.

### THE DECEIT OF PERCEPTION SUNDAY 12th JANUARY 2020

*“We suffer from a hallucination, from a false and distorted sensation of our own existence as living organisms. Most of us have the sensation that “I myself” is a separate center of feeling and action, living inside and bounded by the physical body—a center which “confronts” an “external” world of people and things, making contact through the senses with a universe both alien and strange. Everyday figures of speech reflect this illusion. “I came into this world.” “You must face reality.” “The conquest of nature.” This feeling of being lonely and very temporary visitors in the universe is in flat contradiction to everything known about man (and all other living organisms) in the sciences. We do not “come into” this world; we come out of it, as leaves from a tree. As the ocean “waves,” the universe “peoples.” Every individual is an expression of the whole realm of nature, a unique action of the total universe. This fact is rarely, if ever, experienced by most individuals. Even those who know it to be true in theory do not sense or feel it but continue to be aware of themselves as isolated “egos” inside bags of skin.” Alan Watts.*

Bruce



Bruce Stirling John Knox





SHORT STORY 24  
2020  
COMMITTED

DISCLAIMER:

*If I'm sick in the head, then everything is permissible.*

TUESDAY 14th JANUARY 2020

Had my first date with Arlene at my local cafe. Cute kid but I wasn't particularly attracted even though she clearly liked me. To the tune of Billie Eilish, *Bury A Friend*, she stressed just how excited she had been when I had contacted her again, despite ghosting me at the end of last year.

The same day that I had received the letter with the two coins from Sofia, I had gone into Mitte for some air. I ended up at a cafe in Prenzlauer Berg where I read, *The Madness Of Crowds*, by Douglas Murray. At 6:30pm, when I was paying for my coffees, the little waitress seemed distracted before asking about the book. A brief conversation about literature arose and then I asked for her number. Even when I've had an over-saturation of socializing, I would still pick up girls – because I'm a charming piece of shit! No one ever sees the devil when everyone's looking to sin.

Today, while chatting about everything but books, Arlene confessed that she was just another Berlin sub in an open relationship looking for some fun. One of those masochists controlling others through their own suffering. I smiled, listening contently as she talked about how she liked my 'energy' and how much she loved the idea of playing the games that I had suggested. There were, however, plenty of girls that talked about getting up to mischief but so very few of them that followed through.

Later, once I arrived home, Arlene sent me a photo of her standing in the mirror with her red pleat miniskirt hiked up, revealing her bare ass. Two days ago, on my birthday morning, I had text her, saying that if our date goes well, then she should go into the bathroom at the cafe and remove her panties. Yet she didn't tell me at the time. Fucking meat!

THURSDAY 16th JANUARY 2020

This afternoon, I took Mara and Hannah to visit our friend the Italian witch, so that she could tie Mara up in bondage ropes for a surprise shibari suspension.

## Committed

I admired how much Mara had come out of her bubble since we first met years ago. Watching her hanging in the ropes, I couldn't imagine that she would have ever even dreamed of doing such things back in the day.

We all went for sushi and drinks afterward. As the girls laughed and shared intimate moments at the bar, I recalled Mara telling me how she had never wanted to make it to this age. The body, however, had a will of its own. Or was that our true nature and everything else was just self-deception. We all made grandiose claims in the heat of the moment, but how many of us had the gumption to live up to those things promised to ourselves in the deepest despair.

### FRIDAY 17th JANUARY 2020

This evening, the twenty-year-old ginger from Leipzig arrived in town for the second time. I picked her up from the bus and took her back to my place where she pulled out her handcuffs, ball-gag, and butt-plugs. Gagging her mouth, and restraining her wrists and ankles, I bent her over my bed, pulled down her panties, and whipped her ass. Then, one at a time, I went through her butt-plugs, inserting them until the biggest one made her cry.

Annoyed, I smiled, and we got dressed before going out to see some of my friends across the city.

### SATURDAY 18th JANUARY 2020

I fucked the ginger when I woke up. Though, I saw no point in wasting my time with pleasuring a girl who knew she couldn't cum. We hadn't even kissed.

I couldn't stand sleeping with girls anymore. I hated sharing my bed with them. I wanted to sleep when I slept, and not deal with clingy females.

### TUESDAY 21st JANUARY 2020

Just before I left my flat for dinner, I heard the satellite phone ring in my drawer. I immediately asked this time if I was speaking with Mr. Grumbach.

"You're still alive," he said curiously.

"Chloe isn't," I replied.

"Why haven't you raided Samuel's home and all his research?"

"Why haven't you?"

Bruce Stirling John Knox

“What became of Chloe in the end?”

“Something ate her. Something in the water.”

“It’s always been about the water.”

“Yeah, and I want nothing to do with it!” And I hung up.

-

It was going on for midnight when Mr. Grumbach phoned back. “As Doggerland was for Samuel, the Storegga Landslide is for the Norwegians.”

I listened.

“Some, like Samuel, wished to know the truth. While others want to bury it. Why do you think Samuel was diving off the coast of Alexandra? There are consistencies to the myths of the global flood. Universal themes. It’s the water. Water that destroys. Just as the sun gives life. But what lies in the water? Great beasts that were set free with great floods. I have seen them. Many years ago. Seen them in Lake Van. Biblical beasts. If they are not appeased, then they will feed. The Earth will face another flood and the water will be the least of their concerns.”

“Yeah, that’s all very terrifying,” I sneered. “But what the fuck do these Norwegians want with me?”

“They want to let sleeping dogs lie.”

THURSDAY 23rd JANUARY 2020

While at Melina’s place for dinner with friends, I stood on the balcony. I looked down from the twenty-first floor directly upon Beuthstrasse, which



## Committed

had once been the ninth corner of the old, fortified city.

Over dinner, I noticed how cute Melina was looking with her tan and perfectly straight, blonde hair. During the humorous conversation, I pictured her naked and pressed against her big windows as I looked out over the Berlin skyline while sodomizing her.

### FRIDAY 24th JANUARY 2020

I invited Zoe to an Argentinian friend's gig at a small bar this evening. It had been over a month since I had last seen her for her birthday dinner, and then fucked her ripe ass the next morning.

After the show, we walked through Mitte where she admitted that she had wanted to see me more often. But she was afraid of attachment before she moved to Cologne in three months. We made out on the empty streets before I walked her home. Now I know where she lives.

### SATURDAY 25th JANUARY 2020

After watching *Jojo Rabbit* at the movies with Mara, I picked up Arlene from her cafe for our second date. On the way, I dwelt on the death scene of the mother in the film. You never truly know how your last interaction with someone will go before they suddenly die.

Arlene was ready at midnight, and we went for a drink at a smokey bar next to Helmholtzplatz. Once we were seated in old armchairs in the busy place, I asked if she had brought her first butt-plug? She had. I told her to go to the bathroom and slip it in. And she did. During our previous texting, she said that she had a set of four plugs. So, I told her that on each date she should increase the size of the plug.

I soon learned that she was half-Palestinian, and we then talked about travel and the holy sites of Islam. Even though she wasn't a practicing Muslim, she seemed surprised that I knew the five pillars of Islam. I smiled once she revealed that her partner was an Israeli dom. The metaphor of subjugation was not lost on her and it didn't need to be lingered upon. Her other lover was of no concern to me.

After chatting until the bar was empty, we both went to the bathroom before leaving. Kylie Minogue, *Slow*, was playing when I caught her on the stairs, grabbed her throat, and pinned her to the wall. Choking her, I refused to kiss her gasping lips. Instead, my other hand reached under her skirt, and

my fingertips found the plug buried in her sweet asshole.

MONDAY 27th JANUARY 2020

Once again, work at the studio had faded away, and in turn my bank account was draining in proportion to how late I was staying up every night. I couldn't sleep. Couldn't escape. Couldn't stop. There were so many girls in play, and yet I didn't give a fuck about any of them. That black giant outside my window stared at me sometimes, but that's all it did. It didn't have a face. Its head was like a broken boulder. I realized last year that it was similar to the giants I'd seen in Romania. Or was it something else? Why did it just stand there? What did it want?

I could now make the pale porous mass in the walls appear at will, however, when I did sleep, I could hear the holes echo with inhuman voices. Sometimes, I woke up and found that the east wall between the windows was made of slithering, intestine-like organs. Other times, I looked up and saw that every wall had become a writhing, organic swarm of tendrils. The shadowed figures and worm-bodied devils still watched my flat from a distance. They stood on the neighbor's rooftops and stared at me until I closed the blinds. Yeah, I get it, I need to build a bigger stone circle!

That night, I then remembered something Telford had said in Wales. That the Russian sect of the Khlysty had also attempted to bring hell into this world. But how did they do it? Telford had admitted that it had taken him years to find the Khlysty. As much as I would like to know where Telford had met them, I had no intention of ever contacting him again.

Although, turning my head, I suddenly remembered that I still had Marcus's keys that I had taken from his dead body.

-  
Less than an hour later, I walked up to that stone building next to the American Church of Berlin. I unlocked the front door and went upstairs. Cautiously, I opened the door into Marcus's apartment and found that the place looked exactly how I remembered it from December 2017. It definitely needed some fresh air. Sitting at the big desk, I switched on a small lamp. I was looking for the address book that Marcus had used when he first wrote to Telford. There it was, still among a dusty assortment of antique trinkets. Relaxing, I sat back in the armchair and slowly flipped through the vast number of contacts, finding more than what I was looking for.

## Committed

WEDNESDAY 29th JANUARY 2020

Met Arlene at a chic bar on Torstrasse this evening. She wore a black miniskirt, black crop-top, and black knee-high socks with heels. I told her to go straight to the bathroom and insert her second butt-plug, which she did without question. As soon as she returned and sat down next to me, I reached under her skirt and rubbed my fingers over the plug. Of course, she wasn't wearing any panties. I told her that on the next date I would join her in the bathroom and watch.

Over her whiskey sour, she stared hard into my eyes while we talked and laughed. She told me about the Fight Club event in the basement of Insomnia, where couples would wrestle until they both had worn each other out. I smiled, having never heard of it before. She liked to be beaten by her partner in front of others. After her second drink, I choked her as we made out in the busy place. She whimpered, pushing her throat harder into my palm as she wanted more. Her hands grabbed at my erection, but I refused to let her into my pants.

At midnight, as I heard Lorn, *Sega Sunset*, I said that it was time to go. Outside the bar, I hugged and picked Arlene off the ground as I squeezed her tiny figure. While she hung there in my arms, I whispered into her ear what I wanted her to do. I told her to go to a specific strip-bar in the west and befriend a certain Canadian stripper with red hair. I told Arlene to tell her that she was curious about becoming a stripper herself, however, was more interested in modelling nude for art – that should be enough to get on the Canadian's good side judging from her Instagram profile.

Arlene kissed me and loved the idea. She said that she would do anything I suggested, anything at all if it meant that I would fuck her violently.

I walked her to the train but never told her that the stripper was merely a steppingstone to Jessie.

The hope had been that dating girls again would have kept me preoccupied and quietened my hateful mind. It hadn't. Dating had only reminded me that I could only find meaning in desecration. I could only value other's lives when I valued my own. Yet as much as I tried to make my insignificant existence worthwhile, ultimately, I knew that nothing I did would ever fucking matter. Therefore, I only saw worthless meat, even when I gave it an insidious purpose that was beneficial to my own wretched goals.

FRIDAY 31st JANUARY 2020



Brexit officially happened this evening, but I cared little, so went to the movies and saw *1917*. Afterward, I took a walk across Museum Island and past the main university library. There, I saw Special BND Agent Schlenzig come strolling toward me.

“Are you tracing my phone?” I asked, wanting to know if it made any difference that I always had the GPS switched off.

“It’s the price we pay,” the lean German stated in his unnatural English. “Now, what do you think you’re doing exactly? Herr Behm informed me that you’ve been seen outside of his private residence on more than one occasion. This kind of behavior is not what we agreed upon. Your arrogance has consequences!”

I glared back at that suit, glad that my stalking hadn’t gone unnoticed. After all, politicians are easy to track down as a matter of public record.

“Wasn’t I clear about what’s at stake. Your life could become increasingly more difficult if the authorities in your motherland were to learn of your current location. Not even your British citizenship could shield you from those repercussions long overdue. Do I make myself clear this time? Do I?!”

Once I heard this threat out loud, I clenched down a growing hatred for this genuine enemy.

“Herr Heinrich will be in Berlin on Monday. He’s scheduled to arrive at the Lesesaal, Politisches Archiv at seventeen uhr. That’s the Foreign Office at 5pm. Be there. Talk to him. Report back to me. That’s all you have to do. And if Herr Behm mentions that you’re continuing to harass him or his family, then the consequences are on your head!”

As Schlenzig walked away, I recalled that ever since I went to Leipzig last December, I had wanted to talk to the Thule boys again. However, unknown to Schlenzig, I had no way of contacting them – until now.

MONDAY 3rd FEBRUARY 2020

At 5pm, I stood outside the entrance to the huge, curved building that was the Berlin Foreign Office. A black BMW pulled up right on time and out stepped Mr. Heinrich. He stopped and stared across the empty street at me. It had been a few years, but we recognized each other. Mr. Heinrich then turned and walked inside the huge building.

Fuck this shit! I marched off, aware that all I could do was make the first move and see if they would reach out to me. Though, I knew that they had no

## Committed

reason to. The idea of karma was for imbeciles. Justice was for idiots. And the fucking bullshit suggestion of finding peace of mind was for the most pathetic of fucking morons! We are all fucked and fucked in the head!

I ended up walking past multiple U-bahn stations, until eventually I found myself heading down the riverside with the Reichstag before me. That was when I realized the time. Turning back toward the Friedrichstrasse S-bahn station, I noticed that I was right next to the glass wall with the German Constitution written on it. I paused on Article 4 for an extended moment.

Something Alan Moore had once said then came to me, *“The one place in which gods and demons unarguably exist is in the human mind, where they are real in all their grandeur and monstrosity.”*

-

Later that evening, I met Arlene for a drink near my place. She told me how she had had a fun weekend with the Canadian stripper. They went to Kitkat together and danced and made out all Saturday night. Good. Gain her trust. However, as Thirty Seconds To Mars, *Love Is Madness*, came over the sound-system, Arlene confessed that she had forgotten to bring her third butt-plug. Irritated, I took her back to my place. I got her naked but refused to take off my clothes despite her begging. Choking her while she lay under my body weight, I told her that the next time she met the Canadian, mention an interest in learning how to paint with oils. Ask if the Canadian knows anyone that she could learn from.

### THURSDAY 6th FEBRUARY 2020

At 1:30am, as I walked home and approached my street, I saw a looming black shape perched upon the roof at the corner. A long serpent neck slowly turned toward me as massive wings cast a shadow over the night sky. I watched that god-sized vulture closely as I walked past. Endless piles of meat, that’s all I saw. Bodies upon bodies. Worthless masses of nudity, violence, and obscenity. What was one more whore in an avalanche of lecherous depravity? One more cunt to the slaughter. One more pound of flesh. Throw it all on the pile.

-

During the afternoon, Melina paid me a visit, but we ended up back at her flat.

It was going on for midnight when I left her high-rise apartment building on Leipziger Strasse. There, I spotted a black Jaguar parked on the curb. The driver gestured toward my left. Standing amid the nearby Spittelkolonaden

monument, Mr. Juggernaut waited. He was, like always, dressed in an excellent suit with an expression matching the stone pillars that surrounded us. We slowly walked the crescent colonnade as he spoke, "It's a shame that we're no longer able to work together. Your designs were of a superb standard, with some truly remarkable concepts. Unfortunately, none were selected for implementation."

A pang of disappointment was quickly replaced with bitterness. "Sure."

"You were seen by a colleague outside the Foreign Office. As if you were expecting him. That can't happen again."

Pausing in the middle of the pillars, we both stared at the obelisk in the center. Despite the situational reminder, I had suddenly lost all interest in inquiring about moving large standing stones.

"You recently visited the Völkerschlachtdenkmal."

Looking away, I remembered the ginger, her ass, and the banana at the cheap hotel in Leipzig.

"You have a rare appreciation for these historic testaments. Of course, you are familiar with the work of Albert Speer?"

Burying my gloved hands into my jacket pockets, I nodded.

"But what of Karl Friedrich Schinkel?"

"His buildings or his paintings?"

"And the Nibelung?" Mr. Juggernaut finally asked, turning to face me.

I had no idea and slowly scowled at this enigmatic individual.

"There's a path, Mr. Knox, through which you may find your way to higher ground. Before all this rain wipes the face of the Earth clean again. I, for one, have some measure of faith in you."

## TUESDAY 11th FEBRUARY 2020

In the small hours, I had had enough of working on my current series of art and yet I couldn't sleep. So, I went out into the night and found myself in the woods at Mr. Schilling's old facility.

The chain-link fence was locked, and the place was as blackened and abandoned as it had always appeared to be. The shrouding trees rustled with the lingering breath of a dying storm, as I tried to find a way over the fence.

I was eventually defeated and wandered back toward the distant train station. However, headlights soon came down that isolated road. A matte black BMW i8 with gold rims slowed down and pulled over. The driver opened his window and a young, fat guy with messy green hair looked up

## Committed

at me with a sulking expression. Everlast, *Ends*, played over the stereo as this young guy thinned his eyes and seemed to recognize me. It took me a few more moments to recollect that I had met him the day that I had returned from Turkey in 2017. Lev, this name was Lev. He offered me a ride back into town, during which he explained that I had been picked up on the property's security system. He said that these days they were using a crematorium closer to the city center. I asked who oversaw the new place, but he didn't know. Lev presented himself as tough guy with facial tattoos and gold rings on every finger, but his voice was softly spoken. He became even more coy once he abruptly asked what exactly I had done to get Jörg so pissed off? After a drawn-out silence, Lev added that Jörg had recently disappeared. No one had seen him in weeks. Everyone said it was because I had done something. That I had put the fear of god into him. That I had scared him off – which everyone was glad of.

I, however, knew better. Jörg was out for blood. My blood.

### THURSDAY 13th FEBRUARY 2020

Arlene came over to my place and we fucked for four hours. It was the first time that I had made out with a girl while having sex since – I don't remember when. There are girls that like to be spanked and choked, but Arlene was on another level. I put my entire body weight on her throat, and she sounded like she was having an orgasm from it. At one point I noticed the bite marks on her thighs from her partner, so I laid my teeth into her arm, like a dog pissing on its territory. However, despite her curiosity about trying anal-fisting, she couldn't even handle my dick in her tight ass. When the condom broke, I shoved her over my leather sofa and fucked her bare-back. I withdrew just in time to ejaculate all over her trembling spine to the sound of Tove Lo, *I'm Coming*.

I walked her to the train at midnight and realized it was now Valentine's Day. Arlene laughed, saying that she had never received flowers from anyone. I kissed her goodnight and said that she would today.

### FRIDAY 14th FEBRUARY 2020

That night, I took a red rose to Arlene at her cafe. She smiled shyly and had to work, so I didn't embarrass her anymore and I left with a wink.

I had other plans this evening. I bought another red rose and had my

Bruce Stirling John Knox

second date with another girl. A Russian who I took to a photography exhibition before our reservation at a restaurant. It was all a game, and I played it like a professional.

While walking home in the dark, I knew that I had seen god. God was in the endless emptiness of deserted spaces absent of another human being. I had seen god. The great indifference of the universe. I had seen god and god knew me. God knew that I breathed in the air of great atrocities. The worse the scale of the suffering, the stronger my lust became. Your misery made me happy because your pleasure made me sick.

SUNDAY 16th FEBRUARY 2020

After a friend's acoustic gig at Tiki Heart, Arlene and I walked back to my place. She told me about how strict her father had been when she was a child. The day she grew breasts, at fourteen-years-old, he removed her from all sports and immediately arranged for her to marry a nice Muslim boy. And this was in southern Germany. She refused to wear a hijab like her other sisters, and after her parents separated, she never spoke to her father again. She said that she had been in a serious relationship for ten years, but when she showed interest in trying something kinky, her boyfriend went and cheated on her! That was a year ago, and then she moved to Berlin and got involved with her current partner. He would beat the living shit out of her in the name of bondage and discipline, and she loved him for it. She said that those in traditional, monogamous relationships were resentful because of how boring they found their own sex-life, while they still advocated that their very lifestyle was the only way to stay healthy. Arlene saw it as the only way that they rationalized their dissatisfaction. I listened without comment before asking about her progress with the Canadian stripper. However, she had made no more efforts in that regard. So, looking away, I knew that her tight ass was definitely going to take my erection balls-deep tonight no matter how much she claimed that it hurt. After all, she had just gone into graphic detail about how much she got off on the pain. I'll put that to the fucking test!

Except, once we arrived at my place, Arlene received a call from an old university friend. She was having a breakdown, so Arlene needed to go and keep her company.

I watched her leave, and then picked up Marcus's address book. Listening to Odonis Odonis, *Collector*; I flipped through the neat pages. One person of interest stood out: a professor at the German Historical Museum. Perhaps he

## Committed

could make a connection between German architects and the Nibelung. I had no idea what I was meant to be looking for, or even if Mr. Juggernaut was simply mocking me.

It felt like I was tied to a crucifix on a bleak coastline, watching as the tide came crashing in. There was nothing I could do. Just watch, wait, and pretend that I was doing fine. But ultimately, I knew that I was a fucking idiot playing with my own shit while muttering gibberish about delusions that no one gave a fuck about. They say the more experience you have, then the more responsibility you get, and that perseverance leads to success. Wrong! Arlene was right. Only fools believed in meritocracy in order to satisfy their own shortcomings.

WEDNESDAY 19th FEBRUARY 2020

Arlene cancelled on me once again without a reason, and I couldn't continue with any more art until I found a girl with time to model for the next picture.

Too pissed off to stay inside, I called Lev.

He picked me up and once we drove off, I told him to head to Jörg's place. Lev hesitated before asking where exactly Jörg lived? I just glared out my window at the wet streets. Lev made a couple of calls, and soon I cranked up Hatebreed, *Looking Down The Barrel Of Today*, on the stereo as we ventured westward to Charlottenburg. I was sick of waiting. Waiting for everyone. I wanted Jörg to beat me to death, so that I could get on with my fucking life. The thing is, paranoia only worked if you believed that they were all out to get you. But the reality was no one was after me. I was inconsequential. All the threats that I had heard were of no substance. I called their bluffs and give no fucks. And, in turn, I proved my own worthlessness.

Lev suddenly had some bullshit excuse about helping with a new shipment of girls, and he had to go. I stood on the curb next to one of Jörg's cars and watched as that little chickenshit fucked off. It was a nice building with an elegant facade. As I pressed the doorbell, an old woman exited the front door. Making my way upstairs, I found Jörg's apartment on the top floor. The door was unlocked of course, and as I pushed it open, I knocked. I stepped inside that penthouse and found that it stank of unwashed clothes and stale air. Removing my knife, I placed it on the kitchen bench to my right. I didn't want to stand even the slightest chance against that young Belarusian's outrage. However, after searching the big apartment, I found no one home. How fucking typical.

While sitting on a kitchen stool in the dark, I considered hanging myself from the exposed beams in the attic like ceiling. But I suddenly realized that I would then have fully become Mr. Schilling.

There were lines of cocaine and white pills on the big dining table. In the center of the drugs was a framed photograph of the very girl that I had given the documents from the shunned flat. She had died under torture and hadn't given up the papers that were still missing. Unless... Unless no one had the balls to search Jörg's place.

I immediately began tearing that penthouse apart. And what do you know, in Jörg's bedroom cupboard, under a pile of crap was the same plastic bag that I had stuffed the box of documents in. Placing the box quietly on the kitchen bench, I grabbed my knife and sheathed it. I was then distracted by my memories of leaving little Sofia in that dead man's flat. No one had come looking to put the blame on me. There were no repercussions because nothing I did ever fucking mattered. Opening the box, I briefly scanned the yellowish papers in an unknown language. They appeared to be official certificates in black handwriting with big red stamps. Whatever they were, Jörg's girl had obviously understood their value. They were worth enough that Mr. Bismarck had cut her fucking head off for.

Once I walked downstairs, I'd forgotten all about my self-destructive impulses as my scheming brain reinvigorated my senses. Unfortunately, though, right outside Jörg's building, I saw a police car waiting. The door opened on the far-side and out stepped a female officer. She looked deadly serious as she glared at me while the passenger's side door opened. Special BND Agent Schlenzig stood up and gestured that I follow. I, however, focused back on the female police officer in her blue uniform and leather jacket. Continuing down the footpath, Schlenzig held out his phone. I reluctantly moved closer and saw that he had photos of me standing on the street next to Heinrich's car at the Foreign Office.

"You're making progress but still failed to contact me," Schlenzig said, handing over his business card. His tone then became malicious, "I know all about your sexual relationship with your friend Annika. She's a lovely young woman, you agree. It would be a shame if she were to lose her job because of her association with someone of your reputation."

I glanced back down the empty street and saw Annika driving her patrol car slowly behind us.

"On Friday evening, Herr Heinrich will be at the Westin Grand Hotel on Friedrichstrasse. Talk with him." That smug prick then waved down a passing

## Committed

taxi, before adding, “Remember, I’ll be watching.”

I glared at the departing taxi, before turning toward the stationary police car. Annika stepped out. I hadn’t seen her since last summer when we had a short, week-long fling. Approaching, I spoke bitterly, “So, you’re a cop.”

“Don’t usually tell the guys I’m seeing what my job is,” she replied, keeping her distance.

“You look good in a uniform.”

“Why the fuck does the BND want to talk with you?!”

“Why the fuck did you ghost me?!”

### FRIDAY 21st FEBRUARY 2020

I had been hanging out at Mara’s place, and had brought the box of documents with me. She had an app on her phone that could scan foreign languages and instantly translate them. It was after midnight when she finally fell asleep, and I then borrowed her phone and went through the old papers in her kitchen. The handwriting seemed hard for the app to read, but the language was Slovakian, and they were land-deeds to a property that had been passed down through a family for generations.

At 2:30am, I walked down the street to a public phonebooth and gave Lev a call. I told him to park outside the Westin Grand Hotel tonight. Told him to come into the lobby when I text him but to stay back. He should then follow the guy that he sees me talking with.

Lev seemed like a good lad. I guess he still felt guilty after all these years for the mess that I helped him clean up.

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That evening, Lev unexpectedly handed me a flip-phone as he walked past me outside the hotel. It was right on 7pm when I stepped through the revolving doors into the lobby while sipping on a Starbucks’ latte. The front desk was to my left. A dining area to my right, along with a pianist at a grand piano below a huge staircase. Scanning the place, my eyes landed on an advert for the Berlinale Film Festival that was currently happening. Another reminder of my failures. Yet tomorrow, I would record the voice-over that I wanted to add to my rejected short film, *Nephilim*. But it would make no difference, the opportunity to get my foot in the door of festivals had passed. The Berlinale hadn’t accepted my film. All I had to please now was my own attention to detail with these final adjustments to the audio.

Turning, I finished my coffee and was looking for somewhere to dump the



cup, when Mr. Heinrich and another man entered the hotel. The old German looked furious as he slowed his pace and spoke, “What are you doing here?!”

“You know,” I sneered impatiently. “Nothing much. Just on the lookout for the Nibelung.”

Mr. Heinrich looked genuinely appalled as he twisted away. His colleague, an even older gentleman, followed Mr. Heinrich to a table in the window. We all sat, and I glanced out onto Friedrichstrasse. Finally, after a silent stalemate, Mr. Heinrich began speaking in Deutsch to his associate. I didn’t understand what he was saying, but I knew it was about me. An expression of disgust grew across their faces.

At last, the other guy nodded and said in an unimpressed tone, “Just another Otto Rahn, chasing myths in the mountains like a lunatic.”

“Is that how you’ll be remembered?” Mr. Heinrich snapped. “Another suicide in the woods after a lifetime of irrelevance?”

The simplicity of his words washed over my face like a surge of white-hot adrenaline, but I sat still and waited.

“Or are you more like that imbecile in Hanau: an ineffectual embarrassment.”

The other guy leaned onto the table and interlocked his fingers before asking in all seriousness, “What is it you want?”

“To build cathedrals!” I stated.

Both Germans scowled at me. They then got up and walked toward the elevators.

Less than a minute later, I saw Special BND Agent Schlenzig walk in through the front door. I reached into my pocket, but kept the new burner flip-phone under the table.

Schlenzig sat at the next table behind me, where he began asking a list of bullshit questions that I wasn’t listening to. Instead, I pulled out my own phone and searched on Google Maps for the best route to my third date with a Russian girl in Neukölln. I had 30 minutes to get to a gay party celebrating the twenty-year-anniversary of Tatu, and I hoped that my date wore knee-high socks. Looking up, I saw Lev’s car cruise by, so I stood and patted Schlenzig on the shoulder. He looked horrified and cut off in mid-sentence.

SATURDAY 22nd FEBRUARY 2020

With strawberry-frosted donuts, I arrived at Yumi’s place at 11am. We first went over some minor adjustments to the sound effects, but I had no more

changes to her excellent score for my short film. Soon, Maddy joined us. She then read the lines that I had written for the new voice-over.

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At 3pm, I met Mara, and together we went to the German Historical Museum.

It closed at 6pm, and I then walked Mara to Friedrichstrasse where we went our separate ways. However, I returned to the museum for my appointment with the historian Mr. Schleyer. He was waiting on the west-side of the building at a service doorway. Stooping, he smoked a cigarette while wearing a woolen vest that looked as old as his crooked glasses.

His office had no windows, and the walls were packed with shelves full of books and boxes. Piles of papers were stacked up so high on his big desk, that I decided to remain standing in order to maintain eye contact with the old man. I asked about the Nibelung, and he went on about an epic poem from the middle-ages. After ten minutes, I realized that nothing he was telling me had anything to do with the Nibelung themselves. He said that they were just part of German folklore. People of the mist that had hidden an ancient treasure. My eyes glazed over, being too tired for this shit. I hadn't slept much after my date with the Russian. But then I remembered what Heinrich's associate had said, and I asked who was Otto Rahn?

The old historian snorted, crossed his arms and shook his head. "Just another Nazi!"

With a sigh, I thanked Mr. Scheyer, and stepped toward the door.

"Rahn and the Nibelung?" the old guy spoke up suddenly. "Rahn was obsessed with the massacre at Montségur."

"He ordered the massacre?"

Snorting again, Mr. Scheyer waved his hand in front of his face. "Pope Innocent the Third ordered it. Ordered the Albigensian Crusade."

"Crusade?"

"In the thirteenth century."

"For Jerusalem?"

"No! In France! Against the Cathars!"

Clearing my throat, I closed the office door and asked, "How's any of this connected?"

"Rahn was seeking a secret. A secret treasure. The treasure of the Cathars. Supposedly hidden in the caves below the fortress at Montségur."

"What secret?"

"The Holy Grail."

Bruce Stirling John Knox

With that, I shook my head and walked out.

MONDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2020

Lev called me on the flip-phone, and he laughed about how I had used a public phone to call him the other day, but he was glad to help and offered me new flip-phones whenever I needed a clean slate. I thanked him, though was skeptical. He then recalled how he had followed Schlenzig from the hotel to a huge building on Chaussee Strasse. It wasn't long before Schlenzig drove out again. Lev followed him to Weissensee.

And now I know where Schlenzig lives.

-

Later, Arlene was a no-show. I waited all night for her to come over, but I received only radio-silence after I text her. I wasn't sure what annoyed me more: the fact that she left my dick wanting, or her inability to make any progress with the Canadian stripper. It was never a straightforward thing manipulating people so that you could use them to get to others.

However, I reminded myself that as soon as I started thinking of a girl as anything more than a sexual object, I should immediately focus on one of the others that I was currently objectifying. Fuck intimacy! Fuck Arlene! And fuck her for wasting my fucking time!

TUESDAY 25th FEBRUARY 2020

The ginger came back to Berlin and I ate another banana out of her tight asshole.

We then went to the Babylon Theater to see the short film, *Schweinchen*. However, on the way, I got an aura blind-spot in my vision (the beginning of a migraine). This being the second one after the migraine that I had last night. I knew my vision would return in 30 minutes, just in time for the movie. But then the blind-spot returned! Despite suffering migraines since I was fifteen, I had never had more than one a year. Some years none at all. The third one within 24 hours had me seriously concerned.

Mara picked us up and drove me to the hospital. Of course, the doctors had nothing new to say. I was put on a drip and left in a wheelchair to wait it out.

THURSDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2020

## Committed

In the small hours, after chatting with the twenty-year-old ginger in my bed, she tried tickling me. Despite telling her that I still had my migraine, she giggled like a dumbfuck and persisted. With just one hand, I grabbed her arm and pinned her down, threatening to break her fucking wrist if she continued! She went and cried like a fucking baby in the bathroom. Women will always lose the power-struggle when they push too far. The weak can easily be put down and reminded of their fucking place. I had no sympathy for cunts that believed that only their boundaries mattered.

### SATURDAY 29th FEBRUARY 2020

Late this evening, I went to the first Torture Garden fetish party in Berlin. I watched gimps being whipped, commented on exhibitionist fornicating, and danced with so many friends in latex that I didn't even recognize half of them. I had hoped that I might see Arlene there, but what for? We meant nothing to each other.

Running into another group of freaks, I joined them on the dance floor, when a trans friend pulled me aside. She asked if I knew that she used female pronouns. I had already assumed as much. However, she pointed out that a couple of weeks ago, at Tiki Heart, I had referred to 'her' as 'him'. We both acknowledged that accidents happen and that was the end of the issue. How easily this was resolved, whereas, if this had been online, there would have been calls for my lynching. Smiling, I patted her on the back and said in my most condescending German, "Es tut mir leid."

### FRIDAY 6th MARCH 2020

After the Tribute to Pantera gig at Kitkat, Lev picked me up in his car.

"The fuck happened to you?" I asked, referring to his blackeye.

"You know."

"Did Schlenzig catch you?"

"Fuck no!" the young gangster stated. "Still getting in trouble with old friends, you know. Some of them don't like it when they see me hanging out with the Turks. You know, they like to remind me what team I'm on."

"By beating the shit out of you?"

"Yeah."

I smiled at the self-correcting nature of internalized tribalism.

Lev then told me that Schlenzig had a daughter who was attending university. “Want me to pick her up? Pass her around the boys?”

Looking out the windscreen at the quiet streets around Alexander Platz, I had to think about Lev’s offer for a long time before saying, “Not right now.”

“So, what’s next?” Lev asked enthusiastically.

“Nothing,” I said, seeing that I had just missed the night bus.

Lev was visibly disappointed. Then, as I opened the door, he revealed that he was bored with the Slovaks. He said how much he liked these little assignments that I gave him.

“Don’t get used to it,” I said. “If Bismarck ever hears that you’re hanging around with me, he’ll make your life a fuck-load worse.”

“What’s the deal with you and him, anyway?”

“Respect is earned. Bismarck hasn’t done a fucking thing that I give two fucks about.”

“Dude!” Lev laughed. “You’re fucking crazy. That guy’s as badass as they come!”

“Sure. Whatever.”

Lev drove off as I walked to the bus stop. He was like a drug addict, clinging to anyone with any kind of direction. Ultimately, he was a tool that I could use more efficiently than Arlene.

My ears were still ringing when I got home and sat on my sofa. I wasn’t part of anyone’s bigger picture. I wasn’t one of them. I wasn’t good enough. I wasn’t their friend. And in turn, I wasn’t going to let them succeed. None of them!

The Bulgarian Mystic from New Year’s Eve, Ventsislav, couldn’t enlighten me, so fuck him and those that taught him! Fuck the Scholomance and fuck the City of Obsidian Temples!

Picking up Marcus’s address book, I flipped through to M, and right there, I found Mr. Maier’s address in Würzburg. But why should I think that he had any answers when he had already declared that I too was just another waste of his fucking time.

What I wanted was to go to Porto, dig up what Doric had buried, and unleash its wrath. I wanted to look straight into the mouth of hell and watch its teeth tear me limb from fucking limb. I wanted to embrace the epitome of atrocities and soak it up until I was consumed with all things unholy. I will be all I will be. I was the one that fed your devils that caused the suffering of mankind. The true integration of the shadow was found through blocking out the delusion of light. I wanted to discover the secret treasure of the Cathars

## Committed

just so that I could fucking desecrate it with pig's blood and mock all those that sought to better themselves!

SATURDAY 7th MARCH 2020

While killing time, walking through the streets before meeting Jules for a drink at the Absinthe Depot, I found myself dwelling on the things that I had been depriving myself of. I did love a nice blonde German girl with their perfect milky skin buttoned up in a high collar, with a high waistband, in high heels. Mostly, I loved them on all fours with their pretty head down and their lily-white ass up high. Despite the lengths that I had gone to in restrain myself, I snapped, caught the train to the Kreuzberg canal, and then broke the magickal circle surrounding Jessie's flat. If you want something done right, do it yourself! I pressed her doorbell, with my right hand on my sheathed knife at the back of my belt.

"Hello?"

"Hey. It's Bruce."

Silence, and then Jessie murmured, "I can't, I'm sorry."

MONDAY 9th MARCH 2020

This morning, I received a message from Jessie, before she immediately blocked me on every social network, "*Hi, sorry I've been extremely antisocial the past half a year. I don't really socialize at all anymore because I just want to focus on my work. Why were you at my place the other day? It made me a bit uncomfortable to be honest. Hope you're well.*"

-

Mara had a couple of books by Tobias Churton, *The Gnostics* and *Gnostic Philosophy*, which she said had chapters on the Cathars. I borrowed them and went to the canal at 6:30pm, where I saw Jessie behind her ground floor windows. She wanted nothing to do with me because she must have seen my true-will. She must have seen through my deceptions. She must have seen what I was really after. I could respect that. But that also meant that she knew too much. Though, if only she understood the full extent of my hideous ambitions, then she would run screaming. Turning, I scanned the bridge and neighborhood. I sat at a nearby cafe and read, while a cute waitress smiled at me from behind the bar.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

MONDAY 16th MARCH 2020

I wanted tanks on the fucking streets! All this over-reacting won't be worth it once the economic cost comes around to fuck us all. The arrogance of those in authority to assume that most people weren't living from paycheck to paycheck would ruin millions of lives. Yet this Corona situation was evidence for how easily the masses surrendered to trends. After all, everyone loved prophecies of doom. The media lives for this shit. The nationalists were right, globalism spreads disease like bad ideas. Bad ideas like quarantining the whole world instead of the vulnerable. A quarantine that would fail for the simple fact that we're all filthy fucking cunts incapable of such things like quitting cigarettes even though we were already well aware that they kill. Why should I give a fuck if I catch this virus, when they say ventilators would only go to the weakest! If my life had already been deemed invalid from day one, then fuck the weak!

TUESDAY 17th MARCH 2020

I finished my art series, *Three And Thirty Andromedas*, and then went straight to Jessie's place at 11:30pm. Her lights were out. I'm going to enjoy cutting her pretty head off and gutting her upon my stone circle altar. Watching her dark windows, I could already feel her blood on my hands. She would suffer to the extreme, again and again. But I had to be patient. Like any work of art, there was a systematic-procedure. Until then, I had things to do.

THURSDAY 19th MARCH 2020

Zoe wrote to me for the first time since she had met someone new, saying that she had just seen my new art series on my website and she asked, "*What did women do to you?*"

I loved them. I loved their meat. Just their meat. They're just meat. Meat to use and abuse. Meat to eat and throw away as soon as it starts to rot. Women = meat. I told Zoe that she should have modeled for me.

To which she replied redundantly, "*But then I'd just be another one of them.*"

FRIDAY 20th MARCH 2020

## Committed

I wondered if this pandemic was the ‘flood’ that Mr. Juggernaut had mentioned. If so, then it was too late, and I hadn’t found higher ground in time. My ill-placed preoccupation with the Cathars was just that, another fruitless distraction. I was left out in the open as these ‘waters’ continued to rise. But I knew it wouldn’t kill me. Nothing stopped me. I would weather this bullshit like I always had.

### SATURDAY 21st MARCH 2020

More cities around the world were going into lockdown, so my trip to Porto was cancelled. However, Jessie had been self-isolating for the past six months. I could live off the pristine meat on her bones for the next six months. But no. My freezer was too small. Although, maybe I could cram in all the best bits and fuck the rest – like her sweet little mouth.

All these smug pricks saying, #StayTheFuckHome, were really saying, #YouJustGotFired, #GetTheFuckOutOfHere, and #WelcomeToPoverty. Mass unemployment wasn’t a fucking holiday. Nothing’s for free. But who needs to eat, pay their rent, or go to the doctor for anything other than Corona? One day, we will see people rioting just to go back to work. And yet these shortsighted cunts laughed in their pajamas, bragging about how their favorite thing to do was sleep. I wondered why they didn’t just fucking kill themselves already, these useless fucking sacks of fodder.

### SUNDAY 22nd MARCH 2020

I signed the new contract at my studio, officially becoming a partner with a 40% stake in the company – at a time without work. I had the entire studio to myself while my business partner did home-office from Dresden.

My first priority was exporting the final cut of my short film with the new audio and voice-over – at a time when film festivals and theaters were closed everywhere.

### MONDAY 23rd MARCH 2020

This morning, I uploaded my short film, *Nephilim*, to YouTube.

I then videoed myself talking about the influences on this project, and also posted it online.

Currently, YouTube was full of these so-called modern thinkers claiming



that there would be a mass spiritual awakening after Corona, and how they believed that we wouldn't go back to the old ways that we used to call normal. Fucking deluded pieces of shit! If these people were half as enlightened as they dreamed they were, then they should fucking understand that the masses are a mob of vicious animals. The masses wanted to go back to the security of a normal life because they instinctively knew how dangerous they themselves really fucking were. Fuck these modern thinkers selling horseshit to the morons that were already losing their flimsy fucking grip on reality!

WEDNESDAY 25th MARCH 2020

At 2am, I heard the flip-phone vibrating in my drawer next to the satellite phone.

20 minutes later, Lev picked me up from the intersection. We drove to an office building south of Tempelhof, while listening to Die Antwoord, *No 1*. I pulled up my scarf and pulled down my beanie, covering my unshaven head as I kept an eye out for security cameras. The place was empty even though all the lights were on and the entrance open. Upstairs, we came across a dead janitor lying in the middle of the corridor next to his trolley of cleaning products. But in the office to our left, I surveyed the real spectacle. Seven dead men lay strewn across the floor. Six looked like gangsters, while the odd one out was dressed in an unremarkable business suit.

I started wondering who these cunts were but suddenly remembered that I didn't give a fuck. Turning toward Lev, I found him standing uncomfortably next to the door, and I asked him, "You did this?"

"Come on," he whispered awkwardly. "You know, I can't let them keep making a joke out of me."

Glaring back at him, I knew exactly what he was really saying. I twisted around, looking at the multiple bullet holes in each body, before I spoke again, "So, we can't use the old facility. What about this new crematorium?"

"Come on. No one else can know about this!" Lev blurted out, frustrated. He then quickly got himself under control. "I know a rundown site where we can dump the bodies."

"Can't just dump them," I said quietly. "Need to remove the heads and hands."

"Exactly!" Lev laughed excitedly. "That's why you're here."

"Go search the janitor's shit," I sneered, shaking my head. "I need rubbish bags and duct tape."

Lev nodded and backed away.

“Go on, get the fuck out of here,” I said, taking off my jacket and gloves. Rolling up my sleeves, I then grabbed my knife and crouched down.

By the time Lev returned with everything that I had asked for, I had already decapitated the seven men and was in the middle of cutting off the first pair of hands. Lev did what I told him, and he stuffed the first body into a trash-bag, then pulled a second bag over the top, before wrapping it up in a shit-load of tape. Carrying the bagged body down to his car, he did the same to the others, but the trunk could only take five bodies. I sent him off to dump them while I finished the rest myself.

Soon, I washed my hands and then pulled on my leather gloves before stuffing the last two men and janitor into their own bags. That made three body bags, plus one full of hands and one full of heads. Moving them to the end of the corridor next to the elevator, I made a neat pile ready for Lev’s return.

There were a couple of big bottles of bleach in the trolley, so I poured it all over the blood in the office. I saw that my Chucks had left bloody footprints, but I knew that it was about time that I bought a new pair.

Lev had been gone for an hour, and soon paranoia began creeping in. Was he setting me up? It was after 4:30am, as I stood in a random office above the front of the building and saw an unknown car drive into the parking lot. I pulled out my freshly cleaned knife and stared at the scratches on the blade. How much meat had it carved up over the recent years? Taking a seat at a desk in that darkened office, I stared out into the corridor where the body-bags waited. Whomever was coming would find me sooner or later. The only question was, were they with Lev, the dead guys, or the property owners?

However, it was Lev himself who stepped out of the elevator.

“Whose car was that?” I asked from the shadows.

“Jesus!” Lev gasped, nearly falling over the bags. “Holy shit! I took one of theirs.”

We filled the trunk with the last five bags, and then drove out of town for twenty minutes. There, we came upon a ruined house on the outskirts. While the headlights lit the surrounding forest, we carried the bags into the weed-knotted basement.

Lev then drove to another area. An abandoned construction site. There were deep holes for the foundations of a building that had never been finished. Piles of trash surrounded the place. We dumped the last two bags of heads and hands into the unseen depth of two separate holes where they splashed loudly.

Grabbing heaps of random junk, we dropped it on top of the bags, covering over the evidence in just another forgotten wasteland of Berlin.

Relieved, Lev shook my hand and thanked me. He then asked if I was worried about Corona.

I burst into laughter and slapped him on the back. “Let’s get the fuck out of here!”

SATURDAY 28th MARCH 2020

As Mara had recently joined Facebook in order to keep in touch with all her new new-age friends, she suddenly blurted out that Jessie had changed her status to ‘in a relationship’. I sat still, staring straight ahead as Mara scrolled through her phone, saying that she had made the update on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March – the night that I had rung her doorbell. Had she changed her status after I buzzed her: sending me a subtle message that she was not available. Or had she changed it before? Therefore, assuming that I was harassing her because she thought that I had already seen it. Who had causality over whom? Or was it merely a coincidence?

I remembered the first time that I met Jessie, it was at an exhibition on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2013. Initially, I assumed that she was one of the models as her little pointy nose, big eyes, and wavy blonde hair gave her the appearance of one of the morbidly adorable characters in the framed artwork. That was how I started chatting with her. She laughed and her voice sounded almost American as she said that she only knew the exhibiting artists from online interactions. We immediately had a natural rapport. She was visiting from Hamburg where she worked on her own art. After we took photos with the overseas artists, I offered to walk her to the local U-bahn. She smiled happily but admitted that she wasn’t looking forward to returning to her hotel. The boy she had come to hook-up with was waiting for her there. She said that, unfortunately, he was so introverted that there was little to no conversation. I grinned and looked away just as a female artist friend of mine came over to speak with Jessie alone. Waiting outside, I soon led Jessie to the train like a perfect fucking gentleman. It wasn’t till sometime later that Jessie told me that my so-called friend had warned her about me before we left together. Whoever needs enemies when you have jealous ex-lovers like mine.

Walking the empty streets later that night, I stopped and turned in circles. Jessie and I had spent barely a few weeks together this year, and it was nothing worth getting all nostalgic over. Looking up at all those buildings,

## Committed

I knew that they were full of self-isolating, complicit citizens in obedient segregation. If they were all infected and dying, I wouldn't shed a tear. The masses were gears in a machine. Most parts of this system of production meant nothing to me, therefore, they could stop functioning and it wouldn't affect me in the slightest. However, I understood that I required this machine to continue operating at a stable level in order that I could go unnoticed within the throngs of normality. And yet, I wanted to open the floodgates of hell and let out endless devils. Because there was no fucking point to any of this meaningless fucking shit! Despite having passed through the suicidal wall of nihilism and into the narcissistic authority of the self, I still knew that there wasn't any fucking point to this insignificant fucking world in the scheme of the obscenely infinite universe! A meaningless existence. No god playing god. Just chaos having its wicked way. Causality without conscience. You, the individual, would never matter. I didn't fucking matter. No one ever fucking matters. We were all trapped in this mocking prison of consciousness. It was all a pathetic fucking game of self-glorified perpetuation. A game with rules. Rules which were, like everything, human illusions. Illusions of importance. Important entertainment. But what greater entertainment was there than what I wanted. I wanted their fear. I wanted their suffering. I wanted to taste their misery like the sweat on the back of a bludgeoned body. Right there, on the streets of Berlin, I found myself in love. In love with the anxiety of the world.

### MONDAY 30th MARCH 2020

After a week of grooming Ariana, on Instagram, I sketched her portrait this evening. She immediately swooned like so many of them did. They acted shy but their vanity made them vulnerable. I had her in my gravity now. She trusted me, so I asked her to tell me a secret. And she did. How often the first thing that came to their mind was sexual. Schlenzig's little girl was a filthy piece of meat with a dirty mouth.

### TUESDAY 31st MARCH 2020

Another twenty-two-year-old girl on Instagram from Czech, Marcela, sent me a message this evening, *"What are you doing to me? I came like five times in a row which normally lasts me like a few days before I'm in the mood again... But now I'm already horny."*

We had been chatting for less than a week, but she loved my games, the

temptation, and being told what to do. She said that she wanted to be my toy and that she would do anything I wanted. Then, within the next hour, I convinced her to sodomize herself with her big, fat dildo. She sent me photos to prove it.

WEDNESDAY 1st APRIL 2020

After my first day as an official business partner at my studio, I went running in the chilly evening air.

Once I got home, I received a video from the ginger. I had suggested that she fuck herself with a toothbrush. She did and filmed it for me.

While I got dressed, I listened to more self-righteous cunts on the news complaining about others complaining about the existential crisis that they were suffering during self-isolation. There's a reason that solitary confinement is a punishment within prison, you fucks!

I then headed to Prenzlauer Berg, with two items in my jacket pockets. I met Ariana on a quiet back street. Smiling, she congratulated me for becoming a partner. I smirked as I approached. Grabbing her slender throat, I suddenly slammed her back into a brick wall! I pinned her there with one hand while glaring into her horrified realization. With both hands, I then choked her fucking meat to death! No one stopped me because no one was there because no one goes out anymore. Finding her iPhone, I used her fingerprint to access her Instagram account and deleted our direct messages. I pulled out a roll of garbage bags and stuffed the teenager into two of them before I wrapped her up in duct tape. She made a petite, unrecognizable ball that I shoved into one more plastic bag.

I waved down a taxi on the next corner. The driver stayed behind the wheel as I opened the trunk and dumped the body. I sat behind a clear plastic screen hanging between the front and back seats. The driver never asked questions.

At Charlottenburg, I carried the bag up to Jörg's apartment. He still hadn't been home as nothing had changed since I had last visited. Opening the garbage bags, I stripped the girl naked, bent her over the kitchen bench, and then fucked her dead asshole. After all, you couldn't catch Corona on your dick!

I next cut her body into pieces in the bathroom. When I removed her left leg, I rubbed her thigh while thinking of the tiny fish that I had seen in the glass-tanks at Bauhaus yesterday. I could crush a fish in my fingertips and

## Committed

feel as little as I did when I chopped up a girl like this. Flushing her meat and organs down the toilet, I soon filled a plastic bag with her bones. Finally, I left Ariana's pretty head in Jörg's huge refrigerator.

I caught the train to Kreuzberg with the bag of bones, walked down to the canal, and stopped next to the bridge. Looking across the still waters, I saw that Jessie's lights were all off. It was just after 10pm. Was she already asleep? Waiting for the last drifters to walk away from the empty streets, I then dumped the bones into the canal right in front of Jessie's apartment. I pictured myself doing far worse things to Jessie herself.

Walking across the bridge, I stared at her black windows for any signs of life. If she were looking out, would she know it was me? Since lockdown, I had changed my silhouette by wearing a new black baseball cap, fake glasses, and by growing my hair and beard. But was it enough? Then again, what did it matter. No one looked outside. Just as most people hate the idea of looking inside at how worthless their normal lives truly fucking are! Passing Jessie's neighbor, I glanced at the gate to their courtyard. I could easily make a simple tool out of thin metal to slide between the lock and open the gate. And if I could gain access to their courtyard, I could then see into Jessie's back windows and tell if she really was at home or not.

On the train, a homeless guy selling newspapers, sat across from me. He removed rubber gloves revealing his fingers covered in shit. This perfectly summed up humanity's response to the current pandemic.

### THURSDAY 2nd APRIL 2020

I went to Jessie's place at 9pm. Her lights were on. I, therefore, planned on returning tomorrow at 9:30pm to see if that was her bedtime.

I also checked another gate into a different neighbor's courtyard. Here, I didn't even have to make a new tool to break in. The gate had the same perforated metal shield over the lock as the gate into my own neighbor. I just needed the thick wire that I always used.

### FRIDAY 3rd APRIL 2020

This evening at 9:30pm, as I walked toward Jessie's building, I pulled my hoodie over my cap, and draped my scarf across my face. I raised my head and just then saw someone that looked like Jessie! She was coming across the bridge toward her home. Her blonde wavy hair was long again, and she wore

a beige trench-coat with her hands in the pockets.

I immediately turned to the left and casually walked sideways, along the canal. Not taking any chances, in case she had seen me, I went all the way to the next U-bahn station. After going down the stairs, I ran to the exit on the other side of the street, whipping my hood, hat, and scarf off. I then followed behind a group of three young guys. Scanning the street, I couldn't see Jessie. She hadn't followed and also probably hadn't even noticed me.

Heading back to the bridge, I saw that her lights were on. I waited in the dark until her lights went out at 10pm. Maybe she took an evening stroll every night before bed.

Walking further down the canal past the hospital, it seemed no different to pre-Corona times. There wasn't a backed-up line of ambulances. It was business as usual. Crossing the next bridge, I looked up at all the lights on in the huge apartment buildings. I was a fox outside all these good chickens in their coops. The night was for me and my devices. Approaching Jessie's place from the other side, I spotted an open entrance to her western neighbors. I walked inside and saw some kids playing in the big courtyard. Then, I thought I could see Jessie's back windows from here. But I was wrong. Once back on the street, I realized that her building was much further along. I still needed to get into her east neighbor's courtyard – but there were people waiting on the street. So, I walked on by.

On the train home, I finished reading, *Eichmann In Jerusalem*, by Hannah Arendt. It was a fair statement about how everyday Germans adhered to the law as if they wrote it themselves. Eichmann himself, as Arendt repeated, was no evil genius, merely a guy dedicated to his vocation by finding the most efficient way of carrying out his tasks. The work ethic of humanity has built empires just as diligently as it has destroyed them.

*“For the truth of the matter was that by the end of the Second World War everybody knew that technical developments in the instruments of violence had made the adoption of ‘criminal’ warfare inevitable.”*

SATURDAY 4th APRIL 2020

This morning, I chatted with another girl while I lay in bed as she sent me nudes of her doing exactly what I told her to do.

I also continued reading about the Cathars and their mass execution. Once the travel restrictions eased up, I planned on visiting Montségur. Not in search of some figment of a holy relic, but to bathe in the forgotten screams

## Committed

of all the ghosts of so much unresolved misery.

MONDAY 6th APRIL 2020

I was about to leave this evening for Jessie's place and follow her evening stroll, when I received an e-mail from Woodward. He said that he had gotten a message from Rushdie. Rushdie stating that he and Ventsislav were trapped in a small place next to the White Sea. Ventsislav had insisted on contacting me, so Woodward asked for my number to pass along.

Why the fuck would they even care to communicate with me ever again? Ventsislav probably only had some more vague bullshit which ultimately said nothing. Why waste my fucking time. In fact, why waste my effort tracking Jessie? Stepping over to my window, I looked down into the trees in the big courtyard. I had to remind myself to be patient, as I scanned to my left, toward the clearing. There were still plenty of other things I needed to do. I knew enough about Jessie's environment for now.

Replying to Woodward, I gave him my number.

WEDNESDAY 8th APRIL 2020

Rushdie didn't phone me last night. Obviously, whatever he had to say wasn't that important. Looking on Google Maps, I couldn't find anything of interest around the White Sea. What were they doing so far north? But I didn't know anything about Rushdie or that so-called mystic. It was only through long-term observation of experience that a pattern could emerge.

FRIDAY 10th APRIL 2020

On this beautiful spring Easter Friday, I went for a run at 2:30pm. I noticed on my street a group of three girls being obnoxious teenagers. This was the third time that I had seen them this week. They were most likely neighbors with nothing better to do during the lockdown. Yet, it seemed as if they were following me as they acted suspicious whenever I passed them.

Later, I text with Marcela while listening to a documentary about the Holocaust. She had to hide from her mother before she could send me more nudes. I then told her to get down on her hands and knees, there she begged for more of my filthy talk. She took a couple of videos sucking her dildo before penetrating her pussy with it. Good toy.



Bruce Stirling John Knox

SATURDAY 11th APRIL 2020

My phone woke me at 9am. A man with a thick accent then transferred my call to someone else. Half-asleep, it took me a minute before I realized that I was talking to the Sheikh from New Year's Eve. He said that while doing business in Bahrain, he had been introduced to a representative of someone called the Red Snake.

I immediately sat up in bed, wondering how he had gotten my number.

The Sheikh said that he had been invited to a gathering this weekend. He would have ignored the request, however, the imam of his own grandfather was accompanying this representative.

"Easter weekend," I muttered to myself, moving over to my desk so that I could take notes.

"How are you involved in this strange organization?" the Sheikh inquired.

"Two years ago, in France, these three guys tried to kill someone on a train. Tried to kill the Red Snake of the Pharaoh. Something stopped them. I'd watch my back around guys, if I were you."

"Your caution shall be taken with the greatest seriousness," the Sheikh spoke thoughtfully. "Once again, you have my deepest gratitude."

"One more thing," I said, glancing at the security-shield over my computer's webcam. "Watch out for the CIA."

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In the sunny afternoon, Mara and I took a long walk following the canal through Kreuzberg. At one point, not far from Jessie's bridge, we stopped, and I looked down into the water. I paused. In the sunlight, I could see straight to the bottom of the canal. I wondered if anyone had spotted Ariana's bones. But perhaps the residual meat had been enough to camouflage them. Or maybe the fish had scattered the remains. Then again, had anyone even looked down into the depth?

SUNDAY 12th APRIL 2020

I had only been asleep for a few hours when I was awoken by the sound of slithering. Slowly sitting up, I found that my flat had become a cave again. Low-hanging rocks led toward a tunnel with ankle-deep water. Further along, one of those devils with an intestine-like body was waiting in the dark. It seemed more patient than most of its kind. There was hardly any light, but I

watched the inhuman creature raise a skinny hand and point toward a smooth section of the stone wall. There, chiseled writing appeared. Wherever its finger touched, symbols would manifest spontaneously. Two columns of unknown lettering in total.

Glancing back at the devil, I wanted to know what unseen force had created the writing. Just as this world was invisible to my own world, were there other realms hidden from these devils too? But more importantly, what was this thing trying to tell me?

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The sun woke me later that Sunday morning as it filled my white flat. Rolling over, I checked my phone and found more nudes from my toy.

Out of pessimistic curiosity, I wanted to see how many people actually went to church on Easter Sunday during Corona. I headed into Mitte but was constantly dwelling on the indecipherable writing that I had seen on the cave wall. Starting at the Romanesque Church of the Sacred Heart, I stepped into the empty, tomb-like shade. I was confronted only by three rays of sunlight descending from the arched windows. The Holy Trinity and I were alone in the house of god today. Standing silently, I stared down the smokey aisle. I appreciated the old-school catholic mosaics. They reminded me of the cathedral in Aachen.

“At eight in the morning on Tuesday, Herr Heinrich will be at the Deutsche Gesellschaft Für International Zusammenarbeit,” Schlenzig suddenly murmured from behind. “The Society for International Cooperation at Potsdamer platz. Speak to him.”

Tilting my head toward the Special Agent, I found him in business casual and unshaven. His glasses were smeared with fingerprints and his eyes were bloodshot. Distraught and distracted, he slowly twisted away and walked out of the church.

Taking a seat in the pews, I smirked at Schlenzig’s pain as I winked at a life-size mosaic of Jesus. I liked this church. It felt like the hollow carcass of a whale. I don’t know what more I could achieve by seeing Heinrich again. Just as I didn’t think I had anything more to learn about Jessie’s habits. But still, was the devil last night trying to teach me something that I hadn’t yet anticipated? Or were monsters just as superstitious as mortal madmen?

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This evening, I saw those three teenagers again. They were walking away from my street, and they all went quiet as I passed them.

Marcela sent more nudes while holding her X-Box controller over her tits.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

So much meat, so many distractions. But it still wasn't enough. A thousand cuts couldn't even fucking kill me. Marcela spoke about how much she wanted me to punish her, and I wondered what her original-psychological-sin was. Before she went to sleep, she wrote, "*You really changed my life for the better. Haha. Night.*"

MONDAY 13th APRIL 2020

This evening, after running in the freezing sunshine, I text Melina, telling her that we should get engaged once lockdown ends. She laughed and loved the idea. I only played these games with girls in order to trick them into thinking that I'm actually a really nice guy despite my perversions. Yet, I still enjoyed hearing about how depressing their lonely little lives actually were. These people all shared the commonality of being too scared of the virus to go outside, and too scared of their own thoughts to think for themselves. Their fear made me smile. Who needs intangible death threats when your own mind leaves you crippled.

Later, I text with an old ex in Essen and asked how her husband was doing since he got sick, even though he didn't have Corona. She said, "*Sometimes I wish he would have it, so this nightmare would be over soon for us.*"

I then remembered the last conversation I had with another ex before the lockdown. She had told me about all the troubles in her relationship now that they were living together. They were both young lawyers but no longer having sex.

The downfall of both relationships was obvious. Either they break up and suffer, or they compromise and suffer. I was glad that I had finally outgrown the fucking cliché of believing in love.

TUESDAY 14th APRIL 2020

My alarm was set for 5am. 30 minutes later, I was on the train reading Nietzsche, *Why I Am So Clever*. Hannah had given me this tiny book for my birthday, and we had laughed over the title. However, while reading it, I was reminded of how detrimental sarcasm was when dealing with the literal minded.

I arrived at the canal at 6am. The sun was up but no lights on in Jessie's apartment. Walking around the neighborhood on the other side of the canal, I familiarized myself with unexplored areas. It was a beautiful morning for

appreciating that you were still alive. At 7am I had to leave, but just then a garbage truck arrived. The guys in orange overalls opened the neighbor's gates so they could collect the bins. So, I walked straight into the courtyard of Jessie's east neighbor for the first time. It was small and twisted. The bins were lined up against a tall fence, and I could see into Jessie's courtyard and her back windows. If I climbed the bins, I could easily scale the tall fence, and then jump onto the bins on the other side. I would then have access to the backdoor into Jessie's stairwell.

Without hanging around, I caught the train to Potsdamer Platz. There, an old gray-painted, stone building stood alone next to a large artificial pond. I was early, so watched the fish in the murky water and saw that it was deep enough to dump some bones.

Moving back to the entrance of The Society for International Cooperation, I watched as a black Mercedes-Benz cruised onto the driveway leading to an underground parking lot. However, the car stopped, the back door opened, and out stepped a blonde bombshell! Behind her, Mr. Heinrich scowled at me, before the car drove him down below the building. The blonde, dressed in a tight black business suit, marched straight toward me as she spoke, "So, you're the stalker."

Smirking, I shook my head as I replied, "You have no idea."

"What is this?" she said slowly. "Some kind of passive-aggressive harassment?"

Looking into her blue eyes, I reflected her tone. "I like being a pain in the ass."

"You must have no understanding of the disaster you're courting."

Inhaling, long and hard, I glanced over the renovated building. I remembered my fading hopes for building a grand circle of standing obelisks with Heinrich's resources. Now I suddenly accepted how foolish it was dreaming that anyone would assist with my delusional plans. How could I convince them of my grand ideas if none of them even took me seriously in the first place. "I know at least two things."

"That many?"

"While in Leipzig, at that monument commemorating the defeat of Napoleon, I realized what you guys actually had me designing. So, you're building something. Something big."

"And secondly?"

"Secondly? Your English is excellent! Yet you've still got that classic German accent. Where are you from exactly?"

Bruce Stirling John Knox

“Far away from this den of beggars.”

I smiled.

She waited.

Turning, I walked away. “Secondly, the BND are tracking your movements. You might want to look into that shit.”

-

I went back to the canal in the evening. Pulling on my black beanie and fake glasses, I wanted to tail Jessie on her evening stroll, but saw that her lights were on and she was still at home. She was sitting at her computer in the window. This was the first time that I had a good look at her in decent light with the windows open. Her hair was still short! So, the girl that I had seen on the bridge the other day wasn't Jessie. Therefore, my theory about her taking nightly strolls was instantly dismissed. I stood across the canal watching her work until 9:45pm. At that time, she got up and left the room. She soon returned with a glass of white wine. For the next 30 minutes, she sat at her desk scrolling through her phone. She had no consistency to her routine. The life of freelancers was hard to predict.

THURSDAY 16th APRIL 2020

It was a sunny morning, and I was feeling good, so I started a new tradition that I had always wanted to if I ever became part of a company that I had a vested interest in: and that was buying fresh flowers for the studio each week. My business partner was finally back in town and we were discussing how to rearrange the studio. We decided that we should each have our own office and agreed to display more artwork on the walls. Out of nowhere, however, my aura blind-spot returned! I was in control of nothing! One day death would come just as randomly. But I had things to do before then. Meat to collect and devils to liberate. And yet I couldn't do anything until these fucking migraines fucked off!

FRIDAY 17th APRIL 2020

Today, the book I ordered arrived. *Inside The Third Reich*, a first edition of the English version of the memoirs of Albert Speer. Maybe this could help me connect the non-existent dots between Speer, the Nibelung, and the Cathars. But what any of that had to do with the Intrepid Supremacy was pure speculation.

## Committed

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After work, I found a blank envelope in my mailbox. Inside was a simple piece of notepaper with the handwritten words, "*Where is she?*"

Who was 'she'? How many 'shes' had I gone through? Are they asking if 'she' was alive, or where 'her' body was? However, glancing around, I wanted to know who had left this note. What horrible things did they think I had done? Where did they get the idea that I was responsible? Why exactly would they suspect me? And how in the fuck had they found me?

But then again, maybe this note was meant for a neighbor. It didn't have a name on it. Maybe it had nothing to do with me. Although, it was in English.

### SATURDAY 18th APRIL 2020

The blind-spot returned at 8:30pm. Took a migraine painkiller. Half an hour later the blind-spot passed, and I went to sleep.

### SUNDAY 19th APRIL 2020

Woke up at 5am from another aura blind-spot. I had always wondered if they could happen while I was sleeping. Now I know. So, three aura blind-spot migraines in February and now three more in April. I had never had so many so close together. Why now?

### TUESDAY 21st APRIL 2020

I bought a disposable medical mask before going to my doctor's appointment. While reading in the waiting room, another aura blind-spot started. After 30 minutes it mostly passed, just in time for my appointment. Doctors hadn't said anything new about migraines in decades. Though, due to the frequency, I asked if migraines could cause any permanent damage to my vision? Apparently, they don't. I got an appointment to see another doctor and a prescription for stronger pills: Sumatriptan dura 100mg.

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Arriving home, I found a second blank envelope, in my mailbox. Opening it, the same notepaper had written on it, "*She doesn't deserve this!*"

The new painkillers hadn't kicked in yet and my migraine was too intense to give a fuck about the paranoia that these notes were supposed to inflict. Fuck 'her'! I'll tell you who 'she' was, 'she' was just another piece of fucking

meat! Meat wrapped up in so much splendid insecurity that it made ‘her’ torment at my hands so much sweeter once ‘she’ realized that that was all ‘she’ would ever fucking be: meat!

-

Later that bright evening, Lev phoned saying that he knew where Jörg was. Even though my head felt like shit, I still wanted to tempt fate. I wanted to know if he actually believed Mr. Bismarck and thought that I killed his girl. And more importantly, I wanted to check if Jörg knew about the documents that Mr. Bismarck wanted so badly. If nothing else, I hoped that Jörg might knock my fucking head off, ending this stupid fucking headache.

As Lev was preoccupied, I traveled across town to meet him in Wedding. His BMW was parked on the footpath with two other sports cars. Fearstbeats, *Omri*, boomed out of Lev’s stereo, and he seemed in a good mood. His friends wore open shirts with gold chains. I, however, had my hoodie up and beanie snug over my lingering migraine. The young Persians smiled and asked Lev, “Who’s the Viking fisherman?”

“Call me John, John the fisherman.”

Lev then drove us away, but he had another small job to finish first. There was an industrial lot where a group of Turkish guys with oily hair stood next to their cars and a cargo truck. Lev turned down the music and told me to get out but stay quiet. Again, Lev was spoken to in English, and I wondered where he was originally from. He handed over a small backpack, while he kept his eyes down. Suddenly one guy started yelling at me. Another Turk laughed, asking Lev why they should trust either of us. I scanned that group of guys in their mid-twenties, and then focused on the angry little cunt who was still talking shit. As accusations were directed at my silence, I listened to Lev play the diplomat. He explained that we had worked together for years and that I had helped him clean up the mess in the office building. I noticed that he was no longer taking credit for the executions. One Turk called me a junkie, and the others laughed. I was a nobody to them, and Lev was not much more. The reality was, no matter how hardcore you thought you were, once you were surrounded by strangers you were just another worthless asshole.

Driving away, Lev looked pissed off and embarrassed. He had a good hustle going, but inevitably humiliation adds up and gets fucking old when you’re always seen as a loser by your so-called equals.

We headed south to a neighborhood full of very East German apartment buildings. I had no idea where exactly I was. Lev and I hadn’t spoken since we left the Turks, and I didn’t feel like easing his discomfort at being caught

out for not being as much of a badass as he wanted to project. He led the way upstairs to the top floor. Trash was scattered throughout the corridors and there wasn't even a door into the flat that we entered. The place was packed full of boxes stacked everywhere. That was when I heard Jörg's voice coming from a big room that stank of weed and sweat. Hundreds of boxes surrounded a dank clearing with two sofas in the middle. Lev called out, but Jörg ignored him as he continued yelling at three other sickly teens sitting on the opposite sofa. The only light came from candles on a broken coffee table. I stood in the shadows surveying this disgusting drug den. Jörg looked fucking terrible. Lev walked over and sat down next to him, before the other three started screaming at Lev! Suddenly Jörg leaped over the coffee table and beat the living shit out of the teenagers! It was fucking brutal. Jörg went absolutely apeshit! Lev managed to scramble away when I head glass break. The voices of the Germans then became screams! Staring through the dark, I finally saw the Jörg that everybody feared. I wanted to stay and watch but Lev literally dragged me away.

When we made it back to his car, Lev's usually tanned complexion was now pale and clammy. He looked like he was about to puke but took a deep breath and then drove down the street. We only made it one block before he pulled over, got out, and started pacing back and forth on the footpath. Sitting in the passenger's seat, a smile had completely replaced my headache. Inspiration had bloomed from the shrieks that echoed throughout my endorphin-saturated brain. I saw what Jörg could become. Getting out, I grabbed Lev and shoved that fat fuck into a lamppost. He shook his head frantically. I had no sympathy for his shock as I snarled, "What did you see?! What the fuck did you just see?! Say it! I want to hear you say it! Tell me what Jörg did! What did you fucking see?!"

Panicking, Lev struggled in my grip as I slammed him back into the lamppost again. "Jesus! You fucking saw it! He cut off their faces! Cut their fucking faces up with a broken beer bottle! Christ! There was nothing left! Just bone! No face! Nothing! Fucking Jesus! He cut their fucking faces off!"

Holding Lev by his collar, I pulled his swollen head closer as I whispered, "Go tell all your buddies. Tell them all what you just told me. Go mingle with all your social circles. Tell them that Jörg does this to his friends. His fucking friends! Tell them all. Spread the fucking word. Go on. Get the fuck out of here, you little fucking shit!"

Releasing Lev, I walked away into the cold night.

"The fuck is wrong with you?!" Lev shouted. "What the fuck do you want



Bruce Stirling John Knox

from me?!”

“Tell them every fucking detail,” I said, still picturing the scene. “Tell everyone just how fucking insane he really is!”

WEDNESDAY 22nd APRIL 2020

Gabi wrote to me today as if we hadn't spoken in the last three years. Given a long enough timeline they all get over their problems with me. However, I hoarded my grudges.

THURSDAY 23rd APRIL 2020

With Schlenzig's business card in hand, I called him from a public phone. No answer, so I left him a message, “Told Heinrich's people that you're watching them, and they did nothing. Just like you!”

I had heard so many empty threats and seen so many living in fear of something that never happened, but nothing stopped me! I wanted Jessie! I wanted to eat her! I wanted her meat! I wanted her tasty, blood-wet pain and her delicious, lightly salted meat. I wanted to prolong her torture. But she would never know until it was too late. Unless I showed her what I planned to do to her by first desecrating another in front of her. Prepare her meat through torment. I wanted to show her a butchered body crawling with black serpents, that I would slowly transfer into her own meat. I wanted to fill her with devils while she was still alive. I wanted to tie her down and force feed her. Force them into every orifice. But I would make sure that she didn't suffocate. I wanted to admire her deformed disgrace as she was eaten alive from within. Her insides slowly replaced with hell.

FRIDAY 24th APRIL 2020

I woke early to a message from the redhead, Trudka. She simply sent me photos of herself in nothing but knee-high socks – because I had asked for them.

This morning, I went to my next doctor's appointment for a repeat of the already established facts about migraines. However, she suggested that I get an MRI. Why not. I had always wanted to see what my brain looked like. Just before I left her office, I considered telling her that I had taken DMT on New Year's Eve in case that had any influence on the current intensity of my aura

blind-spots. But I decided to keep it to myself.

It was a gorgeous day outside. Birds singing and hardly anyone around Alexander Platz. I was crossing the street toward the Red Rathaus when someone called out my name. Turning back toward the street, I saw two young guys in a white SUV pull over. I didn't recognize the two blonde Germans who were about to get out, when they suddenly drove off. Watching them go, I wondered what they were after as I continued toward the train station.

I had planned on going to the canal if I had gotten out of the doctor's early enough, but I couldn't be fucked racing there and back again. My business partner was getting married right now, and I had said that I would take photos at the studio afterward. Their party had been cancelled due to Corona, but I understood the importance of documenting these special moments. However, as it was such a nice day, I continued past the main train station and walked to the next stop while enjoying the sun.

Reaching Alexanderstrasse, I heard the white SUV swerve up behind me! Both guys grabbed and punched me in the gut before I was thrown into the backseat! I didn't put up much of a fight and was just swept away like I was nothing. Coughing as I clutched my ribs, I squinted at the blonde to my left and the blonde at the wheel. I coughed harder and felt something in my jacket pocket. Grabbing the six-inch-long, thick wire that I used to access my neighbor's courtyard, I coughed again, deliberately spewing spit all over the blonde next to me. His disgust was his mistake. As he turned his face away, I stabbed the driver in the side of his neck! The SUV swerved! Tires shrieked! And we smashed hard into something with a BOOM!

Shattered glass sprayed from the left windows where the blonde next to me was slammed against the door. I immediately grabbed him by the jaw and shoved the bloody wire up to his neck as I snarled, "Give me a fucking reason!"

"Lechner! Lechner wants you! I don't care about you! Please! It's none of my business! Please! Please!"

How the appearance of tough guys crumbled the moment the slightest pressure was applied. Despite his honesty, I still pounded his skull back into the door frame and then stabbed that cunt straight through his fucking throat! Climbing out of the wreck, I sneered at the empty street, "Piece of shit!"

The driver had already crawled out onto the pavement. They would live but need medical attention. And I was fine. Shake it off. Walk it off. Just walk it off, motherfucker! It was all so fucking random! We had no fucking control over any-fucking-thing!

I soon limped out of the U-bahn and into a florist, bought a bouquet of white roses and calla lilies, and then headed to the studio. The married couple were early, and I pulled out a handful of confetti, throwing it over the both of them as I held out the flowers. I then put on a charming face and played the part of a professional photographer like a fucking champion.

This evening, Marcela sent nudes and said that she wants to call me 'daddy'. She asked what else she could say while we fucked. I told her that I just wanted to hear her in pain.

I washed the dried blood off the thick wire and slipped it back into my jacket pocket. It had never occurred to me that it could be used as a weapon, but its angular-cut tip made it perfect for puncturing meat like a skewer.

I arrived at the canal at 9:45pm. The lights were on at Jessie's place. Standing directly across the water from her open windows, I couldn't see her inside. There were plenty of people socializing again on the bridge. The warm weather always brought out the fucking insects. Suddenly, I saw movement. Two silhouettes in the lounge window. So, it was true! Jessie did have a new boy. He had messy hair, skinny arms, and wore a loose t-shirt.

I stood there watching until 10:15pm but saw no more movement. And then Special BND Agent Schlenzig stepped up beside me.

"What are you doing?" he asked quietly.

My eyes slowly scanned the water below, right where I had dumped the bones of his daughter.

"What are you doing here?" he repeated.

Turning, I glanced over Schlenzig. He looked like shit. His hair was a mess and his clothes were all disheveled. Staring straight back into Jessie's windows, I replied, "Oh, you know. Stalking girls."

Schlenzig snapped, grabbing my wrist and twisting it into a painful fucking arm-lock! Some people then stepped up next to us and began unlocking their bikes. Schlenzig looked around in a manic frenzy. He quickly released my arm, and shook his shoulders awkwardly as he muttered, "I apologize. I'm... You know... I... I'm under a lot of stress at the moment."

I stretched my arm, as the three strangers scowled at us while walking away with their bikes. My ribs still ached from this morning. Some days the shit really hit the fan like explosive diarrhea.

Schlenzig then broke down and started crying like a drunken tourist. Without hesitation, he admitted that his daughter had gone missing. She had run away before but never for this long. He knew that she hated him, though

he didn't understand why. He insisted that he always did everything right! What was worse was the fact that despite all the resources at his disposal, he still couldn't locate her. He was infuriated at how he couldn't find her, and because he knew that she was doing this because she didn't respect him. Incapable of understanding the situation, he ranted about what a good father he was, or so he told himself again and again.

While leaning against the banister, I smiled at his blubbling. I examined the dynamic, and an idea then came to me, "Make you a deal. I'll ask around if anyone's seen your kid. Know some Slovaks. They trade girls with the Turks."

"What are you suggesting?!"

"If I hear anything that leads to your kid, then you'll fuck off with all this Heinrich bullshit. It's going nowhere anyway."

"But it is!" Schlenzig blurted out. Straightening up, he blinked away his tears and spoke, "You made contact with their Argentinian Liaison, Verena Fellgiebel! You have no idea how important she is!"

"No, I don't," I said, shaking my head. "Who the fuck is that?!"

"Don't act innocent now. You saw her. The blonde. You remember. In front of the Deutsche Gesellschaft Für International Zusammenarbeit. We've never had such a solid connection to Argentina before. This is a massive development!"

Frowning, I dismissed Schlenzig's boastful excitement. I focused back on the more relevant development in Jessie's flat: she had a boyfriend! That complicated matters. He was in the fucking way!

"She's staying at The Ritz-Carlton during lockdown," Schlenzig said, recovering his stoicism. "Seek her out. Use those womanizing skills of yours and report back to me with any detail, regardless how small."

Fuming, I bit my tongue, knowing that I wanted to see her again.

SATURDAY 25th APRIL 2020

Felicity, her dog, and I took a three-hour walk through the city today. I led the way along the canal. We paused at the bridge, but I couldn't see any lights on at Jessie's place. I didn't know why I bothered, there was plenty more meat, like this American. But she wasn't the right kind of meat. I reminded myself of the burning bodies in Italy. I needed the appropriate kind of sacrifice for the ritual. And I would finish what I started after having already invested so much time in Jessie. I had to be patient and bide my time with other distractions

until the alignment came.

We continued to Burroughs place and checked on his broken leg. While there, I received a shower nude from a new Italian girl that I had been chatting with on Instagram. There was always more. Plenty more.

SUNDAY 26th APRIL 2020

In the small hours, I sat in the dark and watched the space between my east windows fade into a tall passageway. I walked through the tunnel in the rough stone as it led further downward. At last, I came to a chamber with pale light seeping from a big crack in the rock to my left. In the center of the space was a wide altar of stone in the shape of a 'T'. Another worm-bodied devil lingered on the other side, but its head was elongated with tumors. Long arms reached out and thin fingers began stroking the surface of the altar. It looked as if it were playing a piano. Black serpents then emerged out of the very stone itself. This devil was causing it. It was doing this deliberately. The whole time, the gray devil stared back at me with tiny black pupils in sunken sockets. These ugly creatures always had humanoid characteristics, but they definitely weren't human. And where their endless, worm-like bodies extended to, I had never seen. The serpents on the altar coiled upon one another and built up into a large pile. I then saw a black smoke slowly creep downward from the ceiling. A smoke that moved unnaturally.

Grabbing the altar in a fit of restlessness, I swept aside the writhing serpents and snarled at the devil before me, "Don't you get it! I'm too fucking stupid to understand what the fuck you're trying to fucking say to me!"

I suddenly stepped back, hearing my own words all around me. Glancing away, I recalled what I'd asked the knucker at the pond in England. Were these things trying to communicate with me or WAS IT THEM WHO WERE INVOKING ME?!

-  
At 2pm, I picked up Melina for the first time since lockdown and we took a walk. I led us to The Ritz-Carlton, but to my silent disdain, I found that it was closed due to Corona. So, the blonde, Verena, wasn't staying here. Fuck Schlenzig! Turning back to Melina, we continued flirting with each other as we walked into Tiergarten park.

Melina liked that I was growing my hair and laughed that I had shaved my head for years when I wasn't even going bald. But I only grew my beard and hair to hide my hateful intentions and appear normal. I was made of violence



and disgust, masked behind charms and good looks.

-  
At 5pm, I met Jules at her new flat, and then we walked to the canal. While catching up with gossip, politics, and film projects, we ended up wandering into a construction site where the autobahn was being extended. A good spot to dump a body.

In the evening, Jules and I sat in a playground discussing interpersonal relationships and things that we liked to fixate upon. I mentioned how lots of girls said that they wanted to try some kinky shit, but as soon as I made the most basic of suggestions they almost always cringed and changed their mind. Arlene, however, seemed enthusiastic for anything, unfortunately it didn't work out with her. Jules then pointed out that Arlene's partner probably had a problem because I had left bite marks on her. His jealousy would have made Arlene's life difficult, therefore explaining why she couldn't find time for me. I had never considered this before, and it was an interesting theory.

TUESDAY 28th APRIL 2020

I went to get the results from my last blood test after my migraines, and the doctor said that I still had a high enzyme count in my skeletal muscles. She said not to worry, but it could be cancer! However, I had the sort of results that you would expect to find after doing mild sports. She suggested that I go a week without exercise and then take another blood test. Once she examined each muscle group, she found that everything was fine. Again, she said not to

panic as the enzyme count was the same as last summer. Why would I worry, nothing seemed to kill me!

After work, I turned up Sun Drifter, *Dire*, and I cleaned my flat. The whole time I was fully aware that I was clinging to the illusion of control by the skin of my teeth.

I was done with my domestic distractions by 10pm, so went into Mitte and stood on Mühlendamm Bridge looking down into the black waters. I'd had a good run. Been up to my fair share of trouble. It would all come to an end sooner or later. In a meaningless universe, the chaos of cancer killing you seemed tediously mundane. Another worthless existence soon to end. And like Doric had said, once I was dead it would be as if I had never existed. But fuck everyone and everything! All I felt was spite for all of this fucking godlessness! There was nothing special! I had nothing but myself! But who wants to slowly rot? I wanted hell to come and get me! I wanted to die most violently! And yet, no matter how horrible I might die, it wouldn't fucking matter! Like all those girls and all their meaningless meat, none of it mattered. Where was god now? Where was this bullshit karma? Resolution was nowhere to be found! The water was where I would end up. And the wind on the river revealed nothing. No revelation. Not even my reflection. But I was never alone. They've always been there. I saw them lurking just under the surface of the water. Infinite atrocities. This was my soul. An abomination of my making. But I'm not dead yet. Been here before. Suicide didn't kill me. I would follow through. Do that which was forbidden. Burn this bridge if I had to. I would continue tempting fatalism until it was finally fucking fatal. I had to remember what Hicks had said, "*We're an imagination of ourselves.*" I will be all I will be. I'm the son of man, mortal and alive at this very moment. I would end, and I would confront it with an appetite for annihilation. Give me hell or don't waste my fucking time!

Turning, I was about to leave the bridge, when I looked up to where the moon had lit the clouds – but it was gone. I gave no fucks if the moon and the stars fucked off with their impossible secrets, for what mattered was what I crushed to death with my own two fucking hands. Walking away, bitter with conviction from a lifetime of confronting my treacherous thoughts, I knew that accepting your own abbreviated existence was one thing but understanding that your life and death would change nothing was another. Logically, if my life meant nothing, then so did every life! If I were to die tomorrow, what would I do with my time? Exactly what I have been doing,

## Committed

because I'm a fucking sadist with a plan!

THURSDAY 30th APRIL 2020

At 11:30pm, I was walking home through the wet streets and past dozens of police vans lined up and ready for May Day tomorrow. Good looking cops glanced out of the vans as I strolled by. I meant nothing to them. They were a pack of wolves, but they couldn't smell the blood on my shoes.

Checking my mailbox, I found a third blank envelope. I went back to the front door and scanned the parked cars. Opening the envelope, I read another short question on notepaper, "*Why her?*"

I then marched upstairs and immediately compared the handwriting to Lechner's letter from December. Not a match. So, who the fuck was leaving these notes?

SATURDAY 2nd MAY 2020

I was drifting through the streets in the small hours after it had briefly rained, and the shiny asphalt reminded me of the black scrying mirror that I had found in Romania. I wondered what Mr. Bismarck had done with it. Right then, I acknowledged that I had met powerful people, traveled around, witnessed devils, created art, and eaten the meat of beautiful little girls. If I had cancer, and if it killed me, then I would die knowing that I had lived a fulfilled life. My only regret was not having caused even more trouble. But I would always want more.

Just as I approached my street, a police van slowed down next to me and stopped at the corner. Staring straight at the driver, I reached the intersection and discovered more blue lights outside my building. However, the cops all stood on the other side of the street surrounding someone on the footpath. I walked past those emergency vehicles as an ambulance arrived. Focusing on several female officers in blue uniforms and bullet-proof vests, my mind turned to Annika. Had I deleted her number? I'd love to fuck a cop after I handcuffed her.

SUNDAY 3rd MAY 2020

The impulse to break in and murder Jessie was getting harder to contain. I shouldn't have broken the magick circle. But I was fucking impatient and



Bruce Stirling John Knox

hated waiting! I wanted to butcher her right now! Fuck the ritual! Though, I knew that just another murder wasn't enough! Merely killing her wasn't sufficiently abhorrent to make her suffer! I wanted to carve out her speck of a soul from her override flesh! I wanted her screaming! I wanted to possess and then have her possessed by a devil, so that I could torture them both endlessly! The spell would keep them trapped in the cage of her own body! I could then keep them both on a leash and hidden away with my five royal Jinn. Then, and only then, would I kill her. And then the devil possessing her would bring her back to life. And I'd kill her again, and again, and again! And never banish either of them!

TUESDAY 5th MAY 2020

At 7pm, I went to Malloy's place. He wanted to show me the *Seven Pillars Of Wisdom*, that he had just bought. He pointed out the personal corrections written by Lawrence himself, and said that this copy had been printed before the first edition. I appreciated that Malloy remembered my interest in such books, and I told him that I was currently reading Speer's memoirs. He recommended that I visit the Wannsee House, and then said that most people never think to read up on such things. I said that I read because I knew that there were so many things that I should already know.

Sitting above his penthouse, in his rooftop garden, we cooked steak on an open fire under the spotlight of the nearly full moon. Talking about theology and historic sites, I asked him about the Cathars. Of course, he knew about Montségur and the massacre, and he had wanted to climb the mountain to the ruins himself. I mentioned that if he ever returned to Jordan, that I would like to join him and see the desert again. He stated that it was obvious that I was naturally curious about curious things and recommended that I try and join the Masons again. There were others in the lodge that I could talk to about such subjects and help me grow beyond my past indiscretions. We all make mistakes, he said, but there was evil out there, and that evil was in those that planned on hurting others.

I listened and kept my mouth shut. Silence was golden even to people like me.

WEDNESDAY 6th MAY 2020

Had another blood test after a week without exercise. If I had cancer, so

## Committed

fucking what. We all die. It changes nothing.

### THURSDAY 7th MAY 2020

Rearranged the studio, and moved my workstation into the back room, making it my own office.

The doctor phoned at midday, saying that the blood test results were the same. He repeated that I shouldn't worry as the levels hadn't increased. Worry? Worry about what? Being eaten by the water scared the shit out of me! Cancer, not so much.

### FRIDAY 8th MAY 2020

Went for a run this evening before I headed to the canal and met my Irish friend, Nigel. We sat on the bridge next to Jessie's place and talked about the future of virus-terrorism. At 10:30pm Jessie's lights went out, and I pictured her butchered. Nigel kept telling me about the latest Corona conspiracy theories, while I just glared at those blackened windows. I could see myself standing above Jessie's completely dismembered carcass, throwing bits of her meat across the clearing in the courtyard outside my flat.

### SATURDAY 9th MAY 2020

This morning, my little toy from Czech sent a video of her sitting on a dildo. The ginger from Leipzig also sent pics of her sodomizing herself with another banana.

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At 4pm, I went back to the bridge over the canal and met my Canadian friend Ben. I stared at Jessie's apartment while he told me about his lockdown depression and how his sex-life had diminished since the Lab at Berghain had closed. Then, in mid-sentence, I looked up and saw Jessie come strutting happily onto the bridge while holding the hand of her boyfriend. I glanced away and continued chatting, though, wondered if she had even recognized me now that I had hair. Ben then asked if I had ever paid for sex, and looked shocked when I said that I hadn't. He had, however, and said that money changes everything. The first time you pay it felt like you owed them something. The second time you realize that they should do their fucking job.

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Bruce Stirling John Knox

Later, the ginger sent a full-length video of her shoving the banana up her tight ass, but I couldn't care less. I was too distracted after seeing Jessie on the bridge. Reminiscing, I dwelled on the two weeks that Jessie and I had hooked up in 2013. She came to Berlin on midsummer's day, when the Fête de la Musique festival was happening. The nineteen-year-old's fevered impatience jumped on my dick as soon as we got back to my place and she didn't seem remotely interested in foreplay. Every time we fucked, she grabbed my hard-on and rammed it balls-deep into her tight little cunt without hesitation. I loved how soft her milky skin felt on my palms. Her ass was to kill for. And when we fucked, she moaned exactly like the girl at the start of the White Zombie song, *More Human Than Human*. The next day, we dressed up and went to the gay pride march through Berlin. I proudly introduced her to all my weird friends, and she confessed that she was starting to fall in love with this city. Of course, mistakes were made. Arrogantly, I brought her to Burrough's place the night before I was going on vacation to Scotland with my ex. My ex who was also at Burrough's place. The tension in the room was delicious. Of course, my ex was furious and returned to Berlin only a couple of days after we arrived in Edinburgh. I, therefore, took a spontaneous journey to Loch Ness with a fresh Bible and absolute desecration in mind. When I landed back in Berlin, I was a different person. I was just a fraction out of whack with the mechanism of material realism. The man Jessie knew for the week before Scotland was not the same man she spent the following week with. And as much as I clung on to Jessie and my understanding of the world, I lost control of everything. Everyone was fucking everyone. There was no one of importance to anyone. So, I focused on the Great Grimoire of my trilogy of books, *Bark*, and my eventual return to Loch Ness in 2014.

SUNDAY 10th MAY 2020

It was 7:30pm when I left the studio. The streets smelled lovely after another spring shower. All the trees were green, and the cobble stones glistened. However, upon turning onto my street, I spotted those three teenage girls walking into my building. So, that's why they seemed familiar. Except, when I opened the front door, I found one girl with her hand in my mailbox! The other two screamed in terror! With one big step, I grabbed the arm of the closest girl, as I snarled, "That's not very neighborly of you!"

The kid squealed and squirmed, but my grip was brutal as I slammed her back into the mailboxes! Another girl ran at me with claws out! I thumped

her with the flat of my palm in the square of her chest and she dropped to the floor! The third teenager looked horrified, as I pointed my finger at her.

"I'll take that, thank you very much," I said, snatching the blank envelope out of the hand of the first girl. Shoving her toward the staircase, I hissed, "Sit the fuck down!"

This new note said, "*Give her back!*"

"Who in the fuck are you talking about?!" I sneered at the petrified girls. "Give who back?!"

"Arlene!" the first girl whimpered.

"Arlene?! I haven't fucking seen her in over two fucking months! Why the fuck would I know where the fuck she's at?!"

"She disappeared while she was seeing you!" the angry girl on the floor said. "What the fuck did you do to her?!"

"The fuck are you kids?!" I demanded, and then took an aggressive step closer. "Why the fuck should I tell you a fucking thing?!"

"She's our sister! She's missing! You're the last person she was in contact with!"

"What the fuck are you talking about?! I broke it off with her after she kept standing me up, back before lockdown! Go ask her fucking boyfriend!"

"Her phone says she spoke to you right before she vanished."

"You have her phone?!"

"Her boyfriend gave it to us."

"So what?!"

"We saw your stuff online! We read your DMs! We know you've done something to her!"

"I did. She was pretty fun," I said, calming down. "But then she ghosted me. And that was it. End of story. Haven't seen her since."

"You're a liar! We know you did something! We saw your art!"

"And?!"

"And the police will catch you!"

"Where are they, then?!"

Silence. One girl started crying.

"For fuck's sake!" I was pissed off by the assumptions of these three brats, but then I thought of Arlene and her willingness to obey. "Has she ever disappeared like this before?"

"What do you care?!"

"Do you want my fucking help finding her or not?!"

"We'll think about it," the angry one asserted like a real bitch before they

Bruce Stirling John Knox

all hurried out the front door while I stepped to one side.

I stood next to the mailboxes for a while. Maybe someone had accidentally killed Arlene after she encouraged them to choke her a little too hard. But her sisters were right, why should I give a fuck?! Arlene blew me off, so fuck her! And yet, these kids found me based on pure suspicion. However, Special BND Agent Schlenzig still hadn't linked me to his daughter's disappearance. But if Arlene was in fact dead, could I locate her like how I found Haushofer in hell? And then I wondered, could I also summon her spirit and trap her in Jessie's body as well?

TUESDAY 12th MAY 2020

Finished work at the studio at 4:30pm and found a package in my mailbox. It was from Armenia. Inside the A4 envelope was a half-filled journal written by Arpi, the girl who came to my exhibition last year. The journal was filthy and warped. There wasn't a letter or anything explaining the journal. On Google Maps, the return address was somewhere in southern Armenia. It looked like the middle of nowhere. The first pages described how she moved to a small village where her aunt and uncle lived. She seemed anxious but didn't say why. The next day she wrote about seeing the nearby lake full of burning people and a black giant standing further out in the inferno. This was why she had sent it to me. I recalled our two conversations at the gallery and her confession about having a type of schizophrenia. Flipping through the journal, the pages were all wrinkled from water damage, but her handwriting was still clear. I found one little sketch of a bee. The final entry was from the beginning of March 2020, and the postal stamp was dated on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March. The global lockdown was the only reason that I could think of why it took two months to reach me. The last thing I found, in the middle of the blank pages, was an actual crushed bee.

WEDNESDAY 13th MAY 2020

At 9:30am, I had my first MRI. Before the scan, I had watched YouTube explaining how it worked. The blood flow within the brain depended on what you were thinking and doing. Therefore, during the entire 15-minute procedure, I concentrated on visualizing how I would butcher Jessie. I pictured myself cutting up her body and spreading her blood and entrails across the dirt in the clearing outside my flat. I focused on her decapitated

## Committed

head and could see it perfectly preserved in a big glass jar full of turps.

The technicians gave me a CD with the images and let me go.

Being a beautiful day, and still waiting for client feedback at the studio, I went to the Ritz-Carlton. Google Maps said that the hotel was open. However, the front doors were still locked, and the same notice was pinned to the entrance. There was an e-mail for inquiries, so I wrote it down.

I then headed to the Kreuzberg and printed out the three posters from my personal animation projects: *Alienated* (2011), *Extermination* (2016), and *Nephilim* (2019).

Back at the studio, I wrote a brief e-mail to the Ritz-Carlton, asking them to forward my message to their guest Verena, telling her that Mr. Schlenzig knows about Argentina.

For what it was worth, which wasn't much, I knew that all I was doing was throwing fishing lines into the abyss. Call me John the fisherman!

I then looked at the MRI images. It looked like a good healthy brain. This was the hidden me. It appeared to be nothing special. Just meat. And yet, this was where all manner of wickedness came from.



I then framed the three posters of my animation, hung them on the wall of my office, and reflected over how my brain alone had created these things that had seemed so important to me.

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Later, the ginger wrote to me, saying that I fulfilled her daddy issues. She hadn't spoken to her father in two years, but she valued my time. In return, I told her that she could talk to me whenever she needed. She then wrote a long

Bruce Stirling John Knox

statement about how glad she was to know me and how she cared about my opinion. But, of course, I was fully aware of how quickly that could change.

THURSDAY 14th MAY 2020

Woke up early and wrote to a pregnant friend about the weight of responsibility raising kids, how tedious it was, and all the time that kids demanded. These weren't idle claims. I had exes who now had kids, and yet it made them miserable! Children were leeches that gave only fleeting moments of pride. I told her that it was a no-win situation. If she kept the kid, then she might become resentful for losing her previous lifestyle. However, if she terminated the pregnancy, then she might lose her boyfriend who wanted to have the kid. I told her that she had to weigh up the pros and cons.

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After seeing the images of my brain, my face now seemed disconnected whenever I looked in the mirror. I am just my abstract thoughts. And yet this meat was me. I had seen inside my skull and my body was just a vessel for my mind. All the things that I had seen through these eyes, all the things that I had heard through these ears, and all the things that I had made with these hands – all of it stemmed from that wrinkled mass within my skull. I was a living primate. An animal. A meat insect. And I had a very real appetite for meat itself. I wanted it. I wanted to eat her. I wanted to fuck her meat. I wanted to make her mine. I wanted to devour her meat in order to make mine stronger.

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Later, my friend wrote back to me. She decided to have an abortion after all. What do you know, I could influence people! I then wondered if I too could convince Othello to murder his own fucking wife.

FRIDAY 15th MAY 2020

After 11pm, I walked home in the chilled air and found a Muslim girl standing outside my building. She wore a black hijab, small leather jacket, long black dress, and black Nikes. At first glance, I thought it was Nefertiti II, but this girl was younger, still a teen. She turned, crossing her arms, and glared straight back at me. "I've been waiting for an hour!"

"And who are you?" I frowned.

"Arlene's cousin!" she squinted, looking away. "Her sisters said you could help!"

Shaking my head, I had too many other things on my mind.

“You know, I’m not at all surprised this happened. Her whole life she’s been attracting perverts. And now something serious has happened to her. My mother was right, look at you! Just another creep!”

“Have a nice fucking life!” I snarled, pulling out my keys, as I stepped up to the front door.

“Wait!” she ordered.

“I ain’t got time for this fucking bullshit! Fuck off with your self-righteous attitude, you little smug cunt! Go find your missing cousin by your-fucking-self! See how fucking far you get! I don’t tolerate this kind of second-class behavior from fucking nobody!”

“Wait! I’m sorry! Please! Look, I’m sorry. You know, the police won’t help, and the rest of her family have already given up on her. Please, wait. I’m sorry. Please, I need your help.”

“Why in the fuck do you give a shit about her then?!” I sneered, holding the door half-open. “Why should I fucking waste my time?!”

“She was there for me once,” the girl whispered sadly. “I owe her. She was there for me when no one else was.”

Sighing, I thought of Mara as I glanced down the footpath, when, to my shock, I saw Verena sitting in a car parked across the street. I then slowly spoke while staring straight at Verena, “I need something of hers.”

“What do you mean?”

“A piece of clothing or an object of hers.”

“You’re kidding, right?”

I turned my scowl back on the girl.

“What, do you have a sniffer-dog or something?”

“Something like that,” I said, nodding. It was only when this girl noticed a patrol car driving down the street, that I realized how pretty she really was.

“Here, give me your phone,” she said, suddenly nervous. “I’ll give you my number.”

The patrol car came to rest right in front of my building, and the girl hurried away without another word. As I looked at my contact list, I saw that her name was Defne. Annika then stepped out of her patrol car. I didn’t see Schlenzig with her this time. She approached with that same cute smile that I remembered when we had dated.

“Officer,” I said with drawn out sarcasm.

“Bruce,” she stated, standing a distance from me. “I wanted to apologize. You were right. I shouldn’t have ghosted you. It’s just... There were... It’s



been a difficult...”

I watched her struggle to recall her excuses, until I stepped closer. She didn't back away as I broke the social-distancing bubble. I stood right up in front of her and slipped my hands around her hips, pulling her up against my body.

“Why haven't you answered my messages?” she murmured, just before I kissed her lips. “Why is the BND in contact with you? What have you done?”

So, that's why she came. The insatiable curiosity of females. Smiling, I ran my hands up both sides of her face as I said, “Come over next week and I'll tell you everything. And wear the uniform.”

“I'm free tonight,” she whimpered, while I stared at her mouth.

“I'm not.”

“Why?”

“I've got things to do,” I stated, gradually pushing her away.

“Are you punishing me?” she asked, with a pained face.

“Your ass will know when that happens,” I smirked.

“Call me,” Annika giggled, returning to her patrol car.

I said nothing. Watching her cruise down the street, I slowly turned my bitter eyes to where Verena finally got out of her own vehicle. Her long blonde hair was now in a ponytail, and I clenched my jaw at how hot she looked in her business suit.

“They weren't joking,” Verena said, slightly amused.

“About?”

“Your reputation.”

Smiling, I inhaled deeply, thinking of Arpi's journal and my new art series that I had hardly found time to work on.

“We received your message,” Verena said, adjusting her posture into a more professional manner. “It was appreciated.”

I had to force myself not to fixate on the excellent shape of her figure, as I nodded, “Cool.”

“What do you want, then?” she asked, studying my face. “What are you really after?”

Taking a long moment, I looked deep into the blonde's eyes as I said, “There are some Norwegians. A guy. Mr. Neilsen in Oslo. He owned a ship from Bergen. It sank in the North Sea a couple of years ago. Can you find out what happened to the wreck? Or anything about the boat itself? It was called the Catatonic, or something.”

“Norwegians? A shipwreck? Why?”

## Committed

“I was on it when it sank.”

Verena looked perplexed.

“You have no connection to any of this. Removed from those involved. And you seem like the kind of person who knows how to gain access to certain things that certain people would rather keep off the books.”

She said nothing.

“Now, I really do have other fucking things to do this evening, so you have yourself a lovely fucking night,” I said, before walking inside and leaving Verena on the footpath.

I was exhausted after a long day but continued reading Arpi’s journal and all of its random madness. Slowly, I came to the conundrum that I might be wrong about Jessie. Arpi was a true seer. Jessie had talent, but she had no vision.

### SUNDAY 17th MAY 2020

I met Felicity on the bridge next to Jessie’s place, but I ignored the dark windows. Felicity looked nice, in a dress and heels, and I wondered if she thought that we were dating. We then had dinner on a restaurant boat and enjoyed a pleasant evening. Swans mingled in the water as the sun went down, and I asked myself why I couldn’t just be content with these little things. Why not let this be what it appeared to be. Because I knew that nothing was ever what it fucking seemed! We all had our own agenda behind every motivation!

After dinner, we strolled back along the canal. Jessie’s lights were still off.

### TUESDAY 19th MAY 2020

Had dinner with Melina at the Russian place in Mitte. While I watched the blonde waitress, I doubted that Mr. Bismarck ever came here anymore.

I text Lev when I went to the bathroom, and then walked Melina to Alexander Platz. After she caught her train, I went back up onto the street where Lev waited. In the passenger’s seat sat a pale, gaunt woman with platinum white hair. She never spoke. Lev said that he was showing her the sites around town.

He dropped me off at a bar in Kreuzberg, and I glared back at that morbid woman’s gray eyes as she was driven away.

“Where are my papers?!” Mr. Bismarck yelled, as he threw a vodka bottle at the wall when I walked in. The group of young Slovaks all went silent.

Bismarck shoved the others aside as he approached. "I want those fucking papers! Where the fuck are they!"

"Where's that mirror I gave you?" I replied, as Bismarck stood right up in front of me. Everything went deathly still in that stale bar. It smelt like it had been closed for the entire lockdown, and the lack of any background music made the atmosphere even more unsettling. Eventually, I suggested, "Have you ever tried searching Jörg's place?"

Mr. Bismarck never looked more like an old bulldog than at that moment.

"They were fucking each other, weren't they? Come on! Surely, you've sent someone to look?! Or at least asked Jörg if he's seen them?!"

Turning his back on me, Mr. Bismarck scanned the other men, all with their eyes down.

"For fuck's sake, I'll go and look!" I stated antagonistically. "Where does he fucking live? Take me there! Come on, let's fucking do this!"

"Jörg wants you dead," Mr. Bismarck scoffed, as he returned to the bar and picked up a stack of binders. "You show up at his place, he'll fucking kill you on sight."

"Great, then he'll save you the trouble," I stated. "Look at you. You want these fucking papers so badly you're breaking out in a rash. So, let's go fucking see for ourselves! And if the rest of you cunts haven't got the balls to search the most obvious fucking place, then I'll go alone!"

"What's in it for you?" Mr. Bismarck asked.

"Nothing, I'm a fucking saint!" I barked, slapping a giant gangster on the back, before stepping up to the bar. "Or maybe I want those fucking keys we originally agreed upon!"

Less than 30 minutes later, I was in Charlottenburg and climbing upstairs with four Slovaks. Jörg's door was shut but still unlocked, and I was instantly disappointed once I found the penthouse empty again. Hitting the lights, I walked over to the windows and looked down upon the two SUVs parked on the street where Mr. Bismarck waited. Finally, the four tough guys stepped inside the penthouse.

While they searched the place, I stared out over the Berlin rooftops. I wanted the scrying mirror back from Bismarck. Maybe it could show me where Arlene was, whether in this world or the realm of death and sin. But if she was still alive, I'd love to keep her for myself and go all the way with her pain obsession, just to see how much she likes it when I gut her alive.

Suddenly one of the gangsters yelled out! I looked over to the kitchen and the others ran up to the fridge. They had found Ariana's head. You would

## Committed

think that criminals would be hardened to such sights of violence. But they're not. The four guys looked appalled by the discovery. Fuck these chickenshits! I wanted to befriend maniacs who were beyond the pale and had committed the unforgivable!

THURSDAY 21st MAY 2020

Today, I finalized the layouts of all 60 concepts for my new series of art, *Cult Of The Offensive*. The titles were as important as the images, so I incorporated the words into each picture like Communist propaganda posters.

This evening, Marcela sent me videos of her fucking her ass with her dildo exactly how I told her to. While I was jerking off to the videos, my ex in Essen text me saying that her husband had just asked for anal on Father's Day. I told her to think of me, which she clearly already did.

Later, Lev called on the burner phone. He said that the pale woman that he was escorting had wanted to talk with me.

At 10pm, Lev picked me up from the intersection. This time he introduced me to his thin passenger. Her name was Tiesa. She was visiting from Lithuania. Once we drove off, Tiesa let out a relentless monologue about her observations toward the city. Her voice remained subdued and her tone relaxed. I sat in the backseat gazing at the streets, as she brought up her disdain for the German response to Corona. These pathetic token gestures of a lockdown were a ridiculous paradox considering that she had seen people getting drunk en masse in parks every day and pretending that their homemade masks were up to industrial standards. She asked if everyone in Berlin knew that these attempts at amateur prophylactics were merely a placebo dress-code or were they all genuinely ignorant about basic hygiene?

"Ignorance is bliss!" I sneered, bored with the subject. "It's all a fucking game. The rules have shifted but it's still the same old game. The illusion of control. You got to fit in, so follow the party-line and act like you give a shit. So fucking what. It's nothing new. We've all been wearing masks of socially-acceptable-behavior since we were fucking born. The only difference now is that it's a literal fucking mask. We're all still the same deceitful pieces of fucking shit that we've always been!"

Tiesa looked over her shoulder and said, "You're an odd one."

"You need to get out more," I replied harshly.

"What was the point of confronting Bismarck like that?" Lev asked cautiously.

“The point?!” I sneered. “The fuck?!”

“We were drinking with some of the boys that went with you to Jörg’s,” Lev said. “They told us what happened. What they found. And I told them about that night when, you know, Jörg attacked those junkies with the broken bottle.”

“Yes, what was your point?” Tiesa insisted. “You had a reason, yes?”

“In hindsight,” I replied. “Every decision seems a little fucking suicidal.”

“See,” Tiesa said to Lev.

“Yeah, that’s what I’ve been telling you! He’s fucked in the head! No offense.”

“There was a reason. You have a plan,” Tiesa said in her passive tone. “Yet if you died right here and now, or at any random moment, how much of your life’s work would make that much sense? Could anyone even pick up the pieces, or would it all be swept away and immediately forgotten? It’s only with actual suicidal intentions that you can work toward your own designed climax.”

“Who are you?” I asked, studying the woman’s platinum hair and her strange twitching.

“I manage international logistics and financial strategies for a private consortium.”

“I remember a time when drug dealers just used to say they did import/exports,” I said, chuckling to myself.

“Narcotics are not my field.”

Frowning, I understood that this chick was definitely somewhere on the extreme end of the spectrum.

“What was your plan?”

“Seemed like a good idea at the time.”

“Your deflection betrays a motive.”

“And your fucking assumptions should mind their own fucking business!”

“I see,” she said, pausing for a moment.

Shaking my head, I asked her, “Have you planned your own climax?”

“Naturally,” Teisa stated. “Within minutes of my expiration, my affairs will be delegated and resolved by independent lawyers.”

“Efficient,” I said quietly.

“You remind me of Daedalus. Imprisoned within a labyrinth that not even Icarus could escape.”

“Yeah, but it wasn’t Daedalus that crashed and burned, now was it.”

“Stop the car!” Tiesa abruptly ordered. “Stop the car this instant!”

## Committed

“Okay, okay! Jesus!” Lev frowned, pulling over near the Berliner Dom.

“Get out!” Tiesa demanded.

“What?” Lev asked.

“Get out!” Tiesa said, pointing at Lev’s door. “Get out!”

“Alright, fuck. Give me a second.”

Once Lev climbed out, Tiesa reached over and pulled his door shut. In the dull stillness, the pale woman slowly twisted in her seat and looked me in the eyes. “You’re too dangerous to be seen associating with. Statistically, you could never be trusted. That’s of value to me. But do not trust this driver. Despite what he says, he is not your friend. Now get out.”

“Seriously, who in the fuck are you?!” I asked bewildered and intolerant.

“Exit the vehicle, and for your own benefit, refrain from mentioning this encounter.”

Sitting where I was for a while longer, I eventually opened my door and stepped out. Lev was smoking a cigarette on the curb and shrugged.

## FRIDAY 22nd MAY 2020

I was awoken in the small hours to a choking sound. Below the open window next to my kitchen, something sat. In the dark, my eyes couldn’t quite make it out. Jumping up, I switched on the nearest lamp. The figure turned its head away. It took a moment before I realized it was one of the worm-bodied devils. However, its thick, intestine-like tail that started below the ribcage had been cut off. The torso sat bleeding upon my white floor. Its gray complexion was partly blackened and burnt to a hard crust. Skinny arms lay weakly at its sides. The thing was dying. Looking at the tattered remains of its midsection, I examined the shredded muscle fibers. Even devils had a consistent anatomy that could be charted. I grabbed a pen from my desk and poked at the massive wound. The creature clearly had veins, bones, and nerve endings. Judging from its expression those nerves led to a brain that was in a great deal of pain. Devils were animals. There was a logic to their form. As I lifted the chin of the creature, it snarled with crooked teeth that dripped with black blood. It was made of physical matter. I could feel its clammy skin under my fingers. But all I could think of, was could I kill one of these creatures with my own two hands alone?

I got up and grabbed a steak knife from the kitchen when I saw movement outside the window. Replacing the knife with my pen-light, I pointed it out through the thick vines surrounding my windows. There, the huge black

stone-like head of a giant stood. It was different to the one that I had seen before. This one's body was disfigured and not at all humanoid. It had tiny eyes between deep cracks in its broken head that stared back at me – when suddenly the devil at my feet grabbed my leg! I ripped myself free, and the creature muttered what could have been a language. The next thing I knew, it began dissolving upon my floor. I reached and got a grip of its skull just before it dematerialized within my hands! Even the puddle of blood vaporized. I crouched there, rubbing my fingertips across the floor where the creature had faded. There was no trace of it. How could you study the physiology of a demon if their structural state was beyond solid, liquid, or gas?

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During Father's Day, I wrote to my old ex and asked if her ass was feeling used? She simply said that she had been a good wife. I told her that I needed a wife like that. To which she reminded me that once she would have been. She said that I might still get married one day and that I would make a good father. Laughing, I wrote that if she ever got divorced, she should give me a call. She replied, "*I will.*"

-

At 11:30pm, I sat on my floor listening to the rain. Almost immediately, the room became a cave and the passageway in the east wall appeared. I could still hear the rain, but it was coming from down the passageway. As I walked along it, it opened like the crack in a cliff. Rain trickled down the tall rocks as I emerged. There was a small, dark clearing and on the opposite cliff-face, where a niche was carved, and a baby skeleton hung from a dagger stabbed through its tiny ribcage. It wasn't a human child. The skull was unrecognizable, and it had a long tail.

Further along that narrow gorge to my left, I heard wet sounds. More than just the rain. I saw black serpents in the mud around my bare feet, and I followed them. The space between the cliffs widened into a great court. Next to another wall of rock, I approached a mound of serpents. There, a semicircle of eight devils stood before the writhing pile. These eight had armored flesh like blackened lava. They didn't notice me, instead focused on where the mound of serpents were building up toward: a doorway-like niche in the rock. A faint light then drifted down from the distant clouds. It seemed like the moon, a white glow, but then the light slowly moved. In the dim illumination, I saw that doorway recess was starting to fill with rainwater like a sideways pond. And then a BOOM came from the sky! A giant bull as tall as the towering cliffs, came charging down the gorge! Its enormous horns

## Committed

tore into the surrounding rocks. However, its head was nothing more than a huge screaming mouth! Inside those massive jaws were jagged teeth where countless smaller parasites shrieked with a ravenous hunger!

I opened my eyes and shook my head. Then I went to bed. A pale light still glowed outside my flat just like the one I'd seen above Mühlendamm Bridge.

### SATURDAY 23rd MAY 2020

Lying in bed, I thought about last night and the night before. Hell looked just like this world: and I walked through any situation unaffected, as if I wasn't even there. It was only when I caused trouble that I seemed to have any influence on anything, including myself.

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At 2pm, I went to my local cafe for my first Tinder date since lockdown had ended. I wasn't surprised when she stood me up. No one on Tinder was reliable. However, I was prepared for a no-show, and continued reading Arpi's journal. I then matched with another girl and arranged a date for tomorrow.

Arpi kept writing about the House of Lies, a bridge, and how she kept following bees into the countryside. She repeatedly mentioned the humming of bees at strange times. There were large sections of her writing that was so messy that I couldn't read a single word. Also, there were parts in another language and in a different alphabet, which I assumed was Armenian.

Another match on Tinder, and I wrote to her. There were always more. So many that it was easy to get over the disrespect of being stood up. Just like there were plenty of able and willing girls happy to humiliate themselves for my viewing pleasure. The power of suggestion was one of my favorite forms of magick. Like when I had fooled Captain Grant into invoking the very devil that had killed him. And while reading Arpi's journal, I wondered if I had driven her over the edge when I had told her to face her fears. Reading on, she seemed to have truly gone mad.

### SUNDAY 24th MAY 2020

Of course, today's date cancelled. Alone, I went to Malloy's place for a Persian dinner with Mara and a French guy. After dinner, we began watching *Lawrence of Arabia*, while we talked about his real life.

Afterward, I was organizing three new dates for the upcoming week, when Malloy asked about Felicity. I wasn't sure what he meant. He said that



Bruce Stirling John Knox

she had asked him for a reference on me. In return, he had told her that, “*He’s never boring.*” I frowned, admitting that another friend had already said that she like me, but I knew that that time had passed. The French guy said that the Greeks called it, ‘Kairos’: the right time to act.

As Mara and I were leaving, Malloy asked if I wanted to come to Jordan in October for his birthday. He was taking a small group of friends, all expenses paid. Of course, I accepted the invitation. He also said that we would visit Jerusalem where he would show me the secrets below the city.

WEDNESDAY 27th MAY 2020

I helped Felicity move furniture into her new flat this evening. Afterward, we walked to a restaurant, but on the way, I took a detour, and we strolled past the cafe where I had met Arlene – and right there I saw her working!

Felicity continued talking, while I just stared into the distance. Why had Arlene’s sisters and cousin believed that she had disappeared?!

After dinner, Felicity finally confessed to liking me more than as just a friend. Adding that she never met a guy who didn’t try to have sex with her. I simply recalled that after we first met a year ago, she had messaged me, stating clearly that she wasn’t looking to date anyone. She then fumbled with some back-peddling, while I listened and looked away, giving her no resolution.

FRIDAY 29th MAY 2020

Arlene replied to a message that I had sent last night. She was doing fine and about to move into a new flat. I kept my cards close to my chest and said nothing about her family contacting me.

-

That evening, I sat at my desk staring at Arpi’s journal. I had nearly finished reading it. How could I know if she really saw these entities or if she was just insane? A question that I had asked myself countless times.

So, I shoved my chair aside, switched off the lights and sat on the floor facing the east. I sat for a while in silence before I closed my eyes. It was quiet. And then I heard chanting and a bonfire. Looking up, I found myself now sitting on the edge of a cliff, looking down into a small valley where the courtyard had been. A blackened giant stood there with its inhuman head turned toward me. To my left, a blue flame burnt in a correlating position to

where I had consecrated my stone circle. To my right, a huge number of wet, panther-like creatures fought with one another. The chanting voices came from distant figures on the opposite cliff. They were all draped in long black sheets. Hundreds of them, with their robes blowing in the strong wind.

The ten-meter-tall giant then twisted its obscene head toward the sky. I too looked up to my left, where I saw a soft light in the low clouds. The light was moving slowly closer. A roaring sound then swelled up from everywhere and shook the very ground! The mob of frenzied beasts suddenly ran off in a wild dash passed the blue fire – right before a massive wave of flood water came sweeping down the gorge! The giant braced itself but struggled to stay where it was as the flood hammered against its chest. A more powerful surge of water then swamped right over the giant! Standing, I backed away from the edge as the water seemed likely to overwhelm my position too. The light in the sky then began fading, but I was distracted by two glass apes that appeared either side of me. The same kind of beings in transparent armor that I had seen in the tree next to the pond in England. One of the insect-faced apes held out a long black staff. I couldn't tell if it was offering it to me or making a threat. The giant's hand then burst out of the raging water and struck me back!

Opening my eyes where I sat on the floor, I expected at least to have had a bloody nose, but no. No blood, no broken bones, or any fucking answers. Every time that I went looking for something that made sense, I was only ever faced with more fucking chaos! Maybe Telford was right: when you're in hell you're incapable of rational thought.

Pissed off, I sat on my floor again and concentrated. I was immediately on a jagged mountainside being blasted by wind and dust. Ominous storm clouds loomed above this gray landscape. Clinging to the sharp rock formations, I called to Amaimon! Within the same breath, a shadowed figure appeared in front of me. Staring at its partially transparent, smoky form, I once again forgot every question. Standing in the presence of such a spirit left me enthralled by its intimidating menace. I felt in awe of the infinite. And then I was overcome and without a doubt. I knew exactly what I was: THE BAD SHEPHERD.

Amaimon fully materialized before me and held up a black serpent with one of its many arms. I too raised my left arm and saw that I also held a serpent. The words then came from my mouth without effort, "How do I find my way through this place?"

In an instant, the entire mountain vanished! Amaimon now stood below

a gigantic entrance into the side of a cliff. It was comprised of elaborate arches within other, even more ornate arches. Arches of stone that moved and reconfigured themselves. Beyond this passageway was a wide river with a hole in the middle. A hole that was draining half of the river's current and speaking with a tremendous voice that filled me with unbelievable terror and admiration.

SUNDAY 31st MAY 2020

Mara and I took a walk along the canal in the sun. I couldn't see any lights on in Jessie's place, but the canal was packed with boats. Berliners had decided that the best way of fighting American racism was by having a party



and forgetting all about social-distancing. Because today's moral outrage outweighed yesterdays. Civility was a fucking lie. People only worshipped fear and distraction while slowly dying from boredom.

Near midnight, I was reading Arpi's journal on my sofa, "*God's touch is always upon us. God is always there. His presence holding us in place. Gravity is the hand of god.*" Turning to the last page that was written on, I read how she had become lost on a mountain in a rainstorm one night. Crawling into some ancient ruins, she looked out a window, "*And I saw you, the devil with two crowns, standing on the other side of the bridge. I saw you looking back at me. I saw the five beasts at your side, and in your hand was mercy slain.*" Under those final words, Arpi had drawn the very sigil of Jessie

## Committed

that I had created to cast her encircling spell! Jumping up, I searched for the envelope and found that the postal date from Armenia was on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. Arpi had, somehow, seen me on the 7<sup>th</sup> outside Jessie's place!

### MONDAY 1st JUNE 2020

A quiet night. Cool air. I could just let it go, all my resentment and spite. But then what would I live for? It was my nature that attracted me toward the suffering of others. So, I went into my basement. Opened the hidden compartment. Took one iron nail from where it sat upon one of the five glass jars, and I sat on the floor. I held the nail in my left fist. A photo of Gabi in my right. Focusing on her crying, I pictured her terror, and then I spoke to the iron talisman, "Let her see just a little."

### TUESDAY 2nd JUNE 2020

The passageway I had channeled within my flat had become a temple for devils to gather. I came home and found the ceiling covered with swarms of huge black worms. Later, I was working at my desk when I realized that a black, buzzard-like creature was sitting in the corner of the room nodding its head at me. I then awoke in the middle of the night and saw a grotesque demon the size of an elephant eating another creature at the side of my bed. These things weren't ghosts or poltergeist, they seem far too savage.

### WEDNESDAY 3rd JUNE 2020

Today, I saw the painting by Ivan Aivazovsky called, *Wave*. A formidable depiction of a vast storm at sea. Enormous waves were swallowing the masts of a ship, next to an overcrowded lifeboat. The people were tiny against the great mountains of water. This painting filled me with dread. This was what I feared. Being eaten by the ocean. And I hated knowing that I would have to face it again. Until then, however, I longed for desolate places.

-

In the evening, Otto Rahn's book, *Lucifer's Court*, arrived in the post.

After a run, I headed out on my next date. I unexpectedly found Defne standing in the courtyard. Instantly annoyed, I scowled at her friendly smile and she quickly became timid as she held up a pair of glasses.

"You said you needed something of hers," Defne finally spoke up.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

I grabbed her forearm, crushing her flesh until she twisted in pain. Exhaling hard through my nose, I pulled her close as I snarled, “Come back this time tomorrow!”

“Can’t!” she squirmed. “Friday!”

“Good.” I then let her go and walked away, tucking the glasses into my jacket pocket.

THURSDAY 4th JUNE 2020

Yumi came over to the studio at 7pm, and we caught up for the first time since lockdown, when she was trapped in Sweden with her new boyfriend for two months. She mentioned how he would sometimes get jealous of her lifestyle. He said that he wasn’t freaky enough compared to her past sexual encounters. Yumi then admitted that she had come to realize that creative people like us, who were openly explicit about their sexual nature, were not the norm in other countries. Of course not! I reminded her that the majority of the world was conservative and saw people like us as abhorrent aberrations. Being honest about your fetishes was the mistake of liberal-minded half-wits! Everyone was perverted, but you must act as if you’re not!

Yumi went quiet for a while as she stared past me, at my big artwork, *The Pergamon Of Jerusalem*. Eventually, she remarked that a stranger would find it hard looking for a deeper meaning in my art when it gave the first impression of being nothing more than female objectification. She thought that people would appreciate my work more if they got to know me first. I smiled and said that like the *Black Lives Matter* situation, there was no correct thing to say. You’re racist if you say one thing, and you’re racist if you say the opposite. So, why try to appease the insufferably self-righteous. People would see whatever they wanted to see. Explanations and apologies were for cunts with nothing better to do.

Before Yumi left the studio, she commented on how much more approachable I now appeared having grown my hair and beard. I told her that the last time that I did, Natalie Portman even fucked me! Yumi burst out laughing, and yet I could still remember how tight both hers and Portman’s assholes had been.

FRIDAY 5th JUNE 2020

At 7pm, I left the studio, but Defne wasn’t waiting outside my building. I was

## Committed

not at all surprised and went into Mitte where I sat across the river from the Berliner Dom and read.

I paused. Was I too just like Otto Rahn and Arpi? Was Heinrich's colleague right? Was I just another dumbfuck documenting my experiences while distorting them through historic coincidences and my own psychosis?

A storm slowly rolled over the city, until, at 10pm, the rain finally came. I then went to the canal and didn't see any lights on at Jessie's place. Using the wire, I opened her neighbor's gate and moved over to the trash bins. There, I saw lights on in Jessie's kitchen and bedroom.

### SATURDAY 6th JUNE 2020

I had dinner at Ben's place overlooking the rooftops in Neukölln. We laughed and shared stories about, what he called, our sexual conquests. His being homosexual, while mine, heterosexual. Though, once he showed me the inside of his kitchen cupboard, where he kept his Berghain trophies, I conceded that he was a much greater slut than I could ever become. He dismissed my modesty and said that once you've fucked so many people that you could no longer remember the number, then you were no different to him. I liked Ben. No homo. He was a quiet, polite guy, but with a mind of smut. We then raised our glasses in agreement about the psychological pleasure of both having someone and then having their pornography all to yourself.

### SUNDAY 7th JUNE 2020

This evening, I picked up a small group of friends and took them to Daniel-Ryan Spaulding's outdoor comedy in Kreuzberg. While walking there in the warm twilight, I chatted with a couple of guys from New Zealand. One of whom was a butcher. During our conversation about the state of German meat, I asked if I could buy some pig's blood from his butchery for an art project. He heartily nodded, stating that there was always some there for the black pudding.

### MONDAY 8th JUNE 2020

There's nothing special about intimate relationships. Everyone's a bragging whore. However, you only get to kill someone once. And after I ate them, they would always be mine.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

TUESDAY 9th JUNE 2020

Natalie Portman's birthday.

At 11am, I went to my appointment at the neurologist. The doctor looked at my blood results and the CD from my MRI. There she noticed something and pointed out faint 'white spots' in the horizontal scans of my brain. She said that they could either be scar tissue from an infection, or just something that people with migraines were known to have for no reason. So, it could be something or it could be nothing. She said I should have a follow up MRI in six months to see if anything changed.

The doctor then gave me a physical examination, finding that I was perfectly fine. She told me to go three weeks without exercise and then they would do another blood test to check my muscle enzymes. However, that was cutting it close to my deadline. But at least there was no mention of cancer this time.

Leaving the neurologists building and walking through sunny Hackescher Markt, I wondered if these 'white spots' were why I had visions of devils. Or if my visions were causing the 'white spots'. Though, deep down inside, I took it as irrefutable proof of the brain damage that validated my father's opinion that I was a fucking idiot.

It was amazing how complete the delusion was that assumptions were truth.

WEDNESDAY 10th JUNE 2020

*"Secretly, I scold myself as a foolish dreamer."* Otto Rahn.

FRIDAY 12th JUNE 2020

Quiet day in the studio working on my new art. The ginger dropped by in the afternoon on a spontaneous trip to Berlin. While sitting on the sofa in my office, she recalled what had just happened. The photographer she had arranged to meet, picked her up at the bus station in his convertible. He had first kissed her on the forehead and then took her for a ride where he ran his hand up her inner thigh. She then demanded that he stop the car and let her out. Which he did, despite his protests. She had then come to see me. After she relaxed, we laughed about dodgy photographers and how young girls

## Committed

trusted complete strangers on the internet. As I had already planned another date for this evening, I walked the ginger to the bus back to Leipzig.

She soon text me, *“It’s so weird how nice you are in real life. And it’s weird that you make me want to get my ass fucked by you.”*

### SUNDAY 14th JUNE 2020

While Red Desert, *Older No Wiser*, played, I was cleaning my flat, when something grabbed my shoulder! But there was nothing there. Though, a fucking hand had unmistakably yanked my shoulder back. Glancing around my black and white flat, I wondered which devil had crossed the line. I would have to put a leash on it and add that cunt to my fucking collection!

My date that evening cancelled, so I continued reading. I eventually stopped once I saw parallels with Arpi’s journal. Rahn wrote about the historical events which he reframed through his obsession, but they seemed to be leading to nothing. While Arpi wrote about random events which she seemed incapable of comprehending, but which were also leading to nothing. So, was I the same, leading myself with incomprehensible obsessions straight to fucking nowhere?!

Perhaps only through hindsight could a path be seen. No! I knew exactly what I wanted!

I was too restless to stay at home, so I called Felicity. We met and sat on the open grass of the Lustgarten on Museum Island. I told her how I admired the history of this town, both the great and the terrible. Then, describing how this entire place had once been filled with Nazi soldiers during their huge rallies, I pointed out how peaceful it now appeared. And yet, I asked if she could still hear the echoes of the past lingering in the surrounding stone.

We got dinner and she talked about loneliness. While she spoke of the isolation of being a foreigner living in Berlin, I considered how many other kids had revealed their fears, while simultaneously admitting how ashamed they were of being judged for it. I told her that loneliness could only be addressed by the self. No one else could cure it. It fucking sucks, but so does life.

Felicity was cute. We liked each other, and yet still I looked away.

### MONDAY 15th JUNE 2020

While Mara was in the countryside, I checked her mailbox in the evening. I



walked home in the warm air and was about to reach my building, when a light came on inside a Range Rover parked on the street. Emmanuel stared out at me. Slowly reaching back, I unfastened the sheath of my knife. However, he remained behind the wheel, and then leaned over, pushing open the passenger's side door. The big French guy just sat there smoking a cigarette as I climbed in next to him.

"What's the fucking use?" he muttered to himself. "It's all contaminated. All of it. Life. Life's nothing more than a contagious disease. The world will be better off once this place goes up in flames."

I looked sideways at Emmanuel's bitter depression.

"I was in Libya last week," he said, glaring at the empty street. "Saw an eight-year-old boy eaten alive by hyenas."

I glanced around, expecting him to say more, but I guess he was drunk. He was hardly able to keep his eyes open and unable to muster the effort to say another word. Reaching for the door, however, I heard him sneer and laugh under his breath. He had noticed the book that I was carrying, and he shook his head.

Walking upstairs, I kept thinking about Emmanuel's expression. What kind of trauma could have disturbed him so? Was it merely the grind of repetition that breaks us? Or was he just another drunken cunt revealing how weak his shallow facade of arrogance truly was? I fucking hated sobbing alcoholics.

TUESDAY 16th JUNE 2020

Going over the accounting today at the studio with my partner, I found that I had gone from being cautiously optimistic, to feeling that the company was inevitably doomed. If the Corona situation didn't become the 'new normal' soon, then the studio wouldn't survive the summer without more clients.

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After work, I met an old ex who had just moved back to Berlin. We walked to Boxi and saw another ex, but we continued on our way.

"You have a good life. Girls, work, and your health," she said sadly. "How do you keep motivated and find the time for your own creativity?"

"People get comfortable and forget their convictions," I replied, thinking of our own history together. "All that does is expose how fucking insincere their fucking convictions were in the first place. Comfort is fleeting. The misery of the world is something I'll never forget. It surrounds us constantly."

## Committed

All comfort does is temporarily blind you from the great indifference of the universe.”

Once my ex went home, I remembered the smell of Jessie in my black hoodie at the start of summer 2019. Jessie had seemed to have far more in common with my goals than any previous ex had. I thought that we were a perfectly complimentary couple. And yet, I was a fucking idiot. Nothing had changed in the preceding six years. As quickly as we had reconciled our past differences, she ghosted me just as fast. Despite how much she had lamented her loneliness, and as much as I had offered her a way back into the world of socialites, she had still left me with my dick in my hand! Intimacy was dead. If you confess your vulnerability, it will be exploited! If you think you can rely on anyone, you will be disappointed! If you give second chances, then you deserved to be fucked over! The-most-hated-girl-I-knew was ultimately nothing special at all. And I too, was clearly just another unremarkable fuck in a long list of nobodies passing through the melancholic, self-isolation of her tight little cunt. It was the fundamental formula of her banal disposition that was the greatest source of my disgust. And I finally recognized that my attachment to her was due to her proximity to my emotional crossroads after I had first returned from Loch Ness. So, what better way to rid myself of this distraction, than to sacrifice her for my own sadistic gratification. After all, without reciprocation, one-sided affection was psychotic, and if there’s one thing I’m not, it’s affectionate.

WEDNESDAY 17th JUNE 2020

I had a second date with another girl this evening. We met on Jessie’s bridge, but I didn’t once look at her building.

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When I got home at 11:30pm, I picked up Arlene’s glasses. I then went through the photos I had of her. The glasses weren’t even similar to the ones that she had worn. Whoever the fuck Defne was, she expected me to listen and believe without fact-checking her bullshit! But maybe Arlene had simply ghosted her entire family, and they had then assumed the worst. Assumed that I had done the worst.

THURSDAY 18th JUNE 2020

This evening, I went to play billiards with a group of friends that I hadn’t

seen since ‘the plague’. Nigel asked if I was romantically involved with Felicity, to which I smiled, and then shook my head at the text that I had just received from an old ex. She was apologizing for being so anti-social. I was immediately reminded of Jessie’s message just before she blocked me. As wise as their judgment was in cutting me out of their lives, I still saw it as a fucking insult. I returned to the billiards while I pictured beating my ex with the blunt end of the cue.

FRIDAY 19th JUNE 2020

Shortly after arriving at the studio in the morning, I realized that we were out of milk and sugar. On my way to the local convenient store, an SUV swerved right onto the footpath in front of me! Two thick-necked cunts rushed out and dragged me into the vehicle, before speeding off!

The guy in the back pinned me down and pulled a plastic cord around my wrists. He then found my knife and threw it onto the dashboard while yelling, “Sofia! Where’s Sofia?!”

It seemed that Lechner had upgraded his hired muscle.

The fifty-year-old prick then punched me in the side of my ribs!

That hurt. A second hit emptied my lungs. He slammed me back against the door with hands like battering rams! Coughing, I then told him exactly where she was. I was punched in the side one more time before the driver headed straight to the old apartment building.

Once we reached that quiet street in the sun, I pictured Sofia’s butchered carcass, and wondered how badly it had decomposed. Relaxing, all I felt was pride. I was proud of my work. Proud of what I’d done to her.

“Where?!” the ugly thug demanded, bashing my head back into the doorframe.

“Top floor,” I said, pointing with both hands at the building’s elegant facade. “The door’s unlocked.”

The driver stayed with me as I watched the stocky guy walk across the street to the front door and press all the doorbells. Eventually, someone buzzed him in. I wished I could have seen his face once he walked into the apartment. But as soon as I saw the front door close behind him, I loosened my belt. I looped it over the driver’s head and around his throat! With both my knees pressed against the back of the driver’s seat, I pushed my entire body weight backward! As he choked and flapped violently about, I snarled, “When you fucking see my father, tell him I’m making progress!”

And then I heard him! I heard my father's voice! My father speaking through the gagging!

"I fucking know!" I yelled at the top of my lungs. "It can't be fucking done!"

My father's anger at my failures was outweighed only by my own fucking hatred as I pulled back harder.

"I fucking heard you the first time! But I can't move the fucking stone!" I shouted. "I'm making do with what I've fucking got!"

The driver then went limp.

"I'LL FUCKING DO IT! I'LL FUCKING DO IT MY-FUCKING-SELF! I DON'T NEED YOUR FUCKING HELP! I'LL FUCKING DO IT ON MY OWN!"

Grabbing my knife, I cut the plastic restraints on my wrists and then walked away from the dead man in the SUV. I was fuming and thought of nothing but the Pergamon of Jerusalem. I will be all I will be. I have achieved nothing until the temple is built.

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Later, after a restless day at the studio, I walked to a public phone and called Special BND Agent Schlenzig. However, someone else answered. They said that Schlenzig was taking some personal time off. Disgusted, I hung up and called Annika. But I thought only of Arlene as I listened to her voice. Making a third call, I phoned Defne, and she actually picked up.

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After work, at 6pm, a model came to the studio and I took reference photos for one of my new artworks. We then talked about the south of France where she had grown up, and I asked about the places that Otto Rahn had traveled to.

At 8pm, Annika came to my flat in her uniform: wearing a navy-blue t-shirt under a bullet-proof vest, with loose cargo pants. She looked delicious with her hair in a long ponytail which I grabbed and pulled back as I slowly licked her throat. I then fucked her viciously over my sofa. When I came, my pupils rolled back into my head as I clenched my eyes while my brain was drenched in euphoria. Opening my eyes again, I saw tall black pillars surrounding me. I looked down and found that I was still choking Annika with both hands. She appeared terrified, but once I released her and backed away, she gasped, saying how much she loved it. Standing naked in front of her, I picked up her police baton. I pushed her face-down on the bed and watched her spreading her ass with her own two hands as I inserted the handle

into her rectum. She played the part of the innocent cop perfectly.

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I went to meet Defne at the Eberswalder Strasse intersection at 10pm. She was waiting under the U-bahn overpass. Dressed in black Nikes, baggy gray track-pants, a tight black tank-top, and a tiny black backpack, she was almost unrecognizable. Especially now that she wasn't wearing a hijab and her long black hair was tied back.

"You're late!" she stated.

"How old are you?" I asked.

"What?!"

"Your parents let you dress like that?"

Scoffing, she turned away. "What are we doing here?!"

Without another word, I led the way down to the cafe on the next corner. While standing on the other side of the street, I gestured for Defne to go inside. She looked pissed off but slowly walked over to the cafe while shaking her head. I could see Arlene working at the bar as I watched from a distance while Defne walked inside.

A minute later, Defne marched back across the street. "What am I doing here?! What is this shit?! Where's Aileen?!"

And then it struck me like a slap to the face! Pulling out my phone, I searched through my WhatsApp contacts and opened a profile pic. "Is this your cousin?!"

"Where is she?! Why'd you bring me here?!"

Dazed, I turned and walked away. I was a fucking idiot! I had been wrong this whole fucking time. I had heard 'Arlene', when they had actually been saying 'Aileen'. She too was a waitress, but in Friedrichshain. Arlene was a Palestinian Muslim, while Aileen was a Turkish Muslim. However, I hadn't seen Aileen in nearly a fucking year! This was bullshit!

Exhausted, I found myself sitting on the riverside across from the Berliner Dom. I had too much in my head. Yet none of it mattered. Contradictions opposed all certainty. But I must remember what I'd seen. I must write it down in my notebooks so that I don't get lost in the paranoid delusions of my own self-deceit. Mistakes were made. But I could focus. I knew what I fucking wanted. Murder for murder's sake! This impulse had always been here. The desire to concentrate contemptuous frustration into the destruction of others. If I couldn't have it perfect, then I would ruin it all!

The time was close enough, so I caught a taxi directly to Jessie's place. The wire that I always kept in my jacket pocket, popped open the neighbor's

gate and I stepped into the small courtyard – when someone called my name!

Lev came out of nowhere and grabbed the gate before it shut behind me. He insisted that I had to stop. That my obsession with the blonde was going too far. He said that if he knew what I was doing, then the cops could also work it out.

I was utterly incensed! But then I spotted a Mercedes-Benz parked across the street. From behind the wheel, Mr. Behm stared back at me. Everything was against me! I silently patted Lev on the shoulder and walked over to the car, got in, and the old guy drove me away.

“Heinrich’s withdrawn from the city to residence in Worms,” the bearded politician finally said, as he cruised onto my street at midnight. “These are dangerous people, and you’re a fool to think otherwise. You should have known better than to get involved with any of this.”

I kept my mouth shut, though dwelt on the paradox of ‘knowing better’ while still being a ‘fool’. On that sentiment, I marched upstairs full of spite. I slammed my door shut, shoved my desk-chair aside, and sat in the middle of my flat with Aileen’s glasses in hand.

The moment I closed my eyes, a hand clamped about my neck and I was lifted clean off the floor! I dropped the glasses, grabbing the wrist of a shadowed figure. The arm was solid despite its smoky silhouette. As I hung there, struggling against that immovable entity, the immortal words of ‘fuck it’ came over me, and I let go. However, that shadow also released my throat. And there I hung in midair. I had no weight, but pressure crushed me from all directions. Pillars then began forming in a circle around my levitation. Black pillars of flesh. Pillars that spoke in unison once again.

#### SATURDAY 20th JUNE 2020

I slept in and woke to a text from my ex in Essen. She was in town for her twenty-year class reunion. She met me at the studio where I was working on my art, and we laughed about old times. At one point she asked, “How many girls are you flirting with?”

“No idea.”

“How many are you dating?”

“About two new girls a week.”

“You’re such a dog!”

“I’m just like everyone else.”

“No, you’re not.”

“Just a normal guy.”

“Normal is monogamy.”

“You know, the moment you make a girl special, she’ll disappear. Disappointment makes you philosophical about it. You know: Get back on that horse, there are plenty more fish in the sea, get over it, desensitize yourself, become jaded. However, that inevitably leads to a little bit of sadism. After all, you got to remember, the psychopath is the übermensch.”

That night, I went to the Absinthe Depot, and met Yumi and friends. My ex joined us after her anemic reunion, and at 1am, I walked her to Alexander Platz, where I received a call from Lev.

I was feeling relaxed and quite recovered from last night’s clusterfuck, so I was keen on seeing what Lev had to say for himself. I waited with my tattooed arms crossed as Lev stepped out of his car and let his anxious guilt spill forth, “Hey, I got bored! I need to keep busy! So, you know, I found myself watching Schlenzig’s house more and more. Maybe thought I’d see his little daughter again. You know what I mean. It had become a habit. Whenever I ran out of other jobs, I’d drive over and, you know, sit outside his house. But I guess it was too much. Must have been obvious. He caught me one night. Jumped in right next to me. Just about shit myself. He said he knew I was working with you. Hey, I didn’t know he was a fucking cop! You never told me anything about that shit! He didn’t give me a choice. Said I had to follow you. Watch where you go. Track your routines. But you got to believe me, I didn’t tell him anything! Not a thing. Nothing about the blonde. I fucking swear! But you know, it didn’t take much to work out why you kept returning to that bridge over the canal. I mean, the blonde’s cute and all, but come on. I can hook you up with some sweet-ass pussy! But you know, whatever. Last night this other guy called me. Said he was looking for you. Said that you were looking for Schlenzig. Didn’t know who he was but I told him I was at the canal. He got lucky when you showed up. You got to believe me, that’s why I stopped you last night! I didn’t want you to do anything in front of him. I was looking out for you. I’m your boy! I’m here for you! I got your back!”

Patiently, I listened to Lev’s awkward confession, while I recalled Tiesa’s warning.

“I know you probably think I’m full of shit. But hey, whatever. I can’t change that now. You’ll trust me or you won’t. But hey, I know some people. They need something taken care of. They mentioned you. Called you the

## Committed

Fisherman, whatever the fuck that means. They want to know if you can help them. Yeah, but whatever. I like working with you. And you know, I can always get you whatever you want. No problem. Anything, anything at all, I can get it! I'm your boy!"

"I want a gun."

### SUNDAY 21st JUNE 2020

I sat in Boxi park with my friend, the Baptist, where we caught up and talked about modern day witch-hunts. He shook his head about the whole drama that had happened a year ago when his now ex-friend had called me out as the Plague of Berlin. We agreed that any environment where questions made you the enemy were to be fled from.

In the late afternoon, we met other friends at a Mexican joint. Some played guitar and banjo, while kids ran around screaming, and then the new lovers from a convoluted polyamorous affair joined the group with outrageous stories for the faint of heart.

I got home exactly on midnight and opened my front door right as a blind-spot came over my vision. Annoyed, I drank water and lay down. 45 minutes later, the blind-spot passed, and I took a pill. I couldn't be fucked with this shit if this was the beginning of another series of debilitating migraines. It was dehydration! That was all! I must drink more water! There was no other factor that caused this! I didn't have cancer, or brain damage, or anything abnormal! This was nothing more than an irritating waste of my fucking time!

### TUESDAY 23rd JUNE 2020

After I had dinner with another girl, I decided to delete all my dating apps. None of these girls were complimentary for a long-term relationship. I had better things to do.

### WEDNESDAY 24th JUNE 2020

Had dinner at Melina's place this evening. While looking out over the clear evening with the sun soaking into the Berlin rooftops, I dwelled on what kind of cathedrals I had built. Nothing I had done mattered. I must work harder on my plans before my luck runs out.

Returning home, I scanned the parked cars on my street. Too many people



Bruce Stirling John Knox

knew where I lived, were tracing my phone, and were literally following me. I couldn't trust anyone. They were all out to fuck me over. I couldn't even sacrifice Jessie without people interfering. I needed to get these cunts off my back. Or maybe it was too late. Maybe 2020 really was the end.

THURSDAY 25th JUNE 2020

I went to Malloy's penthouse for another big dinner party. However, I was only interested in the one-on-one conversation that I had with Malloy. While we were in the kitchen preparing the steak, I read him a quote, "*The members of Lucifer's court understood that an intermediary is not required to feel the presence of god or to converse with him; rather, they searched for their god through their own actions.*"

Malloy nodded, saying that they discussed these things all the time at the lodge. I told him that I was used to finding my own way in the dark. Yet, I admitted that I kept coming across historic, spiritual, and cultural patterns. He mentioned the importance of rituals for removing the ego in order to access the unconscious. I said that art was like magick, in the sense that after learning from others you needed to go and do your own thing by yourself. He bought up how magick was all about changing perception and in doing so changing your fundamental structure. I suggested like alchemy, and he grinned. However, how did I know that it wasn't just all in my head? He said that the self-critical mind was what separated us from the sheep. And only sheep needed a priestly class. Finally, Malloy added, "Rites reveal what must be done, but what you don't want to."

SATURDAY 27th JUNE 2020

While working on my art, Alicia from Prague paid me a visit between her photoshoots. Mara joined us for drinks at a cafe after her latest Kambo ceremony. They shared their shibari experiences, and I text with a gay comedy friend who invited me over for pizza.

At his place he expressed his frustration about the fact that despite becoming more successful, less guys wanted to fuck him. I merely told him to keep the long-game in mind.

MONDAY 29th JUNE 2020

## Committed

This evening, Mara and I went to the home of the Italian witch. There, we watched our Japanese-American friend get suspended upside down from hooks in her lower back while being lashed with a bullwhip. A pleasant time had by all.

Afterward, she told us about a time, during a play-party, when she was bound at the wrists and ankles and then strung up in midair spread-eagle. A vibrator was inserted into her vagina before her labia were stapled shut. For the next two hours, people randomly walked over and beat her where she hung. I could picture it clearly – but in my mind they used baseball bats.

TUESDAY 30th JUNE 2020

Awoke early for my blood test after three weeks without exercise. However, almost every day I was socializing around town. If my blood results were no different, it was because I lived an active life.

Afterward, I got my first real haircut and trimmed my beard. I was starting to look acceptably respectable. As they say, all warfare is deception.

I then phoned Emmanuel, Peter, and then Lev, telling him that I'd do the job tonight.

Sitting outside the Russian restaurant at Rosenthaler Platz, I read in the cool evening air. Though, I soon found myself distracted, thinking about what needed to be done in order to get the heat off my back. I believed that it required jumping out of the pan and into an even more direct line of fire. Chances were, I would get burned alive, but it seemed like a good idea.

Just before 8pm, Lev joined me at the restaurant. He looked twitchy as he sat hunched over and disheveled. I asked if he had everything ready. His only reply was needing to know what I was planning to do to the blonde.

As I stirred the sugar into my cappuccino, I quietly told Lev exactly how I would perform the ritual and invoke a devil. A devil that would possess her body. And then I would feed them both to an even greater beast. I told Lev that as much as he feared for his reputation, feared the violence of his so-called friends, and feared Jörg most of all, there were much worse things hungry to eat him again and again until the very universe ripped itself apart. I told Lev that he was on the right path with his ruthless ambitions. But I told him that only if he embraced his most despicable potential could he ever survive in hell.

He looked sick as he sat in silence. I watched him get up and drive away.

Yeah, run along like a good little traitor.

Not long after Lev departed, I was reading again, when the bulk of Emmanuel stepped up next to my table.

“How’d you get my number?” he grunted.

“Telford, of course,” I lied.

Emmanuel sneered and then took a seat. There, I proceeded to spin a tale about wanting him to ask Marcus how I could contact the Khlysty. Emmanuel became irritated, stating that Marcus had disappeared a year ago. I feigned annoyance. Emmanuel snorted and looked down the busy street, as I asked if Marcus’s disappearance had anything to do with the Austrian? The Frenchman just glared back at me. Returning the subject back to the Khlysty, I wanted to know if Emmanuel had any way of contacting them. He then abruptly stood up. “Asking the wrong guy! Don’t know anything about these Russians or any fucking Austrians!”

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At 9pm, I arrived at the bridge, took a seat by the canal, and continued reading. I looked up occasionally, but Jessie’s lights remained off. Lev called me on the burner, and soon he drove up, followed by a second car with five guys inside. Focusing on the dark windows across the water, Lev then scowled sideways at me. Several of the clients suddenly began bickering among themselves. I scanned this popular area full of young Berliners enjoying the warm evening, as Lev quietly explained that two of the brothers insisted on joining us. I told him to get rid of them, but then one guy stepped up and started talking shit. As aggressive as he got, once I locked eyes on his attitude, he suddenly backed away, repeating, “Machts gut, machts gut.”

Another guy then muttered, “Der Fischer!”

I glared at that prick and he too shrunk like a fucking child.

Lev and I drove behind the other car, and he told me that my equipment was in the plastic bag on the backseat, and that payment was in the glovebox. I opened it and found a 9mm with two extra magazines. Immediately, I pointed the gun at Lev’s temple and asked, “Did you warn the blonde?! Did you fucking tell her about me?!”

Lev clenched his jaw before whispering, “No.”

“Good.” And I put the gun in the plastic bag.

The two brothers were Syrians, and we watched them abduct their own sister right off the street. Lev elaborated on how she had gotten pregnant while drunk at a party. I asked him if he really thought I cared.

As I had foreseen, at the abandoned location, one of the brothers began

## Committed

panicking and the other one puked after going deathly pale. The girl screamed endlessly under the cloth gag, mostly berating her two siblings. They both cringed like utterly useless fucks. So, I smashed the girl's face in with a crowbar! The Turks called me a fisherman again as they retreated from the scene with the two horrified brothers. I glared at them hatefully until they all fucked off. Opening the bag that Lev handed me, I then used a power-saw to cut up the girl's carcass.

Later, Lev returned me to the canal where I watched him drive away. Crossing the bridge, I reached into my jacket pocket for the wire, when I spotted Jörg marching along the waterside and coming straight at me. I popped open the neighbor's gate and pulled it shut just before Jörg's murderous hands slammed into the metal bars! Enraged, he stomped back and forth, looking for a way through. I stood staring at him. It was tempting to open the gate and let this savage animal finish me. But I was too close to complete what I had been planning for so long. I began backing into the darkness of the courtyard, when Jörg lunged forward and shook the bars! He then told me a curious little story that stopped me in my tracks. Two years ago, at Friedrich's house, when we were there with Friedrich's girl and her lover – someone had filmed everything that had happened on his driveway. Jörg watched me absorb the implications, adding that someone had just given a copy of the video to Mr. Bismarck.

Jörg and I glared back at one another in silence. He slowly walked away leaving me alone in that cage. As soon as I thought that I was getting the upper hand, life came and took an even bigger shit right on top of my insignificant fucking head!

### WEDNESDAY 1st JULY 2020

I began my morning exercises again after the three-week break and went running in the evening. It always felt good working out. Yet, as healthy as I was, sooner or later, I would be dead. There was nothing special about me. I had simply found that it was far better to challenge anything I came in conflict with than to live in fear of a death that was coming for us all. All we could do was prepare ourselves for the inevitable hell that was waiting beyond our ultimate judgment. The weak might inherit the Earth, but eternity would treat them like the worthless pieces of shit that they had made of themselves.

### THURSDAY 2nd JULY 2020

The ginger sent a message this morning saying that she didn't want to do a few of the sexual games that I had suggested once she arrives in Berlin next week. So, I text her back telling her to cancel her trip. I was done with wasting my time on flaky females.

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In the evening, while conducting a small ritual toward Jessie, I felt an overwhelming pull. I shoved my chair aside, sat on the floor, and closed my eyes. In that moment, I was grabbed by dozens of hands. I fought back against a swarm of pale devils. We were all trapped in a deep pit. Looking up through the rain and writhing bodies, I saw an ape-like woman standing above draped in a long black sheet that hung over her head. She was speaking in an unknown language as she circled the pit. Watching her, she reminded me of the witches in the doorless building in the Romanian woods. She then crouched down, scowling back at me – when a huge shadow swooped overhead! The imprisoned devils shrieked when half of them were suddenly ripped away into the darkness! The witch snarled, and I glimpsed a bestial giant rise through the rain. Those caught in its hands were then torn to shreds! Finding that I had more space in the pit, I managed to scramble up the rocky wall. The giant then jumped down into the pit and the ground shook like an explosion had just detonated! Devils shrieked and the witch howled as I crawled up to her level. She uttered something scornful, but I ran and slammed her back onto the mud! I pinned her disgusting face under both of my hands with my knees on her arms – when she suddenly dissolved into the very puddles! Manic, I pounded my fists into the mud where her fucking brains should have been! There, I found a small piece of wood in the wet soil. Rubbing it clean in the rain, I saw a line of sigils scratched into one side of the wood. The giant was still slaughtering the masses in the pit, as I snapped the wood in two.

Opening my eyes, I was sweating on my floor. Had the witch summoned me? Or had someone else sent her snooping into my business? Or then again, was she just another little fish caught in my net?

FRIDAY 3rd JULY 2020

At lunch, I was reading at my favorite cafe, when who served me: fucking Aileen! She didn't even acknowledge me, perhaps because of my beard and hair, but I watched her skeptically. Despite being accused of abducting

## Committed

her, now that she had turned up perfectly fine, I was treated like a complete stranger. Typical. I had no effect on anyone. So, I read my book and ignored that fucking waitress.

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After work, I turned the corner and saw two police cars and a van full of cops blocking my street. I rolled my shoulders, sure that they had come for me. But no. As I approached, they all slowly drove away. I continued home, got changed, and went for a run to burn off my resentment toward everything.

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Later that night, I met friends at a billiard hall. I didn't feel like socializing, but I was still so fucking good at it. Good at meaningless small talk and having fun. Levity was, after all, necessary to balance the neurosis. Ultimately however, it served one purpose: fooling the witnesses.

### SUNDAY 5th JULY 2020

Felicity invited me as an extra in a short film being shot this evening at a bar in Neukölln. There, I chatted with the cast and crew of young artists. The screenwriter was a gay comedian who I'd seen perform at the Soho House during Black History Month. He said that I reminded him of Anthony Jeselnik. I laughed and took the compliment.

### MONDAY 6th JULY 2020

I chatted briefly with Gabi this afternoon. She was on holiday in the Netherlands. I asked if she was still going to model for my new art, and she said, "*I'm still in but I lost it a few times in my mind recently. You know I'm not the most reliable person. It'll happen spontaneously.*"

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I went for a run after work. Arriving home, I found a cop standing outside my building. Annika turned around and smirked at my sweaty state. Upstairs, she wanted to suck my dick while I was still dripping wet, so I told her to keep the uniform on. However, we still hadn't kissed, not once. At one point, she was sitting on my hard-on as I watched myself penetrating her tight cunt. However, it wasn't until I reached over and grabbed her baton and pictured myself bashing in her teeth, that I could finally cum.

Washing myself in the bathroom, I stood only wearing my tiny white running socks. Annika then walked out of my flat and closed the door without

a word. Just as she was meat to fuck, so too was I just a phallic object that she used as a means for her own self-gratification. That's it. Nothing more. I could be easily replaced with anything as banal as her own fucking police baton. What was I but the son of man? A violent, disgusting devil.

-

I went to Mara's place for dinner. While I ate, we sat on her balcony and she read from one of her many books on the spiritual power of the female orgasm. It went on and on about the mystical enlightenment attained from accessing the tantra chakras that could heighten one's lived experience of a fully integrated soul combining all of one's past lives.

After I finished my meal, I asked her, "What's the evolutionary benefit of the female orgasm?"

She looked confused.

"Promiscuousness! Female promiscuousness is the reason why human males have the biggest balls of all the primates. Female promiscuousness fueled the sperm-war. And females are promiscuous because we're all slaves to the replicators! So, spare me this post-hoc poetry about the orgasm being anything more special than taking a shit!"

-

Entering my building at midnight, I crossed my courtyard when I spotted movement to my right! Bracing myself, I scanned the dark – only to find a neighbor taking out the trash. I walked upstairs disappointed. It seemed that I was unable to relax anywhere. I needed to misdirect those with an eye on me. They needed scapegoats. Or was it possible to deal with them all at once?

TUESDAY 7th JULY 2020

I finished work at 3pm, so went to see a photographer friend on Torstrasse. He had bought my artwork, *In Medias Res Meat*, from my exhibition last year down the road, and I proudly found it hanging on his wall. I stared at it, thinking of Amelia's silence in recent years, when suddenly Gabi text me. She said that she was planning on moving to Berlin in September. Until then, she suggested that I visit her in Mainz. My friend then took my portrait, during which, the thought occurred to me that Mainz was not too far from Würzburg.



WEDNESDAY 8th JULY 2020

Again, after running, I found Annika waiting outside for me. The condom broke while I fucked her over my sofa, so I fucked her pretty mouth. There wasn't anything quite like slamming a girl's face against your pelvis until you cum down their throat.

While I was cleaning up in the bathroom, she sat naked on the washing machine and asked why the BND were talking to me. Looking at the cute cop's reflection in the big mirror, I then glanced at her crumpled uniform on the floor, as I said, "Bullet proof vests and medical masks, you must feel unstoppable."

"This, it's all hype," she dismissed, shaking her head. "When the 'second wave' comes, which it will, they'll say children can still go to school. You know, if the virus was as bad as the hype makes it out to be, then schools would be the first place to shut down. Kids are supposed to be these universally loved things. But there's no worse place for spreading a disease than in school. Everyone's in close contact from multiple households. But no. It's all hype. They will let schools stay open because it's all blown out of proportion. The government wants to appear to be proactive, but they aren't solving the situation!"

"Of course," I replied. "What does it say on every pack of cigarettes? If the fucking government gave a shit about your health, then why are they still legal?"

"So, why are they interested in you?"



Enjoying the warm water on my hands, I eventually replied, “They think I’m involved with a German elitist organization that’s got roots going back before the war.”

“Are you?” she asked quietly.

“Do I look German?”

“You mean, like the AFD?”

“Amateurs.”

“Neo Nazis?”

“Grow up.”

“What are they, then?” she asked, reaching for my dick as she began kissing my chest, neck, and finally lips.

I grabbed her ass as my dick got hard again and I whispered into her ear, “They’re intrepid.”

-

Walking back toward the studio so that I could work on my art some more, I spotted two men sitting in a parked car. I wondered if they were Austrians. But no, it was just my paranoia. They soon drove off minding their own business.

Gabi then sent me a selfie where I could see her ass in the mirror. I had almost forgotten how fuckable she really was. She wrote saying that soon I could take photos of her myself. But I only wanted to break her.

-

I had just gone to bed, when something smashed into the outside of the building! It sounded like one of the big trees in the courtyard had toppled over. Instead, there were giant devils outside. Black and oily. Creatures beyond identifiable shape in the dark. Thick limbs and heavy bulks collided with one another. The entire courtyard was packed with wrestling beasts. Why couldn’t anyone else see this fucking chaos?!

Closing my blinds, I went back to bed. Whatever they wanted, it could fucking wait.

THURSDAY 9th JULY 2020

Before leaving the studio this evening, I called Lev on the burner and told him to pick me up later. I then went to dinner with Mara at our favorite ramen place. When Mara went to the bathroom, I got up and gestured for the waiter to come over. The nervous guy hung his head as I held out a paper napkin with my phone number on it. He didn’t react, as I told him to pass it on to

Mr. Slappy.

At 11pm, I left Mara's place and Lev picked me up. We then drove to Schlenzig's house. I had never been there before. We sat and waited for five minutes in silence, before I told Lev where to go next, and we drove to Mr. Behm's house. Again, without a word, we sat as I stared at his big, modern home. Finally, I told Lev to drive to the canal. We sat outside Jessie's place, and Lev switched on the stereo, playing Deichkind, *Keine Party*. Before the song ended, Lev killed the volume and spoke up, "Why are you doing this? I mean, people, everybody's scared of you. I didn't believe them at first. Thought you were a cool guy with loads of connections. But you know, people are more freaked out about you than they are about Jörg! Even he's fucking scared of you! Can't you fucking see that! Why are we here?! What are we doing?! Just stop with this fucking game and tell me what we're doing! I'm going out of my fucking mind! What are we fucking doing?!"

"You already know why I'm here," I replied, still glaring at Jessie's black windows.

"Why her?! What did she fucking do to you?! What did she fucking do, huh?!"

Turning my head toward that young guy in all his gold chains, I studied his anxiety and slowly responded, "Now you care? Now you need justifications? Now you have a fucking conscience?"

"Yes! Of course, I fucking do!"

"Your hypocrisy is your humanity," I said looking back at Jessie's windows, while thinking about the security cameras that would have now seen Lev's car at all three locations this evening.

"Hey, just tell me who she is."

"She's no one. You're no one. I'm no one. Just like everyone," I sneered hatefully. "Isn't that fucking precious, how fucking Zen we are!"

Soon, Lev pulled over to the now closed ramen restaurant. I opened my door, about to get out when Lev said, "You know, I like working with you. Was never helping the pigs. I'm just... Come on... I don't know. Most of my friends talk a lot of shit behind my back. They're always complaining that I take everything too seriously. But I don't know. I'm just... Mostly angry... All the time... I just want... I don't know. I want something to do. And you... I don't know, you always seem to know exactly what you're doing. You always know what you really want. Even if I have no idea what you're thinking. I don't know. I just don't fucking know what I'm doing. That's all."

I sat back and we both stared out at the empty street where I knew there

were no security cameras.

Lev then grabbed my arm as I was getting out, and he said, “Hey, leave her alone.”

“Why?”

“You can’t do this.”

“What is she to you?”

“It’s just wrong.”

“Why do you think I’m doing this?”

“To fuck her?”

“Think bigger.”

“I don’t know, domination, or whatever.”

“How is this a means to an end? What’s the point of what I’m doing?”

“I don’t fucking know! There’s no fucking point! Just because you can!”

“Just because I can,” I smiled. “That’s a good excuse, but what’s my higher motivation?”

“How the fuck should I know? Because you’re a sickfuck!”

“You like her, don’t you?”

Lev retreated and went silent.

“Meat is replaceable. So, why am I focused on her meat in particular?”

“She disrespected you?”

#### FRIDAY 10th JULY 2020

At lunch, I went to my local cafe to read. Light showers made the breeze even more humid. Aileen wasn’t working.

When I was about to head back to the studio, I spotted Aileen and Defne chatting with the current waitress. Walking toward the girls, Defne turned and scowled at me as she coldly hissed, “Go away!”

I continued down the footpath, my blood boiling.

-

In the evening, I went to the canal and read. Jessie’s lights were on in her kitchen.

Once it got dark, it got cold. I caught the train into Mitte. There, I ran into different groups of friends on the streets. I gave the passing pleasantries but continued on my way to Arlene’s cafe. I saw her working, and then I walked on.

Arriving home around midnight, I heard a thunderstorm rumble above. I looked out my windows and saw a huge swarm of human-sized, black

## Committed

locusts spiraling through the air above the courtyard. One of those creatures crawled across my window and snapped its crab-like jaws at me. They too were attracted to my little stone circle. And the activity around the circle was getting worse. I then realized that it wasn't just a stone circle anymore, it had become a magical sinkhole.

### SATURDAY 11th JULY 2020

At noon, I went to the Taschen book sale. Once I left the store, I walked by the rich-and-relaxed enjoying their brunch at the cafes on the Kudam. And then, on the street between the Zoologischer Garten S-bahn station and the Helmut Newton Gallery, I passed the homeless lining up outside a foodbank.

A political demonstration on the steps of the Altes Museum, echoed among the stone colonnades as I sat in front of the Alte Nationalgalerie and read.

I soon met another ex with her youngest kid and we had a coffee.

Later, I had dinner with Melina at a Syrian place on Torstrasse.

Back at her flat, she pointed out how her next-door neighbor's door had been wide open since last night. We ignored it and sat on her balcony high above the city. The subject of becoming a parent came up, and I talked about its responsibility, and how it's something I'm still torn by. I didn't say it out loud, but wondered if I ever created life would I finally learn to value it? No! All I could gain from having offspring was exaggerated expectations for a child that would inevitably disappoint me. Ultimately, I knew that that time had passed.

I then remembered the neighbor, so I went and knocked on the open door. There was no answer, so I told Melina to call the cops. She started to worry. I smiled and reassured her that the cops had a job to do. And I wasn't incriminating myself by walking inside in case someone was actually home.

The police soon showed up, but Melina seemed even more nervous. I told her that the cops weren't her enemy, they're not her friends either, but they're not her enemy (no matter what was going on in America). The cops found no one next door, so I hugged Melina goodnight and left.

### SUNDAY 12th JULY 2020

I finished reading Otto Rahn's book at my favorite cafe. It left me with one big question: what other stones were part of Lucifer's crown? I watched

Aileen waitress as I realized that I had found no actionable connection to the Nibelung in this book. Then again, it was never exactly clear what Rahn himself was looking for. What I did know was that you might search through the ruins of other's secrets, but eventually you had to build your own kingdom of forbidden deities.

MONDAY 13th JULY 2020

I picked up the blood test results from the neurologist this morning. No doctor spoke to me, but my enzyme levels were the same as before. These tests proved that I was the same weakling that I had always been. The scrawny second son. However, I had learned at an early age that I would never be physically stronger than my older brother. That knowledge drove me to seek out more strenuous experiences in order to fortify my lack of inherent endurance. Eventually though, I understood that physical strength was not the same as psychological strength. But I'm not dead yet. I would always push harder and go too far. Because fuck the weak!

Stepping outside the neurologist's front door, I found a black Rolls Royce parked on the curb. The back door opened, and Nefertiti II gestured for me to get in.

"Who the fuck are you?!" I demanded, admiring her profile in her black hijab.

"A practitioner of what you only dabble in."

Shaking my head, I looked out the window at the sunny city as I was driven away.

"Your infraction is small, but it has reached a great distance, and it's unsustainable," she said gently. "Close what you have opened."

"Or what?!"

"Or the breach will swallow you whole."

Smiling at these vague conversations, I replied, "I don't know what the fuck you're talking about. I see no difference. It's all business as usual. I've had no effect on the world, just as this fucking world has no fucking effect on me."

As soon as I was dropped off at the studio, I sat down and wrote letters to Schlenzig and Lechner. Listening to Alabama Thunderpussy, *Rockin' Is Ma Business*, I e-mailed the Ritz-Carlton asking them to pass a message on to Verena. I then text Lev telling him to find Jörg. And finally, I phoned Emmanuel, inviting him on Wednesday to the Russian restaurant near the

## Committed

canal. I then went to the post office and sent the two letters, knowing that if Lechner was as desperate as he seemed then he would make it to Berlin in time. That only left Bismarck to call. However, I would wait until Wednesday evening to do that. I didn't want him putting a bullet in the back of my head before I had a chance to fuck with everyone else. Why die quietly when you could be torn apart by a pack of wolves. Unless, of course, you could fool the wolves into eating their own.

Later, I kissed Mara goodnight before I left her place. She would not stop me this time. I was utterly free from all delusions of false hope.

It was after midnight when I walked home through the quiet streets. And then it happened. The sound of a great collision howled above! Looking up into the black sky, I saw colossal beasts! They were looming sphinxes with abhorrent heads and completely encircling the entire hemisphere. If they wanted to, they could have leveled the entire city by merely spitting at me. While staring at those primal entities, I turned onto my street. That was when they suddenly rammed their horned heads into one another! It sounded like massive storm waves battering a coastline with incomprehensible detonations. I walked on watching, welcoming their brutal indignity. However, as daunting as those all-encompassing abominations were, I felt nothing. They were part of me. I am the son of man. I am my father's son. And my fathers were murderers, monsters, and much, much worse.

Climbing upstairs to my flat, the chaos outside was still deafening. The whole building shook so hard that it felt like the staircase was going to collapse. Without turning on the lights, I sat on my floor, closed my eyes, and I immediately grabbed the throat of Nefertiti II! Her shock was bliss to me. Ripping off her hijab, I ran my other hand through her long black hair as I whispered, "Soon, you impatient cunt!"

I opened my eyes to a perfectly still night outside my flat. The air was peaceful and unaffected. I am my father's son. My father of desolation.

TUESDAY 14th JULY 2020

Walking through the Kudam with my old ex who had just moved in with her father, we discussed traveling together to Porto. She said that she needed to check on the house that she had renovated in southern Portugal. Curious, she asked what my interest was in visiting. The best lies were the simplest, so I told her that I just thought that it looked like a pretty place.

Bruce Stirling John Knox

Over milkshakes at McDonald's, she said that her hands were feeling tight after practicing cello. I was massaging her palms when she mentioned, out of nowhere, that she needed to get some new knee-high socks.

On the train home, I text her, "So, do you still like anal?"

One thing then led to another, and yes, we were still on the same page. She then suggested that I buy her a schoolgirl uniform so that I could take her anal virginity again like I did when she was eighteen in 2007.

WEDNESDAY 15th JULY 2020

At lunch, as it rained, I went to my new friend's butchery. I didn't even have to pay for the pig's blood.

On the tram back to the studio, I considered how many things could go wrong during the ritual, and also at this evening's big meeting at the Russian restaurant.

-

This evening, I cranked up Hellyeah, *Startariot*, stuffed the Slovakian documents into my jacket's inner pocket, and then phoned Mr. Bismarck at 8:45pm.

Walking along the humid canal at 9:30pm, I stopped at the bridge and saw that Jessie's lights were on.

While sitting in the busy restaurant, I wrote in my notebook how I wouldn't be surprised if no one joined me. Why would my plans work? People only followed their own interests. However, I had leverage. I knew exactly what they all wanted. They wanted answers. But the weight of realism had me anticipating my own death by misadventure. Or miscalculation. Or misdirection. On the other hand, even if no one showed up at 10pm, I still had my year-long ritual to complete. If I was alive in the next 30 minutes, then Jessie would finally be mine in just a few more hours.

But then, what do you know, I walked Mr. Bismarck wearing a charcoal suit. I had never been so pleased to see him. As he strolled down the long restaurant, I received a video of Marcela fingering her own asshole. I smirked but put away my phone, indicating that Mr. Bismarck should sit next to me at the big table with our backs to the wall.

"Where are they?!" he demanded, just as the waitress came over. I placed the documents on the table and watched Mr. Bismarck relax. He ordered a red wine without taking his eyes off the old papers.

"And the keys?" I added.

Mr. Bismarck was too preoccupied with the documents to comment. I then spotted Lechner at the front door. Directly behind him was Special BND Agent Schlenzig. Both were dressed in business casual. Schlenzig briefly argued with the waitress before stumbling behind Lechner. The alcove in the back where we sat provided us some privacy. The two men stared down at me, when I saw Jörg march through the restaurant and shove them both aside! Perfect timing! Jörg was sweating and furious, though he seemed fidgety now that I was finally right in front of him. The other two snarled like animals, barely clinging to their illusions of human sophistication.

“Please,” I said, gesturing for all three to take a seat across the table from me. Only Jörg showed some sign of acknowledgment toward Mr. Bismarck. Everyone else seemed hesitant about their present company. The place was emptying but still serving meals. I was fully aware that none of those at my table were the shy type and were all obviously dying to rip my head off with their bare hands. Mr. Bismarck seemed mostly inconvenienced by the unexpected gathering, and he tucked the documents into his jacket pocket with an irritated grunt. He said nothing when his glass of wine arrived, and no one else ordered anything. If my other guests were as punctual as these four, then I had precisely 15 minutes to spell it out.

“You’re all here for the same thing,” I said, glaring into each pair of eyes across the table. “For your precious little girl. She knew all of you. All of us.”

“Where is she?!” Schlenzig snapped.

“Good question,” I said, immediately turning toward Mr. Bismarck as I continued, “What did you do with her remains?”

Silence.

“You fuck!” Jörg whispered at me, as tears ran down his unshaven face. “You fucking took her from me!”

“After all this fucking time, after all the fucking shit you’ve seen me do, why now would I fucking deny such a trivial fucking thing like this bullshit?! Why would I deny it?!” I hissed at Jörg, as I punched the tabletop. “Why?!”

Silence.

“What did you do to her?” Lechner pushed.

“I gave her the documents that Bismarck now has in his pocket. Unfortunately for her, she tried blackmailing him, so he had her head cut off.”

Everyone suddenly focused on Mr. Bismarck’s lack of any reaction.

“He then presented her head on a platter, quite literally, and threaten to do the same to me unless I got the documents back,” I said quietly, before addressing Jörg, “She hid them under all that shit in your bedroom cupboard.”



Jörg's eyes flinched as his expression shifted from hostility to bewilderment. Yes, confusion was what I wanted! I had no power but that of convoluted influence. I wanted to corrupt their convictions and encourage self-doubt to live up to its full potential within their own fallible reasoning.

"And not to belabor the point, but it looked like she died horribly." Lingering on that, I watched the three men soak up the implications. "He didn't do it himself, of course. Does it really look like he ever gets his own fucking hands dirty?"

"He's a fucking liar," Mr. Bismarck finally announced with such authority that even I believed him. He lifted his glass, saying aloud without reservation, "And you're all fucking imbeciles!"

Jörg lunged – stabbing Mr. Bismarck five quick times in the left side of his neck! The wine glass dropped as blood sprayed across the table!

Everyone froze.

I was truly shocked that the blade hadn't slit my own throat.

Jörg simply wiped his knife clean with a napkin as he watched Mr. Bismarck's outraged expression. His head slowly slumped forward as the blood stopped flowing.

Right then, I looked beyond the three men opposite and saw Mr. Juggernaut walk through the restaurant. Four men in suits followed close behind. Verena had received my message, but I hadn't expected Mr. Juggernaut to deal with this personally. I nodded toward Schlenzig, who gave no resistance as the four Thule boys escorted him out. Mr. Juggernaut scanned the situation, and spotted Albert Speer's book on the table. He never said a word and casually walked away. Mr. Juggernaut passed Emmanuel at the door. I couldn't have directed this any better than I had already planned it. With an open palm, I gestured toward Lechner, who the big Frenchman grabbed and slammed against the wall!

"You'll find Marcus's body where his men dumped him," I said, thinking of where I had disposed of the carcass. "Go look where I told you."

"Why should I believe you?!" Emmanuel barked. "Why?!"

"Just ask the cunt himself!" I snapped back. "Ask him what kind of fucking dumbfucks he likes to hire to do his hard lifting!"

Emmanuel turned his fury toward Lechner, who clearly didn't enjoy being the lesser of two opposing forces, and he was marched out despite his attempts to resist.

That left me alone with Jörg. Mr. Bismarck looked like he had drunk too much wine and had passed out after spilling his glass. No other patrons

had seen the stabbing, so why would anyone assume that this wasn't the case. Appearances were all that mattered. However, Jörg suddenly became distraught. He began muttering about how the consequences would fuck him over and that he didn't honestly know what he was doing anymore.

For a moment, I relished his distress.

But then Jörg mentioned that Mr. Bismarck's men were all waiting outside. Squinting, I reached into Bismarck's jacket and removed the documents from his pocket. They were now slightly blood stained around the top edge. I also searched him for Mr. Schilling's old keys. Which weren't there! He had only brought his thugs to fucking murder me! What a fucking cunt!

"You should straighten your shit out!" I stated viciously. "The king is dead. Long live Jörg. There's a vacuum. Seize the opportunity. Take Bismarck's crown. People fucking fear you! Use that! Man-up and take his fucking position! Own your shit! Become a fucking king!"

Jörg frowned, looking aside with shame, "You mean a fucking tyrant."

"Exactly! You'd make a fucking great, merciless tyrant the likes of which this city hasn't seen in far too fucking long!"

It was 10:30pm when Jörg and I stepped out of the Russian restaurant. Mr. Juggernaut and his men stood next to two black SUVs where Schlenzig sat imprisoned. A small group of Slovaks approached us, while Emmanuel drove by with Lechner now bleeding extensively from his beaten face. I walked straight into the midst of the young gangsters and told them to collect the body of Bismarck and deal with it. Someone muttered something about the Fisherman, so I snapped at him that Jörg was now in charge!

Just as I was about to leave, Jörg grabbed my arm. Pulling me close, he whispered in my ear, "Hey, man, I was wrong. I didn't know any better. Bismarck's a prick. I should have never listened to him. You know what I'm saying. I'm... You know."

I walked away without another word. A few minutes later, I crossed the bridge and stood below Jessie's open windows. Her white cat sat directly above looking down at me. I saw no one following and heard nothing inside. As much as I wanted to begin, it was still a few hours too early for the alignment. I pressed my hand hard against her building, knowing that not long after midnight the ritual would go exactly as I had envisioned it – just as the meeting with all my enemies had. But not quite yet.

THURSDAY 16th JULY 2020

Arriving at Ostkreuz at 7:30am, I made my way down the street toward home – until the cops pulled up in front of me. I scowled at the two young officers as they stood in my way. Too tired to care what they were saying, I just took a seat in the back of their car, understanding that this was inevitable.

I was on the verge of falling asleep when the patrol car pulled up to a hospital. Soon, I sat in the emergency room where a nurse questioned the cops and went through my wallet. They occasionally asked something in German, to which I glared straight through their fucking meat.

The nurse began looking through my bloody hair when I asked, “Can I have some water?”

The cops shrugged and started chirping a list of questions in English now. They wanted to know what had happened and who I was, despite holding my Health Insurance card in their fucking hands.

The nurse brought me a cup of water and then asked from behind her PPE visor, “Are you injured anywhere else?”

“It’s not my blood,” I said quietly.

The two boys in blue then perked up.

The nurse examined my scalp and then turned, nodding.

The cops spoke with the nurse in a more serious German tone. Another nurse soon came and took a sample of the blood on my face as well as scrapings from under my fingernails. The cops asked more questions, but I wasn’t listening. They weren’t here to help. They were garbage-men and I was just another piece of trash.

“Have I committed a crime?” I asked.

No one responded. One of the baby-faced cops then received a phone call. He looked concerned and spoke to his partner who quickly pulled out his handcuffs.

It wasn’t long after they restrained me, that I heard dress shoes come stomping down the hospital corridor and in burst Mr. Behm. That angry little man got right up in my face and whispered, “I didn’t think Lev was serious. Didn’t believe he was telling the truth. But look at you. Why? Why would you do this, knowing you were being watched? What did you do to that little blonde girl?!”

Lev, my young Judas. The catalyst to flush out other enemies lurking in the shadows. But even Judas had to pay in the end.

“This is an extremely disturbed individual!” Mr. Behm stated, as he stood next to the cops. “Extremely unstable!”

“Compared to what?!” I sneered. “Compared to you?! You fucking meat!”

Who the fuck are you to judge?! What the fuck would you know from your moral superiority of academic sterility?!”

“You’re a murdering son of a bitch with no value for human life!”

Looking down at my bloody hands, I replied, “Aren’t we all?”

Mr. Behm then began an irate monologue using his politician voice, and the cops looked more and more concerned. An orderly suddenly interrupted Mr. Behm, and then the cops escorted me to an elevator.

“What did you do to that little girl?!” Mr. Behm yelled down the corridor. “What did you do to her?!”

A helicopter was landing as I stepped onto the roof where puddles of rainwater were blown against my fatigued expression of detachment.

I faded in and out of sleep as I was flown across the city and out over the woods. The helicopter eventually made a gentle turn as it descended. Looking below, I saw that nestled within the forest, was a large building in the shape of a ‘U’. A smaller, more modern building stood next to a wide lake. As the helicopter curved around, I noticed a little jetty reaching out into the dirty water. Standing there, a tall man with a shaved head, and dressed in a white hospital gown, stared back up at me.

Once the helicopter touched down on the roof of the secondary building, orderlies opened the door and unlocked my restraints. They led me downstairs without a word. The cops following. In the middle of a long, white corridor with bright neon lights, a worn-out old man stood. And then it struck me, I knew exactly where I was and who was waiting before me.

“Welcome back, Bruce,” Doctor Kinski said, gesturing toward the imprisoning walls of the Luise Neumann sanatorium.

Bruce

Bruce Stirling John Knox





SHORT STORY 25  
2020  
MY INESCAPABLE SPITE

DISCLAIMER:

*Written not as a confession of my crimes but as a testimony to my absolute disregard of authority.*

*“Just as we see the bee settling on all the flowers and sipping the best from each, so also those who aspire to culture ought not to leave anything untested but should gather useful knowledge from every source.” Isocrates.*

THE HILLS OUTSIDE PORTO  
SUNDAY 23rd AUGUST 2020

The bus dropped me off in the humid suburbs an hour out of Porto. After taking a few wrong turns, I soon climbed a dirt road to the crest of the hill. I was surrounded by scrawny trees leading to an open space and a tiny white chapel. But I had come to the wrong fucking hill! Fucking idiot! I must have tapped the neighboring crucifix on Google Maps. Fucking waste of my fucking time!

Hiking down into the next valley, I followed the long winding roads up into another isolated range of hills. Despite being struck with a blind-spot migraine the moment I arrived at my hotel this morning, I was now feeling remarkably recovered. I had dealt with it by drinking water and knowing that my agenda was a higher priority than mere pain. Not to mention, this was the first occasion that I had left Berlin all year. It only took me half an hour to reach that steep road rising to a much higher summit. Coming upon another small chapel below the main church, I saw a gathering of Portuguese at a little cafe. I bought a can of cola and drank it immediately. My black linen shirt was drenched in sweat as I surveyed the dusty vista while slowly circling the remote church. A side door was open, so I took advantage of the shade. I was alone again and sitting in the house of god wondering what the fuck I was doing here. Penance! Penance because I fucking loathed myself! I had girls, a studio, and my art – but there was no satisfaction! You seek meaning, give your life purpose, become an individual – but still there was no fucking consolation! You set goals, reach goals, so set more goals – but nothing gets resolved! You climb a mountain, only to climb back down, just to face

## My Inescapable Spite

another – but you can never fucking escape yourself! However, I understood one fundamental truth: being fully human in the face of the great indifference of the universe meant standing steadfast as an unrepentantly hateful entity that spoke directly to god himself: I FUCKING DEFY YOU!

There was a road at the back of the church with a chain across it next to a ‘private’ sign. A big black dog on the porch of a rundown house stared at



me as I looked for another route. Only a couple of buildings stood near the church before the slope dropped off into an expanse of wilderness. Heading down to the smaller chapel, I knew that there should be a track leading south. It indeed went around the guard dog and across the top of the range until a stray dog suddenly crossed my path. Grabbing a two-foot-long, baseball bat-like stick, I felt confident that I could fend off any of god’s little creatures that



had the misfortune of getting in my fucking way.

I had walked some rough as guts dirt roads before, but this was some seriously rugged shit. Soon, I came to a lookout tower at another summit before the trail began its long and ruthless descent. The view was barren, and I was much higher than I had expected. Yet the sun was beaming and the sky perfectly clear on this summer evening. The road abruptly dropped so sharply that it resembled a cliff. I couldn't imagine even the most tricked-out 4x4 making it up there. It was hard enough for me scrambling downward, however, the stone had a grain to it that my boots gripped nicely. After many wrong turns and false alarms, I began noticing how low the sun was getting. I then, finally, spotted the exposed area of raised rock with the split tree at an intersection of paths.

On the sheltered side of the twisted tree, at its base, was a small pile of stones. I used my stick and dug through them. Just under the gravel and nestled among the roots, I found what Doric had buried there twenty-one years ago. I glanced around while crouching beneath the tree. The valley was massive. No one would have a reason for looking here. Yet I had come and found what had been kept hidden for so long. I found it. I willed it. I brought myself here. But what was achieved by uncovering this forbidden secret?! Looking across the hills, nothing had changed. The world was unaffected. A surge of contempt had me despising the very fucking trees for not yelling out that I should stop! That I should back away! But nothing stopped me. All I had was the letter that Doric had written. His caution was a temptation. Yet why tell me where to find it if he wanted it to remain lost? Perhaps this was another test. Though, I had nothing to prove to dead men. I only followed through where my father figures had failed to.

Reaching into the dusty earth, I pulled out a small object wrapped in a filthy rag. I immediately stuffed it into a clear, sealable plastic bag and then into my small black backpack. Walking away without a second thought, I noticed how fast the sun was going down. Once I got lower in the valley, heading north, the sun dropped behind the western hills and I began having my doubts about making it back to the road before dark. If this overgrown path didn't lead to civilization, then I would be forced to backtrack up that nightmare of a dirt road. When I heard traffic down to my left, I knew to push on. I always appreciated hiking in nature by myself. It reminded me that the world didn't owe me shit! I was just a man. No more and no less than what I could make of myself right here and now. The illusions of polite society led to the false expectation that someone, anyone might check in and at least

## My Inescapable Spite

pretend to give a fuck about you. But no one did. We were all alone. The wilderness never pretends to save anything. And then a lone woman came jogging toward me in the twilight shadows. Like a tamed animal, I made room for her to pass. But out there, I too didn't need to pretend to be any-fucking-thing.

I made it just in time to catch a bus back into Porto at 8pm. On the way, I watched as the sky blackened while thinking about an old ex that I had recently hooked-up with again. She had promised to join me here, but like so many females, had changed her mind without warning. However, I knew that I had only ever felt lonely when I missed someone that I was in love with. But now I had just wanted to fuck her and have nothing else to do with her fucking life. The smell of sex both aroused and disgusted me. And I couldn't think of anyone I missed anymore. Ten days ago, I left my flat in the evening to meet her for some vegan ice-cream. I had just turned the corner from my street when Rauna appeared and slapped me across the face!

"How could you?!" she snarled manically. "How fucking could you?!"

I watched her scowling for a moment longer before she marched across the street with her arms crossed. Emmanuel must have spoken to her. Which meant that he didn't believe that Lechner's men had killed Marcus. And that meant that Lechner probably also didn't believe that Bismarck's men killed Sofia. I fucking hate it when people communicate with one another instead of just going apeshit. These cunts were all supposed to be enemies, not allies against me!

Over ice-cream, my ex said that not only couldn't she join me in Porto but made excuses about being too busy to spend any time with me at all. "I'm really sorry that I misled you, but I honestly wasn't aware of what I wanted or didn't want at the time. And thought, well, you're attractive and we know each other. But you know, sorry, I can't."

I had known that this was coming. Intimacy was dead after all. However, this situation came to reframe how I had seen our original break up in 2007, and I now understood that I had done nothing wrong. Later, while socializing with friends on a barge full of artist, I reminded myself never to wait on others or you'd be waiting for the rest of your fucking life. So, I headed back to the studio that night and booked my flight to Porto.

My ex and I had been whores with one another, but even that had left me with no satisfaction. I had gone years between sodomizing her, and yet each time I felt how empty her ass truly fucking was. With every ejaculation, I only confronted the bitter disappointment that she was still alive!

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Looking at my backpack as I sat on the bus, I sneered at the insignificance of this treasure that I had uncovered. What the fuck could it possibly offer me? But then, in a rare moment of altruism, an idea arose. A spell.

I made it back to my hotel in the center of old Porto right on 9pm. After cleaning up and eating, I sat in the leather armchair below the tall drapes. I stared at the dirty, rag-wrapped object lying in the middle of my bed, remembering Doric's letter. He had made a deal with a devil to see the unseen. The payment was having to deny seeing his family ever again. But the cost was worse than that, his entire extended family was found boiled alive until their skin had melted off – despite none of them being anywhere near water. Outraged, Doric had trapped the devil and buried it in the hills – even though it had granted his request.

I, however, had no one of value left to lose. Tearing out a blank page from my notebook, I wrote down my spell. A simple little spell. Picking up the small object on my bed, I unwound the rag. Inside was another cloth bound up with a length of rosary beads. Looking closer, I saw that each bead had a symbol chiseled into it in an unknown alphabet. Thinking of the stick that I had picked up in the hills, I understood that these beads were the same thing: a precaution. Pausing, I glanced aside. By intervening with nature through your mere existence you were constantly in a position of danger. Unlike Doric, I had no desire to stand back and merely bear witness to the atrocities of powers greater than myself. I wanted to enable those very powers and facilitate greater atrocities than ever before. Removing the rosary beads, I slipped my spell inside the folds of the inner cloth. I placed the object on the bed as I examined the beads. They were made of iron. Picking up the phone, I then called down to the reception.

A few minutes later, one of the girls from the front desk knocked on my door. I was sitting on the far side of the room in the armchair as she let herself in. She wore the hotel uniform, a medical mask, and had her short black hair in a ponytail. Despite the dim light, she looked like she was from Central America. She stood in the open doorway and asked how she could be of assistance. Holding out the rosary beads, I wanted to know if she could read what was written on them. She hesitated for half a second and then smiled under her mask as she approached. Scanning the heavy beads, she shook her head. She didn't recognize the language. Remaining seated, I looked away as my mind filled with questions. What force was able to restrain a devil for over twenty years? Were these symbols effecting the devil directly, or were

## My Inescapable Spite

they evoking something stronger? Were these rosary beads an actual holy artifact? Were there both divine forces as well as demonic? Or was it all just a hierarchy of demonstrable wickedness?

“Anything else?” the cute receptionist asked, slowly tilting her head.

Glancing at the cloth covered object on the bed, I whispered, “Open it.”

As the girl picked up and unrolled the cloth, I watched her face closely. Inside, she found a small sculpture of what looked like a saint, but it was burnt to charcoal.

“Anything else?” the girl repeated, quieter this time. Her eyes were no longer flirtatious but sickly pink and pinned like the dogs that had snarled at me after I had left the hills. We glared at each other for a while longer before I noticed that my spell was not among the discarded cloth.

“You’re free to go,” I spoke clearly.

The girl instantly ripped off the medical mask, dropped the sculpture, and lunged across the bed! Her fingers reaching for my face – until I held up my fist! The iron rosary beads wrapped tightly around my knuckles. The girl froze on the big white bed as she struggled to whisper, “Doric... is dead.”

“You’re more than just an animal. You remember. You know things,” I hissed, my mind now focused. “The world is your oyster. Have at it.”

The girl backed out of the room, not taking her eyes off me until the door closed by itself. Raising my bottle of water, I reminisced on Doric’s meticulous artwork portraying the savagery of hell. Everything he had painted was true. “A toast, to Apollo.”

That night, I slept with the air-conditioning chilling my room, but I awoke from screams downstairs. Sitting up, I looked at the polished floorboards and listened. It wasn’t long before I heard sirens. They sounded different to the police in Germany. The day after I had booked my flight here, I was invited to another dinner at Malloy’s penthouse. I met his new Swedish girlfriend that night, and we began a conversation about creativity, where she admitted to already owning one of my artworks. I frowned. She described the piece, *Inconsequential Consent*, and I soon recalled who had bought a copy as a gift from my last exhibition. I then realized who I was talking to. Malloy sure knew some influential people. She leaned over and smiled as she spoke softly, “Despite your recent troubles. Just know, you still have friends that will stand with you.”

Later, I got home before midnight, and soon my phone rang. My newly acquired public lawyer quickly informed me that Special BND Agent Schlenzig had been reassigned, and Mr. Behm had received an official

reprimand.

Irritated, I knew that that meant Mr. Juggernaut hadn't executed Schlenzig, who probably didn't believe that his daughter's death was carried out by Bismarck. Which also meant that Behm mostly like now assumed that I had done it.

The Lawyer began rambling on about other shit, but when he mentioned Detective Rosswald, I paid closer attention. Rosswald was harassing my lawyer daily with intrusive phone calls. So, my lawyer did some background research on the guy. He said that Rosswald had moved to Berlin a couple of years ago after an incident involving a missing girl in Stuttgart. Even though she turned up perfectly fine in Rome, Rosswald seemed to have a personal grudge against me for reasons my lawyer couldn't quite discern. I lowered my phone, as I said, "Not to worry. I'm sure he has better things to do with his time."

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When I went downstairs in the morning, I found that the hotel lounge was now sealed off, and many of the framed pictures on the walls were smashed. I didn't ask questions as I bought a large bottle of water from the new girl at the reception.

After coffee, I caught a bus down to the coastline. The Atlantic lay bare and blue below pristine skies. And yet, all I saw was another horizon of endless death. Despite my innate fear of water, I still walked straight out to the end of a long pier-like breakwater where a tiny old lighthouse stood. I feared it, yet I faced it. Yet I still feared it. Those immeasurable waters were alive, and I was right to fear such elements that were infinitely vaster than myself. However, as monstrous as the ocean may be, it couldn't reach me even though I was surrounded. I had made it to Porto a year after escaping Doric's cult in Italy, but the situation in Berlin was infuriating. A week ago, I had heard the burner ringing in the drawer. It was that pale, autistic woman Tiesa. She had just extracted Jörg from Europe. Allegedly, she stated, he had murdered Mr. Bismarck right in front of a BND agent and several other ranting witnesses. And now Herr Friedrich blamed me for the ensuing chaos left behind without Bismarck keeping everyone in check.

"Why in the fuck are you telling me this shit?!" I groaned, glaring at the wall.

She softly sniggered into the phone, and then simply hung up.

I snapped the burner in half! Went into the kitchen, grabbed my hammer, and smashed the phone into a million fucking pieces! Fuck that cunt! And

## My Inescapable Spite

fuck me! All my fucking plans of deception had been for nothing! Everything had gone completely fucked!

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In the evening, after exploring more of Porto, I crossed the huge iron bridge and sat in the park below the sprawling white monastery. I had had too much sun at the waterfront. At least my blonde hair and long beard protected



my head better than when I used to shave it, but my shoulders were burnt. I had no intention of triggering a repeat migraine, so I relaxed in the shade of the big, old trees and drank plenty of water. The cool darkness reminded me of when I had arrived home from the studio four days ago. I opened my door and a deep droning noise boomed out of an absolute blackness filling my flat! It was an impenetrable void lying just within my front door, and that sound breathed upon me like the condemnation of a whale. It was like a voice. A long, drawn out exhale. But then, within that blackness, a golden shape appeared. A free-floating fruit. It seemed wet, and then gold drip from it. It was bigger than an apple, but not like any fruit that I recognized. However, as quickly as it appeared, the droning voice, the blackness, and the golden fruit vanished! Of all the infernal entities that I had encountered within my desecrated space, this seemed particularly abstruse. Ever since I had seen it, I had been reconsidering my DMT experience on New Year's Eve. Had this been some kind of residual hallucination? Or had the DMT actually made contact with something that I had not previously anticipated. But of course, I was in control of nothing! So, fuck trying to rationalize any of this!

While listening to Portishead, *Western Eyes*, I glanced over as an old man sat at the other end of the park bench, maintaining the social-distance. He was a priest in black with a white collar, so I pulled out my ear plugs and started a conversation about whether Portugal was a Catholic country? I was asking, as a month ago, while having a video chat, I questioned my brother if we had been baptized? None of us had been, due to the fact that my father was a Protestant, and my mother was a Catholic. Apparently, my father had to sign a contract saying that he wouldn't deprive his children from the church. Not that we were raised in any. I had gone my entire life never knowing my own parent's religious background until now.

"I teach at the seminary here," Father Lucus then offered. "If you're looking for more answers."

"I like the churches here, with their facades of white tiles and blue illustrations. It's always interesting noticing the differences. Like the domed steeples here are not like the steep roofs upon the towers in Romania, or the stepped arches at the tops of the blackened churches in Scotland," I said, with my memories drifting through far off lands and unresolved encounters with the inhuman. "Are you teaching because you couldn't make it as a priest yourself?"

The sixty-year-old nodded and his white mustache twisted to one side as he spoke, "The young will always need guidance."

"Even if it all leads to dead ends?" I sneered.

"And what brings you to our humble little town?" Father Lucus politely deflected.

"Ah, you know," I said, watching some pretty girls stroll through the park. "I'm on the run."

"From the law?"

"From everything."

"Even if you're not looking for it, it'll all find you in the end."

"Yeah, sure. Till then, I have things to do."

"Why don't you try facing your demons?"

I immediately burst into side-splitting laughter! Rolling around on the park bench with tears filling my eyes, I slowly managed to lean over to the old priest, as I snarled in delirium, "Fucking spare me!"

"You believe you have all the answers, then?"

"I believe in delusions. And the more I believe, the more I'm fucking deluded."

Father Lucus smiled, before saying, "We all need something to look up to."

## My Inescapable Spite

What exactly are you capable of admiring?"

I frowned, looking across the river at the picturesque city with its spires and patchwork of orange rooftops.

"Why do you look so scared?" Father Lucus gently asked, crossing his arms.

"I'm already dead," I replied quietly. "And it changes nothing."

"Why do you need to change the world? Can't you just sit back and enjoy the view for what it is?"

"I can't do that anymore than I can forget the reasons that brought me here."

"The view could change you, if you let it."

He was right about that, but I was already thinking about how many other destinations I could reach before those that I had manipulated came back looking for retribution.

"Places can change you, and some places can't be changed no matter what we do." Father Lucus said, before going silent for a long time. "There's a ruin in the heart of the old city, you can almost see it from here. It's boarded up. Condemned. Like plenty of other abandoned places. It's common knowledge that the building's cursed. But no one cares. Like the homeless, we neglect them, and they fade into the background. No one does anything about it. We ignore it. And these ruins fall further into a crumbling state of disrepair."

I craned my head and watched the old priest talk in his somber tone.

"A local boy, just a little kid, broke into that ruin a while ago. He fell and injured himself. It didn't seem serious at first. But soon he developed blood-poisoning. He didn't respond to treatment. And got sicker and sicker. His mother begged me to visit as often as I could. But his family grew more hopeless the worse his condition got. His mother prayed without end at his bedside. She was convinced that the ruin was causing her son's suffering. She pleaded that I see for myself. She needed me to understand what she was dealing with."

"So, did you?" I asked softly. "Did you go into the ruin?"

"I tried to, but I couldn't. I stood outside that place. Stood there staring up. Those awful windows looking back at me. I couldn't move. Was unable to. I wanted to run. Was overcome and found myself stumbling away. I clung to the wall of other buildings to prevent myself from collapsing. Was afraid of even turning my back on the place. Even though I had walked past it a thousand times before. It was different now. It had seen me. The building knew what I was doing there. I couldn't control myself. And once I could, I



ran,” Father Lucus whispered, with tears in his eyes. “I ran and took up my current position at the seminary. I couldn’t help the boy. Couldn’t help him at all. But I thought I could warn others. Teach them to become stronger than I was.”

“What did you see?”

“I saw the unspeakable,” he uttered. “You would have to see it for yourself.”

THE MOUNTAINS OF SOUTHERN FRANCE  
SATURDAY 12th SEPTEMBER 2020

I woke early and opened the shutters to find a brilliant blue sky above the towering ridge and rooftops of this small French township. While listening to Jugurtha, *Jannaty*, I emptied my small backpack down to a minimum, before realizing that I should have learned from Porto and brought some fucking sunscreen.

According to my preparations, there should have been a bus to Montségur this morning, but when a bus arrived, the driver said that nothing was going there today.

Fuck it. Google Maps said it was only a three-hour hike away. I had done worse. Heading south, I almost immediately spotted the castle ruins on the distant mountain. It didn’t look that far. My mind soon drifted back to three days after I had returned from Porto. I was preparing to leave the studio for the evening when the doorbell rang. Mr. Juggernaut and Verena stepped inside, both dressed in black suits. I invited them into my office. The elegant blonde sat on the sofa while the tall German gentleman stood, staring at my artwork on the walls.

“You let Schlenzig go,” I stated angrily, remaining in the doorway.

“Of course,” Mr. Juggernaut replied, keeping his back to me. “Potential. Wasted potential. If only you focused instead of sticking your fingers in all these other pies. You’re too preoccupied to live up to your potential.”

I eyeballed Verena, picturing her on all fours.

Mr. Juggernaut stepped over to my big desk and looked at the books on Gnosticism and Berlin architecture. Impatiently, he spoke while staring at the framed photo of my dead father, “You’re no renaissance man! Not at all! That requires expertise! Expertise in these fields! You’re master of none!”

Leaning against the doorframe, I rolled my jaw. My eyes fixated on the perfect features of the blonde’s vicious scowl.

## My Inescapable Spite

“You pride yourself on your professionalism,” Mr. Juggernaut said quietly. “However, fail to achieve all you could because of your fundamental weakness.”

Tilting my glare at the big man’s insults, I snapped back, “Yeah, what’s that?!”

“You think you’re a piece of shit,” Mr. Juggernaut stated, looking straight back at me. “You said it yourself. And you’re correct in believing this truth. Yet obviously this superficial self-awareness hasn’t clarified why you’ll never become anything at all.”

I waited, clenching my jaw.

“Have you studied Vitruvius and his ten books? What do you know of *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas*? Have you any opinion on the *Antiquities of Athens*, by Stuart and Revett? No? No?! No, instead you let every curiosity and obscenity that crosses your path mislead and bewilder you!”

Standing silently, my eyes glazed over.

“What do you know of Irminism?!” Mr. Juggernaut demanded. “*Columna universalis sustenans omni!*”

I crossed my arms, hating Latin.

“Name the four cardinal virtues!” he commanded.

My silence resulted in him holding his palm toward Verena.

“Prudence. Justice. Fortitude. Temperance,” she asserted without hesitation.

“And the three theological virtues?!”

I glanced at Verena.

“Faith. Hope. Charity,” she answered.

The two Germans moved toward the door and I stepped aside, staring out the window at the evening light.

“You weren’t brought inside because of Schlenzig, but because of your own inefficiencies!” Mr. Juggernaut said, stopping at the front door. “Haven’t you realized by now, those that built the pyramids were never buried within. You’re just an artist, and you’ll die impoverished and forgotten. Goodbye, Mr. Knox.”

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The town soon faded behind as I followed a neat little French road away from civilization and passed a couple of hikers. Malloy had wanted to join me, as we had shared several conversations about the Cathars. But a recent heart infection had left him uncertain of his stamina. If he had come, of course, he would have hired a car and stayed in a five-star hotel. Other people had

questioned why I was even travelling during the Corona pandemic. Those same people probably also asked permission to take a shit. I had found that countries had little consistency with these prophylactic protocols. Homemade masks were fine on some flights, but only medical masks were good enough on others – even though they were run by the same airline. Some countries required a signed statement that you hadn't been around an infected person or in a high-risk area – statements that could never be verified. And once I returned to Berlin, I would simply take another free Corona test at the airport and wait 48 hours for the results. It was all a game of control. You played it, pretended to be a good citizen, and then you got on with your travels. Two weeks ago, on a sunny Saturday afternoon, I had gone into Mitte to look for the books that Mr. Juggernaut had spoken of. However, I found Dussmann closed due to an enormous demonstration protesting the Corona restrictions. Finding myself right in the middle of it, I headed down Unter den Linden. Like always, there were riot cops everywhere, and after fifteen years in Berlin, I finally saw some supposed Neo-Nazis swinging red, white, and black flags. But there were also peace flags, rainbow flags, and national flags from all around the world. Everyone was having a good time. American Christians played acoustic guitar, as barefoot hippies danced, and punks handed out pamphlets. Walking through Brandenburg Tor, I heard speakers on a stage warn of the globalist takeover, while I saw countless protesters wearing t-shirts with a big Q, whatever the fuck that meant. The only hostility I encountered was from a tiny gathering of Antifa, when two little boys tried to call me out for walking between their social-distanced conversation. It felt as though the internet had materialized and spilled onto the streets with just as much rhyme or reason. The exact point of the protest was unclear, but I also couldn't reach the Reichstag, as I had wanted to check out the glass wall where the German constitution was written. I was wondering what the right to assemble actually stipulated, as you must always remember what Tom Waits said, *"You got it buddy, the large print giveth and the small print taketh away."*

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I wouldn't wait for people to accompany me, I wouldn't be put off by the travel restrictions of a pathetic virus, and I wouldn't fucking stop myself from seeing where my true-will took me. The path eventually led upward into the shade of the steep woods. Upwards. Always going upwards. The track became more twisted and rugged the higher I went. It got to a point where I was gasping for air and my fucking legs were giving out. I cursed my fucking

## My Inescapable Spite

exhaustion! Where the fuck was all my strength from running three times a week?! What was the point of exercise if I couldn't handle a simple little fucking mountain?! I was sweating like a son of a bitch and despite stopping to drink from my two big bottles of water, I never needed to piss. When I came to a fallen tree blocking the trail, I started having some serious doubts whether I could make it up this endlessly rising slope. I took a moment and crouched next to the obstacle, looking back the way I had come. The main difference between this and other treks was the harsh incline. In Berlin I had trained on flat paved streets. This woodland was chaos and without pity for idiots stumbling along this remote route. But, like always, I pushed onwards. Upwards. Always upwards.

At last, the path flattened out and I wondered if I was at the base of the



cliff that led up to the ruins themselves. However, as I came around a bend, Montségur presented itself beautifully upon its rocky perch on the other side of another huge valley. Taking a break, I drank water, took photos of the spectacular scenery, and studied the great mount itself from this objective vantage point. I couldn't help thinking of Otto Rahn and I wanted to indicate to him how the entire mountain itself looked as though it was the actual stone that had fallen from Lucifer's crown.

After catching my breath, I headed down the now exposed trail. I reminded myself that life wasn't about contentment, it's about endurance. Push on. Push through. Or stay where you are, out in the blistering sun for an unceremonious sky burial. No one but the birds would find the bones of the dead out here. I despised the sedimentary. The path once again led back into the cool shadows of the surrounding forest and yet the ruins never seemed a foot closer. On and on the path went and not a single human came across my bitter wandering. Gasping for air on the climb, I snarled at myself. What the fuck was I doing here?! I remembered reading that those seeking the truth sought the holy Grail. I remembered the disgust from the guy at the German Historic Museum when he had spoken of this place. And I remembered when Mr. Juggernaut had first mentioned the Nibelung and the flood. One suggestion leads to another and then you're chasing synchronicity and coincidences like a fucking fanatical lunatic. But I wasn't here for any of that. I had my own plans, and there was nothing as noble as Otto Rahn's hopeful naivety about my motivations. I was drawn to wretched sites of mass suffering to revel at the magnitude of such cruelties committed.

Up and up, I pushed through my weariness until suddenly the trees opened and I stepped out below the ruins and stood upon the 'Field of Burning'. Dumping my small backpack, I collapsed on the damp grass and drank long and hard. In the year of our Lord 1244, the siege had ended and over 220 Cathars willingly let themselves be burned alive right here rather than renounce their faith. However, like Jerusalem, these were not the ruins of the original stronghold. A fort was built years later upon the site and that had fallen into the crumbling silhouette that now towered above. There was nothing here to find that hadn't already been thoroughly searched through in the last 800 years. Only the lingering record of the slaughter of reclusive aesthetics hung in the air. Not even their heretical god had saved them. So, they burned. That was their only reward for a lifetime of poverty, isolation, and hardship. A monastic existence not worth living would have been easy to surrender when killing yourself wasn't an option. I call it, suicide by crusade.

## My Inescapable Spite

Gathering my strength after my hike, I forced my way up the looming cliff face. It was definitely a good thing that Malloy hadn't joined me, as I was struggling with that broken trail that was barely fit for mountain goats. I could hear the bells from a herd of them down in the next valley. The view was even more magnificent from up there. A tiny village was visible below the southside, and the encircling mountains were utterly spectacular.

Every time I rested, I shook my head, knowing that I wasn't quite there yet. Up and up. Crawling with my hands on the dry rocks until, dripping with sweat, I reached the foundation of the ruins. An open gateway led inside the hollow shell of those stone walls. A tower stood to my left, and another opening straight ahead. I moved to my right and slumped into the shade, loathing the idea of returning the same way I had just come. A few random hikers appeared and also sat out of the sun.

I eventually got up and explored the empty walls before stepping out through the northside gate. The vista ahead was a flat landscape, but in all other directions the Pyrenees were fucking epic. To my right, there was a



sheer drop off, and I scanned the jagged mountain ranges in the midday sun – when I was struck aside! I slammed against the stone wall and grabbed the rocks, bracing myself near the edge of the cliff. Looking around madly, I expected to find some French cunt trying to be funny, but I was alone in the shadow of the ruins. I was suddenly slammed into again by some unseen impact! Scrambling to cling onto the rough exterior wall, I found my heels shoved over the edge as I heard the snorting of a wild animal right next to my face! Holding my left elbow up, I could feel the weight of something against

me. It retreated and dust clouds rose where invisible paws slammed into the ground. Ripping off my backpack, I sunk my hand inside as I heard that unseen devil rear up in attack – and I held out the rosary beads from Porto! Immediately the heavy breathing went silent, and the stirred-up dust drifted away on the breeze. Scowling at the narrow track on this side of the ruins, I kept the beads outstretched as I slowly moved away from the cliff’s edge.

An old man and his dog then came strolling out of the northern gate and headed in my direction. Tucking the rosary into my pocket, I nodded as I moved toward the tower-end of the castle. I had promised Malloy that I’d bring him a souvenir, so I stood in the demolished spiral staircase of the ruin and rubbed my hands into the rubble. Pressing my palms against the rocks, I knew that this was real. I was here. I could see, feel, and smell it. But if I couldn’t see what had attacked me outside, then how could I know if it was real? No one else was there to feel it. And feelings alone proved nothing. So, I picked up a small stone for Malloy and clenched it in my fist.

Suddenly all the sound drained out of the ruins and was replaced with a deep droning noise. Standing up in the center of the roofless tower, I watched a swarm of blackness fill the space. I could still see the walls on either side, and the sky above, so this wasn’t some new variation of a migraine blind-spot. This mass was contained within the walls before me, and just like the darkness that I had found inside my flat once before, a golden shape appeared in the dark. A free-floating sword.

The next moment, the blackness and golden sword vanished like smoke, revealing the old man and his dog standing in the entrance. He trembled and then yelled at me in French. Shaking my head, I climbed the small ladder up to his level, as I asked, “You speak English?”

“What was that?! That thing?!”

His words stopped me on the wooden walkway.

“Monsieur, what was that?!”

“I. Don’t. Know.”

“What are you doing here?!” he demanded, holding his walking cane and leash close to his chest.

“Ah, you know, loitering in just another Masjid Al-Haraam,” I replied, still glancing around.

“What are you looking for?!” he spoke in a rich accent with a skeptical squint.

“Deus absconditus.”

“Danger, monsieur?” he repeated what he misheard.

## My Inescapable Spite

“Sure,” I smiled, leaning against the railing as I glared at the pale blue horizon. The big German shepherd rubbed itself against my thigh. I don’t know why dogs like me. I never paid them much attention.

“Danger is out there,” the old guy stated grimly, as he stood at my side. “It’s out there as surely as god is. You’ll find him too, just as you’ll find your own mortality.”

“Doubt it,” I said bitterly. “Like all those illusive wild animals, whenever I actually come across any they always turn and run. All danger is a disappointment. And as for god, what is he but the ultimate scapegoat.”

“You seem confused, monsieur,” the old man said. “Are you seeking god or the devil?”

“Neither!” I snapped back. “And both.”

“And what have you found so far?”

“A whole lot of hell.”

“Yet you still seek both?” he queried, as his dog sat at my feet. “Why bother?”

“Call me Pandora’s son.”

“So, you are full of hope,” the old guy placed both hands on the railing. “One of goodness.”

Keeping quiet, I thought of the book that I was reading by Dan Carlin, *“From the perspective of the Romans, it must have seemed like every barbarian tribe had another even more barbaric tribe behind it forever stretching off to the ends of the earth.”* All we had was a history of human-ants rising and falling with perpetual delusions of immortality and significance. “There’s no such thing as goodness. It’s all just a relative struggle between those with power and those with less. And what makes one strength override another? Is it just physics, like a keystone holding up an arch, or is it something else? Something beyond the conceptualization of man? Something between supposition and force? Or is there only the abstract and the material? No midpoint. Nothing between unrestrained imagination and the cold hard matter at hand.”

“The soul, monsieur. That is where the spirit transcends.”

“Jesus fucking Christ!” I snarled, turning toward the stairs.

“Why are you here?! You think this is where you will discover god?! What if there is a place, a place where you could face the almighty, would you go there?! What would you achieve?! What would you do if you reached a holy site and found yourself in the very presence of god himself?! Do you honestly think the creator of the cosmos would welcome you in, even if you



went to the very ends of the Earth for your search?! What makes you think you could confront that which no man is worthy of?!”

I stood still on the wooden steps listening.

“What makes you think you have the right to even speak to god?! You?! What are you to god?! What makes you think you are any more destine than anyone else to find him?! What lengths have you gone to?! What worship have you given?! What charity have you done?! What gives you the arrogance of hoping to find any sort of grace and communicate with that which is beyond the understanding of even the holiest of men?!”

“If not me, then who?!” I yelled. “What other cunt is free from sin?! If I can stand up to my own father, I can stand up to any god made of piss and wind! I seek the fucking impossible because I am the fucking word made flesh!”

“You seek the godhead through your irreverence?!”

“I am my father’s son!”

“You know nothing! Your words mean nothing! Nothing!”

“Yeah, what the fuck would I know?!”

“You seek no consolamentum!”

“You’re god damned right about that shit!”

“You are unworthy and will never prevail!”

“Just as all men shall rot, tell me something I don’t already fucking know!”

“You are a terrorist!” the old man gasped, backing into the ruin, but his dog stayed by my side. “An unholy terrorist! You are not what you seem!”

I stopped to think on that for moment.

“God shall never tolerate your detestable kind! Never! Never tolerate you and yours!” the Frenchman muttered, yanking furiously on the leash. “You have no virtues! No soul! You are not of this Eden!”

Looking away, I recalled in 2014 when I had reduced my life down to a suitcase after giving away all my old artwork. “Once you’re dead, you’ll learn that everything you value means nothing to everyone else. Once you’re dead, they’ll throw out everything you ever held dear. The sacred is a lie. And we all learn that once we’re fucking dead.”

“What are you looking for?!”

“A power greater than the devils subdued by it.”

“You won’t find it here, Monsieur.”

And with that, I grabbed the leash and then waited to see if god would stop me. But there was no Holy Grail, ghosts of the Cathars, or any part of Lucifer’s crown in this fucking place. There was nothing but the atrocities I

## My Inescapable Spite

made for myself!

I soon descended the mountain and stumbled into the quiet village far below. This year I had wanted to build monuments out of stone, but even *Maison Carrée* was weather worn. Nothing lasts forever. Not the Assyrians nor the Greeks. It's all an exercise in futility. Why bother with anything beyond the flesh. I remembered the day after the Corona protest, Felicity invited me to model in a photoshoot for a calendar. I then had dinner with Melina, before Alicia stayed the night. It was all meaningless meat. Temporary distractions that solved nothing. And yet, the next morning, when Alicia came to the studio with a headache and lay on the sofa, she found a small envelope stuffed down the side of the armrest. I opened it and realized that it was a message from Verena. She had written a location in Norway, along with several random strings of numbers and the name, Alvsson. As pretty as Alicia was, lying vulnerable on the sofa, the bigger picture was far more distracting. I knew that even in my most despondent moments I could never be content with the mere pleasures of the flesh.

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I was exhausted when I came across a small museum in the village below Montségur. There, I bought a couple of postcards and asked the guy at the desk if there were any taxis around? He suggested that I talk to the folk at a nearby restaurant. The owner of which said that a taxi would cost about fifty euros, and then another big Frenchman offered to drive me back to my hotel for half that. After my coke and ice-cream, the friendly giant raced back down the twisted mountain road like only a local would dare. Staring out the open passenger's side window, I couldn't believe how far I had gone by foot. The road kept going down and down. My aching feet were grateful that I didn't have to walk all the way back. The guy driving was a fucking champion, and despite his English being only slightly better than my French, he burst into random conversations about unknown shit that I just smiled at.

Arriving in the small township in the late afternoon's blazing heat, I shook hands with the giant and said goodbye with, "Merci, merci, merci."

I spent the evening in my room on the third floor, dwelling on the failure of my magical sinkhole. But sometimes it takes the unexpected to push you in new directions. The birthing ritual had progressed dramatically after that clusterfuck with Jessie, and it had developed far beyond what I had been instructed under the little white house in 2016. A week before my flight to France, however, I had heard something coming through the walls of my flat. I sat on the floor and closed my eyes. The east wall lay opened with a crack

between two blackened cliffs, and so I walked into the passageway. The narrow tunnel was dark but soon I could see statues carved into the stone walls. More appeared side by side until I realized that they were bodies. Hundreds of nude female bodies hung upside down. Finally, the passageway opened into a huge cathedral-like space with towering columns and statues of beasts not even remotely recognizable. The massive chamber was crowned with a broken dome. Rain and pale light drifted down into the misty floor. On the far side of the space, a cloaked figure sat holding a long staff. I began approaching when something slammed into me! Knocked backward by this unseen force, I braced my footing as a translucent black form began to manifest in the middle of the chamber. A gigantic serpent materialized, covered with countless black worms hanging from its looming underside. Backing away as the creature raised its insect-like, barbed head all the way to the ceiling, I saw that its body was stretching out to fill the entire width of the chamber. I looked back the way I'd come, only to find that the passageway was gone. Solid rock and ancient pillars now stood there. This was a fucking trap! It seemed that I still owed some vindictive devils that which they had believed I would deliver. That menacing serpent then moved as though anticipating my actions, and as I ran to the side, the beast struck. Its speed was impossible to outmaneuver. Opening my eyes, I grasped my forehead where I sat on the floor. I was sure my skull had been split in two, but I was, like always, perfectly fine.

The day after Montségur, I stood in the Romanesque cathedral in Toulouse before my flight back to Berlin. The Sunday service was packed, and even the priests wore medical masks. Standing at the back of the cathedral, I thought of the bus ride this morning. I had noticed vast fields of sunflowers. All of them with not a single petal. They made me recall the field of sunflowers above the little church overlooking Amelia's town in the center of France. I wasn't far from there. She should have been my first trophy. And yet she still was! I had cut off her pretty fucking head with my own two hands! I had! I remembered it! It was real! It wasn't all in my fucking head! However, she was still alive! She wasn't my first trophy. Instead, my first had been Miss Resting-Bitch-Face, and those other two Berlin whores. Three insignificant strangers. So many strangers. So much fucking meat. Countless bodies like endless burning fields of sunflowers.

THE TINY CITY OF WÜRZBURG  
SATURDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2020

## My Inescapable Spite

After travelling south of Berlin for seven hours on a coach, at 2am I walked up to a private residence. The old, two-story building had stone-framed windows looking out upon a well-kept garden, tall iron fence, and a clean street with big trees. There was no answer when I rang the doorbell, and I recalled Melina laughing as she had said, “*What if he’s not at home?*”

I rang the bell again – and then I recognized that nasty German voice from Aachen.

Glancing over the unmoved front door, I croaked into the intercom, “Be at your office tonight at zwanzig uhr!”

I slept in till midday at my hotel, and then had coffee in the lobby staring out at the wide river. The blonde at the front desk reminded me of a girl who used to model for my art before she ghosted me. After this year, I understood what it was like in Muslim countries where women covered their faces.

I was listening to Ben Harper, *I Shall Not Walk Alone*, on my headphones as I strolled along the riverside in the rain toward the heart of that traditional Bavarian town. The cathedral was beautiful on the inside, with white sculptures, white pillars, and white details highlighted with gold. Circling the layout of the quaint city by foot, it was much smaller than I had assumed. After another coffee, I crossed the old stone bridge with its lineup of statues and climbed the hill to the omnipresent castle. It was a massive structure compared to the miniature Prague below. Inside, I went through a museum and found a scale model of Würzburg from the sixteenth century, and in another room a second model but from 1945. It depicted how the entire city had been fire-bombed and had resembled Berlin’s own incinerated remains. But why was this place targeted for decimation? This wasn’t a trade route or industrial hub. I felt oddly distraught. How much history and culture had been lost? If everything had been laid to waste, then everything today had been rebuilt. Though, as strong and proud as you built your fortified walls, sooner or later it all gets torn down, and yet here it stands again. We gather in these cities and lock ourselves away convinced that we matter. But at the end of the day, in the morbid stillness of self-isolation, all we have are our own devices to hold off the encroaching meaninglessness of it all. And we lie and tell ourselves to tolerate our own neglect as we bury our lives within the walls of our cities which too will one day be forgotten. A week and a half ago, I had been babysitting an ex’s seven-year-old. After his dinner, he asked if I would help him with his homework. He had a textbook with exercises to fill in. His writing was uneven, so I explained the height of each letter in the

alphabet in relation to the lines. Afterward, I had a strange feeling for the rest of the evening. The idea of teaching a kid how to do something important was profoundly constructive. The passing on of knowledge. I took a sad sense of accomplishment in seeing him slowly understand the concept. And yet, I will never have my own children. But I can live with that regret. There was still so much about the world that I myself didn't understand. I had no business in teaching anyone anything.

Descending the hill from the Würzburg castle in the relentless rain, I knew that the river would eventually travel west until it joined the Rhine at Mainz. Where Gabi lived. But where was she now? Her talk was cheap, and she had, once again, become just another predictable let down. I didn't give



## My Inescapable Spite

her a second thought.

Heading along the riverside, on my way to the lonely chapel on the next hill, I soon entered a tunnel-like walkway. The passage bent in the middle, and there a homeless guy sheltering from the downpour. Approaching the other end, I heard someone yell out behind me, and then stomping feet came changing into the tunnel.

“Where is he?!” the heavy-set man grunted, as he stumbled to a halt.

“Winstone?” I sneered, next to the arched exit. “The fuck are you doing here?!”

The hunched Englishman reached for my throat, so I went for my knife, but he froze. Shaking his head, Winstone looked back the way he’d come. “They’re going to fucking slaughter us all!”

“Who are?”

“Get as far north as you can!” Winstone stressed his words, frantically glancing around. “Don’t fucking trust anything these cunts tell you! You hear me?!”

“The fuck are you talking about?”

“Where is he?!”

“The fuck?!”

“Where’s that Swiss bastard?!”

“Switzerland?!”

Raising his frustrated fist, Winstone grunted half a sound before spotting something, and then he raced back the way he had come.

I watched him go, when two men sprinted past me and chased the lumbering Englishman into the rain. Opening my umbrella, I backed away, hoping that Winstone would get his head kicked in. Suddenly a black Range Rover pulled up to the pavement! Four more lean men in tailored suits jumped out and began marching toward me – until one of them received a phone call. I couldn’t recognize the language. And then they all ran back to their vehicle and sped off.

On top of the neighboring hill, I stood outside the Rococo chapel staring over the tiny city. I had found out a week ago, while giving Malloy the stone from Montségur, that due to Corona, all flights to Jordan for his Birthday had been cancelled. That meant that my plan of visiting Arpi in Armenia on the way back from Jordan wasn’t going to happen. The next day, I wrote a letter to Arpi, mentioning that I would be having a new exhibition next April, and suggested that she come back to Berlin. As much as that might bring her slender neck within my reach, I had been looking forward to travelling



both to Jordan and Armenia so that I could stand, as I did here in Würzburg, scanning the horizon of places I had never been before.

I got back to my hotel just after 5pm. The blonde was saying goodbye to her colleague as I stepped into the elevator – and she joined me. She was even prettier without the medical mask.

At 7pm, I crossed the street to a gas station and bought some trash-bags and duct tape. These wet streets at night were no different to those of Berlin. A few nights ago, I received an unknown phone call. Some smug cunt grunted that he was looking for Der Fischer. I had been wondering when this would happen after Bismarck's death. Taking precautions, I immediately caught a taxi to Kreuzberg. Stepping out onto the curb, I spotted a couple of cunts hanging around next to an iron fence surrounding a graveyard. They suddenly

## My Inescapable Spite

straightened up with the expression of pissed off gangster-wannabes. I had slicked back my hair and removed my beard after France, and they obviously didn't recognize me. Nevertheless, the first little shit raised a USB stick, laughing as the other young guy held up a baseball bat. I pulled out my 9mm and aimed it at the first prick! The other one instantly dropped his weapon and sprinted away! I scooped up the baseball bat, and as the first guy turned to run, I smashed the bat down into the back of his fucking skull! The USB stick dropped as he did. So, I bashed and bashed, and fucking bashed his fucking face in! I then destroyed the USB stick with a supposed copy of the video from Friedrich's driveway. Kicking the fragments into the gutter, I then raced after the other fucking coward! He ran like a fucking retard. I caught up to him in a matter of seconds and knocked his feet out from under him! Crashing into the cobble stones in the middle of the empty street, he gasped in terror. I circled him, holding the bat in both fists demanding to know where they'd gotten the video from? The sniveling thug cried out the name, Gajdošova! Apparently, he was taking over now that Bismarck wasn't around. While circling that cringing cunt, I asked where Bismarck's appartement was? He didn't know, so I shattered his right kneecap! After a few desperate phone calls, he relayed the address. Thanking him kindly, I let him go limping off into the night. I dumped the baseball bat in the river and considered how many enemies I was unaware of, but then I remembered how little I gave a fuck about the ones I already knew.

It was still raining when I left the hotel at 8pm. I made it across Würzburg to my meeting 15 minutes late, like usual. There was a big old building with wide wooden double doors below a shadowy niche. I was soon buzzed into a courtyard leading to a stone-framed, glass entrance. Mr. Maier stood on the other side of the thick glass, scowling at me with his hands in his pockets. I stopped, standing in the black courtyard under my umbrella, glaring back at that tiny little man with his thin spectacles above a pointy mustache and beard. Eventually, he ran a keycard over a screen and the glass split in two.

The exterior of the building seemed like authentic German architecture but inside it was all high security and extreme minimalism. We said nothing as we walked up stairs.

Mr. Maier unlocked a giant wooden door with the plastic keycard, and we entered his so-called office. The two-story high space was part library and part museum. Ancient paintings with gold frames, fractured marble statues, and endless manuscripts lined the walls that extended in a t-shape floorplan,



like the transepts of a church. Ornate trinkets, preserved sculptures, and iron busts were housed in glass cases on renaissance furniture. However, we were not alone. Eight other gentlemen stood at the far end.

Walking ahead, Mr. Maier joined those waiting for us. Apart from their age and distinguished attire, they all had the same amulet hanging around their necks. With his back to me, Mr. Maier then stated impatiently, "We know you murdered Marcus! The police will be joining us presently."

Still scanning the candle-lit chamber, I recognized Egyptian, Samaritan, Greek, Roman, Persian, and Hebrew artifacts. My eyes rolled back around to the giant door that we had come through, and I understood that I wasn't getting out of here without the keycard. Glancing up at the baroque ceiling, I asked, "Why am I here?"

The group of men remained as apathetic as the surrounding relics. But then my eyes moved past them, to a large sarcophagus on the distant wall.

"Why was I speaking with Marcus and Telford?"

"This is a time of grotesque theological misrepresentation!" Mr. Maier announced. "Uneducated infidels concoct selfish fantasies conveniently supporting their nonsensical ideas without a shred of historical evidence or practical implementation! These bastardizations then soak into the ether as supposed common knowledge until morons are hailed as saints!"

The old men slowly moved closer to me and spread out. They were all esteemed individuals with stiff postures and upturned noses. Getting a better look at the amulets on their chests, I guessed that this place was some sort of lodge. I then added to Maier's statement, "Isn't that exactly what you yourself are kept busy with? Perennialism! That's how you're writing the new bible! A bit of this, a bit of that, a bit of whatever the fuck you feel like!"

"You walk in here like so many fools knocking on the gates at Mount Athos!" Mr. Maier snarled, as the men surrounded me in an equilateral triangle. Three on each side. "You judge with the knowledge of a deaf and blind maggot! You crawl in the filth of catastrophic events incapable of even verbalizing a single divine language! What do you have but momentary impressions of cosmic intersections! Your squirming irrelevance remains ignorant to the magnitude of such marvels! You are just the bait on a fishing line! Nothing more!"

Nodding my head, I held up the rosary beads from Porto. "And yet I'm still fishing."

It was only then, during a pause of distracted curiosity, that the nine men stopped reciting a chant murmured beneath their breath.

## My Inescapable Spite

“Found this recently,” I said quietly. “Don’t recognize the lettering. But this thing, it seems to have power. It kept a devil imprisoned under a tree for twenty-one fucking years. But how does it work? I mean what physical force can these spells actually hold over an entity and yet have no power over another? I don’t understand the underlining mechanics of magick. I know it works, but how?”

And that set a tirade from the entire gathering:

“I wouldn’t even go so far as call him a Neophyte!”

“What do you know of Agrippa or Augustine?!”

“Maybe he could draw us a Rosy Cross in all its detail!”

“Could you give a Geomantic reading right here and now?!”

“What are his thoughts on the Picatrix, if any?!”

“Have you written a thesis on Trismegistus?!”

“On that note, what are his views on the Tabula Smaragdina?!”

“Name at least three Grimoire scholars with writings on Clavicula Salomonis!”

“I would very much like to hear him recite a hymn or two from the Three Steles of Seth!”

Once the overlapping voices exhausted themselves, I stared off at that distance sarcophagus as I began speaking, “I don’t want to join your little gang. That time has passed.”

“You don’t even know what you want!” Mr. Maier decreed.

“I admire the raw nature of the wild,” I whispered, focusing on the distance. “But it’s only through high culture that we shape the environment into a subject of our creation.”

“You have no culture!” Mr. Maier denounced. “No respect for the forbidden! You have no right!”

“No rights at all! All I have is what I can take by force and make it mine through my will alone! And if I’m not part of this world or even capable of learning how to elevate myself, then I’ll open the gates to the infinite horrors of the wilderness!” My voice was now yelling at such a volume that my echo drowned out any protests from the gathering. “I wanted to build fucking cathedrals to the ruthlessness of human determination! Though, it seems I’m only fit to bring about their fucking desecration! And that role suits me just fine. But if you want to lock me out of your precious fucking temples then perhaps you shouldn’t have just let me in.”

On that, the place fell silent, and I realized that all eyes had shifted to something behind me. I turned, finding that another cloud of blackness had

appeared in front of the door. The form expanded to a diameter of about five meters, when a small golden shape emerged in the center. A free-floating key. The old men backed away, but a few seconds later, the whole black cloud evaporated.

“What have you done?!” Mr. Maier gasped on his choking voice.

Scowling at that miserable old German, I glanced back at the distant sarcophagus.

“This should not be possible!” Mr. Maier yelled at the others, and then pointed a crooked finger at me. “What blasphemies are you communicating with!?”

“That, that wasn’t me,” I said, walking out of the triangle and slowly toward the far wall. The design of the sarcophagus didn’t seem familiar, but as I got closer, I noticed that it had doors which opened in the middle like an iron maiden rather than a coffin’s lid.

“Show me this talisman,” Mr. Maier spoke softly, as he slowly stepped up beside me. Still examining the tall sarcophagus, I held up the rosary. Maier immediately responded, “Enochian!”

Twisting, I turned the beads toward the dim candlelight.

“Angel magick,” Maier said.

“Get the fuck out of here!” I scorned.

“Where did you find this?” he asked.

“What’s in here?” I replied.

“How do you know it wards off demons?” he insisted.

Opening the sarcophagus, I discovered that it was just a cabinet with shelves filled with rarities.

“These reviled spirits are not your allies,” Mr. Maier spoke with almost genuine concern. “They’re using you. Using you until your vulnerable enough.”

“No doubt,” I acknowledged.

“They’re like a pack of wolves: hungry yet patient beyond anything you could imagine.”

“Wolves are far more respectable than dogs!”

“Animals can never be trusted!”

“Animals eat those that try to control them!”

“What have you done?!” Mr. Maier questioned suspiciously.

“I wrote a little spell before I took the rosary. A suggestion. A proposition,” I whispered. “If it showed me where others were trapped, then I’d also set them free.”

## My Inescapable Spite

“He is deformed!” another gentleman shouted from behind. “The devil has deformed him!”

Reaching into the sarcophagus-like cupboard, I picked up an elegant metal box that contained utensils for making wax seals on letters. Inside, sat a small wax disk that was about 5cm in width and 1cm thick.

“Why would you do such a thing?!” Mr. Maier asked, now looking sickly pale. “They are not your allies!”

“And neither are you!” I spat back, turning toward the group. “I know exactly what it’s like being locked up! Locked away like a fucking animal in a fucking cage just because of your god given fucking nature!”

Several men then gasped! Some staggered backward! They could finally see what I had this whole time. That blackened creature crawled down from the top of the sarcophagus and crouched next to me. Taking the wax disk, I tossed the metal box aside before resting my left hand upon the cold, wet skull of that naked devil from Porto.

“Why would you commit such ignorant malice?!” Mr. Maier grunted, as others held up their amulets and began reciting prayers. “What could be achieved by this act of inane lunacy?!”

“FUCK JUNG! FUCK INTEGRATION!” I yelled. “I WANT THE ABSOLUTE FUCKING LIBERATION OF THE SHADOW!”

“At what cost?!” Mr. Maier yelled.

“Why of course, all humanity!” I stated through gnashed teeth.

“They’ll treat you no different!” Mr. Maier murmured, before suddenly snatching the rosary beads clean out of my grip! “They’ll erase you without a second thought!”

The manifest devil under my hand then abruptly pulled away. The old men all backed off as that black entity snarled and slowly circled around in front of me.

“The angels are the only reason you’re still alive. And yet you’ve done nothing but abuse their blessings!” Mr. Maier dictated as he stomped back and forth, “No man shall mock the lord with impunity!”

Glaring at the old German, I never took my eyes off him as I held my palms open at my sides. The devil on all fours snorted aggressively like it had done outside the walls of Montségur. The gathering leaned in like a crowd at the colosseum. And then the devil attacked! It lurched across the dark wood floor with talons shredding the polish! Jaws screamed as saliva sprayed at my defenseless position – until the creature suddenly screeched to a halt! Cringing at my feet, the devil slammed its own hideous head hard against

the floor. Concentrating hatefully on Mr. Maier, I could see in my periphery multiple long black, bony arms rise around from behind my back. I stood in the presence of Amaimon. There were no gods here tonight, as I hissed, “Only the fallen have kept me alive, you piece of shit!”

The nine old men shrieked with incantations, while I placed my palm back on the devil’s head below me. One of the gentlemen then broke ranks and humbled himself upon the floor as he muttered, “Jörmungandr! Nothing on earth is its equal! Jörmungandr! It is a creature without fear! Jörmungandr! Job 41:33!”

Two other men ran off, while the rest of them threw their arms around screaming banishment spells in an incoherent craze! Mr. Maier looked deranged with his face trembling as he yelled at the top of his lungs in Deutsch. I then held up the small wax disk and snapped it in two – the lights suddenly went out as a blast of wind filled the place! The men’s voices were lost under a cacophony of a thousand screeching monkeys! In the darkness, I found that we were now standing in ankle-deep water that was teeming with black serpents. Millions of infernal insects covered the surfaces of every piece of furniture. Several men cried out in terror as a blackened, alligator-like beast with an endless torso climbed up through the flooded floor itself! Another devil set free! Maier was so distracted by the arrival of such an impossible creature that he didn’t even see me grab and slam him against the sarcophagus! Taking the rosary and plastic keycard, I clamped my hand around his throat as I casually mentioned, “I don’t think Emmanuel’s got the stomach for it anymore. Thanks for your time. Appreciate it.”

I soon found myself standing under my umbrella in the center of the old stone bridge. The rain was pouring, and I paused, listening to it battle with the wide river. It seemed so peaceful out there. Staring into the night in the middle of Germany, I knew that I’d never come back to this place. There were no revelations to be learned from the magi here, and that was my only resolution. The sanctum regnum wasn’t meant for me. I then noticed a devil pinned beneath the foot of the statue of Mother Mary next to me. I am the son of man. This is my place: above the devils that I’m made of, but below those holier than thou. As much as there was a hierarchy, and as much as I knew my place, I would not sit still! I immediately remembered that the day before I caught the bus here, I received a letter from Italy. Peter wrote, informing me that the documents, that I had sent him a copy of, were ownership deeds to a property in the north of Slovakia. He said that there was a lawyer in the city of Košice that I should contact in order to confirm my stake. But what was so

## My Inescapable Spite

important about this property that Bismarck had killed for it? I would have to find out for myself, like I always did.

I arrived back at the hotel at 10pm. Despite my wet feet, I still had things to do. Standing in the doorway of my room, I thought of the jogger in the hills of Porto. How I'd smashed her fucking skull apart with the two-foot-long stick, and then dragged her body off the track where I hid it under branches. The old man and his dog in the ruins of Montségur gave little resistance when I bashed in both their brains with a heavy rock. Their bodies had tumbled down the cliff and into the steep woods, never to be seen again. And now, in my big hotel room, I considered sodomizing the blonde receptionist's dead body again. However, I was too disgusted, and just wrapped her up in trash-bags and duct tape. I walked along the riverside, dumped the body in the strong current, and then dropped her head and hands in random trashcans on the street. No one ever put these fucking pieces together. Not Detective Rosswald, not Special BND Agent Schlenzig, and not that cunt Behm. I MOCK THE FUCKING LORD WITH UNRESERVED FUCKING IMPUNITY!

### THE FORESTS OF NORTHERN SLOVAKIA FRIDAY 30th OCTOBER 2020

The train to Prague departed Berlin at 7:15am and arrived at 11:30am.

The next train departed Prague at 12:30pm and arrived at a small town in the north east of Slovakia just after 5pm. I had spent the whole day travelling through three countries of rain and misty forests. It was dark and freezing when I walked through the empty streets to my big old hotel. The black-haired girl at the reception was incredibly cute despite her medical mask, and if it wasn't for the security camera behind her, I would have dragged her up to my fifth-floor room and beaten her pretty face into the decrepit walls. The corridor up there was long and stained, and I was undoubtedly the only guest in the entire building.

After I found a nearby supermarket, and bought several large bottles of water, I was annoyed to find that the receptionist was chatting with a young guy upon my return. My phone rang as I stared out the window at the impenetrable night. It was the lawyer from Košice. He informed me in his broken English that a driver would come tomorrow morning at 9am. This was not how I had originally planned things. But I was used to shit going askew. I was in Slovakia, after all, that was what I had wanted. Because I made it

work! I remembered a month ago, shortly after returning from Würzburg, I went to see Mara in the evening. She was boiling a heavy pot of herbal tea. It smelt utterly repugnant. She was looking sickly with dark rings under her eyes. Walking over, I wrapped my arms around her, and she burst into tears. I held her tightly as she buried her face into my chest, saying that she didn't know what to do anymore. Nothing helped. Nothing made her emotional state any better. Nothing had improved in the last year of her trying to change her life. She was desperate to try anything. And then admitted giving up on western medicine and she was now getting treatment from a Chinese doctor. She had just bought seventy euros worth of tea – which would only last ten days. It was in the hopes that something, anything new might alleviate her constant psychological distress. I listened and kept my mouth shut. My arms were what she needed right then. All her self-help, spiritual positivity, and female empowerment books, seminars, and retreats couldn't stave off her creeping depression. And neither could I.

The next evening, I checked in on Mara. She was doing better, so I headed into Mitte, to pick up the book that I had ordered at Dussmann, *On Architecture*, by Vitruvius. I then walked to Museum Island and sat on the steps next to the Neues Meseum. Skimming through this new book, I examined the detailed illustrations. Mr. Maier and Mr. Juggernaut were correct. There was so much I would never understand. Closing the book, I watched two young guys playing clarinet between the colonnades as two girls danced in front of them in the cool Berlin evening. I should have just enjoyed the moment, but my hatred had already sized up which female I would like to behead and perform the birthing ritual upon. Forcing myself to walk away, I crossed the bridge and past the theology library, stopping nearby at another bookstore. While scanning the latest selection in the window, I noticed a black SUV pull up behind me in the reflection. Putting my new book in my left hand, my right was ready to grab my knife, but the SUV slowly drove away.

The following morning, while watching the news over my first coffee, I saw that Armenia and Azerbaijan had started firing missiles at each other. That explained why I couldn't seem to find any flights. First Malloy's trip got cancelled and then a fucking war broke out. I couldn't help but feel that the universe was trying to stop me from sacrificing little Arpi upon my altar of desecration. But she would be mine. I knew I would eventually find a way to get her. I always did. And then I'd make her suffer. All her premonitions wouldn't save her from my fucking hands!

However, ten days later, after spending all week animating the art of the

## My Inescapable Spite

Italian artist Loputyn, I went home for dinner and found a letter from Armenia in my mailbox. Tearing it open, I didn't recognize the handwriting. There was only a short message from a friend of Arpi's family. They apologized for the lateness of the reply but had to inform me that Arpi had died. She had run away from home many times before, but in mid-July she was found dead in some ruins in the countryside. They said it was sad but her whole family knew that Arpi had been unwell for a long time. I stood next to my mailbox in the stairwell for a while, brooding as my frustration grew. It was such a fucking waste of a perfect sacrifice! Fucking piece of shit! There was nothing in Armenia for me now. Yet suddenly, I thought of the three teenagers that I had caught right here outside my mailbox. I could try searching through the realm of death and sin for Arpi, but that was always chaos with no guarantee that I would find her. However, if I had the scrying mirror, I might.

So, at 11pm, I went out west to Mr. Bismarck's place. I was rather surprised to find that he had lived in a modern building. It didn't seem like his style. The security was tight. Cameras everywhere. I waited across the street until I saw someone exit the glass front door. Running, I slipped inside and caught the elevator to each level, searching for Bismarck's name on the door. Eventually, I found his place on the top floor of the hinterhaus. The deadbolt though, was something that my simple wire-technique wasn't going to open. Listening to the dull emptiness of that bright white minimalism, it reminded me of the sanatorium, so I walked back downstairs. Coming to the glass entrance, I saw an SUV pull up as three young Slovakian gangsters got out and waited for me. A short, clean shaven guy marched straight over and punched me in the gut with such force that I flew off my feet and back into the glass door! The power behind that fist reminded me of what my father used to say about watching out for the little guy. He then stepped up and got in my face as my back began slipping down the glass. I caught myself, barely, while the other two closed in. The little guy then snarled, "You have no business here anymore! Do you listen?! Fuck off Fischer!"

A machinegun blast of knuckles to my ribs made the glass door rattle behind me before I collapsed! Clenching my inability to breathe, I watched those three cunts climb into their SUV as I memorized their fucking faces.

I got more and more pissed off on my way home. My entire torso ached, I couldn't get the scrying mirror back, and Arpi was already dead! Nothing went the way I wanted it! Fuck everything and fuck my failures! And then I spotted a gray Range Rover parked outside my flat. My paranoia wasn't paranoid enough. Opening the passenger's side door, I sat next to the big



Frenchman.

“I might have been wrong about you,” Emmanuel said, though not looking at me. “I’ve seen men in Iran manifest the entities you produced at Maier’s place. These men, the ones bringing these things out, they all, without exception, go completely fucking mad. It’s too much for our minds to deal with. If you’re smarter than you look, you’ll stop before they break you.”

“Why’d you let the Austrian go?” I asked, cradling my ribs.

“I don’t work for free,” Emmanuel stated. “Maier’s not so pleased about your unannounced little visit.”

“Fair enough,” I conceded.

“You don’t go walking into a nuclear reactor without protection, that’s just stupid,” Emmanuel grunted, reaching for a small wooden box on the dashboard which he handed over. “Don’t do what I did. Make preparations. Be methodical. There’s a logic in dealing with such matters. You know this much, or you’d already be a fucking corpse.”

Opening the box, I found a little talisman made from carved wood with a hollow center where a tiny piece of dried bone was embedded. It was filthy and hung from a leather string.

“The Russians are coming for you,” Emmanuel then hit the ignition.

Frowning, I leapt from the Range Rover as Emmanuel raced off. He was right. I couldn’t hold off the Slovakian’s fists this evening, so I needed to be smarter and take the appropriate precautions. Walking upstairs, I took out the 9mm handgun that Lev had given me and counted the bullets.

A week later, I went to check up on Mara who had been feeling worse than usual, only to find that she had just been tested positive for Corona! Others from an outdoor dance party had informed her that they too had caught it. She had gone to hospital last night where they had told her to simply fuck off – because despite how much the government claimed that they cared about your wellbeing, you still weren’t intitled to any treatment unless you were old as shit or fat as fuck! Mara had a fever, sore throat, and her body ached, but I was perfectly fine. As it was a Friday evening, she said I could get tested on Monday, but until then, I should self-quarantine. She smiled from behind her medical mask, and I told her that we had nothing to worry about – as we weren’t the enfeebled of society.

After getting quarantine supplies, I dumped them at my flat as my annoyance swelled. I had already booked my journey to Slovakia for the end of the month. My plan was to fly to Budapest and catch a train north to Košice where I would meet the Slovakian lawyer and discuss the land deed.

## My Inescapable Spite

From there, I would catch a couple of trains west to the property in question. However, I did realize that even if I tested positive, my self-quarantine should be over just in time to travel – but right then, I received an email cancelling my flights to Hungary as its borders had closed! Furious, I shook my head considering the options. I would have to postpone Slovakia and everything else. But I fucking hated all this fucking waiting! Especially having to wait until Monday just to know that I had to wait some fucking more for the results! Fuck this shit!

So, I went into Mitte and walked through to the statue of Saint George and the Dragon. Sitting in their presence, I considered alternative routes to Slovakia. There was always another way to skin a fucking cat. And even if I had the plague, it wouldn't stop me from doing anything that I fucking wanted. No laws nor morals of mortal men had ever curbed my thoughts and actions. Walking across Mühlendamm Bridge, I glared down at the black water, thinking of all the things I wanted to find with the scrying mirror. I should have never given it to Bismarck after Romania. Soon, I spotted big ripples in the water below as giant serpents approached, but I continued walking to Schinkelplatz. I stood before the statue of that man with a legacy, and I dwelled on my own agenda. How many devils had I brought into this world at the facility? I couldn't tell anymore. But I wasn't able to make a big enough passageway for the truly monstrous abominations that I had witnessed. A thought then came to me. I wondered if I could create a reverse birthing ritual for myself. Not to be resurrected in hell but reincarnated! To become a native of the environment. Just as Enoch had been taken wholly into the kingdom of Heaven.

On the following Monday morning, I went to the STI clinic where I had been checked for venereal diseases three months ago. I had been given the all-clear despite my unprotected sexual encounters this year. However, now the clinic was testing for Corona. The technician asked if I had any symptoms. I had a mild headache and today I couldn't taste or smell anything. The throat and nasal swabs were no big deal, but when I asked what I should do if I tested positive, the guy looked confused and shrugged. All he said was stay home for ten days. If I needed a second test, then the Gesundheitsamt would contact me. That was it. I was simply expected to obey with slavish compliance. Yeah, you're part of something bigger than your selfishness, something that didn't give a fuck about you as an individual! I walked away, hoping that I would choke to death on my floor like a good little citizen. Bring it on! I wanted blood in my lungs until I drowned in excruciating pain as just

another faceless fucking statistic. Though, I knew that it wouldn't kill me. Nothing did. I should have had syphilis by now with my history. We're all going to die, but this diagnosis wasn't even slightly intimidating. However, I understood that until I got my test results, I had to act as if I both did and did not have Corona. But then again, every single fucking person on the planet also had to assume this constantly. We all had Schrodinger's Corona!

That evening, when I arrived at Schilling's facility and dumped tonight's sacrifice on the concrete floor, I slowly scowled across the murky darkness of that abandoned factory. In the corners I saw them. In the nooks in the walls and hanging from the high ceiling they all stared back at me. Those devils looked like statues of black iron. The new dead girl wrapped in trash-bags and duct tape lay upon the rotten remains of so many other females. Fortunately, the stench was barely noticeable each time I returned. Once I ripped the trash-bags off, the girl lay face-down dressed in a mini skirt and short-sleeved shirt. Standing up, I found that the sight of her miniskirt barely covering her round ass was more attractive than if she were naked. So, I sodomized her while she was still dressed as I watched the left side of her dead expression. Murdered girls were always beautiful, but I knew that she would look even more so once she was mutilated. Her ass was fucking excellent. After I came inside her, I used my knife and disemboweled her body in order to perform the birthing ritual. And soon, while my cum was still warm, another blood-soaked entity of demonic origins spilled forth into this world! It would be fully grown by the time that I came back with another sacrifice. And if I tested positive for Corona, I would return here every fucking night of my so-called self-imposed self-quarantine.

Less than 48 hours later, the Corona app said, *Caution! Positive result!* This was the lamest death threat I had ever received.

In the midst of my quarantine, I arrived home in the small hours from the facility to find my phone ringing on the desk. I never took it with me when I didn't want my movements being tracked. Brushing the rain across my slicked back hair, I answered the call. Rushdie began yelling over a deafening storm. The line was barely connected, and his frantic voice made little sense. I couldn't make out what he was saying except for, "Follow the dragon!"

A few friends wrote to me during quarantine, asking the same thing, if I had already seen everything on Netflix, and how bored I was? I shook my head at these people who apparently claimed to know me so well. I was never fucking bored! I had my current art series to work on during the day, and my stalking and sorcery at night. What else would I fucking do? Being

## My Inescapable Spite

both creative and destructive was what life was all about! However, I hated how slow my progress seemed. I had the infamous Corona and yet I was uninhibited, other than a lack of taste and smell. This had been another dress-rehearsal for one's own death, and like this, I would inevitably face it alone. Though, unlike 2014, I had outgrown the delusions of an idiot's pain and I missed no one. In these solitary days and nights, I focused on my own goals and felt stronger than ever in my hateful convictions.

I awoke one morning to a phone call. Expecting only the Gesundheitsamt, I found it was my public lawyer. He said that Detective Rosswald had attempted to get the Sondereinsatzkommandos (SWAT) to raid my flat last week. However, apparently, he had insufficient evidence, so the judge denied Rosswald's request. Mr. Behm was currently filing a report of misconduct against my lawyer simply for representing me. I lay in bed knowing that my time was running out, and I still had so much more to do. My lawyer somehow knew that I had Corona and said that a second lockdown was starting in Germany on the first of November – right when my quarantine ended! Immediately, I knew I would have to travel to Slovakia as originally planned before the borders shut! I had already found two possible routes by train, but I would be coming from the east, so would visit the property before seeing the lawyer in Košice. The deep voice of my public lawyer then asked if there was anything I needed. I hung up on him.

The receptionist on my first morning in Slovakia wasn't as cute as the girl last night. A short guy in camo pants, black shirt, and leather jacket stood next to his piece of shit car outside the hotel. As welcoming as he seemed, my driver didn't speak a word of English. That, however, didn't stop him from chatting away as he pointed at an old map-book. I recognized the location that I'd discussed with the lawyer. I put my small backpack in the backseat, next to piles of newspapers. The driver didn't care about wearing masks, and despite his car smelling like a wet dog, I liked that shaky rust-bucket. It had rained all night, though, wasn't anymore as we sped along the drenched streets toward low hung clouds resting upon the surrounding mountain ranges. Following the river, we drove east and soon left the main road heading into the countryside.

Eventually, the driver ran out of conversations with himself and we silently took a sideroad upward. The forests were speckled with mid-autumn colors of gold, brown, and olive. Half-naked trees towered above as we came to the end of that lonely street. A dirt road continued straight ahead, but the

Bruce Stirling John Knox

driver pulled over and yanked back on the hand-break. He then indicated theatrically how rough the road was further up ahead. Replacing his driving glasses with another pair hanging around his neck, he drew a line on the map that I should follow. His wobbly penmanship marked where the road forked but he insisted that I should keep going straight. Handing me the map-book, he opened a pack of cigarettes as we both got out of the car. He gestured with a smile that he would wait here until I returned – at least that’s what I hoped he meant.

It was cool but not cold, so I took off a layer and stuffed it into my backpack next to my raincoat and water. The hill wasn’t too steep, and the air was fresh. I was curious to see if Corona had caused any damage to my lungs, though my airways were clear. The road seemed decent – for a while



## My Inescapable Spite

at least. Soon enough, the incline rose, and mud replaced the gravel, until one side of the path became a creek. I leaped across particularly twisted parts and soon my boots were clogged with mud. It wasn't too long before I reached the fork in the path. The trail veered off to the left and only a simple track crept up into the peaceful woods. It was really rather pleasant hiking through the misty forest on that quiet morning. Once the track got steeper, I pulled on my leather gloves and grabbed onto trees to prevent myself from slipping backward. I became concerned at one point, that I had lost my way. The route was so overgrown that it seemed indistinguishable to the rest of the woods. Unsure of how to proceed, I looked back and spotted an old iron railing in the bushes. This had to be the way, so I kept going up and up, until I found clear signs of the track snaking higher still. It was a calm place, though, I still didn't understand why Bismarck had had such a hard-on for it. Was it just a nice remote spot to retire? But I couldn't imagine him hiking up this piece of shit trail. It was beautiful, however, there was nothing here for me. What the fuck did I want with a forgotten plot of land in the middle of fucking nowhere? Owning property was always considered a good investment, but this location was just too inconvenient. What was the point of owning real estate that you couldn't use? I knew that once I met the lawyer in Košice, I'd tell him to just sell the land and give me the money.

The track then flattened out and moved along the side of the mountain. I couldn't see the summit through the dense branches but heard running water. The house slowly appeared like a dark primordial shape between the shrouding trees. The forest grew all around and indeed right through that roofless, two story structure. Stone walls with once classical details stood with ornate bars over blackened cavities for windows. There was clearly nothing left inside the abandoned ruin. A grand arching facade loomed above the raised front door where words in Latin were chiseled. The entire place was covered in half-dead creepers, moss, and tangled vines. As I drew closer, my foot sank into a puddle hidden beneath a carpet of dead leaves. I then spotted a rowboat, and I froze. That wooden boat rested unnaturally half-submerged within the leaves. Scanning the immediate area around the house, I realized that the entire building was encircled by a wide pond. Someone, a long time ago, must have dragged the rowboat all the way up the fucking mountain, as there was no other way across the leaf-coated water. A fallen tree trunk protruded at a sharp angle at the side of the house, indicating that the water seemed to get a lot deeper. Carefully kicking the exposed tip of the boat, I found that the thing didn't budge. I noticed an ore lying nearby in the

shrubs, but my eyes focused back on the awkward remains of the rowboat. Sweat suddenly greased my palms, as I watched the leaves floating on the gently undulating water. I was immediately overwhelmed with a need to run. A need to back away. But I couldn't move. I just stared at the solid walls of the house that were tilting slightly to one side. Like the rowboat, this fucking place was half sunk. Slowly looking down, I clenched my jaw. My boots were waterproof, and I hadn't realized that I too was sinking into those insidious waters. I needed to back away, but glancing around, I couldn't be sure what was solid land beneath so many fallen leaves. I couldn't stay where I was, but I couldn't move. There could have been hidden pits all around me. It felt like I had walked into a fucking minefield. Staring at my sodden boots, I knew I had to face the water one day, but I didn't fucking want to! However, I owed it my life. But I wasn't ready yet. Not yet! I had too much left to do!

"You okay, there?" Lev asked, from behind.

Craning my head around at the miraculous appearance of that green-haired gangster, I ripped my gloves off and rubbed my hot palms against one another, before I snapped back, "I'm fine!"

"Seriously, didn't think this sort of place bothered you," Lev shrugged, pulling up his hood as it began to rain. "Just an empty house, who gives a fuck."

"Yeah, well, we can't all be immovable objects of stoic resilience like you, you fat tub of shit!"

Lev smiled, but looked away sadly as he spoke, "You knew about this place all along. You had Bismarck's papers this whole time. If you just gave them back, none of this shit would have happened!"

Ignoring Lev's moaning, I finally took a step away from the boat – but then Lev instantly pulled out a handgun from his massive pockets.

"Now his fucking widow wants you dead!" Lev yelled. "She wants the papers back, she wants this house, she wants the whole fucking inheritance! And if I don't finish this shit, then we're all fucking dead! You fucking did this! You fucked everything! And now I have to do what you should have! I hate this shit! I hate it!"

"Widow?" I sneered. Not once had I ever entertained the idea that Bismarck had had a wife.

"Hey, I was there for you! I always was!" Lev shouted, backing off as the rain rattled through the loose canopy of residual leaves. "But you're such a twisted fuck! I don't get it! What the fuck?! I don't understand you! What did you do to her?! How the fuck aren't you in prison?! I thought they'd protect

## My Inescapable Spite

you! I thought you'd be safe there! Before someone like me..."

"Catches up?" I finished his sentence.

"I don't fucking understand!" Lev desperately pleaded. "What did you do?! What did you do to her?! How'd you escape the cops?!"

Glancing aside, I watched the raindrops reveal the circumference of the hidden pond.

"Why the blonde?!" Lev insisted, though still backing away. "What did you do to her?! Please, I need to know! I fucking need to understand! Come on! You owe me that much!"

"Eating the forbidden fruit of female flesh is the consumption of the gnosis that their finite sacrifice feeds the infinite," I whispered, with my mind fixating on Jessie. "The infinite bloodlust for more and more and fucking more!"

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean?!" Lev demanded in exasperation. "You sound like a fucking crazy person! Tell me what happened! Tell me what you did! Tell me about that night! What happened after Jörg killed Bismarck?!"

"The logic's the same as when I was in my mid 20's and I decided that I needed to let my guard down and start a relationship with women again – so that they'd fuck me up in order to develop my character," I said quietly, while glaring into the darkness of that doomed ruin. "I've been applying the same logic... but now... with devils."

Lev thumped his fist into a tree, yelling impatiently, "What did you do to her that night?! Tell me! What the fuck did you do?!"

So, I told him exactly what happened after I left the meeting at the Russian restaurant: At 1:15am, on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020, I walked around my block, opened my neighbor's gate, and entered the big black courtyard. I carefully moved through the dark trees, thinking how it had been exactly a year since I was last here. However, I concentrated on what I now called my magical sinkhole. It was all quiet. Approaching the small clearing, I hid my knife below the surrounding bush. I was traveling light and only needed the small bottle of pig's blood, the wire, a roll of duct tape, and plastic trashbags. The sound of movement then caught my attention. In the middle of the clearing stood that enigmatic old rabbi dressed in black robes. He stared at me as I rose to my feet. My mouth opened and I was about to ask who the fuck he really was, but I quickly reminded myself that I had a tight scheduled, and I walked away.

My taxi arrived at the canal a distance from Jessie's place at 2:15am. The



streets were wet from the recent rain, so no one was hanging around on the bridge.

I saw a faint light in Jessie's window, as I opened the neighbor's gate. Climbing the garbage bins, I scaled the fence, and stepped onto the bin on the other side. I opened the backdoor and stood inside the entrance of Jessie's building. Her front door was right there upon the first landing of stairs. Standing in the dark, I glared hatefully at her door. Her boyfriend might be there, but I trusted my violence. I couldn't wait to split Jessie open, gut her alive, and fill her with a devil. So, I lunged at the door – when I was struck back! Stumbling down the steps, I braced myself. The ceiling above her door coiled with smoke. A nest of anaconda-size black worms emerged from the walls surrounding the door frame. They lashed out at me as long fangs extended from their spines. Annoyed, I tried ducking under their reach, but they knocked me back again and again! For fuck's sake, why the fuck were they protecting her now?! She was the sacrificial meat for these fucking things, after all!

Unless...

Stepping back, I scanned that cluster of slithering creatures above. Perhaps Jessie's own curiosity with the occult had grown in the past year, and these were incarnations of her own doing. Or maybe Nefertiti II was attempting to impede my activities. Or who fucking knows what these fucking cunts were doing here!

I ran up the steps – and was stopped in midair and thrown away like a rag doll! Crashing to the concrete floor of the entrance, I tumbled all the way to the far wall! I was utterly incredulous. You make long-term plans, you work out all alternatives, and you invest yourself completely, only for it to fall apart at the last fucking minute! Of all the things that could have gone wrong this evening, this was not a factor I had taken into account. Fuck everything! Fuck this epic waste of my fucking worthless fucking time! And fuck ever thinking that I had anything at all under fucking control! A surge of disappointment then came over me with vivid memories of standing outside Amelia's door.

With that thought, I stood up, and walked out onto the street. I looked up at Jessie's windows, and saw that a light was now on. Had she heard me outside her door? Who gives a fuck! Opening the bottle of blood, I poured some of it onto the pavement and drew a sigil exactly where I had piled up the stones last year. And then I walked away empty handed.

Venturing into the unknown, I drifted along unfamiliar streets and a caught random bus across town. The ritual had failed. I had failed to complete

## My Inescapable Spite

it. I was a fucking failure.

At some point, I looked out the bus window and realized that we were in the woods. I got out and stood on a long street in the middle of nowhere. The sky was fading from ebony to indigo, so I turned toward the forest and wandered down a dirt road. All I felt was contempt. I wanted to spite myself, get lost, and never be seen again. And then I smelt water! The further along that road, the more the black became a morbid haze of morning mist among the gloom of those silhouetted trees. I saw a lake down the hill to my left, but soon found an old fence blocking the way. Following the fence-line, I heard something suddenly lurch and then race off through the underbrush! A boar or deer. I despised its cowardice. I wanted it to attack and maul my stupidity to death.

The dirt road slowly extended out of the woods, and in that dismal light I was confronted with what appeared to be the gatehouse to a concentration camp. I scanned the open area for cattle-cars, but there was only a perfectly straight road leading away toward the overcast glow from the eastern sky. There wasn't even an *Arbeit Macht Frei* sign above the gatehouse, but I soon realized that this was in fact the entrance to Lake Wannsee.

Alone and unable to even reach the water, that I hoped might drown my inadequacies, I pulled out the bottle from my jacket. I faced the east and then poured the pig's blood over my skull. As the cold blood ran down my forehead, I pictured all the reprehensible things that I had planned to do to the-most-hated-girl-I-knew. I then moved on, walking toward the light-bringer. But I didn't belong in Otto Rahn's court or in the company of anyone seeking answers through good intentions. I ONLY EVER HAD THE WORST OF INTENTIONS IN MIND! As the miserable morning-star of yet another fucking day slowly rose beyond the woods, I spoke out aloud, "Upon this stone, I have built my temple! And upon this temple, I have desecrated the godhead! There is no part of me that is not of the devil!"

It was 4am, when I came to the main street in that forest and I turned to the left, beginning my journey down the long road of self-loathing. Whether I fulfilled the ritual or not, the world was no different. I walked on a dirt road parallel to the busy autobahn, and it was all unaffected by my presence. I felt only disgust. Despite how well everything had gone down earlier at the Russian restaurant, now that the ritual was ruined, it all seemed like bullshit. I was just another fucking idiot stumbling down an empty road with no end in sight. And that road went on forever, just like my deprecating mood. I remembered the forests in Scotland, and the forests surrounding the little

white house, and the forests of Finland, Romania, and Italy. I had walked through the fucking wilderness before, however, once again, I knew I would fucking learn nothing! Even this knowledge was worthless! So, walk it off! I didn't have to sleep. Walk it off! I didn't need to eat. Walk it off! I wasn't doing anything. Walk it off! There wasn't any reason that I was there. Walk it off! I wasn't in pain. Walk it off!

Exhausted, I eventually took a knee as it began raining and I touched the road with my fingertips. I had walked a mile or two in my day, and today was my fifteen-year anniversary of arriving in Germany. I had brought myself here. I was the architect of my own troubles. And if demons wouldn't dine upon the flesh served up on the altar of inflammatory indulgences, then I would! Playing with your food was pointless unless you eventually chewed it up. I would not give homage to fruitless labors or ungrateful divinities. I'm not dead yet. I would damn the world myself if the devil can't be fucked. Straightening up, I marched on with my head held high. But still, I hated this fucking place!

Two and a half hours after I left Wannsee, I stumbled upon a train station called Grunewald. What did I get for my perseverance? Absolutely nothing! I caught the train all the way across Berlin with blood on my face and not a single person noticed – until, upon arriving in my neighborhood, a patrol car pulled over and two cops confronted me. I was soon taken to a hospital where I told them that it wasn't my blood. Mr. Behm suddenly appeared, but before I knew it, a helicopter flew me out of Berlin and back into the woods. Back to the Luise Neumann sanatorium.

After an hour alone in a tiny interview room, the door finally opened, and I looked up from my state of focused hatred. Doctor Kinski sat at the table and muttered a series of generic questions about my health. I sat, glaring back into his eyes. My silence soon sent him on his way.

It wasn't long before he returned with Mr. Behm and Police Officer Annika. They all wore plastic face visors, but I was offered nothing. Annika stood in the far corner next to the closed door. Doctor Kinski sat opposite me as he opened a binder. Mr. Behm sat to Kinski's left, with the door to Behm's left. With my back to the wall, I watched each of those meat objects dressed up in the pretense of importance. Once everyone was settled, I repeated my question, "Have I committed a crime?"

Mr. Behm then recalled his interaction with a young criminal known on the streets as Lev. Glancing up to the ceiling, I assumed his statement was meant for the CCTV camera. Lev had informed Mr. Behm that he feared

## My Inescapable Spite

for the safety of a young girl living alone by the canal. Lev had insisted that her life was in danger. Mr. Behm regretted that he hadn't taken action at the time, but when he had asked for specifics about the girl, Lev refused to go into detail, so there was nothing more Mr. Behm could do. He then began to elaborate on his involvement with Special BND Agent Schlenzig and the ongoing investigation into an international organization that had ties to German extremists. During this investigation, they had recruited me as I had once been in contact with this organization. Soon after, however, Mr. Schlenzig's own daughter went missing. Mr. Behm paused, shaking as he said that after this morning's events, Mr. Schlenzig's missing child should be viewed in a more serious light. Annika looked devastated once Mr. Behm brought her into the story. He asserted that I was manipulating her in order to gain information as well as serve as an alibi. Mr. Behm believed that I was in fact working for the unnamed organization, and I was responsible for much more than was currently evident. Finally, after a long rest, Mr. Behm stated that right at this moment, officers were knocking on the doors of the residence of the canal next to the bridge. He was certain that they would soon discover a gruesome crime-scene, and with the blonde's blood on my face, it would be an open-and-shut case. And then he softened his tone and asked me what had happened. He needed a confession.

This whole time, Doctor Kinski was writing notes and glancing back and forth between Behm and myself. A drawn-out silence began and Behm crossed his arms while Kinski flipped through more paperwork in his old files from 2011.

"What do you have to say for yourself?!" Mr. Behm finally snapped.

Slowly pushing my cuffed and blood-stained hands further across the cold tabletop, I leaned forward and said, "Article 4 of the German Constitution."

Everyone looked confused.

"Have I committed a crime?" I repeated.

"You murdered a girl!" Mr. Behm yapped.

"When?" I asked, scowling at Annika.

"You're covered in evidence! It's all over you!"

"Pig's blood."

"Stop wasting our time! Once we find the girl's body, you won't be able to help yourself! So, speak!"

"I bought it yesterday from a butcher."

"DNA isn't so easily disguised!"

"Article 4 of the German Constitution," I reinforced. "What does Article

4 of the German Constitution say?”

Silence.

“Why do you have pig’s blood on you, Bruce?” Doctor Kinski asked.

“Article 4 of the German Constitution.”

“Why her?” Mr. Behm said quietly. “What could she have possibly done to deserve this? Do you even know why you did it? Who do you think you are?”

“I’m just like everyone else,” I replied calmly.

“You’re nothing like any of us!” Mr. Behm scoffed.

“What’s the one and only rule society teaches us, no matter where you come from?” I specifically directed my question toward Doctor Kinski.

“Treat others the same as—” Mr. Behm began.

“NO!” I snarled. “IT TEACHES US TO BE NORMAL! TO ACT NORMAL! JUST LIKE YOU! AND YOU! AND YOU! I’M JUST LIKE ALL OF YOU! COMPLETELY FUCKING NORMAL! A CONCEITED, BIGOTED, PERVERSE, TOTALLY FUCKING NORMAL GUY! FULLY CAPABLE OF COMMITTING ATROCITIES WHILE PERPETUALLY PRETENDING TO HAVE ACHIEVED SOME FUCKING UNATTAINABLY TAMED STATE OF FUCKING MIND! I, LIKE YOU, AM PERFECTLY FUCKING NORMAL!”

“You’re a sadistic misogynist!” Mr. Behm refuted.

“Those that belittle other’s success with women do so only as a pathetic rationalization for their own sexual failures,” I hissed back.

“If you are indeed, as you say, a perfectly adjusted, normal individual, then clearing up this obvious misunderstanding must be a priority for you,” Doctor Kinski said. “Which requires, as you understand, your cooperation. Meaning we need clarification around the events that have brought you here this morning.”

“The pursuit of divine knowledge,” I said, sitting back. “That’s the only thing worth risking your worthless fucking soul over, when you’ve got nothing better to do with your-fucking-self in this piece of shit fucking existence.”

“Jesus Christ!” Mr. Behm shouted. “Are you done?!”

Ignoring him, I looked at my hands as I whispered, “Everyone dies. Who cares. We’re all fucked.”

“Stop making excuses!” Mr. Behm interrupted. “Tell us what you did to that little girl! Tell us and you can help someone! You can help yourself!”

“That’s beautifully poetic but fuck off!” I sneered. “You short-sighted little man.”

## My Inescapable Spite

“Bruce, if you believe in the divine, then you must also believe in divine retribution for your actions,” Doctor Kinski put forward. “Even if there is some kind of great wisdom out there to learn, do you really think such things should or even could be understood by yourself?”

“The moral limitations of the few doesn’t persuade others with stronger motivations to build bigger. Those with delusions of integrity are always overthrown by the belligerent forces of those with the fortitude that the weak lack,” I said, looking at Annika’s troubled expression. “If something can be conquered, then it will be!”

“What of unforeseen consequences?” Doctor Kinski asked.

“All consequences are unforeseen!” I barked madly. “Anyone saying otherwise is selling security-theater wrapped up as some kind fucking predestination bullshit!”

“I don’t want to listen to any more of this nonsense!” Mr. Behm mocked. “Stop stalling and tell us what you did to her!”

“That’s rich,” I scorned. “Coming from a politician.”

“Going over your file, Bruce,” Doctor Kinski said. “In the past you spoke a lot about your art. However, there was no indication that you had any spiritual inclinations.”

“Art?!” Mr. Behm burst into laughter. “The guys a degenerate pervert!”

“That says more about you than it does of the work,” I responded.

“Your abuse of women is not art!” Mr. Behm yelled. “Exploitative pornography is even too polite a way of putting it!”

“What happened in the last nine years, Bruce?” Doctor Kinski asked. “When did you find god?”

“Don’t be fucking stupid!” I sneered, punching the tabletop with both my fists! “There’s no fucking god! Only hell! And nothing special about all this stinking fucking meat!”

“Bruce, why are you covered in blood?” Doctor Kinski gently insisted.

“Article 4 of the German Constitution,” I replied.

“What the fuck is Article 4?!” Mr. Behm shouted, turning toward Annika. She pulled out her phone – when someone knocked hard on the door!

“What is going on in here?!” a big man in a cheap suit demanded, as he suddenly stepped inside. “Kinski, you know better! This is no way to treat a patient without his legal counsel present! How could you let this environment deteriorate to such an extent! My client has rights, and you all have legal obligations not to infringe upon his mental health despite the accusations! And so far, I have seen no formal criminal charges laid against my client!

Kinski, I expect more from you!”

Watching the fifty-year-old German standing above us all, I found his face somewhat familiar. The two young arresting officers stood outside the room, then closed the door.

“My client is absolutely correct!” the lawyer stated, dumping his briefcase in the middle of the table before he tore the files out of Doctor Kinski’s hands. “The Freedom of Faith is a fundamental right protected under the Law of the Federal Republic of Germany! Whatever religious practices my client was conducting with animal fluids attained legally from a registered establishment, is of no concern to any of us! And yes, the blood results have just come back from the lab, proving that it is in fact pig’s blood and nothing more!”

Mr. Behm protested, but upon looking at Annika, she held out her phone and Behm went tight-lipped.

“I can’t believe this, Kinski,” the lawyer scolded. “You didn’t even clean him up. This is unacceptable!”

“Listen, you have no idea what he’s done!” Mr. Behm insisted, rising to his feet. “We have extraneous reasons to believe that he has murdered a young—”

“Yes, well, the so-called victim was located at her home by the police fifteen minutes ago!” the lawyer said, tossing the folder back at Doctor Kinski. “And she knows nothing about this situation. You have nothing on my client and no reason to hold him a second longer!”

Doctor Kinski stared soberly at Mr. Behm who pulled out his own phone and confirmed the lawyer’s revelation.

The big guy opened his suitcase and handed me a disposable medical mask along with a pack of wet-wipes, saying to me, “*“What you seek, is seeking you.”*”

“Danke,” I replied, slowly cleaning my hands.

The interview room was tiny before, but now, with five inside, it was more like an awkwardly filled elevator. Mr. Behm’s bewildered expression of frustration was suddenly mirrored by yet another person entering the packed space. This older guy also had a remarkably familiar face, though, I still couldn’t recall where I knew the lawyer from. The new bearded guy held open the door as he spoke in a thick German accent, “We have to let him go.”

Scowling at this new arrival, it suddenly dawned on me who he was: Detective Rosswald from Stuttgart. A hushed chatter in German went around the cramped room, until out of extreme intolerance, I slammed my hands

## My Inescapable Spite

against the fucking tabletop before holding up my cuffed wrists! Annika removed the handcuffs while looking sorry for herself, as I whispered viciously into her ear, “Danke-fucking-schön!”

My lawyer soon drove me home. I fell asleep on the way, and when the old guy woke me outside my flat at 2pm, he said, “*“God brings men into deep water not to drown them, but to cleanse them.”* John H. Aughey.”

“You came to my exhibition last year,” I said, upon remembering his random quotes. “You love cocaine and quickies.”

He shook my hand with both of his, and bowed his head saying, “Rumi.”

I slept until 3pm, and then cleaned myself up. At 4pm, I went into my neighbor’s courtyard and collected my knife from under the bushes. I cut a sigil into the soil in the center of the magical sinkhole, before crossing it out. With nothing left to lose, I headed straight to Mr. Schilling’s old facility with bolt cutters and the 9mm. My time of the birthing ritual was finally here.

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“Wow, okay,” Peter said, coming through the trees as he grabbed Lev’s gun. The grinning Scotsman tapped his own handgun against Lev’s forehead as he continued, “You weren’t kidding about having enemies!”

My suspicious mind took a moment to focus after telling my story. Evaluating this next unexpected arrival in the middle of nowhere, I watched Peter turn both guns toward me.

“You’re really way too trusting, ma lad,” Peter spoke in a deadly tone through his menacing smirk. “Deeds! Give them to me! I already searched your hotel. I know you have them on you! Come on! I want those fucking deeds! And then you two can get back to your little lovers spat!”

Looking Peter in the eye, I could tell that he seemed far more comfortable pulling the trigger than Lev had ever tried to appear. I glanced around the trees, at the empty ruin, and then at Lev’s crossed arms. Grabbing the plastic envelope in my backpack, I removed my return train ticket, before handing over the Land deeds.

“You really should have gone to the guy in Košice first and made your claim. But now this entire part of the country up to Poland is all mine!” Peter scolded harshly, before scowling at the house. “What do I always say, have a contingency plan!”

“Did Gajdošova send you?!” Lev yelled out. “Or was it Friedrich?! Or did Caviezel send you?!”

“Now you two play nice,” Peter laughed, backing into the thicket. “Toodeloo.”



Calmly watching Peter depart, the thought came to me: the lord giveth and the lord taketh away. I then heard a hum from behind. Turning, I saw a huge swarm of black flies filling the gap where the front door to the house should have been. The mass of insects slowly parted and among the black cloud, appeared a golden goat. As the flies dispersed, they revealed that the animal had been crucified with its golden guts spilled out and glowing like a warm flame. Footsteps in the leaves turned my head back toward Lev. While wiping the rain from his face, he looked through the many layers of his jackets until, reluctantly, he pulled out a knife – when I smashed the ore into his fucking skull! The edge of the old wood cut like a dull ax straight through skin and bone. The moment Lev fell sideways, I proceeded to shatter his head with blow after blow, leaving nothing recognizable above his jawline.

Tossing the bloody ore into the leaf smothered pond, I pulled on my backpack as I ran with a fucking purpose. Slipping and sliding, I leaped down embankments, throwing myself around skinny trees and skidding through thick clumps of loose soil. It wasn't long at all before I saw a vehicle. No, there were two vehicles! But as I reached the fork in the road, Peter had already turned his Land Rover around and was driving away at a casual pace.

Lev's four-wheel-drive had two flat tires, though his handgun sat on the hood in the pouring rain. Grabbing the firearm, I held it out, only finding that Peter had already vanished down the twisted descent. I was alone again with nothing but my miscalculations.

Slowly stomping down the mud road, I then discovered that my own ride had disappeared. I was already fuming with indignation, and this was just



## My Inescapable Spite

the shit cherry on top. It was only 11:30am but as I no longer had anything else to do in that fucking country, I walked it off. It took several hours to hike back to town. On the way, I crossed what seemed like a gated-community. All the houses looked brand new. Slovakia wasn't like Romania. There seemed to be some decent money in this country. Crossing a vast field on a downward slope, I realized that my lungs were fine. I was starting to think that I had been cursed with fucking immortality! Yet if I died anytime for any reason in the next month it would be counted as a Corona death. #AreYouFuckingKiddingMe?! But I'm not dead yet. Alive for no justifiable reason except instinct. Survival of another nobody that had achieved nothing and never fucking mattered. Life was constantly threatening to come to an end at any moment – but it never fucking did! After polluting my way through this meaningless world, there was still nothing to live for! None of the spiritual encounters with unholy entities from another realm of existence had even a single fucking answer! And I fucking hated all of it! All I had was endless fucking hatred for every-fucking-thing! So, I text my little toy in Czech, suggesting that I finally taste her tight asshole on my way back to Berlin. She declined the offer – because of course nothing ever fucking worked out in the end! It's all bullshit! I hate this fucking place! Plugging in my headphones, I switched off Airplane-mode on my phone (for all the fucking good it did in preventing cunts from following my fucking footsteps). I then opened Spotify and cranked up House Of Pain, *It Ain't A Crime*.

### NORTHWARD TO THE GREAT CONJUNCTION SUNDAY 20th DECEMBER 2020

Standing on the outstretched breakwater, I glared across the Baltic sea below an overcast sky, while listening to Amenra, *From Birth To Grave, From Shadow To Light*. The open water always seemed far more daunting when standing face to face with it. But right then, Special BND Agent Schlenzig came marching into the head wind. In disbelief, I turned from that bleak midday view toward this cunt that I had completely forgotten about. With the small north-eastern German town of Sassnitz up on the hill behind the marina, I watched as Schlenzig marched closer. He grabbed my jacket, demanding, “Where the fuck do you think you're running off to, huh?! There's nowhere I won't follow you!”

Glancing at the sleek launch that pulled into the marina with ‘Pilot’ written on its side, I gestured toward it as I said, “Come with me. I'll tell you



everything. Everything that happened to your daughter.”■

The rain started while we got on board the launch, as the old guy at the helm scowled at us. Without a word, he sped out of the harbor and headed north to the next bay. All my travels around Europe this year always took so much fucking time. It had been nearly two months since I had I sat on the train for twelve hours on the return from Slovakia. I remembered brooding over how much I hated Lev for failing to do his fucking job. When I finally stumbled down my street after 8pm, my only reward was spotting an SUV parked near my building. I recognized Lechner with two tough guys as I crept up from behind. Without thinking, I turned down the parallel street and dropped off my backpack at the studio. I immediately entered the kiosk on the corner. Buying a couple of supplies, I noticed that they were already selling firecrackers for New Year’s Eve. I bought several packs and a lighter. Outside, I handed half of the crackers to the local drunks. I then slid up behind the SUV. The moment the drunks set off the firecrackers, I ripped open the backdoor and jumped in! Lechner looked genuinely wide-eyed when I shot him twice, pointblank in the chest! I turned Lev’s gun on the driver and shot him through the seat as well as the passenger. I quickly lit another pack of crackers and tossed them out the door. That little shit, Lechner was still writhing next to me, so I took my knife and stabbed him in the throat as I hissed, “You should have heard her scream!”

I pulled my knife out of his neck and watched him squirm. All three men soon went limp. Using my supplies, I heaved a trash-bag over each bleeding torso before duct taping them up tight, especially around their faces. I dragged

## My Inescapable Spite

the other two between the parked cars and shoved them in next to Lechner. That was when I noticed a small leather case on the back seat. Opening it, I found three thin syringes full of a yellowish liquid. I tucked the case into my jacket pocket before driving out of my quiet neighborhood.

It wasn't long until I pulled into a vacant parking lot, sprayed the interior of the SUV with lighter fluid, and then walked away as it was gutted by fire. It was that simple, how the fuck could Lev have fucked it up?!

I was watching the wake churn up the gray water, when suddenly Schlenzig attacked! Shoving me across on the back deck of that fast pilot boat, he whipped out his gun while pointing furiously at a distant amphibious aircraft floating in the calm waters. "There's no way you're leaving this country! I don't care what you have to say about anything! You're not leaving this fucking country!"

Scanning the forests on the clifftops and the lonely little plane waiting for me, I quietly told Schlenzig exactly how I had befriended, murdered, and then disposed of his daughter's body.

Schlenzig looked more than just seasick as the boat slowed down. His arms hung weak, and his shoulders slumped, as all hope drained out of his lungs. The police-issue handgun clattered loudly onto the deck. Then, without warning, he sprung! His hands clamped about my throat and I was slammed against the railing! I wanted him to just finish me, but I had things to do! So, my leather gloved hands grabbed his face – when BAM!

The old guy had used Schlenzig's own firearm and shot him through the side of his head. Frowning, he tossed the weapon overboard before helping me wrap the body in weighted chains and dumped him over the side. I kept Schlenzig's phone and tucked it into my small backpack. We soon continued onward to the floating plane. Before I left the boat, the old guy wanted my own phone as he handed over a GPS locator, saying, "For getting back."

The small plane never seemed more than 100 meters above the Baltic. At one point we passed over part of Denmark. It wasn't long until we followed the coastline of Norway, where I fought off my fatigue by dwelling on all the events that had led me here. I recalled walking home in the small hours of mid-November. Opening my front door, I found that the inside of my flat was now a gaping shaft. I looked up and down the stone pillars. Ice coated the archaic details and a mist hung in the dark air. In the middle of the shaft, a levitating shape appeared. It was a blackened skeleton. However, the bone structure was all wrong. It wasn't exactly human. There were too many ribs

in strange places. Bones where there shouldn't be any. The seemingly burnt skull slowly turned as a golden flame ignited above the center of its temple. The skeleton just hovered there in the shaft, staring at me. Suddenly the entire place faded to black, and I hit the lights, finding my white flat unmoved.

I woke a few hours after that vision of the shaft, and saw a different black shape sitting on the edge of my bed. Exhaling, I sat up behind the cloaked figure and grabbed it by the fucking head with both hands! It, however, threw me across the room! I rolled onto my feet and lunged back at that unknown apparition – which suddenly vanished before I got a second grasp upon it! That fucking cunt! Shaking my head, I cracked my neck from side to side, and went straight back to bed. I knew that if these silent specters had something of significance to say, then they'd be back.

After that night of disturbances, I took a Saturday afternoon stroll through Mitte. I found myself in front of the Kulture Büro Elisabeth where I sat and read on a park bench. After an hour of collating my enemies in my notebook, the cold had finally crept in, and so had the dark clouds. Looking up, I found Schlenzig taking a seat next to me. He looked much gaunter but just as smartly dressed as when he first made contact a year ago. Slipping my notebook into my inner jacket pocket, I zipped my thermal layer shut, and was about to walk away, when that stiff German spoke up, “If you do anything to hurt that little girl... If you go anywhere near that canal... If you even think about her again...”

“How's the wife?” I asked cruelly.

Schlenzig snapped and grabbed my arms and we both stood straight up where I towered over him.

“Being as fixated on my whereabouts as you are, Herr OCD,” I scorned glaring into his darting pupils, “Surely, you're aware that I recently fucking tested positive for Corona.”

Being the good German that he was, Schlenzig instantly retreated to an acceptable social-distance. His hands moved out to his sides in a non-threatening stance as if he knew we were being watched.

Walking past him, I put on my most charming smirk as I whispered, “You have yourself a lovely fucking day, now.”

This was the first time that I had seen Schlenzig since the meeting at the Russian restaurant. If he actually had something on me, then van-loads of cops would soon come racing into the park. But no one was backing that seemingly discredited BND agent anymore.

However, I hadn't walked two minutes in the direction of Hackescher

## My Inescapable Spite

Markt, before a gray Range Rover pulled up next to me. Emmanuel opened his window with a frown. It was too cold to act like I didn't need the ride. We then drove in silence to the river. Getting out near the locks across from Märkisches Museum, we stood on the water's edge where the big Frenchman finally spoke, "Why aren't you listening?! They're trying to warn you, you stupid fuck!"

"The fuck are you on about?" I replied.

Emmanuel then swung me around into the railing! I was sick of all this bullshit manhandling and pulled out a 9mm, shoving it under his chin!

"I'd love to put a fucking bullet through your cuntin'g face, but, you know, you already look pretty fucked in the head these days!"

"Don't go north!" he grumbled through clenched teeth,

"Why? Why not?"

"Just... Don't go north!"

"Why would you give a fuck?"

"I couldn't care less if you got hit by a fucking truck!" Emmanuel snarled, pushing me away from his disgust as he backed away. "It's the Russians!"

"I don't know any fucking Russians!"

"They fucking know you!" Emmanuel strained his voice, covering his face as he turned. "I should have never gotten involved. Why can't I be left out of all this fucking horrible shit!"

"What do these cunts want?"

Emmanuel laughed dementedly, as he wandered off, "They think you're a father of the desert."

"A what?!"

"A holy man."

"Never fucking met one!"

"Have you ever tried looking?"

Emmanuel's final words lingered in my thoughts, as I walked away and caught a train across town to check on another unresolved curiosity. Soon, I pressed the doorbell to Bismarck's apartment. Staring at the camera in the ceiling, it wasn't long before I was buzzed in. Upstairs, I found the door open, and I entered a darkly furnished penthouse. The lounge was big and had a balcony from a second level circling the lengthy space. Only a couple of lamps lit the distant corners where I saw someone standing next to a massive painting of abstract oils. Gently closing the reinforced door, I moved across the room and passed a huge sofa looking out floor-to-ceiling windows. Bismarck's widow was in her fifties and held her nose up as I approached.

She appeared Turkish in a black business suit.

“How do I rid myself of you?!” she abrasively demanded. “Speak and don’t mix your words!”

“Bismarck had something I gave him,” I stated, glancing around. “I want it back.”

“He didn’t owe anybody a thing!”

Suddenly thinking of the keys to Schilling’s facility, I began boiling with irritation.

“If anything, it’s you who owe your uncouth life to my late husband! Yet you were nothing but a persistent thorn in his side! But I ask you, Fisherman, who will clean up after you now?!”

“Fucking cunt!” I sneered, stepping closer. “I was the fucking one who cleaned up the fucking shit too nasty for even him to fucking deal with!”

“What do you want?!” the widow snarled.

Watching her black eyes behind her hooked nose, I whispered, “A small black disk. About the size of your hand. There are letters carved around the edge.”

“What is it?”

“A mirror.”

“There isn’t anything like that here.”

Maintaining our caustic eye contact a few moments longer, I then slowly nodded and turned to leave. It was entirely possible that Bismarck had thrown the thing away the day that I had given it to him.

“Gajdošova!” the widow suddenly spoke up, as I reached the door. “Get rid of Gajdošova, and I will look for this little mirror.”

Just like last time, as soon as I exited the building, an SUV pulled up and that same small guy marched toward me – until one of the other guys called him back. I glared at that violent prick and remembered how easily he had knocked me down before. But this time I had the advantage and walked on down the street.

Later that same night, I arrived at the old facility with another dead girl in a trash-bag. I dumped the body in the middle of that stinking hellhole of rotten carcasses, and I scanned the surrounding devils. They never left the old factory, just waited and watched me. So, I ripped open the plastic bag and kicked over the fresh meat, gesturing that they could fucking have her! They could perform the birthing ritual themselves! But nothing. No response. I had brought these inhuman entities into this fucking world, but they just stayed where they were. Why didn’t they fucking run free and run amok?! What the

## My Inescapable Spite

fuck were they all waiting for?!

I had spent two weeks in November learning to animate in Adobe After Effects, and despite my frustrations with the interface, my progress had given me pause. With enough determination even an old dog could still learn a few new tricks. Without a doubt, I knew that I, like any other idiot with half a brain, could apply the same method to understanding anything once focused upon. I had taught myself, and the results were evident. Like so often was the case when reading great books, a sentiment resonated because it was already a belief you had naturally surmised about your model of the world. Coping mechanisms inevitably developed independent of other influences because without our ability to adapt, we wouldn't survive. Reminding me of when I had read the very quote itself by Matsuo Bashō, *“Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the wise; seek what they sought. Seek the meaning behind their footsteps, and not upon the steps themselves. For in seeking the footsteps you shall be glancing only upon the next footprint. And you're sure to stumble upon an unforeseen obstacle. But in seeking the meaning behind their footsteps you're sure to see ahead; comparable to looking up while walking. Thus allowing you to easily maneuver around the hurdles on the path you walk. And if you walk like this long enough, you'll one day, to your surprise, find yourself among the wise.”*

The problem, however, was always the same, there were always more things beyond any grasp of my understanding. I had then received another letter from Armenia. It was the same friend of Arpi's family saying that they had found her diaries at her uncle's place. In them, Arpi had written about me many times. About me and Vishaps. The friend of the family then gave more detail about Arpi's death. Her body was found completely submerged in a barrel of honey. It was in her lungs. She had drowned in it. No one seemed to know where she had gotten so much honey from or how she was able to transport it into the remote mountains all by herself. The letter ended with demands to know what exactly I had done to Arpi during her brief time in Berlin. Fucking typical.

On the last night of November, I saw Aileen's three teenage sisters walking down the street. They didn't see, or at least didn't acknowledge me. Thinking of that fucking misunderstanding of names infuriated me again. It had all turned out to be nothing in the end, no one was missing, and yet no one apologized for the accusations made against me. What was the point of these fucking visions of other realms, if I couldn't use them to find what I was looking for! It was all bullshit! I controlled nothing! Everything was



meaningless fucking chaos!

Later that night, I walked up the lonely road through the woods toward the facility. I could smell something was off from a distance. The closer I got, the stronger the scent. And then I found a new big padlock on the chain-link gate, as well as fresh security cameras replacing the ones I had destroyed. Dumping the new body, I climbed the fence and walked the long driveway to the unfamiliar silhouette of the burned down factory. The entire complex had very recently been gutted by fire. Using my pen-torch, I scanned the blackened rubble where those big walls had collapsed in on themselves. There was nothing left. No bodies, none of Schilling's equipment, and no devils. All my work here had been just another fucking waste of time!

Switching off my pen-light, I asked myself if all the rituals that I had performed here had all been in my fucking head?! No! I glanced back at the gates where I had left the new trash-bag. That was real. She was dead. I had done everything that I had set out to do here. The ruins were lit by the full moon as I surveyed the piles of debris surrounded by the forest. I knew I would miss this place. Though, it had never been mine. But ultimately, the birthing ritual was another failed experiment. I had invoked them for nothing. Why hadn't they at least torn me to pieces like what had happened to Grant?! This burnt-out building in the middle of nowhere was the perfect sum of my achievements. All delusions of self-improvement were a false hope that could go fuck itself! The only perpetuity was degradation, bitterness, and insignificance! Nothing ever fucking mattered! This was the proof! The mud and ash was all that I had made, been, and would ever become! There was no recognition because there was no god to curse me worse than I loathed myself. Even if I finally found my way face to face with such a thing, god himself would only confirm what a fucking piece of shit he was for bringing me into this cuntin' world and letting me get away with so much! So much worthless shit! Shit that changed nothing!

Fuming in the ruins, I suddenly felt a force grip my chest from within. My whole body went tense as I was lifted clean off the ground! Levitating, I was frozen in midair. It felt like my ribs were going to rip apart. I was struggling to even breathe when I heard footsteps. Nefertiti II came walking over the piles of bricks and twisted metal. Her tight black hijab and dress beautifully complimented her physique in the moonlight. She stood below and stared up at my free-floating imprisonment. I watched her kneel and pick up my fallen pen-light. Holding her other hand up, she then pointed the beam of light upon her palm – that slowly became transparent like glass. However, not invisible.

## My Inescapable Spite

I could actually see the layers of her flesh and bone. Even her blood looked like water coursing through translucent veins as though they were branches of icicles. Relaxing, I had seen others like this, though less human. She was right. She clearly knew much more than I did.

Suddenly headlights came from the distant road! Nefertiti II merely shook her head in dismay.

I then fell and struck the ground gasping for air. Every muscle aching. By the time that the headlights from approaching vehicles lit up the ruins, Nefertiti II was gone. Stumbling to my feet, I stuffed my pen-light into my pocket as I was blinded by that lineup of headlights. Doors opened and shut and soon I heard the sniggering of Slovaks.

“Didn’t think Lev would do it,” A deep voice called out over the purring engines of at least four SUVs. I squinted at the big guy with a shaved head and heavy eyebrows as he neared. “I knew after seeing that video where you made even Jörg hesitate. I knew then, Lev didn’t stand a fucking chance.”

I had nothing to say.

“I got a job for you,” that hard-faced Slovakian stated, with his hands in his jacket pockets, while the younger gangsters stood next to their vehicles.

“I don’t work for you,” I replied, turning toward the now brightly lit ruins that remained blackened.

“You worked for Bismarck, that means the Fisherman’s now part of my crew.”

“Didn’t work for Bismarck either!”

“Yet you follow orders from his bitch wife?!” the guy snapped, shoving me in the shoulder! “She made a deal with you! But if that cunt wants me dead, she’ll need someone a lot bigger than a fucking runt like you!”

Several guys then yelled out, but I just glared back at Mr. Gajdošova.

“You work for me now! You’ll do what you’re fucking told! And there’ll be none of that psycho-shit!”

Gunshots suddenly caught our attention! We both turned toward the idiots firing their weapons, and then we looked at what they were shooting at. The rubble had begun moving as hideous black shapes crawled out of the ash. The devils were still here. They sneered and slowly crept closer, sizing up their prey. Bullets ricocheted off their stony flesh. It was hard to differentiate them from the very wreckage of the ruins.

“What the fuck?!” Gajdošova muttered angrily. “What in the fuck is this?!”

“I fucking told you,” I replied, watching my creations inch closer. “I don’t

work for cunts like you. I work beasts of burden.”

The moment the first Slovakian ran, the devils charged! They ripped those men to bloody rags. Human bodies were torn inside out with a few tugs! Meat and guts were thrown aside with slaughterous talons! One SUV began reversing, but a bigger devil pounced and split the vehicle open like it was breaking bread and the men inside became like wine! Watching the mayhem, I thought of a quote from someone that I couldn't remember, *“The demons are more numerous than we are, and they stand over us like mounds of earth surrounding a pit.”*

I soon took a photo of Gajdošova's butchered remains. Half his face had been stripped to the bone. Kneeling, I put my palm on his sweaty forehead as I looked into his dead eyes and whispered, “See you soon.”

Scanning where I had last seen Nefertiti II, I found a black creature the size of a rhino foaming at the mouth. Upon its back sat the devil from Porto. Antagonistically, I stepped up onto that mound of debris. They watched until I was close enough to feel the breath of the vile gargoyle-like animal, where I addressed the rider, “Who killed Doric?!”

The devil snarled down at me.

“How did Arpi die?!”

No response.

“What's out in the North Sea?!”

To that, the devil tilted its ugly grimace and leaned forward.

Picking up two handguns from the carnage, I then climbed into a spare SUV and reversed down the driveway. I glanced back and saw the devils thrashing into one another as they fed on the dying. Turning outside the front gate, the headlights lit up the new girl wrapped in trash-bags. But I just drove away. Whomever was monitoring the new security cameras would send someone else to clean up this mess. I was done with this fucking place.

I headed straight to Bismarck's widow. However, no one answered the doorbell. Waiting for someone to exit the glass entrance, I soon snuck inside and up to the top floor. There was still no answer at the door. Pissed off, I glanced around, and then hid the two handguns in a locker where a fire extinguisher was stored.

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The small amphibious plane landed on the waters of a sheltered inlet, just south of the Norwegian city of Bergen at 4pm. There were houses at one end of the bay, and highways on either side. I quickly stepped off the plane's pontoon onto a private jetty and hurried toward the street where I waved

## My Inescapable Spite

down a taxi.

Bergen was small and surrounded by mountains that soon turned black in the early nightfall. The taxi dropped me off at the harbor, right next to the pier that Verena had written on her note. As the taxi drove away, I dumped Schlenzig's phone in the nearest trashcan. The port was open to the public but as I approached a cargo ship, I paused once I saw its name, Alvsson. Opening my backpack, I grabbed Verena's letter and confirmed the name of the ship. Looking at the list of numbers on her message, I soon applied one string of digits to a combination lock on the gate into the vessel.

Cautiously searching the big boat, I was most curious about the cargo. However, once I found my way to the hold, I was confronted with the stench of cow shit. Dozens of cows were locked up in pens. The huge space was dark, and the only light came from the aft of the hold. There, I found what looked like a slaughterhouse full of stainless-steel equipment next to a giant sealed doorway at the back of the ship. Glancing around, I wondered if this was a repurposed whaling boat. But repurposed for what?

Two of the crew then stepped out of a door right next to me that I hadn't even seen.

"I think I'm on the wrong boat," I said with a squint. The two Norwegians didn't seem amused.

I was escorted up on deck where they met another crew member, who then led me to the bridge. There, they searched me, but I hadn't brought my wallet or any kind of identification. However, once they emptied my small black backpack and discovered my collection of amulets and talismans, the guy in charge backed away before making a phone call in a serious tone.

It wasn't long before a black SUV raced onto the pier and pulled up next to the ship. Two more Norwegians in suits stepped out of the vehicle. These guys were more critical of the crew than they were of myself. They then drove me around to a completely different section of the harbor where my bag was handed to the crew of a modern, three-story tugboat. I was ushered impatiently on board without a word and then the tug immediately headed out to sea. Out into so much black.

My backpack was thrown into a locker on the small, towering bridge, and I was free to roam about. So, I stood on the aft deck, watching the city lights of Bergen sparkle and shrink into the distance. I was somewhat confused as to what the Norwegians were planning to do with all the cows. Maybe they were about to attempt their own birthing ritual, or maybe lure out what lurked below with an offering of fresh beef chum.

Once the powerful tug had charged out into those massive unseen waves, I moved onto the small balcony below the bridge, but the wind was just too fucking freezing. I ended up in one of the cabins, staring out a portal while listening to the roar of the engine battle with the pounding sea. Watching the spray thicken the icicles on the cables outside the back door, I remembered waking in the small hours at the start of December. My bed was surrounded by countless gray, worm-bodied devils. Their long intestinal tails extended upward into a spiraling cluster. They all stared down at me with their wet beady eyes as their gathering slowly moved upward. More of them rose from below, but those far above separated until their endless torsos crisscrossed into a vast organic lattice. Sitting up, I watched as a different kind of giant white worm gradually descended from that complex network of flesh. Once it reached my bed, its tips gently peeled open and expelled a chunk of ice. The circling devils then began humming as their hands made strange gestures with bony fingers. The central fat worm recoiled, so I looked closer at the block of rough ice. Suddenly a bright light came from above, and then I could see that within the ice was a small skull. By the time I woke in the next morning, the ice had mostly melted in the kitchen sink. I placed the inhuman skull in the drawer with all the other occult items I'd been given.

On my way to the studio, that bleak Sunday afternoon, I saw an SUV waiting outside. The widow's bodyguards frisked me, took my knife and then drove to Bismarck's place.

In the penthouse, the widow sat at the dining table at the far side of the lounge. She was preoccupied with a stack of paperwork when I entered. Her face was tight, hair straight, and her hand wrote with a delicate fountain pen. The two Slovakian's stayed by the door as I moved over to the huge windows and admired the rooftop view in the dwindling light.

"Why didn't you tell me already?!" the widow said, from where she sat.

I glanced over at her but kept my mouth shut.

"How did you do it?" she asked. "How exactly did you get Gajdošova?"

"I've never hurt a fly," I replied, looking back at her little bodyguard still scowling at me. "I'm a fucking saint."

"I found it. What you asked for," the widow spoke in a calculating manner. "It was under a photograph of his mother. Though it hardly seems like anything of value. So, why do you want it so much?"

Twisting around, I stared at the distant dining table and spotted the brown paper that I had wrapped the scrying mirror in when I had given it to Bismarck in 2017. I eventually moved closer, as I spoke, "Did you know, his mother

## My Inescapable Spite

was a witch.”

“She was no such thing!” the widow scoffed. “Now tell me, how did you do it! How can I know that you’re not taking credit for someone else’s work? Describe how Gajdošova died! I want the details! Or you’re not getting anything! Tell me exactly how you caught Gajdošova off guard! But you can’t, can you! Because you didn’t do anything! Not a thing! It’s all the work of someone else! Someone like Jörg!”

“Thought he fled the country,” I said, inching toward the table. “You know, after creating your current marital status.”

“I want him,” the widow whispered, placing her hand on the prize. “Bring me Jörg’s head, and then you can have your worthless mirror.”

Clenching my jaw, I knew that this was coming of course. No one ever keeps their fucking word. So, there was nothing to say. Turning, I walked straight to the door. But I paused and held my palm out, “My knife.”

That smug little cunt just opened the door, shoved me out, and then slammed the door in my face!

Standing in the bright stairwell next to the elevators, I shook my head. Fuck it!

I knocked on the widow’s door. A moment later, the little bodyguard opened it with a vicious expression that I put two bullets through! BAM! BAM! The second gangster yelled out, but I shot him at close range simultaneously from each of the two handguns that I had hidden next to the fire extinguisher.

“So, it was you!” the widow said, though not moving from where she sat.

I shot that cunt twice in her face! Then twice more in her chest! Grabbing the scrying mirror, I turned away. I shot the bodyguards twice more in the chest before collecting my knife. Wearing medical masks in these times was perfect for walking away without a care.

Once I got home that evening, I sat on the floor facing the east and placed the obsidian disk in front of me. I concentrated on the blackened surface in the silence of my lightless room. Soon a shimmer moved beneath the polished glass. It was like looking at pale mist that softly swirled. The view then tilted and rose as if coming out of water. The image was of a flooded tunnel. A big cave. In the distance a tiny ring of lights appeared high up in the dark. Suddenly the devil from Porto smashed its face against the inside of the mirror! Its jaws snapping as the disk itself jumped off the floor!

Sitting back, I looked up as Amaimon’s infinite black arms retreated from the cocoon they had made around me. The mirror now sat still and clear. Annoyed, at this irrelevant vision, I seethed with contempt! After all this

fucking time, I had the scrying mirror back, but what the fuck did I have to do in order to control it?! A fucking tool is useless unless you know how to use it! None of these fucking devils were going to help. But then, I glanced aside and thought of Nefertiti II.

The next evening, after thinking about the scrying problem all day, I wrapped myself in a big black sheet, and sat on the floor facing east with the mirror and several personal items.

First, I held Arpi's journal as I concentrated on the black glass. Nothing.

Next, I held Doric's letter and stared into the depth. Nothing.

I couldn't seem to find the dead, so I held onto Aileen's glasses and looked for that pretty piece of meat. But nothing appeared! The mirror remained a reflection of only my fucking disdain for this waste of my fucking time! Shoving the items aside, I grabbed the mirror in both hands and closed my eyes. I was immediately on an exposed ridge of volcanic rock under a dark sky. Large holes in the slope gushed with smoke. Standing, I saw several giant creatures hunched over and leaning on spears next to a pit. Flames shimmered from below upon their infernal faces. I held up the scrying mirror from a distance. Their only reaction was one of disinterest.

Walking along the ridge, I descended into a valley where ash gently fell upon everything. I pulled my sheet over my head before coming close to a wide pool of mud. A horse-like thing stood knee-deep in the center of the pond. So, I held up the mirror, but the beast just turned away.

Soon, I came to a waterfall between jagged boulders. Cries came from the caves in the gray cliffs, and then a big animal with long spines on its armored back leaped down from an overhang! I held up the scrying mirror, however, this time the demon roared murderously and then pounced with taloned paws reaching – when I was yanked backward!

Nefertiti II herself had pulled me out of harm's way as she had done once before. And again, I found myself in an unexpected location. I was in a room with huge lengths of scarlet silk hung from a high ceiling. Suddenly, she threw me to the floor on my back. She put her bare foot on my head and pressed down hard, as she spoke suspiciously, "How are you still this suicidal?! You know what's waiting for you! Why do you insist on causing yourself even more condemnation?! Those beings, they will never, not for the rest of time, ever forget your face! Have you learned nothing?!"

"Obviously," I sighed, watching this beautiful girl berate my existence.

"I've never met a greater miscreant! How you're still alive is beyond all reasonable explanation! No one should have gotten away with as many

## My Inescapable Spite

trespasses as you have achieved through blind luck!”

I then held up the thick obsidian disk. Nefertiti II slowly crouched down and straddled my waist as I placed the mirror flat on my tattooed chest. Craning my neck, I looked into the blackness as a pale flicker emerged within. I saw falling snow. But then the mirror itself began vibrating. A rumbling hum emanated – until Nefertiti II smacked the mirror off my chest! She looked sick and crawled away from me. As she went, her long black dress revealed her tanned thigh.

“If you go, you’ll die,” she murmured.

“Go where?”

“North,” she said, looking back at me with tears in her eyes. “They’ll eat you. No one escapes the great jaws. You can’t play games with these things. You may have seen jinn, but you’re incapable of communing with gods. And even you know this.”

“I’ll be fine.”

“You’re an idiot!” she yelled, and she slapped me across the face! With that, I sat up and grabbed both of her wrists! Squirming, she snarled, “You’ll go naked against a falling mountain, all the ignorance in the world won’t save you!”

I pushed her backward and leaned over her.

“But you’ll still go, even knowing all of this,” she whispered despondently. “Why?! Why risk it?! Why race toward your own damnation?!”

Pinning her down, right there, I only wanted one thing – but then I blinked and opened my eyes back in my own flat.

On the following Friday night, I was invited for dinner and drinks at a model’s place with a few of her friends from Berlin’s incestuous kink community. While we sat around the cozy Christmas tree eating cookies and sipping on mulled wine, my phone rang. I excused myself only to hear the ungracious voice of Mr. Slappy on the line.

It was just after midnight, when I left my friend’s place with two of the girls. Crossing Warschauer Strasse in the freezing wind, I bid adieu to the girls, and climbed into Mr. Slappy’s Mercedes-Benz. We drove to Kreuzberg and never spoke a word.

Scaling the staircase in some shit hole building, I came to a door that opened into an empty room where I stepped inside. Mr. Slappy slammed the door shut behind me and then some bearded guy came out of another room with a big butcher’s knife in hand. I pulled out one of my new 9mm from my jacket and shot Mr. Slappy twice in the chest! Turning, I shot that other



prick once in the gut, then stepped closer, and fired a second time into his shocked face! Marching passed the fallen stranger, I kicked the knife aside, and checked the other empty rooms. I returned to Mr. Slappy, searched him, and then took his own firearm to add to my evolving collection. The little Chinaman was still alive as I grabbed him by the collar and began brutally slapping him! “How do you like it, cunt?!”

I then shot him right between his squinting fucking eyeballs!

Stepping over to the Arab stranger, I picked up the knife with my gloved hand and scowled down at that bearded piece of shit, “What were you going to do, cut my fucking head off?! Here, let me return the favor!”

And I hacked his fucking throat into a meaty mess! Stabbing and slashing, I shredded the flesh down to the bone. I put my foot against his collarbones, and then yanked at his head with both hands and the spine cracked and groaned and eventually broke! Standing tall, I held the dripping head up – when I suddenly recognized this cunt!

I immediately dropped the head and grabbed Mr. Slappy’s keys before running downstairs. Jumping into his car, I sped back to my neighborhood. If that fucking asshole had tracked me down, then the last of those three terrorists from Calais might have also found Mara! Parking the car outside her building, I suddenly received a text from Mara herself! But it was just a casual message. Looking up at her lights, I replied that I was still with friends. I then paused. Scanning the street, I watched random people walk by as I considered the connections. The Sheikh from New Year’s Eve had been contacted by the so-called Red Snake of the Pharaoh. The Sheikh must have connected the dots and had Mr. Slappy drive me to my own execution. However, Mr. Slappy knew nothing about Mara’s involvement. If I was being tracked right now, then I would be the one leading the terrorists to Mara. I must remember that my phone was always being monitored. Glancing at Mr. Slappy’s gun sitting on the passenger’s side seat, I remembered when I was about fourteen and it was my first time to shoot the sheep before assisting my father in butchering it. I could still picture it as clear as day when the bullet bounced right off the animal’s forehead! Annoyed, my father snatched the 22 rifle out of my hands and shot the sheep at the correct perpendicular angle in order to puncture the bone and kill the animal instantly. As impatient as my father had been, he still took pride in passing on this knowledge. I never forgot the lesson and my mistake.

Looking up at Mara’s windows, I thought of her growing acquisition of numerous books on Eastern philosophy and spiritual tantra. As much as she

## My Inescapable Spite

had recovered from Corona, she had found no solution in all her accumulated wisdom to dampen her creeping depression. There was no perfect philosophy, or one all-encompassing theory for navigating life with its unaccounted factors. Sometimes you get it right, but mostly we fuck it up. But fuck it! I fucking hate this second guessing! There was no fucking reason to believe that the third terrorist was even here! Fuck this shit!

I drove back to my place, dropped off my phone, and then drove across town. Pulling into a quiet, suburban street, I pulled on a medical mask and then locked Mr. Slappy's car. I casually walked around a corner, admiring the nice big houses as I made my way to the nearest train station.

The next evening, I received a phone call. The number was hidden, and the voice was unfamiliar. "You have come to my aid twice now. What would you have me do with the third traitor?"

Staring out my blinds, I snarled at the Red Snake, "Make him suffer! Make him suffer for his own lack of conviction! Make him fucking suffer something fucking biblical!"

That night, I couldn't sleep. I rolled over after an hour and came face to face with the devil from Porto at the side of the bed. It snorted as the dim light glistened on its wet eyes. The walls of my flat then changed and grew into that porous mass of hardened stone that covered every surface. Taking notice, the devil retreated quietly. But it was too late. Thousands of black serpents emerged from the holes in everything! The devil then raised its arm, as if pointing, just before it was overwhelmed by a huge swarm of slithering violence! Rolling away, I faced the north wall where the devil had gestured, and I knew that I couldn't avoid the call of the water for much longer.

Two days later, I woke in the morning from the satellite phone ringing in the drawer. Mr. Grumbach groaned into my ear, "It's happening again! A disturbance in the Barents Sea! The Norwegians know! They know! They're readying a ship! It could leave any day! Get there! Get to Bergen now!"

The phone went dead, and I stared down at Lechner's small leather case in the drawer. I still had other shit to deal with first.

That evening at the studio, after work, I finally looked for flights to Norway. Frustratingly, the airports wouldn't allow entrance to anyone without a negative Corona test on arrival and even then, they would lock you in a hotel for ten days at your expense. What's the fucking point of all these tests when even if you're negative you still had to be fucking quarantined! It's all fucking bullshit! Sitting in silence at my desk, I tried thinking of another way. I even looked up the scenic route, by catching a ferry from Denmark, but

they weren't even running until next year. With a stricter German lockdown starting tomorrow, I found that my options were shrinking beyond any solution – and then the doorbell rang.

The DHL guy handed me a small box, and what did I find inside, another fucking phone. A BlackBerry. Switching it on, I saw a missed call from the contact, 'Call Me'. I sat on the sofa shaking my head as I returned the call.

"Schilling was unable to break his commitments to the Slovaks. However, they don't seem to want to have anything to do with you," Tiesa spoke coldly into my ear. "You have enemies. Enemies that know who you are. That will always put you at a disadvantage. Unless, of course, you were to disappear, and start again. And if you were to do so, how would you? How would you start again?"

"Move to Alaska," I replied quietly. "Become a fisherman."

"Such an odd moniker you have."

"Is there an actual point to this idle chit chat?! Or are you just calling so you can continue being a fucking cunt?!"

"I believe Schilling had faith in you. But before someone has the gumption to neutralize you yourselves, I have a business proposition. I could assist you as I have with Jörg."

Sitting forward, I glared at my computer and whispered, "Say, can you arrange transportation to Bergen?"

The following morning, I woke early from a dream where I was in a crowded room and saw blondie, my ex, crying. I tried to get closer but the more I battled against the packed bodies the further away I was pushed. Getting out of bed, I text her while the lingering feeling filled my mind. I still knew how I felt toward her even though it had been nearly ten years since we broke up. And that gave me an idea. Sitting on the floor with the scrying mirror, I simply remembered how Arpi had made me feel – immediately, her face appeared in the black glass! She was crying while the wind tore at her long dark hair. The image slowly pulled back revealing that Arpi was naked and covered in filth as she huddled in a crack in some rocks. The further back the image moved, the more I saw that she was perched within a massive cliff that went up into the clouds and dropped down into the fog. And this was all that she had made of herself in hell.

Sitting back, I noticed the Porto Devil crouching in the corner of the room near the kitchen. It watched on patiently. Gesturing for it to come closer, I saw recognition on its gruesome face as its head tilted. The blackened creature sat next to me and we both looked down into the scrying mirror. I didn't need

## My Inescapable Spite

a personal item for this to work, I merely had to feel. And so, I focused on Nefertiti II. As her face appeared in the back seat of a luxury car, the devil and I looked calmly at one another.

At 7:30pm the next evening, I stood on the southside of the canal glaring across the water at the closed curtains over Jessie's windows. The lights were all on, but I saw no movement. I stood there for a while, brooding before walking across the bridge. Using the wire, I popped open the neighbor's gate. I stood quietly in the small, dark courtyard lined with trash bins and watched Jessie's kitchen and bedroom windows. Despite the lights, I saw no one inside. I then slipped my phone into a sealable plastic bag and tucked it under the paper-trash bin. Returning to the street, I stood directly outside the entrance to Jessie's building and waited in the cold. I recalled last year when Jessie told me about her travels through the USA, and especially when she went to Hollywood. She was captivated by how intriguing and beautiful everyone was. However, she quickly discerned that there was little to no substance under their superficial self-promotion. No one had anything original to say and they ultimately only cared about looking cool at all times. I glanced up at the windows into her lounge where she had told me this story, knowing that she had been describing herself. She was no seer. She was nothing special at all. And she hadn't protected herself with those serpents above her front door on the night that I had come for her. Those devils were there preventing me from making a mistake!

Less than twenty minutes after I had arrived at the canal, Mr. Behm's car sped up the street. I knew that his savior-complex would bring him running. Regardless of what my lawyer had said, these cunts were still tracking my every movement. Behm jumped out of his car and then froze as I stared back at him. Straightening his coat, he approached with a sour curl to his snout.

"I want to confess what happened to Schlenzig's daughter," I said, before Behn had a chance to speak.

Nodding, Mr. Behm looked up at Jessie's windows and replied, "Good. Good. Come on. Let's go somewhere warm and you can tell me everything. You're doing the right thing, you know."

As he opened the passenger's side door, I stabbed him in the neck with one of Lechner's syringes! Behm gasped and lashed out! His knees, though, went weak. I caught him as he collapsed, swinging his body onto the passenger's seat. Taking his keys, I climbed in behind the wheel.

I cruised across the city's wet streets in silence, until I eventually heard a whisper trickle out of Behm's sedated lips, "Do you even feel any remorse

for any of these girls?”

“Like eating a ham sandwich,” I admitted, “I enjoy my meal and then get on with my fucking day.”

Behm’s eyes then welled up as I pulled into his own private driveway. His daughter was just walking in the front door of their two-story modern home with Christmas lights in the windows. It was 8:20pm, when I left the father of the house incapacitated in his double garage. I found his wife in the kitchen cooking and I smashed an iron skillet into the side of her head! While injecting her fallen body with a syringe, the daughter screamed behind me! I overpowered and choked her unconscious in a headlock and then stuck her with the final syringe. Stepping into the lounge, I ripped the huge Christmas tree down and then soaked it in lighter fluid. I finally dragged Mr. Behm inside and placed him on the big sofa. Covering his entire family in lighter fluid, I made eye contact with that immobile German politician as I said to him, “This whole fucking year has been an exercise in capitulation. And now just look how naturally this all comes to you.”

I walked out the garage door, pulled on a medical mask, and continued down the street to where I’d parked Mr. Slappy’s car. As I slowly drove by, I watched Mr. Behm’s family home burst into an inferno of swollen flames!

Returning to the canal at 8:50pm, I retrieved my phone from below the trash bin, and then drove out to the western woods, to Friedrich’s estate.

I arrived at the guarded front gate at 9:20pm, where several young Slovakian’s backed away from the Mercedes as soon as they saw that it was me. A minute later and the gate slid open, and I drove up to the mansion. Mr. Caviezel was standing outside as I eased on the breaks. Other Slovaks kept their distance near the front door. Stepping out of the car, I waited as Mr. Caviezel slowly approached. His demeanor was as reserved as he had always been while we scowled at each other.

“The documents that Bismarck wanted are in the possession of a Scottish arms dealer living in Barga, in the mountains of Tuscany,” I stated quietly. “His name’s Peter.”

“Why are you here?” Mr. Caviezel asked.

“Getting my affairs in order.”

“What happened to Gajdošova?”

Glancing around the wide courtyard where I had killed the two lovers two years ago, I replied, “I don’t work for you or Friedrich or whoever the fuck that cunt was.”

Two days later, on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2020, I saw Malloy for

## My Inescapable Spite

the first time in months and handed over his late birthday present. I didn't often give gifts, but when I did it was for a reason. It was the two-volume catalogue of the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, *Christ, Plato, Hermes Trismegistus*. I thought it was an appropriate way of thanking him for our theological conversations. He had seemed like the only one without criticism toward my ignorance and encouraged my thirst for such things that might evolve myself if I just continued.

Once I left Malloy's penthouse, I headed directly to Hauptbahnhof and bought my train ticket to the northern coastal town of Sassnitz. Tiesa had arranged a ride to Norway tomorrow at 1pm.

I then fornicated with a nice English girl for a few hours before getting home just after midnight.

Stepping into my flat, I stopped dead in my tracks when I found Nefertiti II sitting on my sofa! In her hands was the scrying mirror and the golden dagger that she had originally given me. She scowled as she hissed, "Such a disappointment!"

Without hesitation, she smashed the mirror with the dagger!

I lunged furiously at that cunt – but she did that thing again, and I was lifted clean off my white floor by invisible means! Hanging in midair, I thrashed out manically, attempting to free myself despite the crushing pain. She then began telling a story about the fall of man being the direct result of the fall of god himself. God fell first. His great sin being all of creation. I, however, didn't give a fuck! I was pure concentrated hatred for this fucking meat! After I had finally discovered how to use the fucking scrying mirror, it was now fucked! Fuck this cunt! Suddenly, I dropped to the floor! Crashing backward into the wall, I braced myself. Nefertiti II stood petrified. The clawed hands of the Porto devil were clamped upon both sides of her head from behind. She stayed perfectly still. Her black eyes wide with terror. Then she gasped, "Your hair! Two crowns! Two crowns in your hair! With the head of a lion. The son of chaos!"

Turning, I moved to the open drawer where the mirror had been taken. I immediately grabbed the rosary and held it at arm's length. The devil gnashed its teeth ferociously at me and released the girl. She didn't move. Lowering the beads, I saw Nefertiti II reaching for the dagger, so I raised the rosary again and she froze. These beads worked on more than just the devil, which also noticed this. I tested her response by slapping her across the face with all my strength! She remained steadfast. So, I stripped her naked, bent her over the sofa, and used an anal speculum to pry open her asshole where I inserted

the entire rosary. While sodomizing her, I invited the devil to dine upon her flesh. It began with her hands, eating her alive while I violently raped her.

After I consecrated this desecration with my cum, I collected the shattered pieces of the mirror as the devil licked up the puddle of blood from the glossy floor. Not a slither of meat or fragment of bone was left after the devil had its fill, rosary and all.

I only had three and a half hours to sleep before my train north, but all I could think about was how long would the harrowing of hell take me before I found my own father.

It was after midnight when the Norwegian tugboat's engine changed tempo. We had entering calmer waters. It was raining much harder than before, but still only blackness surrounded. That was, until the tug's spotlight lit up the steep cliffs of a narrow fjord. The crew threw their lines to men on a path cut into the vertical rock. There, an old guy and his dog stood staring at me from under a black umbrella.

"My young Argonaut," the old gentleman called out. "I told you to stay away from that little white house."

Scaling the stone steps with the crew of the tug, I tilted my head. I knew this old guy. Him and his dog. From back when secrets were passed onto me under that house. Secrets that I had doubted until I saw what had grown in the derelict ship in the North Sea. Secrets that I had tricked Captain Grant into testing. Secrets that I had committed upon the bodies of little girls in Schilling's abandoned facility. Secrets that still couldn't satisfy my ever-increasing bloodlust. Reaching out to shake his hand, I acknowledged the old Swiss gentleman as, "The philosopher farmer."

"No, no," he dismissed. "Just a poor sarabaite preparing the hypogeous for tomorrow's alignment. But whom might I ask has sent you here to sabotage our most holy work?"

"One of your kind," I replied, though slowly becoming aware of how vast this entrance was as it led into a cavern where the water continued deep inside. "Another Swiss."

"Grumbach?!" the old gentleman whispered. His tense brow lost focus for a moment before he turned and walked away. The Norwegians then proceeded to beat the shit out of me!

Dragged within that massive cavern, my hiking boots scraped across the smooth stone as I coughed for air. The further we went, the more I noticed wide bowls along the path burning to light the way. I strained my neck and saw

## My Inescapable Spite

more and more rows of columns on both sides of the water. Ancient Corinthian colonnades were carved directly out of the cave's black walls. There were intricate entrances to neglected shrines and other unlit passageways leading into ominous catacombs. Soon I was dragged up wide steps, across an icy platform, and into an ancient Roman-like temple. Thousands of candles barely lit the huge inner sanctuary, while dozens of iron-cast, animal-headed statues lined the walls. The golden glow from the candles highlighted what looked like blood dripping off the sculptures. In the middle of that great hall, a hole sunk into the floor like a well. Behind it were two huge, stone sphinx seraphim with countless wings reaching all the way to the ceiling. There, thousands of ornate metal bowls hung from long chains. The echoing water reverberated throughout the hollow space like a disembodied moan. Before I got a chance to look beyond the two looming stone beasts, the Norwegians stripped me naked. I was then immediately dropped into the hole in the floor!

Landing painfully in the dark, I rolled across what I assumed was a cold pile of wet seaweed. I was in a tunnel that went in one direction, toward the dim light and sound of the water. The seaweed thinned as I stumbled along and was confronted by the stench of death. The tunnel emerged onto a wide pedestal above some stairs that led down into the channel of water. I was so deep inside the cavern that I couldn't see any sign of the tugboat. However, to my left, I focused on the rotting carcass of a man. It was Winstone! He lay strewn and naked on this shelf four meters above the undulating water. There was nothing restraining him. He appeared to have simply frozen.

"Cleanse yourself!" the old swiss gentleman called out from across the twenty-meter divide. "Cleanse yourself in the tide, and rise as Jonah had, but from the mouth of the Leviathan itself!

I could only just make out that the stairs leading down from my side, also ascended the water where that gathering of men stood below many more temples carved into the cavern. Scanning upward, I couldn't even see the ceiling of the cave but suddenly recognized this place. I'd seen these colonnades and black waters during one of the random visions in the scrying mirror. Shivering, I tried controlling my breath as I glanced down at Winstone. He must have chosen to stay where he was and rot. Lowering my trembling arms from where they crossed my chest, I bitterly reminded myself of why the fuck I'd come all this way. Why I'd always go too fucking far! And why the infinite horrors within the waters were exactly what I fucking deserved! I thought of the abhorrent creatures that I'd seen at Loch Ness and recalled the many times that I'd watched bestial dragons below Mühlendamm Bridge.



Now was my time to be wiped off the face of the Earth. I spat on Winstone's carcass and walked straight down. My hatred for the world's failure to stop me, or elevate me, or even embrace me, fueled my aggression toward my own trepidation. The water was my enemy! The water could kill me! So, let the water do its worst but it wouldn't see me retreat, not one single fucking step! If this was my death, then let this penance cut me down, for no fear would ever hold me back. However, as my feet entered the water, nothing I believed diminished the agony from every step into that arctic misery. Fuck this shit! There was nothing to think about. No thought to hold onto. If pain was all there was to fear, then I wanted it to utterly overwhelm me until the saturation exhausted itself and left me as heartless as a lifetime of survival had done so. As strong as my indignation was to suffer through, once I plunged my head under the swells, I then lost my fucking mind! My flesh became numb. All I could feel were my bones. I was a skeleton in excruciating torment with lungs that were clenched fists. The current almost immediately swept me away into slow-motion disorientation. Lost in a hostile oblivion, my slender body curled into a tight ball of rigid limbs. I was unable to control anything and beyond the capacity to care. My entire being had finally become a stone.

I then slid up against something. The current surged again and I struck a solid surface. Too frozen to discern up from down, I did however, hear a thumping! My eyes and jaw were clamped shut but my lungs were about to explode – when I was lifted out of the water! Hands dragged me upward just as my nostrils gave out, panting shallow and frantic. I was heaved aside, though remained fetal. Then I heard the crackling flames of a giant bonfire. A massive weight was dumped over my shoulders, and there I lay shaking as the open fire cooked my immobility. Breath trembling. Muscles cramping. Bones aching. The cold had set into the marrow. Opening my bloodshot eyes alone took an effort that nearly knocked me unconscious. The falling snow confused me. The bonfire roared below a night sky, where thick snowflakes drifted upon the heavy fur that covered me. Slowly sitting up, I managed to pull that stiff, hairy blanket closer. I glanced aside at a vast sheet of ice. In the distance, lightning illuminated the dense clouds on the horizon. A figure stood a few meters away with his back to me, he too was draped in a similar bearskin. But then a voice came from behind, “Behold the pitiless lips of the White Sea.”

Rushdie then crouched down next to me. Compared to last New Year's Eve, the Indian ascetic had grown a beard and his long hair was now untamed and full of icicles.

## My Inescapable Spite

“You’re early!” the old Bulgarian mystic, Ventsislav, yelled over the rising wind, while still looking out at the frozen sea. “It’s too soon!”

Closing my eyes, this place felt like one of my visions through the realm of death and sin.

“Noesis,” Ventsislav spoke, suddenly standing over me, “Comes tomorrow.”

“You still have time,” Rushdie whispered, while staring into the flames. “Still have time to repent.”

I slowly scanned my surroundings and saw large wooden poles sticking out of the ice in multiple concentric circles around us. Behind me, a black forest spread into the darkness.

“You have time to purify your spirit,” Rushdie reassured. “Repent and prepare your entirety for the sacrifice.”

Regardless of how close we were to the bonfire which consumed whole tree trunks, I couldn’t seem to get warm on the inside. My ribs continued shivering in constant spasms. I then noticed that the fire was raised upon a tiny island that jutted above the surface of the ice, a stone’s throw from the edge of the mainland forest.

“You still have time to repent. Still have time. Repent and give your blood over to the gods.”

With that, I slowly scowled at Rushdie’s ramblings, before I locked eyes on that white bearded mystic and his threatening presence. He then stated, “You know what must be done. You have done it yourself. You already know.”

And then there was an almighty CRACK!

Far off, a detonation BOOMED beneath the ice sheet and rumbled!

Rushdie stood straight up. Ventsislav turned toward the sea and held out his hand as if he were about to give Rushdie a signal.

The wind eased and the echoes of thunder rose but were soon replaced by the rustling in the woods behind us. I didn’t move. Couldn’t summon the energy to do so. I just hugged my chest as the bon fire dried my hair. The two men above me however, slowly turned toward the growing disturbance in the trees.

“We have been deceived!” the mystic cried out. “We have been betrayed! You! You did this! You are not the worthy! You are not meant to be here! How?! How have you done this?!”

“No!” Rushdie yelled, backing away. “He passed every test!”

“He has damned us!” Ventsislav shouted furiously! “Our ruin is upon us!”

“That isn’t possible!” Rushdie insisted, while running with a burning

branch, lighting up the wooden posts like a flammable woodhenge. “He faced the guardian! He saw the path! He found his way here!”

“All is ruin!” the mystic said, remaining firmly where he stood. “This is why the messengers fell silent. He has infected us. And this is his deception exposed!”

Rushdie soon returned, dropping to his knees in front of me. Gasping, he pleaded, “You inhaled! I watched you take in the smoke! I lay you down! You saw! You saw the guardian! You communicated! You made contact and came back as the only one having endured its radiance! You saw! You passed the test! You saw it! You are meant to be here! Here! Right here! You passed through and made it back again! You made it here! You are meant to be right here, right now! You saw! You saw and came of you own volution! You are meant to be here!”

“But...,” I whispered, looking up. “I was never meant to be there that night.”

“Poisoner!” Ventsislav bellowed from powerful lungs, as he thrust his arms out wide, opening his bearskin cloak in order to begin gesturing with his hands as he murmured some prayer toward the forest.

“No! No, you passed every test! I saw you do it! You saw them! You saw! You see! Look! Look and tell me you see them! Look!” Rushdie screamed desperately. Grabbing my shoulders, he twisted me around until, yes, I saw thousands of translucent black figures emerging all along the tree-line.

Ventsislav then exclaimed a cry of genuine terror, as I saw other forms make their way out of the forest. The shadowed figures were joined by other humanoid creatures with skin that was wet like tar and grotesque features that burned with hot magma. Naked demons snarled feverously as they advanced toward the ice.

“Look! You see them! Don’t you!” Rushdie wept. “See what you’ve done!”

Suddenly another loud CRACK came from the frozen sea! This time, not just the ice shook, the trees swayed as though an earthquake had struck. Then explosions tore loose! A succession of ruptures broke through the ice and extended across that endless expanse. We turned our backs on the approaching devils and watched tall black pillars, like the massive bones of a god-size ribcage, rise out of the ice! These towers of ebony flesh began droning in unison as the wind grew with gale-force intensity.

“You’ve brought this upon us all!” Ventsislav shrieked! “Death of all deaths!”

## My Inescapable Spite

“Repent!” Rushdie demanded, shaking me violently! “Repent! You must! You must repent!”

Shoved down, I glanced up as more and more devils crawled forth from the forest. Giants parted the trees, and other beasts fought among themselves in a mania of intolerance! Their insatiable aggression stomped the Earth and called out to the building storm! None of the wicked, however, ventured out onto the ice.

The old mystic then shoved Rushdie aside and jumped on top of me! I was pinned on my back as Ventsislav put a curved dagger at my throat. Still too frozen to fight, I wanted it all to fucking end! Just end me! I wanted it to be done with! I had come, I had seen, and I was done. End me! but all the two men did was recite something in Latin. Rushdie reiterating everything Ventsislav announced. The wind and snow battled with their distraught expressions. At regular intervals, they would both repeat, “AD FONTES! AD FONTES! AD FONTES!”

Another series of loud CRACKS in the ice were then joined by a volcanic clap of destruction deep within the sea! More BOOMS hammered across the ice sheet before a much more inhuman howl shrieked up from the depth so horrendously that it overwhelmed all the savage devils and the wailing storm itself!

The mystic and ascetic both fell silent. Ventsislav’s steaming breath billowed out around his trembling white bread below his pupils that glistened with dread.

“There’s something out there,” Rushdie muttered, clinging to his bearskin. His own voice now breaking like a frightened child. “This should never have happened.”

I, however, knew exactly what was coming.

Another overwhelming howl roared across the White Sea, casting a wave of rolling mist into the woodhenge and blowing like a hurricane against the forest! The gathering of devils and beasts screamed back in monstrous unity! All that chaos from their snouts never went quiet from that moment on! Their constant ferocity was impatient for a war of all things!

But then a light filled the clouded sky above. A white haze came through the swirling fog and descended upon the bonfire where it suddenly faded away. Ventsislav raised his hands, removing the dagger from my throat as he stood and spoke another oration. The two men backed up to the bonfire. Glancing aside as I slowly sat up, I saw a dozen glass apes surrounding within the wooden circles. In their translucent armor and each clutching a four-

meter-long crystal spear, these ethereal beings watched us with contemptuous scowls.

“Repent!” Rushdie begged. “For god’s sake, repent! Please! Repent!”

Slowly, I got to my feet, leaving the bearskin on the ice. I stood naked. The fire finally having reached my hateful core. Ventsislav mumbled inanely as the infernal hordes screamed at my back.

“Repent!” Rushdie yelled!

“Repent?!” I sneered, glaring at the flames before me. “This is the only fucking thing I’m proud of!”

“Repent!” Rushdie commanded – just before every spear from the glass apes stabbed straight through both wise men!

“WHAT SIN HAVEN’T I COMMITTED?!” I screamed into the fire!

The spears all swiped upward, liquifying Rushdie and Ventsislav, soaking my pale, tattooed body in their hot blood! Not even the pious were protected here.

The distant howling echoed out from the horizon again, drawing the attention of the glass apes. And then the masses of devils from the forest swarmed onto the ice! The wooden posts were ripped apart like twigs, and the larger creatures overcame the glass apes and all their efforts to hold off this brutal attack! The glass apes were torn to shreds in seconds! Their agonized shrieks so high pitched that even the bonfire seemed to flinch. Steaming from my fresh coat of blood, I knelt and picked up one of the fallen spears – just as another white light came from above. Two more glass ape-like beings appeared next to the bonfire but were thirty meters tall and had unrecognizable features and faces. Even less humanoid than the glass apes, these two held great rods which they swept through the raging mob of demons, obliterating anything that they struck! One blow reduced an equal sized giant into little more than gore and bone! They both looked down and saw the spear in my hands, so I pointed it right back at them. They merely continued sweeping their path of annihilation through the endless devils like swinging merciless scythes through a field of abominations.

I have been the trembling child, and then the traumatized lover, but now I was beyond such weakness of heart. I had no faith in mankind for I was man. And no man had stopped me attaining the one thing that I had always wanted: to become the worst parts of myself: distilled humanity focused through an unrestrained antipathy for all existence!

The sea of ice was finally clear of obstacles. The two luminous beings with their unabashed weapons stepped aside as they watched me cross the

## My Inescapable Spite

slaughtered. Fiends also looked on, as I heard atrocious howls that had been building up in cascades of malevolence from what was lurking beneath the surface of the ice. Lightning lashed the horizon and the enormous storm clouds crackled with obscene energy. The gigantic bolts silhouetted hulking shapes that swam heinously through the sky. The black towers of fleshy entities groaned, as I walked past them and further out onto the ice. Alone with celestial beings, I saw the White Sea break apart miles away as Cetus finally arose! Lightning struck down in a massive electrical bombardment! The surfacing of that great sea beast sent a shock wave washing across the ice, eventually knocking me off my feet! I was sent sliding backward, where I used the spear to brace myself. There, I saw enormous indistinguishable shapes come downward from the clouds, just as colossal belligerent forms stretched upward from the sea! Where they met an explosion burst out across this entire realm! This tidal wave of flames expanded like a nuclear blast of infinite magnitude! In the majesty of that open space before this elemental collision, I was absolutely awestruck. I walked onward wanting nothing more than to be consumed by the very jaws of hell itself, as I whispered with the voice of apatheia, “I fucking defy you.”

Through the approaching flames, I witnessed Cetus climb forth from the entire width of the sea. I had seen its birth, its youth, and now its full form. No sacrifice could ever satisfy such a force. This was the corruption of all redemption. I thought of what Doric had said. Maybe this world was a womb, just not for us. I hadn't brought this Titan into the world, but I knew that if I could, I would have – suddenly the sheet of ice rippled into huge shards of splintered mayhem as another shock wave came! I was thrown sideways as the thick plate of ice that I stood upon completely capsized! Slammed into another chunk of ice, I clung on. The water below however, had become churning anarchy, and the ice then flipped and drove me under! The current swept me backwards as the fire storm scorched everything above in a perpetual inferno! Spinning in that freezing water again, I twisted enraged. I was going to fucking drown! Fuck this shit! I thought I had finally escaped this fucking fate! My hand then ran over something rough like stone and I caught ahold. The ground suddenly rose violently upward, taking my resentful self with it!

I was raised out of the water still clinging to that crystal spear, but I was back in the Hypogeum. There, I continued to rise while sitting upon the back of a great headless serpent. The screams of the Norwegians meant nothing to me as the enormous black beast lifted me higher still. A golden glow then came from above. I saw a ring of hanging stones suspended from the ceiling

of the cavern then begin melting. Burning lava poured down all around the giant serpent and I. Steam immediately billowed back up. As I was taken higher, I realized that I had found Lucifer's crown.

While upon the thrown of the serpent, I saw black clouds form within the gushing lava. In the midst of those self-contained orbs of smoke, golden skulls materialized. Then scarlet veins lined the bones and extended into bodies and finally long gold cloaks laced with more red veins hung like the pillars of lava behind them. These free-floating figures then spoke. Spoke in Russian. The headless serpent descended, but I remained levitating naked with the spear in hand. Of all the times I had been caught like this, this was the first instance that I didn't feel like I was being crushed where I hung in midair. Glancing down, I saw how huge the serpent really was. Its body filled the entire channel of water. The steam soon quickly made these upper reaches of the cavern tropical. The Russians were chanting as the lava gushed more explosively behind them. Twelve golden robed Russians. Golden rings of light then began to appear. Wide halos that rotated as they looped over one another into a spherical entanglement that enraptured us all. A loud humming grew in volume along with the voices of the cloaked Russians. Their faces never seen. The heat began burning my skin, just as the Russians became livid in their tone. They seemed to expect a response from me. But like so many encounters, I didn't speak their fucking language. After all, I had no formal education. They could tell me the futility of competing with the devil, and I wouldn't understand a word.

The lava then drained to a trickle, as the yelling Russians all repeated the same word over and over with vindictive scorn: "YALDABAOTH!"

Gravity finally returned to its true nature and I dropped forty meters into the steaming water! The great serpent had gone, and when I surfaced the last of the blood of the mystic and ascetic had been washed off. I stayed in the hot water as darkness soon took hold of the humid air. Yet this had cleansed nothing. I had asked for no absolution. Hell had judged me by my works, and despite every atrocity achieved, I had never done enough. What more must I do? But this wasn't the Scholomance, nor the City of Obsidian Temples, and yet everyone had abandoned me once again. I had no justifiable reason for being alive, however ultimately, what more was there to know other than: HELL ABOVE, HELL BELOW.

I am the Fool of Babylon.

Bruce

My Inescapable Spite



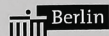






## Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin

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Herrn  
Bruce KNOX  
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Datum: 03.02.2021

### Bescheid

#### Hier: Einstellung des Verfahrens

Sehr geehrter Herr Knox,

Ich informiere Sie hiermit, dass der Überprüfungsausschuss des Polizeipräsidenten in Berlin den Verantwortungsbereich für den Fall Nr. [REDACTED] geprüft hat.

Auf der Grundlage des vom Berliner Polizeichef vorgeschlagenen Beschlusses kamen wir einstimmig zu dem Schluss, dass der Fall die Persönlichkeitsrechte eines Einzelnen nicht verletzt. Das Verfahren wurde damit eingestellt.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen  
Im Auftrag

Kriminalkommissar Rosswald



# SOUNDTRACK

## OF SYCOPHANTS, MESSIAHS, PRODIGIES, AND ME

Daniel Pemberton, *Escape From East Berlin*

Sunnata, *Orcan*

Jimi Hendrix, *Voodoo Child*

## ROAMING PERDITION

Planet Of Zeus, *Gasoline*

Tool, *Tempest*

Rammstein, *Puppe*

## ZEN AS FUCK

Soulfly, *Prophecy*

## COMMITTED

Billie Eilish, *Bury A Friend*

Kylie Minogue, *Slow*

Lorn, *Sega Sunset*

Thirty Seconds To Mars, *Love Is Madness*

Everlast, *Ends*

Tove Lo, *I'm Coming*

Odonis Odonis, *Collector*

Hatebreed, *Looking Down The Barrel Of Today*

Die Antwoord, *No I*

Fearsteats, *Omri*

Sun Drifter, *Dire*

White Zombie, *More Human Than Human*

Red Desert, *Older No Wiser*

Deichkind, *Keine Party*

Alabama Thunderpussy, *Rockin' Is Ma Business*

Hellyeah, *Startariot*

## MY INESCAPABLE SPITE

Portishead, *Western Eyes*

Jugurtha, *Jannaty*

Ben Harper, *I Shall Not Walk Alone*

House Of Pain, *It Ain't A Crime*

Amenra, *From Birth To Grave, From Shadow To Light*



## OTHER WORKS BY BSJK 2001 - 2021

- First exhibition: Fingers In My Orifices. 2001.  
Finished writing my first book after 10 years: "Apocalypse, Holocaust, Armageddon". 2003.  
Second exhibition: Fuck The Weak. 2003.  
Third exhibition: The Strength Of Hatred. 2004.  
Fourth exhibition: Pandora's Meat. 2005.  
Art: Saturn Returns & The Divine Contradiction. 2006.  
Art: This Disgust. 2006.  
Art: Hell Hath No Fury. 2007.  
Art: In My Father's Footsteps. 2007.  
Art: Beloved Beheaded. 2007.  
Art: The Goddess. 2007.  
Music video: Make It Rain – Tom Waits. 2007.  
Love letters: The Bane Of My Life. 2008.  
Music video: 18.12. – Sinah. 2008.  
Art: We Vulgar Creatures. 2008.  
Music video: Closer – Richard Cheese. – (Nine Inch Nails) 2008.  
Self-portraits: Disarticulation. 2008.  
Music video: Just A Car Crash Away – Marilyn Manson. 2009.  
Art: For My Idle Hands. 2009.  
Music video: Indifference – Pearl Jam. 2009.  
Art: Power-Game. 2009.  
Self-portraits: A Personal Hell. 2010.  
Music video: Danger Global Warming – The Blacksmoke Organisation – (Remix John Fryer) 2010.  
Art: Jealous As Fuck. 2010.  
Concept art for a movie pitch: Alienated. 2010.  
Self-portraits: Not Dead Yet. 2011.  
Movie pitch: Alienated. 2011.  
Short story 1: 10 Days In The Madhouse. 2011.  
Art: The Rational Animal. 2011.  
Short story 2: How I Ended Up In Hospital. 2012.  
Music video: I Lost Control – The Girl & The Robot. 2012.  
Art: Perpetuation. 2012.  
Short story 3: The Small Hours. 2013.  
Short story 4: Loch-Fucking-Ness. 2013.  
Art: Inconsequential Consent. 2013.  
Self-portraits: The Boy Who Cried Wolf. 2013.  
Art: Antimother Of God. 2013.  
Short story 5: Natalie Portman & I. 2014.  
Self-published trilogy of novels with artwork: Bark. 2014.  
Short story 6: An Occult Obligation. 2015.  
Short story 7: Relationships And Their Discontents. 2015.  
Picture book: Uncle Fingers. 2015.  
Self-portraits: I Will Be All I Will Be. 2015.  
Short story 8: There Is No Diagnosis. 2015.  
Art: They've Always Been There. 2016.  
Art: Imbalanced. 2016.  
Short story 9: Somewhere To Be Alone. 2016.  
Movie pitch: Extermination. 2016.  
Short story 10: The Museum Island Murders. 2016.  
Art: Every Hour Every Day. 2017.  
Self-portraits: MacFarlane. 2017.  
Short story 11: Unholy Water. 2017.  
Art: The Realm Of Death And Sin. 2017.  
Short story 12: Tempting Fatalism. 2017.  
Short story 13: Laughter And Screams. 2017.  
Art: Exhume The Hatchet. 2017.  
Short story 14: Pernicious Transmutation. 2017.  
Art: The Pergamon Of Jerusalem. 2017.  
Art: Satans Of Coercion. 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.  
Picture book: Uncle Fingers 2. 2018.  
Short story 18: The Curse Of Incomprehensible Causation. 2018.  
Self-portraits: The Needle Of Anagnorisis. 2018.  
Short story 19: This Pilgrim Denied. 2018.  
Short story 20: Inalienable Theophany. 2019.  
Exhibition: Desecrate The Temple. 2019.  
Short story 21: Of Sycophants, Messiahs, Prodigies, And Me. 2019.  
Short Film: Nephilim. 2019.  
Short story 22: Roaming Perdition. 2019.  
Short story 23: Zen As Fuck. 2020.  
Art: Three And Thirty Andromedas. 2020.  
Short story 24: Committed. 2020.  
Short story 25: My Inescapable Spite. 2020.  
Art: Cult Of The Offensive. 2021.

